February 2023

Golden Age Newsletter

1915 S. 18th. St. Centerville Iowa 52544 Phone # 1-641-856-2757

Celebrating February

Groundhog Day
February 2

Thank a Mail Carrier Day
February 4

Pizza Day
February 9

Super Bowl LVII
February 12

Valentine's Day
February 14

World Human Spirit Day
February 17

Presidents' Day (U.S.)
February 20

Mardi Gras
February 21

Richard Clemens 7th
Jo Murphhy 23rd

Finding a Lost Art

You may not realize it, but if you send a valentine through the mail on February 7, you are celebrating Send a Card to a Friend Day. Despite the ubiquity of electronic communications like text messages and social media posts, the art of sending mail by post has not been lost entirely. Sending a thoughtful letter to a friend or loved one is a surefire way to show that special someone exactly how dear they are to you.

While a greeting card purchased from a store is a nice gesture, the best card-sender does more than just sign their name. Demonstrate thoughtfulness by personalizing your message. Reflect on a memory or moment you shared with your loved one that really meant something to you. List the qualities you most admire about your friend or what you most miss about them, or thank them for a valuable lesson they taught you. Finally, sign off with a thoughtful question and encourage them to write back. Handwriting a letter won't just make their day, but the act of writing is a powerful one for you, too. Writing has been proven to reduce stress, strengthen memory, and sharpen your wit, all at the same time. If you feel particularly inspired, you could compose an original poem. After all, it is believed that poetry is what gave us the Valentine's Day we know and celebrate today.

While Valentine's Day has been celebrated as the religious feast day of St. Valentine since the fifth century, it wasn't until 1382 that Valentine's Day became a secular holiday for romantics. That was when Geoffrey Chaucer, the writer from the High Middle Ages best known for *The Canterbury Tales*, penned his poem *Parlement of Foules*. In this poem, he declares Valentine's Day as the date when mating season begins for both birds and humans. Over the following centuries, young lovers seized on February 14 as the day to express their adorations with the sending of flowers, chocolates, jewelry, and of course, valentines. If you plan on sending one of this year's 190 million Valentine's Day cards, make sure to personalize it for the one you love.

Heart vs. Head

When it comes to making decisions, must we always choose between listening to our heads and following our hearts? In 2007, inspirational speaker Deb Kulkkula decided that she no longer wanted to choose one over the other, so she declared February Renaissance of the Heart Month, an entire month dedicated to making decisions with the heart as well as the intellect.

Many people insist that the best decision-making is data-driven and entirely logical, emphasizing the importance of keeping a "cool head." Emotions (sometimes called *intuition* or *instinct*) are often seen to cloud or muddy the decision-making process. Society also tends to influence our decision-making. When it comes to finding a job, people will often follow their heads rather than their hearts. Attractive incentives like higher pay, more prestige, and better benefits take precedence over a low-paying dream job that might satisfy a lifelong passion. And yet when it comes to finding a life partner or choosing a pet, we let our hearts guide us. Culture has told us that when it comes to jobs, we follow our heads, but when it comes to relationships, it's okay to follow our hearts. The scientific truth is that decision-making almost always requires both cognitive and emotional thinking.

Studies show that almost every decision is really a struggle between our emotions and intellect. Studies of individuals with damage to the emotional centers of their brains show that these people struggle mightily with decision-making. This is because we use both our intellect and emotions to calculate risk and reward, the primary drivers of decision-making.

Relying solely on emotion or intellect to make decisions often drives us to make poor choices. As brains develop from childhood and people amass both good and bad life experiences, we fine-tune our abilities to calculate risk and reward. The wisdom that comes with old age develops from the hard-won lessons taught to both our heads and our hearts.

An Inconvenient Truth

Convenience plays a powerful role in our day-to-day lives. New technologies often rely on promises of convenience: dishwashers replace handwashing, search engines replace encyclopedias, text messages replace emails and snail mail, Amazon replaces the department store. To resist these convenient options in life sometimes means being called quaint, eccentric, or even a fanatic.

But has life become too convenient? That is a question worth asking on February 22, Inconvenience Yourself Day. Convenience frees us from toil and gives us more free time, but should we instead enjoy physical labor? Shopping on Amazon means we never need to leave the house or interact with others. But have we become too isolated? Inconvenience certainly requires more effort, but effort can lead to great benefits, like socializing with friends or learning a worthwhile new hobby. Effort creates feelings of self-worth. Perhaps a little inconvenience is a good thing.

Flannel Favorites

Is flannel the perfect fabric? On February 10, Flannel Day, you can either praise its softness, warmth, and durability, or don a flannel shirt and enjoy all those qualities. What makes this

fabric so cozy and warm? It has a napped, fuzzy finish, the result of combing the fabric to raise its fine, soft fibers. The first flannels came from Wales, where the word *gwalanen* referred to "woolen cloth." In the 17th century, Welsh textile workers began the process of *carding* sheep's wool, a method of combing that both disentangled and softened the yarns. The new carded fabric proved both strong, warm, and soft, and became a favorite of Welsh farmers. Flannels made from both wool and cotton soon spread around the globe, first as a favorite garment of the working class, and today worn by just about everybody.

