January 2023

Golden Age Newsletter

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

Happy New Year!

Facility Update: We had a COVID-19 outbreak in December; however, all residents were COVID-free as of 12/23/2022.

Influenza A followed COVID, infecting five residents in December. If no additional cases are identified, we will no longer be in outbreak status as of Dec. 31st.

Visitors are required to screen ONLY when the facility is in outbreak status. Masks are also required when in outbreak status.

Please continue to observe CDC Core Infection Prevention Practices. If you are ill, please reschedule your visit to keep our residents safe.

Looking forward to great things in the new year.

Have a safe and joyous holiday!

Becky Oposnow

"Year's end is neither an end nor a beginning but a going on, with all the wisdom that experience can instill in us."
~ Hal Borland

Make Your Dream Come True Day – 13th

Martin Luther King Day – 16th

International Sweatpants Day – 21st

Compliment Day – 24th

Holocaust Memorial Day – 27th

Looking Back to See the Future

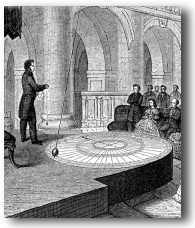
A new year often prompts us to look forward and imagine what the coming months might hold. The month of January is named for the Roman god Janus, protector of gates, doorways, and transitions. He was depicted with two faces, one looking to the future and the other looking to the past. January seems an opportune month for reflection, to contemplate where we have been as we chart where we are going.

The Spanish philosopher George Santayana famously said, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." The past offers myriad lessons for the present. Studying past societies, systems, ideologies, religions, governments, cultures, conflicts, and technologies teaches us how we got to where we are today. Are there any more profound questions than "Who am I?" and "Why am I here?" History often provides answers to these age-old questions.

History occurs on different and dramatic scales. The geologic history of Earth stretches back billions of years. Human ancestors first appeared hundreds of thousands of years ago. Human civilization began a mere 6,000 years in the past, while the modern era is just a few hundred years old. While there are lessons to be learned from each of these periods, perhaps far more pressing are our own personal histories. Personal reminiscence can be a powerful practice if done correctly.

For a long time, reminiscence was seen as unhealthy. It wasn't until the 1960s that psychologists began to value reminiscence and personal reflection. Of course, reminiscence takes many forms. Both obsessing about how awful life was and escaping into the glories of the past offer little value. However, using reminiscence to pass on valuable life lessons can be constructive to a younger generation. Using past experiences as a blueprint to overcome present challenges is also helpful. The value of the past is that it gives us wisdom and strength for the present and reinforces for us that the choices we made were valuable and life was not wasted.

Circular Logic



January 8 is Earth's Rotation Day, commemorating the day in 1851 when French physicist Léon Foucault first demonstrated that Earth indeed rotates on its axis, completing a rotation every 24 hours, measuring one day. To prove this, Foucault used a pendulum. Following Newton's law, which states that a body in motion will remain in motion until influenced by outside forces, Foucault swung his pendulum expecting it to swing continuously in the same arc in the same direction. Strangely, the pendulum's path appeared to change. Foucault rightly postulated that the pendulum's path had not changed, but the earth beneath the pendulum had rotated. The pendulum completed its rotation, returning to its original path after 24 hours.

Of course, before 1851, humans understood that a day had 24 hours. Foucault was simply the first to prove it using instruments on Earth's surface. It was the Egyptians who first broke the day and night into 12-hour segments. The number 12 held high significance to the Egyptians. Today, we often break numbers into groups of 10, which we call our *decimal* system, perhaps owing to counting on our 10 fingers. The Egyptians used a base 12, or *duodecimal* system, perhaps counting the finger knuckles of the hand, minus the thumb, which may have been used to do the counting. Twelve proved a powerful number—12 hours of daylight, 12 hours of darkness corresponding to 12 stars in the night sky, and 12 moon cycles leading to 12 months. Hours were kept by a sundial broken into 12 parts.

So, who then gave us 60 minutes and 60 seconds? This sexagesimal, or base 60, counting system was developed by the Sumerians and Babylonians. Perhaps the base 60 system was chosen because it had 12 factors, easily allowing users to break down one hour into 12 different fractions: 30 minutes, 20 minutes, 15 minutes, 12 minutes, 10 minutes, 6 minutes, 5 minutes, 4 minutes, 3 minutes, 2 minutes, and 1 minute. We still use the sexagesimal system to measure time, angles, and geographic coordinates.

The Families of

Anna Shoot
and
Wanda Tomlin

Bobblehead Mania

In the 1960s, baseball teams began giving away bobblehead dolls that did not even resemble players. As ticket sales climbed on bobblehead giveaway days, the craze swept from park to park. And it wasn't children who wanted the dolls but grown men and women. Why would someone show up to a ballgame two hours early to wait in line for a wobbly-headed doll? Marketing psychologists chalk it up to escapism. People collect bobbleheads for the same reason they read tabloid magazines, go to the movies, and vacation in Las Vegas—adults use these outlets to escape the rigors and stresses of everyday life. And some are amassing bobblehead collections worth thousands! Some bobbleheads from the 1960s are worth $10,000. Bobbleheads are so popular they have their own holiday on January 7.

Flying to New Heights

Travel to the Indian state of Gujarat on January 14 and you will find the skies filled with millions of kites for the International Kite Festival. Kite flying is more than just a recreational pastime; it is a significant cultural practice for many Indians.

The Kite Festival coincides with Makar Sankranti, the day of the year when the sun moves into the zodiac sign of Capricorn, marking the start of spring and signifying the commencement of the harvest season. The key word here is *movement*, an acceptance of the movement of the seasons and realization that this constant flux is what facilitates the transition from winter to spring and restarts the agricultural growth cycle. Without this movement and change, life on Earth would cease to exist.

