On This Date

1291 – A pact was made to form the Swiss Confederation. The anniversary of this founding is celebrated with paper lantern parades, bonfires, strings of Swiss flags, and fireworks.

1790 – The first U.S. census was completed with a total recorded population of close to four million.

1893 – Henry Perky received a patent for a machine to make what he called “little whole wheat mattresses,” now known worldwide as shredded wheat. In 1901, he opened a factory in Niagara Falls, New York, which is still producing the cereal today.

Inventor Trivia

Marion Donovan, a post–World War II mother, invented the disposable diaper. This followed her innovative diaper cover with pinless snaps. Pampers went on the market in 1961.

Humor of the Day

“It’s pretty clear now that what looked like it might have been some kind of counterculture is, in reality, just the plain old chaos of undifferentiated weirdness.”

~ Jerry Garcia

Happy Birthday!

Jerry Garcia (1942–1995) was born in San Francisco, California. He is best known for forming the group the Grateful Dead in the ’60s. With albums like American Beauty, the band toured for decades with fans known as “Deadheads” following the band on tour. In the 1970s, Garcia released numerous projects as a solo artist and with other musicians, such as his well-known Touch of Gray album. He died on August 9, 1995.
On This Date

1876 – “Wild Bill” Hickok was killed when he was shot from behind while playing poker. He was holding “aces and eights,” which then became widely known as the “Dead Man’s Hand.”

1892 – Charles A. Wheeler patented ideas for the first practical moving staircase, though it was never built. Some of its features were incorporated into the escalator prototype built by the Otis Elevator Company in 1899.

1938 – A yellow baseball was used for the first time in a major league game (Dodgers vs. Cardinals). The ball was more visible, but the yellow dye came off on the sweaty hands of the pitchers, and the idea was abandoned.

Did You Know?

There’s a basketball court above the Supreme Court. It’s known as the Highest Court in the Land.

Happy Birthday!

James Baldwin (1924–1987) was an African American novelist, poet, and playwright whose work explored numerous social issues. Go Tell It on the Mountain relates a teenager’s struggle with his father’s religion. At 24, Baldwin moved to Paris, where he expanded his experience with race and class. Baldwin said that he never intended to be an activist and that his personal mission was to “be a witness to truth.” The Oscar-nominated film I Am Not Your Negro is based on Baldwin’s last manuscript.

Quote of the Day

“To be wronged is nothing unless you continue to remember it.”

~ Confucius
On This Date

1492 – Christopher Columbus set sail on the Santa María. Two other ships, the Niña and Pinta, accompanied him. Columbus and crew left Spain to begin the search for a water passage to India. Instead, on October 12, they landed on an island now known as San Salvador in the Bahamas.

1933 – The Mickey Mouse watch was introduced for the price of $3.25. The watch, created by Ingersoll-Waterbury, was such a hit that it saved the Connecticut clock company from bankruptcy. More than 11,000 were sold at Macy’s in New York the first day it was released.

Did You Know?

Henry Thoreau spent nine years writing his masterpiece Walden, or Life in the Woods. Thoreau’s writings inspired John Muir, founder of the Sierra Club. In 1903, Muir convinced Theodore Roosevelt to make Yosemite the first national park.

Humor of the Day

“Marriage is the alliance of two people, one of whom never remembers birthdays and the other who never forgets them.”

~ Ogden Nash

Happy Birthday!

Martin Sheen, born in 1940, is an American actor best known for his roles in Badlands and Apocalypse Now. He also earned critical acclaim for his work on the TV show West Wing. He is the father of actors Charlie Sheen and Emilio Estevez. In addition to his work as an actor, Sheen is an activist for causes including animal rights and fair working conditions. He has been arrested several times for taking part in demonstrations.
On This Date

1892 – Andrew Borden and his wife, Abby, were murdered at their home in Fall River, Massachusetts. Their daughter, Lizzie, was tried but not convicted of the crime. The case was memorialized in a popular rhyme beginning with “Lizzie Borden took an axe….”

1922 – Every telephone in the U.S. and Canada went dead as AT&T and the Bell System shut down all its switchboards for one minute in memory of Alexander Graham Bell, who had died two days earlier.

1974 – Under threat of impeachment, President Richard M. Nixon became the first and only U.S. president to resign.

Did You Know?

Alexander Graham Bell believed that his greatest invention was not the telephone but rather the photophone, which allowed for voice transmission on a beam of light. It was a precursor to modern fiber-optic communication.

Humor of the Day

“I write my own quotes. Except this one. I obviously stole this from somebody really clever.”

~ Brian Celio

Happy Birthday!

