

Editor's notes:

This month is named after the Latin word "septem," meaning "seven." September was the seventh month until 700 B.C.E., when Roman king Numa Pompilius switched from a 304-day calendar to a 365-day lunar calendar.

Autumn is an early name for the season between summer and winter. According to the dictionary experts at Merriam-Webster, it's derived from Latin and was first recorded in the 14th century. The word "fall" didn't come into use until the 16th century; even then, it was incorporated into phrases such as "fall of the leaf" and "fall of the year." The Old English word for fall was "haerfest," from which comes our modern word "harvest."

Although September is already a big thrill for parents, here are a few other dates for your consideration:

Labour Day, September 7 -- On the first Monday in September we celebrate the accomplishments of working people. This day also marks the last long weekend of the summer and before the start of school.

Harvest Moon, September 15 -- This is the full moon that is nearest the autumnal equinox. This moon is unique in that it rises for several days near sunset and is often a brilliant orange colour when on the horizon. However, the colour is an optical illusion. The Farmer's Almanac explains: "When the moon is low to the horizon, it is being seen through a larger amount of atmospheric particles than if it were higher in the sky. Red wavelengths tend to travel a straighter path through the atmosphere, while the blue components tend to scatter. The full moon also appears to be much larger when it is close to the horizon, but this is only also an illusion."

Chinese Moon Festival, September 15 -- Mid-autumn features the third major festival of the Chinese calendar, the other two being the New Year and the Dragon Boat Festival. The harvest celebration is held on the full moon in September. The Chinese eat moon cakes, sweet pastries filled with duck eggs, and sesame and lotus seeds on this occasion.

Rosh Hashanah, September 18 -- The Jewish New Year or Rosh Hashanah -- Hebrew for "head of the year" -- begins at sunset on this day. Jews begin 10 days of repentance and spiritual renewal.

Talk Like a Pirate Day, September 19 -- Avast, ye bilge rat! Drink some grog and dance me a hornpipe, or else yer a lowly lubber!

Tolkien Week, September 20-26 -- Observed during the calendar week that contains September 22, the mutual birthday of Bilbo and Frodo Baggins of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and

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The Lord of the Rings.

Start of Autumn, September 22 -- Even though it occurs on an equinox (a term that means day and night are equal), there are slightly more than 12 hours of daylight on this day because of slight deviations in the sun's light. Rays are bent as they pass through the earth's atmosphere so that we actually see the sun just before it rises and also after it sets.

National Dog Week, September 22-28 -- This week honours our faithful, four-footed friends. The more than 200 recognized breeds range from the huge Irish wolfhound standing over 3' feet tall to the tiny Chihuahua which is only 6" high. North Americans own nearly 60 million dogs.

Anniversary of the Discovery of the Pacific Ocean, September 25 -- In 1513, Spanish explorer Vasco Nunez de Balboa was the first European to see the Pacific Ocean. While living in Panama, natives told him of a vast ocean to the west. After a 25-day trek through the jungle, Balboa spotted the Pacific, which he deemed the South Sea.

Yom Kippur, September 28 -- The "Day of Atonement" begins at sunset and lasts until nightfall of the following day. Orthodox Jews do not work and refrain from eating and drinking during this time. Many wear white -- to symbolize purity -- and attend synagogue to pray and repent for their sins of the past year.

You know you're grown up when . . .

. . . you're not a kid anymore. Here's the proof:

- Your refrigerator has more food than beer in it.
- 6 a.m. is when you get up, not when you go to bed.
- You hear your favourites . . . on the elevator.
- You make plans to watch the Weather Channel.
- A clean sweater and jeans is no longer considered "dressing up."
- You have no idea how late the pizza place delivers.
- Your older relatives feel comfortable telling dirty jokes around you.
- You feed your dog Science Diet instead of cold pizza.
- A \$7 bottle of wine is no longer "the good stuff."

Q. What did the Zen master say to the hot dog vendor?

A. Make me one with everything.

When 'doing your best' isn't the point

Business consultant Tom Peters learned a very important lesson while serving as a Navy SeaBee in Vietnam. As he writes in his blog, one time he was sent back to headquarters for a short meeting with the commandant of the Marine Corps, General Chapman, who also was a friend of Peters' family.