Tall Tales

Residents of Bangor, Maine, celebrate Paul Bunyan Day on February 12, claiming that the lumberjack of American lore was born in the woods outside of the city in 1834. Since 1959, a 31-foot-tall statue of Paul Bunyan has stood over Main Street, a log peavey in one hand and lumberjack's axe in the other. Visit the city clerk's office in city hall and you'll even find Bunyan's birth certificate hanging on the wall.

While the authenticity of the birth certificate and Bunyan's connection to Bangor is certainly dubious, Bangor's claim as the birthplace of the American lumber industry is beyond question. By the mid-19th century, Bangor had gained renown as the "lumber capital of the world," with Maine's old-growth white pine used to build houses, ship masts, and Maine's many lobster traps.

Minnesotans have their own opinions when it comes to the birthplace of Paul Bunyan. Like Bangor, the logging industry brought prosperity to much of northern Minnesota. Most self-respecting Minnesotans will claim that Paul Bunyan was born in their state. After all, it was Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox who carved out Minnesota's 10,000 lakes. The only question is, where was he born? The state has no less than five Paul Bunyan statues in five different cities, each claiming to be Bunyan's birthplace.

The truth might disappoint Bunyan fans in both Maine and Minnesota. Historians point out that Bunyan was not a real man, but an American legend. This legend may have been based on a real person, a French-Canadian lumberjack named Fabian Fournier. Fournier moved to Michigan after the Civil War and joined a logging crew. At six feet tall, he was a giant. When he wasn't logging, he spent his time drinking and fighting, until he was murdered. Over time, Fournier's legend likely merged with that of another notorious French-Canadian lumberman, Bon Jean. It is believed that the pronunciation of *Bon Jean* is what gave us the name *Bunyan*.

Flights of Fancy

The night of the first full moon of the lunar new year brings one of Taiwan's most famous events, the Pingxi Sky Lantern Festival. Tens of thousands of visitors crowd the small hillside village of Shifen to release rice paper lanterns into the night sky. Participants write their names and wishes upon the lanterns, hoping that they will fly up to the gods, who will grant them their wishes in the new year.

It is believed that the sky lantern was invented in the third century by military strategist Zhuge Liang as a way to send military signals. When the sky lantern tradition arrived in Taiwan, it was adopted by local farmers, who wrote their wishes for a plentiful season on the lantern's paper walls and sent them skyward to their gods and ancestors. Today, anyone who hopes to release a lantern arrives early, giving themselves enough time to purchase a lantern, write a message, and then find a spot to release it before 80,000 people descend upon the town. The sight of the night sky filled with thousands of lanterns is magical to behold.

Challenge of the North

While the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race might be the most famous sled dog race in the world, February's Yukon Quest Sled Dog Race is undoubtedly more challenging. Run in the depths of winter, the Yukon Quest is colder, darker, lonelier, and runs over more challenging terrain. The course runs 1,000 miles from Whitehorse, Yukon, to Fairbanks, Alaska, and follows the historic route of the Klondike Gold Rush. While the Iditarod has 22 checkpoints along the way, the Yukon Quest has only nine. Mushers cross four mountain ranges, traverse frozen rivers, and deal with temperatures plummeting to minus-60 degrees Fahrenheit. Why would anyone want to compete in such a race? The prize money is minimal. The reward is honor and pride.

Golden Age
1915 S. 18th St.
Centerville, Iowa 52544

Postage Information

The British Invasion

On February 7, 1964, the Beatles landed in New York to start their first tour of the United States. Just a few days earlier, on February 1, their hit "I Want to Hold Your Hand" hit No. 1. Two days later, on February 9, the "Fab Four" would perform on *The Ed Sullivan Show* before hysterical fans in the live studio and to record viewership on television sets. The so-called British Invasion had begun. For the next several years, it seemed as if the only sounds coming through the radio were bands from "across the pond." The Dave Clark Five. Herman's Hermits. The Rolling Stones. The Kinks. The Animals. The Who. Prior to 1964, only two British singles ever topped the pop 100. From 1964–65, British bands held the No. 1 spot for an astonishing 56 weeks. The American radio waves had been transformed forever.

February Birthdays

In astrology, those born from February 1–18 are the Water Bearers of Aquarius. Although they bear water, Aquarius is an air sign, signaling that they are innovative, progressive, and rebellious. They nurture and support new ideas. Those born from February 19–28 are Pisces' Fish. Pisces are incredibly sensitive and empathetic. They often tap into their boundless imaginations and dreamy attitudes to become accomplished artists.

Langston Hughes (poet) – February 1, 1901
Rosa Parks (activist) – February 4, 1913
Babe Ruth (ballplayer) – February 6, 1895
Jimmy Durante (actor) – February 10, 1893
Michael Jordan (athlete) – February 17, 1963
Toni Morrison (novelist) – February 18, 1931
Smokey Robinson (singer) – February 19, 1940
Sidney Poitier (actor) – February 20, 1927
Nina Simone (singer) – February 21, 1933
George Washington (president) – February 22, 1732
Elizabeth Taylor (actress) – February 27, 1932