Louis Vuitton (1821–1892) walked to Paris as a teenager in search of work. He began as an apprentice trunk maker and packer, and in 1853 he was chosen to be the personal box maker for the wife of Napoleon III. His original design of a stackable rectangular canvas bag replaced the heavy, domed trunks of the day. Vuitton died in 1892, but his fashion brand continues to thrive and is known for its high-quality trunks, luggage, and handbags with the signature LV monogram print.
On This Date

1861 – In order to help pay for the Civil War, the U.S. government levied its first income tax (3% of all incomes over $800). The Revenue Act, signed by Abraham Lincoln, was repealed in 1871.

1884 – The cornerstone for the Statue of Liberty was laid at Bedloe’s Island (now called Liberty Island), New York. The actual statue was accepted as a gift from France to the United States.

1981 – President Ronald Reagan fired 11,345 air traffic controllers who had gone on strike two days earlier. He also imposed a lifetime ban on their rehiring.

Daily Trivia

In 1891, Chicago hired its first policewoman, Marie Owens. Chicago’s female police officers were not allowed to wear police uniforms until 1956.

Proverb of the Day

“The gem cannot be polished without friction, nor man perfected without trials.”

~ Chinese proverb

Happy Birthday!

Maureen McCormick, born in 1956, is best known for her role as eldest daughter Marcia Brady in the iconic sitcom The Brady Bunch. She played the role from 1969 to 1974. After the show ended, she had trouble finding serious acting roles and ended up acting in several Brady Bunch sequels. McCormick married Michael Cummings in 1985 and they have one daughter. In 2016, she appeared on Dancing With the Stars, where she was eliminated after week 7 in the competition.
On This Date

1825 – The Republic of Bolivia was created after a 16-year struggle for independence from Spain. The nation was named after its revolutionary leader, Simón Bolívar.

1924 – The comic strip Little Orphan Annie debuted in the New York Daily News. Annie and her little dog, Sandy, were creations of cartoonist Harold Gray.

1926 – Nineteen-year-old Gertrude Ederle became the first woman to swim across the English Channel. The American Olympic champion’s time was 14 hours and 31 minutes, beating the previous record (held by a man) by nearly two hours.

Celebrity Trivia

Warhol’s modest family roots influenced his work: it’s thought his mother’s choice of lunchtime staple prompted his Campbell Soup series.

Quote of the Day

“An artist is somebody who produces things that people don’t need to have.”

~ Andy Warhol

Happy Birthday!

Andy Warhol (1928–1987) was a prolific painter best known for his “pop art” images, including the iconic image of a Campbell’s soup can. He also created portraits of some of the day’s biggest stars, like Marilyn Monroe and Mick Jagger. He enjoyed his celebrity status and was regularly seen in famous New York Night clubs like Studio 54. Warhol also dabbled in other types of art, such as sculpture and photography. His work is said to both celebrate and criticize American culture.
On This Date

1782 – General George Washington honored three courageous soldiers of the Revolutionary War with the first Purple Heart medals. The Purple Heart decorates those members of the U.S. armed forces who have been wounded in battle.

1888 – Theophilus Van Kannel of Philadelphia received a patent for the revolving door. His invention was intended to replace swinging doors that let in drafts and made it difficult to control the temperature of buildings. Despite some stories to the contrary, there is no evidence that Van Kannel did not like holding doors open for women.

Daily Trivia

The fat in milk contains carotene, which gives the milk a yellowish color. That is why nonfat milk is whiter than whole milk.

Humor of the Day

“If you think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping with a mosquito.”

~ Dalai Lama

Happy Birthday!

Carl Switzer (1927–1959) is best known for playing Alfalfa in the Our Gang short films from the 1930s. Switzer was a gifted singer and musician, though he was always typecast as Alfalfa and did not get many serious acting roles. One of his later roles was a small part in It’s a Wonderful Life. In addition to acting, he bred and trained hunting dogs for some of the Hollywood elite, including Roy Rogers, James Stewart, and Henry Fonda.
On This Date

1876 – Thomas A. Edison of Menlo Park, New Jersey, patented the mimeograph machine.

1923 – Benny Goodman was 14 years old when he began his professional career as a clarinet player. He took a job in a band on an excursion boat on Lake Michigan.

1942 – Six Nazi saboteurs were executed by electric chair at the District of Columbia jail.

1975 – Hank Williams Jr. suffered major head injuries in a mountain-climbing accident. After re-learning how to speak and sing, he became a country music star. His signature look includes a beard and sunglasses that hide his facial scars.

Celebrity Trivia

Kit Kat, the chocolate-covered wafer bar, is a big hit in Japan, in part because *kit kat* translates to “You will surely win.” They are often given as good luck charms to students ahead of school exams.

Humor of the Day

“My bed is a magical place where I suddenly remember everything I forgot to do.”

~ Anonymous

Happy Birthday!

