April 2022

Golden Age Newsletter

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

Our thoughts and prayers go out to the family and friends of :
Donna Atwell
Avis Peel

Mary Bostwick 11th
Claude Johnson 12th
Betty McDonald 15th
Mary Alexander 18th

Celebrating April

April Fools' Day – *April 1*

Scrabble Day - *April 13*

Passover - *April 15–23*

Easter - *April 17*

Earth Day - *April 22*

Arbor Day - *April 29*

Season Fit for a King

April in the Netherlands brings a joyous spring sight. It's tulip season! And there may be no better place to watch these beautiful flowers bloom than Keukenhof Garden just outside of Amsterdam. Garden beds are blanketed with tens of thousands of tulips in a staggering variety of vibrant colors. Keukenhof is not the only place to find tulips. There are hundreds of vast tulip fields throughout the Netherlands, which is why the nation is known as the "Tulip Capital of the World," despite the fact that tulips are not native to the Netherlands at all.

Tulips are believed to have originated in the high mountain plateaus of Central Asia. Gardeners throughout the Ottoman Empire cultivated the flowers, which were originally known not for their wonderful colors but their heady perfumes. Historians suspect that an ambassador to the court of Suleiman the Magnificent first brought tulips back to Europe in the late 16th century. The exotic flowers became such a coveted luxury item that by 1637, tulip bulbs were being sold for 10 times the annual income of a skilled worker. This hysteria is remembered as Tulip Mania, and both the economic collapse that followed and the mass hysteria the tulips craze induced are still taught in economics and psychology courses today.

For those keen to avoid tulips altogether (and any mania it might induce), there is Koningsdag, or King's Day, on April 27. This national holiday celebrates the birthday of King Willem-Alexander of the royal House of Orange. The holiday's date changes according to the birthday of the reigning monarch. Of course, it is traditional to wear orange clothes and even orange wigs on this day of national pride, and streets are flooded with the bright color. It has been decreed that no one needs a permit to sell their wares on the street on this day, so flea markets abound along avenues and in parks. Parties are common, with pastries slathered with orange icing and toasts made with glasses filled with Orange bitter, a local liqueur. And, you guessed it, there is no better gift to give than a bouquet of orange tulips.

Party Time

April 3 is World Party Day, which provides humankind with an opportunity to coordinate our efforts to throw a worldwide simultaneous celebration. The idea of a global celebration originated in the book *Flight*, by Vanna Bonta, which ends with the entire world counting down to a worldwide party on April 3, 2000. Readers were so inspired by her vision that they could not wait until the year 2000. Instead, they organized the first World Party Day on April 3, 1996.

What is it about humans and their need to throw a good party? Anthropologist and evolutionary psychologist Robin Dunbar believes that partying is a primal human instinct that we have been compelled to satisfy for millennia. What sets the human species apart from other animals is its massive brain volume. Evolutionarily speaking, our large brains demand lots of attention. Brains require a massive amount of energy, and so we need to fuel them with food. Once they are fueled, our brains allow us to manage incredible social complexities and build massive social communities. Mr. Dunbar argues that as group size increases, it becomes harder and harder to establish and maintain social cohesion and relationships. Partying is our species' unique solution to this problem.

Social practices associated with parties—eating, laughter, singing, and dancing—stimulate the release of endorphins in our brains, reinforcing good feelings and promoting community. Dunbar even goes as far as suggesting that music and dancing in particular are still more likely to take place in the evening, corresponding to another instinctual drive to gather, sing, and dance around fires.

As a species primed and ready to party, World Party Day on April 3 seems like a no-brainer. With a variety of social media applications ready to spread communication across the globe in mere seconds, all it takes is the click of a button to send out an invite to the world.

Supersized Circus Act

April 9 is Jumbo Day, commemorating the arrival of Jumbo the Elephant in the United States in 1882. Jumbo the Elephant had thrilled audiences for years in London's Zoo. When circus promoters P.T. Barnum and James Bailey saw the elephant act, they knew that Jumbo would make their circus an even greater show on Earth. Jumbo's arrival by boat in New York City on April 9 drew massive crowds. The *New York Times* even put Jumbo on the front page.

Barnum and Bailey's gamble paid off. Buying and transporting Jumbo had cost $30,000 ($800,000 in today's dollars). With Jumbo now headlining their circus, they more than recouped that cost in the first two weeks of ticket sales. Jumbo became a national phenomenon, and his popularity spawned a new word. The word *jumbo* came to mean something "extremely large in size." Today, we commonly use it when we say *jumbo jet*, *jumbotron*, or anything else super-sized.

Flying Fish

The Flora-Bama Lounge is found on a sandy stretch of beach straddling Orange Beach, Alabama, and Perdido Key, Florida. At the end of April each year since 1986, thousands have flocked to the state line for the world-renowned Interstate Mullet Toss. No, these athletes aren't chucking bad '80s haircuts (although plenty of attendees arrive sporting mullets or wearing mullet wigs). These *mullets* are common tropical fish found in the Gulf Coast waters. Inconceivably, the fish toss spans three whole days, from Friday to Sunday on April 22 to 24, for six hours each day, for throwers of all ages. The beach party is all for a good cause, and each year the Mullet Toss raises $20,000 for local charities. A record-shattering toss of 189 feet, eight inches was set in 2018.

