

## Editor's notes:

May 2008, Volume 23-8

### May poem

With verdure the wide earth's overspread,  
And trees adorned with blooms;  
The paths in May bow sweet to tread,  
Mid forests of perfume.

-- *Farmer's Almanac*

What's the first sure sign of that warm weather is truly here? Why, golfers . . . of course!

By the way, getting a hole in one is one of the highest achievements, both for the weekend golfer or the pro. The National Hole in One Association estimates that the typical amateur golfer (on a par three hole) hits a hole in one once every 12,750 shots. The best amateurs ace one every 7,500 shots. Professional golfers hit a hole in one about once every 3,750 shots.

With the great weather we've been having, maybe these statistics will improve this year. And if you're not chasing little white balls, here are a few other celebrations to consider:

**Mother Goose Day, May 1** -- Sponsored by the Mother Goose Society, this observance celebrates the old nursery rhymes. The Pennsylvania-based group's motto is "Either alone or in sharing, read childhood nursery rhymes and feel the warmth of Mother Goose's embrace."

**May Day, May 1** -- The first day of May has been observed as a day of celebration since ancient times, when the day marked the transition from the colder to warmer seasons. Festivities included decorating May poles, originally live trees brought to villages to commemorate the beginning of summer, a tradition that is still observed in some places.

The day was also connected to fertility ceremonies in earlier days and included some rather bawdy practices which were squelched by the Puritans in the 1600s. In the late 1800s, the day became associated with a worker's holiday, and continues to be celebrated as such in many European countries where it has the status of a legal holiday.

**V-E Day, Anniversary, May 8** -- Victory in Europe Day commemorates the unconditional surrender of Germany to Allied forces in 1945.

**Mother's Day, May 11** -- While Mother's Day celebrations can be traced back to the time of the ancient Greeks who feted Rhea, the mother of the gods and goddesses, the day gained official acceptance at the beginning of the last century.

Sons and daughters in Canada, Denmark, Italy, Australia, and the United States will celebrate their family matriarchs on May 11, paying tribute with gifts, candy, cards, and flowers. More than 40 other countries have an official day to honour mothers at various times throughout the year.

**Calaveras County Fair and Frog Jumping Jubilee, May 14-18** -- Mark Twain gave widespread recognition to the country fair and frog jumping competition that have been held for years in the tiny town of Angels Camp, California. He immortalized the locale with his story "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County." Fair promoters tout the Fair as "the king daddy of all frog-jumping contests around America."

**Canadian Tulip Festival, May 2-19** -- This year marks the 55th anniversary of the festival, which began in 1953 after the Dutch royal family gave 100,000 tulip bulbs to Canada in gratitude for sheltering Princess Juliana and her daughters during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands during World War II. Today, the city of Ottawa boasts beds with 3 million tulips and hosts more than half a million visitors when the flowers come into bloom.

**Victoria Day, May 24** -- England's Queen Victoria, born on May 24, 1837, was the ruling sovereign when Canada's provinces joined together to form a country in 1867. Even before confederation, Canadians celebrated her birthday. On May 24, 1854, 5,000 Canadian residents gathered in front of the Government House in Toronto, to "give cheers to their queen." Throughout the years, Victoria Day has also been called Empire Day and Commonwealth Day. These days, Canadians celebrate with parades and firework displays in honour of the federal holiday which is on the Monday before May 25.

**Anniversary of the Golden Gate Bridge, May 28** -- Construction on the Golden Gate Bridge began in 1933 and was completed four years later. It broke may records for its time, including the tallest towers, the longest and thickest cables, and the longest suspension span. It also had the largest underwater foundation piers ever built.

The orange-coloured bridge gets its name from the Golden Gate Strait, the three-mile long seaway entrance from the Pacific Ocean to San Francisco. Army Captain John Fremont named the strait "Chrysophylae," which means "golden Gate" in Greek. It reminded him of the harbour in Istanbul named Chrysoceras, the "golden Horn."

The bridge as envisioned in an original plan was deemed "unsightly." Eventually an Art Deco design was adopted.

## History of the Hula Hoop

Although the Hula Hoop fad roared to life in the 1950s, Egyptian children were playing with similar toys more than 3,000 years ago. They swung large hoops of dried grapevines around their waist or pushed them along the ground with a stick. In 14th century England, children and adults were wild about "hooping," and in the 1700s, missionaries to Hawaii came back with the name hula hoop in honour of the dance that hoopers seemed to imitate.

In 1957, Richard Knerr and Arthur Melin, founders of the Wham-O Toy Co., heard from a foreign guest that Australian children twirled a bamboo ring around their waists in gym class. Recognizing a good idea, Melin and Knerr trademarked the name Hula Hoop and began manufacturing the brightly coloured plastic rings, though the toy itself could not be patented because it was such an ancient concept. To market their product, Melin and Knerr did hundreds of demonstrations and gave away Hula Hoops at California playgrounds. Their perseverance paid off: Wham-O sold 25 million Hula Hoops in less than four months; two years later, more than 100 million were sold. The fad began to fade by the end of 1959, but Hula Hoops have recently regained some of their popularity as a way to keep fit.

## Mayflowers

In England, hawthorn blossoms are called mayflowers because their beautiful pink or white flowers appear in May. The hawthorn tree can grow as tall as 30 feet, and its wood is prized for its lovely finish. Bright red hawthorn berries, which ripen in the fall, are used in cooking and are a source of vitamin C, the B vitamins, and bioflavonoids. According to SRC Industries, which sells hawthorn berry juice, it has been used as a tonic since the first century B.C.E. in ancient Greece. The Romans and Greeks thought of the hawthorn as a symbol of love and marriage, and the Romans used it to ward off evil spirit.



### Match the Baby Animal to its Mother

- |           |             |
|-----------|-------------|
| 1. Infant | A. Fox      |
| 2. Kit    | B. Leopard  |
| 3. Joey   | C. Monkey   |
| 4. Cub    | D. Dolphin  |
| 5. Calf   | E. Kangaroo |

Answers: 1C; 2A; 3E; 4B; 5D

## The Kentucky Derby

The Kentucky Derby -- the first jewel of the Triple Crown thoroughbred stakes -- is run at Churchill Downs in Louisville, Kentucky, as it has for nearly 135 years since the first Derby was run in 1875

In 1872, colonel M. Lewis Clark toured the prominent racetracks of England and France and returned home with the idea to develop a racetrack to showcase Kentucky's horse breeding industry. Clark leased 80 acres near downtown Louisville from his uncles, John and Henry Churchill. A clubhouse, grandstand, porters' lodge, and stables were constructed on the site, and the track formally opened on May 17, 1875.

Ten years later, a new grandstand was built featuring two spires atop the roof; these twin spires are now the symbol of Churchill Downs and the Kentucky Derby. Despite the popularity of the race, Churchill Downs was not a profitable operation until 1903, 28 years after its founding.

Since then, it has had numerous owners and presidents, many investing millions of dollars in improvements. In 1954, a film patrol was installed to provide replays to racing officials. In 1977, a sixth floor was added to the Skye Terrace; in 1981, a computerized pari-mutuel system was installed, and a \$7 million Kentucky Derby Museum was constructed. Renovations costing \$121 million were made in 2002.

This year, the Derby is scheduled to take place on May 3rd, and more than 150,000 spectators are expected to watch "the most exciting two minutes in sports."

## Happy Mother's Day

*You may have tangible wealth untold  
Caskets of jewels and coffers of gold  
Richer than I you can never be  
I had a mother who read to me.*

-- Strickland Gillilan