Matthew Henson (1886–1955) was an African American explorer who was best known for being a member of the exploration team of Commander Robert Peary. Trained as a ship’s cabin boy, Henson accompanied Peary on several Arctic expeditions, including when Peary reached the North Pole for the first time. Peary relied heavily on Henson, at one point stating, “Henson must go all the way. I can’t make it without him.” They reached the North Pole on April 6, 1909, with only six of the original 24 men; the rest had turned back.
On This Date

1910 – Alva Fisher of Chicago, Illinois, received a patent for his invention of the electric washing machine. Marketed as the Thor washing machine, it used a rotating cylinder inside a galvanized tub.

1930 – Betty Boop made her first appearance in the cartoon Dizzy Dishes. The character was modeled after Helen Kane, a famous singer of the 1920s, and Clara Bow, a popular actress in the 1920s.

1971 – Leroy “Satchel” Paige, one of baseball’s greatest pitching legends, was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York.

Daily Trivia

In 1965, at the age of 59, Satchel Paige pitched three scoreless innings for the Kansas City Athletics in a game against the Boston Red Sox. He gave up just one hit.

Humor of the Day

“Fine! He is being passive aggressive with me, and it’s gonna backfire; I’m gonna be active friendly.”

~ Natalya Vorobyova

Happy Birthday!

Hoda Kotb, born in 1964, is best known as a popular TV personality on the Today morning show. She was born in Oklahoma to Egyptian parents who encouraged their children to embrace an American upbringing. She went to Virginia Tech University and earned her degree in broadcasting. Kotb worked at several TV stations before settling at NBC in 1998, and she won an Emmy in 2010. Kotb recently released her fourth book, a picture book titled I’ve Loved You Since Forever.
On This Date

1876 – Alexander Graham Bell made the world’s first long-distance telephone call from Brantford to the Bell homestead in Paris, Ontario, using a line nine-miles long strung from Brantford.

1948 – Allen Funt’s television classic Candid Camera debuted. One popular episode of the show filmed the reactions of citizens after they saw former President Harry S. Truman walking down the street, occasionally stopping to ask the time.

1966 – A daylight meteor streaked across the sky from Utah to Canada. It is the only known meteor to skip through Earth’s atmosphere and leave it again.

Did You Know?

Tootsie Rolls were introduced in 1896 by Leo Hirshfield. He named them after his daughter, whose nickname was “Tootsie.”

Humor of the Day

“I told my psychiatrist that everyone hates me. He said I was being ridiculous—everyone hasn’t met me yet.”

~ Rodney Dangerfield

Happy Birthday!

Antonio Banderas, born in 1960, is a Spanish actor who moved to the United States in the early 1990s when he began to receive international recognition for his work in Spain. He is best known in the United States for his roles in Evita and The Mask of Zorro. Banderas also portrayed the voice of “Puss in Boots” in the Shrek series of movies and in the movie Puss in Boots. He has a daughter with his former wife, actress Melanie Griffith.
On This Date

1841 – Just three years after escaping slavery, Frederick Douglass gave his first public speech. It was so well received that he was asked to become a full-time lecturer for the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society. Much later, Douglass developed a close friendship with President Lincoln.

1909 – The steamship Arapahoe was the first ship to use the radio distress call SOS. The ship found itself in trouble off Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, and radioed for help.

1919 – The Green Bay Packers football team was founded. A meat-packing company paid for the first uniforms in return for the team being named “Packers.”

Did You Know?

Morse code is still widely recognized, even if it is not as popular as it once was. It is still popular among amateur radio enthusiasts, and the U.S. Navy uses it to communicate by signal lamps.

Quote of the Day

“I would tell my younger self just be yourself—that who you are is good enough.”

~ Viola Davis

Happy Birthday!

Viola Davis, born in 1965, is the only African American actress to win Oscar, Emmy, and Tony awards. She began acting in high school and continued in college. First appearing on Broadway in 1996, Davis began being cast in small film roles that grew as her talent was recognized. She is best known for her role on TV’s How to Get Away with Murder and the 2016 movie Fences. Having experienced hunger as a child, Davis works with the Hunger Is campaign to help eradicate childhood hunger across America.
On This Date

1865 – Dr. Joseph Lister became the first surgeon to perform an antiseptic operation using carbolic acid as a disinfectant.

1888 – Bertha Benz, wife of Karl Benz (inventor of the three-wheeler motor carriage), took the first motor trip. Without her husband’s knowledge, she borrowed one of his cars and traveled 60 miles to visit her mother. She was gone for five days.

1990 – Sue, the world’s largest, most complete, and best preserved Tyrannosaurus rex skeleton, was discovered in South Dakota by paleontologist Sue Hendrickson. It is now a star attraction at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago.

Did You Know?
The 52 cards in a deck represent the 52 weeks in a year. The four suits represent the seasons.

Humor of the Day

“There is nothing so useless as doing efficiently that which should not be done at all.”