Exodus from Egypt

One of the most sacred holidays of the Jewish calendar, Passover, or *Pesach* in Hebrew, begins on April 15. It commemorates the Israelites' exodus from slavery in Egypt.

The story of Passover begins with Joseph, one of the sons of Jacob. Facing famine in Canaan, Joseph brought his people to Egypt. The Egyptian pharaoh, however, forced them into slavery and ordered all firstborn sons drowned in the Nile River. One such son, Moses, was sent downriver in a basket and was found by the pharaoh's daughter. He was adopted and raised by the Egyptian royal family. Upon discovering his true identity, Moses killed an Egyptian slave master in retribution for the brutal treatment of the Israelites. He escaped into the desert and lived in hiding for 40 years until one day God, in the form of a burning bush, told him to return to Egypt and free his people.

Time and time again, Moses pled with the pharaoh to free the Israelites. Each time the pharaoh refused, God unleashed a plague upon the Egyptians: flies, locusts, frogs, boils, pestilence, lice, turning water to blood, hail, and darkness. The final plague was the slaying of every firstborn son by an angel of death. The Israelites marked their doorframes to indicate that death should "pass over" that home. When the Egyptians awoke to find their sons dead, they beseeched the pharaoh to let Moses lead the Israelites out of Egypt. After initially agreeing to the plea, the pharaoh reneged on his promise and sent his armies after Moses. Miraculously, God parted the Red Sea, allowing safe passage to the Israelites and drowning the pharaoh's men. After 40 years, the Israelites at last reached the promised land of Canaan.

The Passover seder is the ritual meal that commemorates the Exodus. The book of Exodus commands Jews to retell the story: "You shall tell your child on that day, saying, 'It is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.'" And so it has been done on Passover for centuries.

The Ballad of Casey Jones

The name Casey Jones echoes in the American imagination alongside the names of Johnny Appleseed and John Henry. In 1891, Jones achieved his lifelong goal of becoming an expert locomotive engineer. He was known to be so punctual with his arrival times that you could set your watch by him. Jones was also an expert with the train whistle. His signature calls let everyone within hearing distance know that it was Casey Jones riding by. He was even known as a hero, once saving a girl stuck on the tracks from an oncoming train. But Jones is most famous for his fatal run on April 30, 1900.

Casey took the controls of a train already 75 minutes behind schedule. Ideal weather and rail conditions, as well as a top-notch crew, pushed Jones to make a record-setting pace from Memphis, Tennessee, to Canton, Mississippi. Records show that Jones was on track to erase the 75-minute deficit, but in Vaughn, Mississippi, a massive freight train had stopped with cars on the main track. When Casey came bearing down on the cars, he let loose the whistle, shouted to his fireman to leap to safety, and slammed the brakes. It was too late. The collision demolished the freight cars and Jones, but his actions saved everyone else on board. Casey Jones has been remembered as a hero ever since.

Cracking the Market

Indulge in some childhood nostalgia on April 18 by dipping into a box of animal crackers, for it's Animal Crackers Day! The first animal crackers were produced in England, but they were so popular that American bakers at Stauffer's Biscuit Company took notice and began to make their own in 1871. But in 1902, using marketing savvy that P.T. Barnum would be proud of, the National Biscuit Company, Nabisco, sold its crackers in a box designed to look like a circus train car. The Christmas-issue boxes even came with a thin string so they could be hung on a Christmas tree.

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Postage Information

Nepali New Year

Nepal's festival of Bisket Jatra coincides with the solar new year on April 14 and dates back to the Licchavi kingdom, which dominated the Kathmandu Valley from 400–750 AD. This ancient holiday begins with the symbolic slaying of the snakes. An old legend recounts how a cursed princess repeatedly killed her bridegrooms when she inadvertently summoned vicious snakes to their marriage bed. One groom, summoning divine power, killed the snakes, freeing the princess from her curse. The festival culminates with the pulling of two massive chariots, known as *raths*, which haul two gods, Bhairav and Bhadrakali, god and goddess of creation and destruction. Residents from the city's upper and lower quarters of the city engage in a tug-of-war with the chariots, and the winners bring the raths to their quarter. As in many new years' celebrations, the festivities represent a renewal of life.

April Birthdays

In astrology, those born April 1–21 are Aries' Rams. As the first sign of the zodiac, Rams love to lead the charge of change and progress. These Rams burn bright and enjoy leadership roles and daring artistic pursuits. Those born April 22–30 are Bulls of Taurus. Like bulls in a pasture, Taureans enjoy relaxing in serene environments. They also work hard and expect a reward for their efforts.

Eddie Murphy (comedian) – April 3, 1961
Maya Angelou (poet) – April 4, 1928
Spencer Tracy (actor) – April 5, 1900
Dennis Quaid (actor) – April 9, 1954
Beverly Cleary (author) – April 12, 1916
Al Green (singer) – April 13, 1946
Kareen Abdul-Jabbar (athlete) – April 16, 1947
Eliot Ness (lawman) – April 19, 1903
Glen Campbell (singer) – April 22, 1936
Shirley Temple (actor) – April 23, 1928
Ella Fitzgerald (singer) – April 25, 1917
Duke Ellington (composer) – April 29, 1899