Kites fly on the winds of the earth, their movement dictated by forces beyond our control. In this way, the movements of the kites honor the same movements of Makar Sankranti. We are just along for the ride. Kites have more than just this cosmic significance; they have important cultural significance, too.

In India, the freedom of a kite gliding on the wind, rising higher and higher, has long been equated with independence. In the 1920s, Britain sent the Simon Commission to India to propose constitutional reforms for the country. The commission was composed entirely of British men, with no Indians included. One of the most important and visible forms of protest against the commission was the flying of kites bearing the slogan “Go Home Simon.” Ever since, kites have been an expression of Indian patriotism.

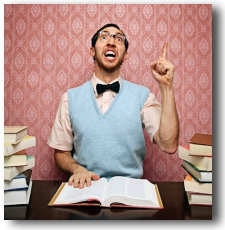
But not all kite flying is so serious. Kite fighting has long been a popular sport in India. Kite strings are covered in glue and ground glass and the goal is to cut the string of an opponent’s kite. During the festival, millions of kites are sold for pennies apiece, allowing everyone to participate in this age-old pastime.

Hopping into the New Year

The Chinese New Year on January 22 rings in the Year of the Rabbit. When the Jade Emperor invited the animals to his palace to determine the order of the zodiac, Rabbit proudly, perhaps arrogantly, believed that his speed would certainly make him first. Rabbit set off and did arrive first, but thinking that he had plenty of time, he took a nap. When Rabbit awoke, he found that three other animals had beaten him: Rat, Ox, and Tiger. The arrival of Ox irked him most of all because Rabbit had always considered himself faster and superior to the slow, plodding Ox.

At first glance, those born during the Year of the Rabbit may appear weak or soft, but this belies their natural strength and confidence. Rabbits are social with a natural charisma that attracts others. Smart, reasonable, and always paying attention to detail, Rabbits make excellent scholars. While Rabbits may appear careful and conservative in their actions, they need surprises in their life to prevent things from becoming too routine. Rabbits enjoy a peaceful life taking care of others.

Logophiles Rejoice!



January 9 is a holiday for all the logophiles out there. A logophile is a lover of words, and January 9 is Word Nerd Day. Writers, those accomplished weavers of words, advise time and again to seek out simplicity. Mark Twain: “Don’t use a five-dollar word when a fifty-cent word will do.” Ernest Hemingway: “There are older and simpler and better words, and those are the ones I use.” Stephen King: “Any word you have to hunt for in the thesaurus is the wrong word.” But what do these writers know? Today is the day to ignore their advice and embrace the weird and wonderful words that make language so vibrant! Anneal your vocabulary by engaging in elocutionary gymnastics!

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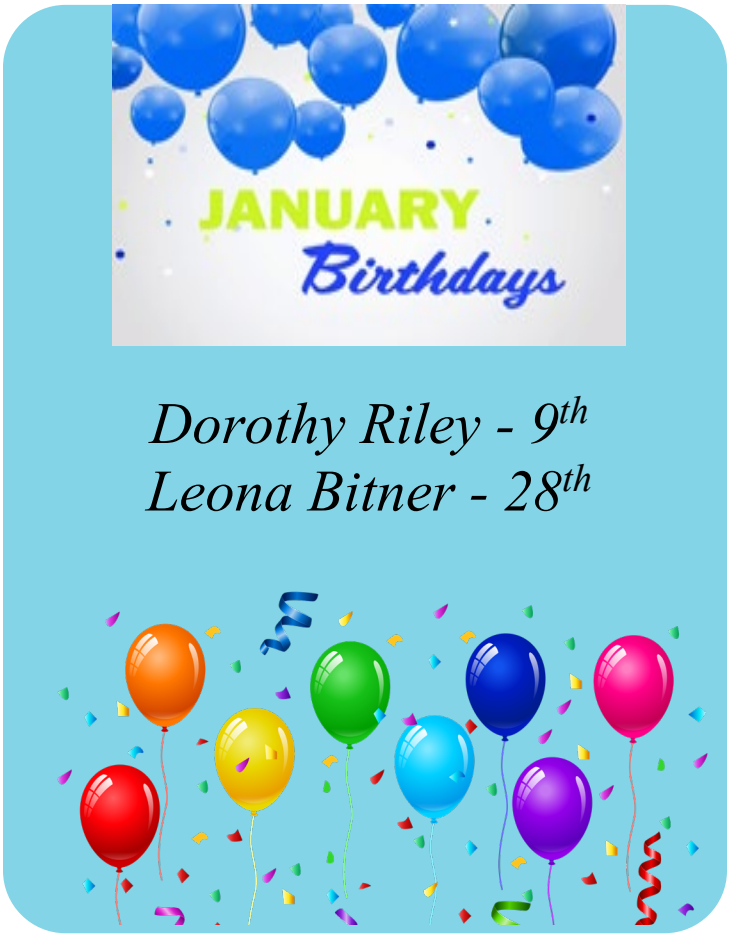
Postage Information

Bearable Traditions

The first Monday after Twelfth Night, marking the end of the 12 days of Christmas, is Plough Monday, a day when ploughmen traditionally blackened their faces with soot to disguise themselves and carried a decorated plough door-to-door looking for alms, shouting “Penny for the ploughboys!” Work was generally scarce in the winter, and the handouts helped the farmers survive. The Tuesday after Plough Monday brought the Straw Bear Festival, when one of the ploughboys was dressed head to toe in straw to look like a bear. The bear was led through town on a chain and made to dance for gifts of money, beer, or food. It seems the ploughmen wanted to stretch their revels into a two-day affair. The straw bear may come from old harvest festivals, where “Old Man Winter” was driven away to prepare for the planting season.