~ Peter Drucker

Happy Birthday!

Francois Hollande, born in 1954, was the 24th president of France and a member of the French Socialist Party. He was born in Rouen and entered politics as a town councilman in 1983. He also served as Mayor of Tulle and as a member of the National Assembly. Hollande was a supporter of equality for all and is quoted as having said, “Each country has a soul, and France’s soul is equality.” Hollande left office in 2017 and is a supporter of the current president, Emmanuel Macron.
On This Date

1934 – Cartoonist Al Capp began his famous comic strip, *Li’l Abner*, featuring a fictional clan of hillbillies in the impoverished town of Dogpatch, Kentucky. Eventually, the strip would be published in more than 500 newspapers and would be the basis for a Broadway play and a Hollywood movie.

1961 – Construction began on the Berlin Wall. East Germany built it to prevent a “brain drain” of educated young people to the west. The wall stood as a symbol of oppression until November 1989.

Hitchcock Trivia

The motion picture *Psycho* (1960) is now regarded as one of Alfred Hitchcock’s best efforts, but initially it received very mixed reviews. Walt Disney so detested the film that he banned Hitchcock from entering Disneyland, and film critic C. A. Lejeune was so offended by it that she resigned from her post at *The Observer*.

Humor of the Day

“I ain’t afraid to love a man. I ain’t afraid to shoot him either.”

~ Annie Oakley

Happy Birthday!

**Annie Oakley** (1860–1926) was born Phoebe Ann Mosey to poor parents in rural Ohio. She learned to shoot at an early age to help support her family. After winning a contest against a traveling sharpshooter, she joined his traveling show, and the two became both an act and a couple. The name Oakley came from the Cincinnati neighborhood where she and her husband lived. She joined the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show and continued her shooting career well into her 60s. She won her last award in 1924.

“I ain’t afraid to love a man. I ain’t afraid to shoot him either.”

~ Annie Oakley
On This Date

1880 – The Cologne Cathedral was completed 632 years after building began in 1248. It was badly damaged during World War II but later repaired. The church is the largest gothic cathedral in northern Europe.

1932 – The Philips Radio Company made its one-millionth radio. Philips began operations in 1891 producing lightbulbs and then diversified into radios in 1927.

2015 – The Embassy of the United States of America in Havana reopened. It had been closed since 1961 when President Eisenhower severed relations with Cuba.

An Apple a Day Keeps the Doctor Away

The earliest version of this phrase is a Pembrokeshire proverb dating to the 1860s: “Eat an apple on going to bed, and you’ll keep the doctor from earning his bread.”

Quote of the Day

“Magic is who I am on the basketball court. Earvin is who I am.”
~ Ervin “Magic” Johnson

Happy Birthday!

Earvin “Magic” Johnson, born in 1959, is a retired basketball player. He played point guard for the Los Angeles Lakers for 13 seasons after being drafted as the overall number one pick in the 1979 NBA draft. Johnson was a member of the gold medal-winning “Dream Team” at the 1992 Olympics. He announced that he had HIV in 1991 and briefly left the NBA but returned to play 32 games for the Lakers in 1996. Johnson has become a successful businessman and an advocate for HIV/AIDS prevention.
On This Date

1057 – In events later used in one of William Shakespeare’s greatest tragedies, the Scottish king Macbeth was killed by Malcolm Canmore, son of King Duncan I, whom Macbeth had murdered 17 years before.

1877 – Thomas Edison decided that the word hello would be a more appropriate greeting when answering the phone than ahoy, as suggested by Alexander Graham Bell. Ahoy was the typical ship greeting at the time.

1945 – Japanese Emperor Hirohito announced to his people that he had accepted the terms of surrender demanded by the allies, effectively ending World War II.

Celebrity Trivia

Ben Affleck and actor Matt Damon have known each other since childhood. Affleck encouraged Damon to try acting, and they pooled their money to pay for audition expenses.

Quote of the Day

“The person, be it gentleman or lady, who has not pleasure in a good novel, must be intolerably stupid.”

~ Jane Austen

Happy Birthday!

Ben Affleck, born in 1972, is an American actor, writer, and director who has starred in a number of hit movies. You may know him from Good Will Hunting, Pearl Harbor, and Armageddon. Affleck was married to actress Jennifer Garner from 2005 through 2017. In addition to his work in Hollywood, he has also been active in charity work for a number of causes, including childhood hunger and stem cell research. He is an avid poker player who has won several tournaments.
On This Date

1812 – Facing what he incorrectly believed to be superior forces, American General William Hull surrendered Fort Detroit without a fight to the British Army.

1829 – The original Siamese twins, Chang and Eng Bunker, arrived in Boston. They were born to Chinese parents in Siam (Thailand). Experts still disagree on whether they could have survived a separation.

