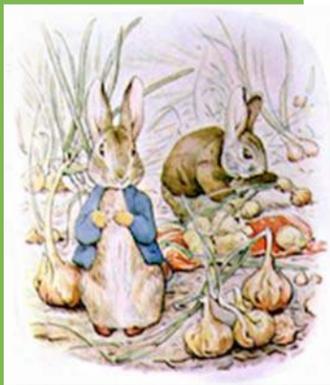




### Notable Quotable

“Bigger than life is not difficult for me. I am bigger than life.”

~ Rita Moreno, actress



## December Horoscopes and Birthdays

In astrology, those born between December 1–21 are the Archers of Sagittarius. The Archer's open mind, optimism, curiosity, and enthusiasm make them the travelers of the zodiac. Above all, they treasure freedom. Those born between December 22–31 are Capricorn's Goats. Goats are responsible masters of self-control. They are practical planners and leaders who value experience and expertise.

Richard Pryor – Dec. 1, 1940  
 Andy Williams – Dec. 3, 1927  
 Walt Disney – Dec. 5, 1901  
 Kirk Douglas – Dec. 9, 1916  
 Ada Lovelace – Dec. 10, 1815  
 Rita Moreno – Dec. 11, 1931  
 Christopher Plummer – Dec. 13, 1927  
 Tim Conway – Dec. 15, 1933  
 Brad Pitt – Dec. 18, 1963  
 Jane Fonda – Dec. 21, 1937  
 Humphrey Bogart – Dec. 25, 1899  
 Susan Butcher – Dec. 26, 1954  
 LeBron James – Dec. 30, 1984

### A Tough Nut to Crack *continued from pg. 1*

concert of the musical suite was played in St. Petersburg. Every number was given an encore. Tchaikovsky knew the music was good, but he worried about the performance.

Tchaikovsky was right to worry. Critics did not like *The Nutcracker* when it premiered at the Mariinsky Theater in St. Petersburg, Russia, on December 18, 1892. One particularly harsh review read, “*The Nutcracker* cannot in any event be

called a ballet.” For decades, only the first half of the ballet, featuring the battle between the soldiers and the rat king, was performed. But in 1944, the San Francisco Ballet, led by William Christensen, staged the entire ballet, and it became an instant holiday hit. By the 1960s, dance companies all across America were performing *The Nutcracker* as an annual December tradition and nutcrackers were synonymous with the holiday season.

### The Tale of Beatrix Potter

On December 16, 1901, 35-year-old Beatrix Potter was so fed up with receiving rejection letters that she decided to publish her book *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* on her own. The book had begun as a letter to the sick son of Potter's former governess. Potter had written and illustrated a letter in 1893 detailing the silly adventures of a family of rabbits, Flopsy, Mopsy, Cottontail, Peter, and their mother. The rabbits of the story were modeled after Potter's own pet rabbits, Peter Piper and Benjamin Bouncer. Potter later asked for the letter back,

so that she could turn it into a children's book.

Potter first printed 250 black-and-white copies of her book. In 1902, it was picked up by the publisher Frederick Warne & Co. and reprinted in color. The book was such a success that it had to be reprinted six times in its first year, selling 20,000 copies. Ever the self-starter, when Potter and Warne disagreed over her next book, *The Tailor of Gloucester*, she again published 500 copies on her own.

# Auburn Hill Digest

December 2020



Auburn Hill Senior Living  
 5800 Harbour Lane  
 Midlothian, VA

### Celebrating December

#### Universal Human Rights Month

#### Bingo's Birthday Month

#### Cookie Cutter Week

*December 1–7*

#### Hanukkah

*December 10–18*

#### Gingerbread House Day

*December 12*

#### Christmas Bird Count

*December 14–January 5*

#### Christmas

*December 25*

#### Kwanzaa

*December 26–January 1*

#### New Year's Eve

*December 31*

## A Tough Nut to Crack

December brings many beloved holiday traditions, but one soars above the rest. No, not flying reindeer, but the dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy. Tchaikovsky's classic ballet *The Nutcracker* has become a holiday staple all around the world.

It was not Tchaikovsky's idea to write *The Nutcracker*. After enjoying success with his ballet *The Sleeping Beauty* in 1890, Tchaikovsky was asked to compose a ballet for the Imperial Theatre. Tchaikovsky turned to his friend and collaborator Marius Pepita, who suggested they write a ballet based on the fairy tale *The Story of a Nutcracker*, by the French writer Alexandre Dumas.

Dumas himself had “borrowed” the story from the German writer E.T.A. Hoffman, who wrote *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King* in 1816. In the 1800s, nutcrackers were common decorations in German households, revered as symbols of good luck. While composing in France, Tchaikovsky discovered a new instrument, the *celesta*. He decided to feature its wonderful sound in his new ballet. Before the ballet premiered, a short

*continued on pg. 4*



## Peak Performance

December 11 is International Mountain Day, a day to show appreciation and respect for the world's high places. It is also a day to honor those with the courage to explore the mountains.