Peters showed up in Chapman's office straight from the helicopter, covered with mud from the field where he was building a camp for an Army Special Forces team. Chapman and Peters spoke briefly, and as he dismissed Peters, Chapman asked, almost as an afterthought, "Tom, are you taking care of your men?" Peters led a detachment of 20 sailors.

"I'm doing my best, sir," he answered. He felt chilled to the bone as Chapman's face darkened, and he remembers the general's words to this day.

"Mr. Peters, General Walt and I and General Buse are not interested in whether or not you are 'doing your best,'" Chapman said. "We simply expect you to get the job done -- and to take care of your sailors. Period. That will be all, Lieutenant."

It was a powerful message: Don't settle for "doing your best." A leader's responsibility is to accomplish his or her task -- no excuses.

Have a happy 'family' at work

Your co-workers aren't your family, but the same rules that ensure a warm relationship with family members can apply to the workplace. Below are some guidelines for communication and respect to create a positive atmosphere at work:

Respect boundaries: Understand that people have their own concepts of personal space and privacy. Just as you wouldn't go into your sister's room without her permission, don't assume you can open someone's desk to look for a pen or a piece of candy. Stay out of your colleagues' personal lives, and don't share too much of your own.

Keep promises: Family members and co-workers both want to know they can depend on you. Don't make commitments you can't keep. If something prevents you from doing what you've said you will, be honest and explain it at once. And do everything reasonable to live up to the promises you make. You'll build a reputation for trustworthiness that will aid your career.

Don't waste people's time: We're all busy with our jobs or our chores. Although a certain amount of informal chat helps build and maintain a friendly atmosphere, don't overdo it, and don't let your co-workers waste your time on irrelevant discussions. Keep an eye on your priorities, and other people's, so everyone can concentrate on getting work done.

Pay attention to people: No one likes to be ignored whether it's by your father reading the paper while you're trying to talk about your day or by a co-worker checking his or her BlackBerry during a meeting. Give people your full attention when they're speaking to you. Eliminate distractions. This shows that you respect their time and intelligence.

Tea time! It's good for you

Drinking three cups of tea a day can have important health benefits, according to doctors and researchers. Among its potential advantages, tea may help in these areas:

Cancer -- Tea, especially the green variety, has been shown in some studies to be linked to a decreased risk of breast cancer, as well as prostate and other cancers. It seems to stimulate the production of certain enzymes that detoxify carcinogens and reduce inflammation.

Obesity -- Some studies with animals have suggested that green tea and oolong tea may contribute to better weight management. The caffeine in tea might boost the body's metabolism and help the body burn off calories from fat.

Brain activity -- Green tea (again!) may help prevent cognitive impairment among older people, as suggested by some epidemiological studies.

Heart disease -- Antioxidants in tea can help the body better regulate its insulin production, which can aid in preventing diabetes and heart disease. In addition, tea can reduce risk factors such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol.

Listening may strengthen musical learning

Simply listening to music can enhance one's musical abilities, suggests research from the University of Amsterdam. Music scientists previously believed that intensive music training was the most dependable route to musical skills (the Expertise hypothesis), but the Amsterdam study found that people without formal training who listened to certain musical idioms were able to perform musical tasks at the same level as other trained listeners, strengthening what music experts call the Exposure hypothesis. So turn on your iPod and start working on your music career? Maybe.

What's New at Roca Milagro?

For those readers who have been following the progress of my Roca Milagro development in the mountains of Panama, I am happy to announce that phase one of our infrastructure is complete. The roads are all in, electrical conduits are in, water distribution pipes are in and we are now in the process of cleaning up and preparing for the next phase of infrastructure.

On my last visit to our site, I was struck by the magnitude of the development. The project didn't seem nearly as large when it was simply a 108 acre (44 hectare) piece of land without roads to give some scale to the relative size of everything.

Roca Milagro has 106 building lots of which only about a third are still for sale. There isn't a single bad lot at Roca Milagro, so the best time to buy is now, while prices are still low.

More information is available at www.rocamilagro.com and at our blog at <http://rocamilagro.blogspot.com>.

Kent Cummings (a local investment advisor and friend of mine) and I will accompany interested individuals to our development and the Boquete area of Panama, probably some time in November. If you are interested in a fun and informative trip, contact me at 519-453-0504 or at spedde@rocamilagro.com. Beautiful scenery, warm weather, good food, friendly people (including lots of Canadians and Americans) are all typical of this area of Panama. Think about it. Sieg Pedde