1954 – *Sports Illustrated* was published for the first time. The famous swimsuit issues were added in 1964.

1960 – Captain Joseph W. Kittinger made the longest delayed parachute jump on record when he jumped out of a balloon at 102,800 feet and dropped 84,800 feet before opening his parachute over New Mexico.

Did You Know?

The Venus flytrap feeds primarily on ants, not flies.

Quote of the Day

“If I could learn to treat triumph and disaster the same, then I would find bliss.”

~ Kathie Lee Gifford

Happy Birthday!

Kathie Lee Gifford, born in 1953, has worked on several television programs throughout her career. You may remember her best from *Live! With Regis and Kathie Lee*. Her time in show business began as a vocalist on *Name That Tune*. Gifford is a passionate advocate against child abuse and has helped raise money for children born at a disadvantage. She has also written several children’s books. She was married to former NFL player and sportscaster Frank Gifford from 1986 until his death in 2015.
On This Date

1835 – Solyom Merrick patented the first wrench, a tool for tightening bolts and nuts.

1896 – Gold was discovered in Bonanza Creek in the Klondike region of Canada’s Yukon Territory. A gold rush began the following year.

1939 – The Wizard of Oz premiered in New York City. It was the first movie to use the combination of color and black and white film. Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney actually appeared onstage for 30-minute song and dance routines between showings of the film.

Daily Trivia

The tombstone of Mel Blanc, the famed voice of cartoon characters Bugs Bunny, Sylvester the Cat, Tweety Bird, and Porky Pig, reads:

“That’s all folks.”

Quote of the Day

“Personality is the glitter that sends your little gleam across the footlights and the orchestra pit into that big black space where the audience is.”

~ Mae West

Happy Birthday!

Mae West (1893–1980) was an iconic actress, singer, and comedian. She began performing as a child, and her career continued until the late 1970s. West was known for writing a 1928 play called Diamond Lil about a smart and easygoing woman from the 1890s. The character was a hit, and West revived it many times throughout her career. She was known for saying, “You only live once, but if you do it right, once is enough.”
On This Date

1227 – Genghis Khan, the Mongol leader who forged an empire, died in camp. He may have succumbed to injuries incurred during a fall from a horse in the previous year.

1587 – Virginia Dare, granddaughter of Governor John White of the Colony of Roanoke, became the first English child born in the Americas.

1957 – The U.S. military detonated a nuclear device at its Nevada Test Site. Patrons at Las Vegas hotels watched the mushroom cloud while they drank cocktails. The test was part of Operation Plumbbob, the most controversial test series in the continental United States.

What Big Eyes You Have

Giant squids have the largest eyes in the world. They are the size of soccer balls. Giant squids live deep in the ocean where those large eyes are useful in spotting their predator, the sperm whale.

Humor of the Day

“What whenever you want to marry someone, go have lunch with his ex-wife.”

~ Shelley Winters

Happy Birthday!

Shelley Winters (1920–2006) was an American actress who appeared on stage and screen. She was known for her roles in *The Great Gatsby*, *A Place in the Sun*, and *The Diary of Anne Frank*, the last winning her an Oscar for best supporting actress. Winters was politically minded, briefly addressing the marchers outside Selma, Alabama, during the march there for civil rights. She was married four times, including to long-time companion Gerry DeFord, whom she married hours before her death. She had one son.
On This Date

1812 – “Old Ironsides” (the USS Constitution) won a battle against the British frigate HMS Guerrière off the coast of Nova Scotia.

1839 – Louis Daguerre’s photographic technique was introduced. It needed only 20 to 30 minutes of exposure compared to a previous eight-hour requirement.

1919 – The Kingdom of Kabul gained its independence from the United Kingdom and changed its name to Afghanistan.

1934 – The first All-American Soap Box Derby was held in Dayton, Ohio. The winning car was made from the wood of a saloon bar.

Inventor’s Quiz

Q: Which was invented first: the Band-Aid, the teabag, or bubble gum?

A: The teabag was invented in 1908. The Band-Aid was invented in 1920, and bubble gum in 1928.

Quote of the Day

“Dress shabbily and they remember the dress; dress impeccably and they remember the woman.”

~ Coco Chanel

Happy Birthday!

Coco Chanel (1883–1971) was a French fashion designer. She was raised in a convent, where she learned to sew. Chanel was known for being among the first to create fashionable clothing that did not require a corset. She designed her famed interlocking CC monogram in the 1920s. Chanel also developed the iconic Chanel No. 5 perfume. Her earnings made her one of the wealthiest women in the world. Although Chanel was linked with many influential men, she never married.
On This Date

1977 – NASA launched Voyager 2, an unmanned spacecraft, toward Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune, and then on toward interstellar space. It carries a 12-inch copper phonograph record containing greetings in dozens of languages, samples of music, and sounds of nature. The spacecraft has now been operational and in contact with Earth for 45 years.