On December 3, 1910, Australian mountaineer Freda du Faur became the first woman to reach the summit of Mount Cook in New Zealand. As a young girl growing up in Sydney, Australia, Du Faur

taught herself rock climbing at a nearby national park. Summer vacations to New Zealand inspired her to summit the island's snow-capped peaks. Du Faur's dedication to physical fitness and rock-climbing would become standards for mountaineers of any gender. Du Faur made many first ascents in New Zealand's rugged ranges, for which she would become famous amongst mountaineers.

## Strange Christmas Traditions



*With so few Christmas traditions in Japan, KFC grew to become one of Japan's biggest holiday pastimes.*

Christmas brings with it many beloved traditions: trimming the tree, hanging stockings, and singing carols. Many countries around the world enjoy traditions you may be less familiar with.

In Japan, an estimated 3.6 million families eat Kentucky Fried Chicken during the Christmas season. This is largely thanks to Takeshi Okawara, who managed the first KFC franchises in Japan. In 1970, Okawara marketed the Christmas "party barrel," a complete fried chicken dinner replicating American turkey dinners. These days, if you do not pre-order your KFC dinner weeks in advance, you will have to stand in line for hours to get your "Kentucky Christmas."

If you happen to be in Norway for Christmas, you'll be hard-pressed to find a broom, for they are all hidden away.

Norwegian folklore tells of how evil spirits and witches emerge on Christmas Eve. Norwegians hide their brooms so that witches cannot steal them for riding through the night.

In Caracas, Venezuela, Christmas morning brings presents and roller skates. Authorities close down the city streets on Christmas morning so that thousands of residents can roller-skate to church in safety. One tradition tells of how children go to sleep with one end of a skate lace tied around their toe and the other end dangling out the window. In the morning they are awakened by skaters tugging at the lace to alert them that it is time to attend mass.

These traditions may seem strange to you, but does your family have any Christmas traditions that others may find nontraditional?

## Sitting Down for Equal Rights



*Three other women joined Parks in the Supreme Court battle against bus segregation.*

On December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks was commuting home after working a long day at a Montgomery, Alabama, department store. Segregation was written into law and Blacks were required to sit in the back of the bus, with seats in the front reserved for white riders. When a white man entered the bus and found no open seats, the bus driver asked four Black riders seated in the first row of the "colored" section to stand. Three complied, but Parks did

not. This was not because she was tired from working all day. In her own words, she "was tired of giving in."

Word of Parks' arrest reached civil rights activist E.D. Nixon. Nixon quickly organized a boycott of the Montgomery buses and enlisted the support of Martin Luther King Jr. Nearly a year later, the Supreme Court ruled Montgomery's bus segregation unconstitutional and Parks became an icon of justice.

## A Pearl of Wisdom



*Pearls are the only gemstone to come from a living creature.*

December 15 is Wear Your Pearls Day, a day to wear the pearl jewelry that's been hiding out in your jewelry box. It is also a day to appreciate nature's ingenious design. A pearl is created when an irritant, often a parasite (not a grain of sand as commonly thought), invades an oyster, mussel, or clam. To defend itself against the foreign invader, the oyster secretes a

fluid called *nacre* that envelops the irritant. Layer upon layer of nacre coats the irritant until a pearl is formed. Nacre is more commonly known as mother-of-pearl. It is incredibly strong and beautifully iridescent. For this reason, Wear Your Pearls day is also a day to recognize the hidden beauty and strength that so often comes with life's small and irritating imperfections.

## Are You Game?

Games Day was created in 1975 when an annual gaming convention scheduled for August was canceled. Games Workshop, a British-based manufacturer of miniature tabletop wargames, decided to sponsor their own Games Day to fill the void. On December 20, 1975, the first Games Day was held in Seymour Hall, London, as an opportunity for game enthusiasts to meet each other and play. Today, the UK Games Expo is an annual event held in Birmingham, but for many, Games Day remains a perfect time to play their favorite games, be they board games, card games, video games, or strategy games.

Health experts have repeatedly demonstrated that habits matter when it comes to brain health. Adding a game night to your lifestyle is a fun way to increase mental stimulation and improve mental acuity. There are many computer games or puzzle websites that promote mental acuity, but many of these are

designed to be played alone. Tabletop games not only challenge your mind but they promote social bonds as well. December 20 falls so close to the holidays that perhaps visiting family members can be convinced to play. Not only is a new game a great holiday gift but games provide a wonderful and creative way to pass the time with relatives.

Game aficionados have seen a tabletop gaming renaissance during the past few years. While traditional board games like Monopoly, Clue, and Scrabble are fun, designers have been busy developing new card, tabletop, dice, and role-playing games for players of all ages. There are even game-design conferences where inventors showcase their games while attendees get to play them and offer feedback. What new games are out there? Log on to websites like [boardgamegeek.com](http://boardgamegeek.com) or [boardgamequest.com](http://boardgamequest.com) to peruse the newest offerings.



*The German Spiel des Jahres award is the highest honor in the board game industry.*