1988 – A huge fire in Yellowstone National Park made this “Black Saturday.” More than one-third of the park burned, and the dense smoke seemed to turn daytime to night. A tree cutter’s discarded cigarette was blamed for starting the fire.

Did You Know?

Elephants in Myanmar (formerly Burma) have been known to silence bells hung around their necks by clogging them with mud so they will not be heard when stealing bananas.

Humor of the Day

“You can’t be that kid standing at the top of the waterslide overthinking it. You have to go down the chute.”

~ Tina Fey

Happy Birthday!

Benjamin Harrison (1833–1901) was a politician and lawyer who served as the 23rd president of the United States. Harrison was an early proponent of securing voting rights for African Americans, although the Senate refused to pass an amendment to the Constitution. Six states were added to the nation during his presidency, and he also authorized the first federal forest reserve near Yosemite National Park.
On This Date

1878 – A group of 100 lawyers gathered at Saratoga Springs, New York, and formed the American Bar Association.

1912 – Arthur R. Eldred became the first boy to reach the rank of Eagle Scout, the highest rank in the Boy Scouts of America program. A few weeks later, Eldred helped save another scout from drowning and was awarded the Bronze Honor Medal for his actions.

1961 – Country music singer Patsy Cline recorded the vocals to Willie Nelson’s Crazy. It became her signature song.

Daily Quiz

The “night parrot” of Australia is considered one of the most elusive birds on Earth. Fewer people alive today have seen one with their own eyes than have ever walked on the Moon.

Quote of the Day

“Nobody roots for Goliath.”

~ Wilt Chamberlain

Happy Birthday!

Wilt Chamberlain (1936–1999) was a professional basketball player who spent time playing for the Warriors, 76ers, and Lakers. He cut an imposing figure at 7’1” and 275 pounds, and was known by the nickname “The Big Dipper” since he had to dip his head through doorways. During his playing days, he earned many accolades, including four MVP awards. He is the only player to score 100 points in a single NBA game. After he retired from the league, he would sometimes perform with the Harlem Globetrotters in exhibition games.
On This Date

1762 – Ann Franklin became the first woman to hold the title of newspaper editor. She worked for The Newport Mercury in Newport, Rhode Island.

1902 – The Cadillac Automobile Company was formed. It was named after the French explorer who founded Detroit in 1701.

1938 – Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers appeared on the cover of LIFE magazine. The glamorous and talented couple offered the public an escape from the dreariness of the Great Depression.

Daily Trivia

Henri Cartier-Bresson started a tradition of testing new camera lenses by taking photographs of ducks in urban parks. He never published the images but referred to them as ‘my only superstition’ as he considered it a ‘baptism’ of the lens.

Humor of the Day

“If they can make penicillin out of moldy bread, they can sure make something out of you.”

~ Muhammad Ali

Happy Birthday!

Henri Cartier-Bresson (1908–2004) was a French humanist photographer who pioneered street photography. He had an innate ability to capture the decisive moment that made a great candid shot. Cartier-Bresson studied art, literature, and English at the University of Cambridge in England and then traveled the world taking pictures. He became famous for his photos of Gandhi’s funeral in 1948 and his coverage of the end of the Chinese Civil War in 1949. Although famous, he was quite shy.
On This Date

1858 – A melodrama titled *Ten Nights in a Barroom* opened at the National Theatre in New York City. A temperance melodrama about the evils of drinking, the play remained in continuous production well into the 20th century, when at least two movie versions were made.

1947 – Margaret Truman, daughter of U.S. President Harry S. Truman, presented her first public concert. Margaret sang before 20,000 people at the Hollywood Bowl. The concert did not get great reviews. The president wrote to one critic, “I have never met you, but if I do you’ll need a new nose and plenty of beefsteak and perhaps a supporter below.”

Daily Trivia

The three-tone musical chime that identifies television station NBC is composed of three notes, G, E, and C, which represent the company’s original owner, General Electric Corporation.

Quote of the Day

“Intense feeling too often obscures the truth.”
~ Harry Truman

Happy Birthday!

Barbara Eden, born in 1931, is an American actress best known for her iconic role in the TV sitcom *I Dream of Jeannie*. She studied acting in high school and college and played a number of roles in TV and film before being cast as Jeannie in 1965. The show ran for five years and was a runaway success. Eden’s career continued afterward, and she made appearances in movies and TV shows up until 2016. She also wrote a memoir of her life entitled *Jeannie Out of the Bottle*, which debuted on the *New York Times* bestseller list.
On This Date

79 – Mt. Vesuvius erupted for the first time in recorded history, destroying southern Italy’s cities of Pompeii, Stabiae, and Herculaneum. At about noon, the volcano exploded without warning, covering Pompeii in a layer of ash nearly 13 feet deep. The other two cities were buried under mud and debris. Archaeologists have uncovered what life was like in Roman times from the volcanic ash-preserved remains of the cities. Vesuvius is still active.

Why Didn’t I Think of That?

Mr. Bernard Sadow reinvented the suitcase by adding wheels in 1972. He recalled meeting strong resistance on early sales calls, when he was told that men would not accept suitcases with wheels. “It was a very macho thing,” he said.

Humor of the Day

“It’s just a job. Grass grows, birds fly, waves pound the sand. I beat people up.”

~ Muhammad Ali

Happy Birthday!

William Wilberforce (1759–1833) was an English politician best known for his work to abolish slavery. Wilberforce believed in the importance of religion, morality, and education, and his work directly contributed to the passing of the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833, which outlawed slavery in the British Empire. He was also one of the founders of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. A movie about his life starring Benedict Cumberbatch (of Sherlock fame) was released in 2007.
On This Date

1835 – The New York Sun perpetrated “The Great Moon Hoax,” a series of six articles about the supposed discovery of life on the moon. The articles described fantastic creatures, including unicorns and humanoids. The reports were meant as satire, but the public swallowed the story.

1916 – The U.S. National Park Service was created. The NPS now oversees 397 units, of which 58 are designated national parks. Other sites include national monuments, cemeteries, historic battlefields, seashores, and scenic trails.

1944 – The German garrison in Paris surrendered to Allied forces. To his credit, the German commander General von Choltitz disobeyed Hitler’s orders to destroy the city.

Daily Trivia

Only two states have record highs no greater than 100 degrees. They are Alaska and Hawaii.

Quote of the Day

“To achieve great things, two things are needed; a plan, and not quite enough time.”
~ Leonard Bernstein

Happy Birthday!

Leonard Bernstein (1918–1990) was an American composer, conductor, author, music lecturer, and pianist. In addition to being the longtime director of the New York Philharmonic, he also wrote the music for many popular shows, including West Side Story, Peter Pan, and On the Waterfront. He won eight Grammy Awards for his music as well as a Grammy for Lifetime Achievement. His musical score for West Side Story is credited for helping bridge the gap between classical and popular music.
On This Date

1498 – The master artist Michelangelo was commissioned to carve the Pietà, which depicts Mary holding the body of Jesus. This work has interested historians for centuries because the sculpture does not feature the perfect human proportions that are the hallmark of Michelangelo’s work.

1883 – Mount Krakatoa, an island volcano in the Dutch Indies (now Indonesia), erupted with violent explosions that destroyed two-thirds of the island and killed about 36,000 people.

1946 – Animal Farm, by George Orwell, was published in the U.S. The allegory is based on totalitarianism and injustice taking place in the Soviet Union. It is included in the list of Great Books of the Western World.

Daily Trivia

The full moon always rises at sunset and sets at sunrise.

Quote of the Day

“If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other.”

~ Mother Teresa

Happy Birthday!

Mother Teresa (1910–1997) was an Albanian-Indian Catholic nun. She joined the Sisters of Loreto at age 18 and took her religious vows three years later. She is internationally known for her work with India’s poor and campaigned throughout her life to advocate for the most marginalized in Indian society. She was fluent in five languages and occasionally traveled outside India for humanitarian reasons. She was canonized by the Catholic Church in 2016 and is recognized by the Church as Saint Teresa of Calcutta.
On This Date

1660 – John Milton’s books were burned in London because of the author’s attacks on King Charles II.

1938 – At a poetry reading given by Archibald MacLeish, another poet set fire to some papers in a fit of jealousy in order to disrupt the recital. That jealous poet was Robert Frost.

1939 – Luftwaffe pilot Erich Warsitz flew the world’s first practical jet-powered airplane, the Heinkel He 178. It remained airborne for seven minutes.

Who Said So?

“Our country, right or wrong.”

A: Naval hero Stephen Decatur. In 1816, he said, “Our country, in her intercourse with foreign nations, may she always be in the right; but our country, right or wrong.” He survived many battles only to die in a duel with a rival naval officer.

Humor of the Day

“A man who writes for a living does not have to go anywhere in particular, and he could rarely afford to if he wanted.”

~ C.S. Forester

Happy Birthday!

C. S. Forester (1899–1966) was an English novelist best known for his Horatio Hornblower novel series. Forester wrote over 30 novels, plus plays and short stories. He also wrote children’s books to encourage his youngest son to finish his meals. Some of his works were used in films, such as The African Queen. Unable to join the military for health reasons, during World War II, Forester wrote propaganda for the Allied Powers.
On This Date

1937 – The Toyota Motor Company was founded by Kiichiro Toyoda. Today, it is the largest company in Japan, with about 350,000 employees.

1963 – Civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his “I Have a Dream” speech. He originally prepared a short speech about the sufferings of African Americans attempting to realize their freedom in a society of discrimination. He was about to sit down when gospel singer Mahalia Jackson called out, “Tell them about your dream, Martin! Tell them about the dream!”

Flower Trivia

Most varieties of hydrangeas produce pink flowers in alkaline soil and blue ones in acidic soil. White hydrangea flowers do not change their color.

Quote of the Day

“Life is a blank canvas, and you need to throw all the paint on it you can.”

~ Danny Kaye

Happy Birthday!

Nancy Kulp (1921–1991) was an American actress best known for her role as Miss Jane Hathaway on the TV show The Beverly Hillbillies. Kulp only got into acting by coincidence. She was working for the publicity department at MGM and one of the directors spotted her and convinced her she should take up acting. She took his advice and soon began landing small roles in film and TV. She was nominated for an Outstanding Supporting Actress in Comedy Emmy award for her role as Miss Hathaway.
On This Date

1966 – After two years as a star on the show, Mia Farrow withdrew from the cast of the prime-time TV drama *Peyton Place* at the urging of her husband, Frank Sinatra.

1991 – The Supreme Soviet, the parliament of the U.S.S.R., suspended all activities of the Communist Party. This marked the end of the party’s 75-year controlling regime in the Soviet Union.

2005 – Hurricane Katrina’s storm surge caused 53 different levee breaches in greater New Orleans, submerging 80% of the city.

Geography Trivia

The Atacama Desert is the driest place in the world. Some parts of it have not received rainfall in more than 400 years. It is located in the rain shadow on the leeward side of the Andes Mountains in South America.

Quote of the Day

“There are things I want to say: They are very important to me, and, not being a writer, I do it through movies.”

~ Richard Attenborough

Happy Birthday!

Richard Attenborough (1923–2014) was an English actor, filmmaker, and politician. He is known for many famous films, including *The Great Escape* (1963), *Miracle on 34th Street* (1994), *Jurassic Park* (1993), and *Gandhi* (1982), which won two Academy Awards, for Best Picture and Best Director. Attenborough served in the film unit of the Royal Air Force during World War II. He was a Member of Parliament from 1993 until his death in 2014.
On This Date

1682 – William Penn sailed from England on this day and went on to establish the colony of Pennsylvania. A 37-foot bronze statue of him has stood atop City Hall in Philadelphia since 1894.

1984 – President Ronald Reagan was inducted into the Sportscasters Hall of Fame. He was presented with the Graham McNamee Award, which is presented to former sportscasters who have achieved excellence in another field of endeavor.

Penn Statue Trivia

A gentlemen’s agreement that no structure should rise above the Penn statue was violated in 1986 when a taller building was erected, bringing about a supposed curse on local sports teams. The curse ended in 2008 when the Phillies won the World Series, just 16 months after a small Penn statuette had been affixed to the top of the new Comcast Center.

Humor of the Day

“Normal is nothing more than a cycle on a washing machine.”

~ Whoopi Goldberg

Happy Birthday!

Mary Shelley (1797–1851) was an English novelist, biographer, and travel writer who is best known for her book Frankenstein. Shelley conceived the story during a summer in Switzerland with her husband, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Lord Byron. Her husband collaborated with Mary on the novel, and historians still debate how much of the work was his. Shelley was a feminist of her time and strongly believed that women were capable of being intellectual equals.
On This Date

1897 – Thomas A. Edison received a U.S. patent for his kinetoscope, a device for producing moving pictures.

1920 – At 7 a.m. in Hannibal, Missouri, Marie Ruoff Byrum, age 26, became the first woman to vote under the 19th Amendment.

1997 – Princess Diana of England died along with her companion, department store heir Dodi Fayed, when their car crashed in Paris while trying to evade the paparazzi.

A Deep Thought

Challenger Deep in the Mariana Trench is the deepest known point in Earth’s oceans. The bottom is 10,924 meters (35,840 feet) below sea level. In 1960, it was visited by the manned bathyscaphe Trieste. If Mount Everest, the highest mountain on Earth, were placed at this location, it would be covered by more than one mile of water.

Humor of the Day

“For fast-acting relief, try slowing down.”

~ Lily Tomlin

Happy Birthday!

James Coburn (1928–2002) was an actor who made over 70 film and 100 television appearances in a career spanning 45 years. His breakthrough role was as the knife-wielding Britt in The Magnificent Seven (1960). A capable, rough-hewn leading man, his lanky physique made him a perfect tough guy in numerous roles in westerns and action films, such as The Magnificent Seven, Hell Is for Heroes, and The Great Escape. Coburn was also interested in fast cars and is credited with introducing Steve McQueen to Ferrari cars.