



Notable Quotable

“[Venice] is the city of mirrors, the city of mirages, at once solid and liquid, at once air and stone.”

~ Erica Jong, novelist



February Horoscopes and Birthdays

In astrology, those born between February 1–18 are the Water Bearers of Aquarius. These deep-thinking intellectuals have big and original dreams. Aquarians seek freedom to reach their greatest potential. Those born between February 19–28 are Pisces’ Fish. Pisces are friendly, wise, and selfless, making them generous and compassionate friends. Their intuitive and romantic natures make Fish creative artists.

- Clark Gable – Feb. 1, 1901
- Rosa Parks – Feb. 4, 1913
- Hank Aaron – Feb. 5, 1934
- Laura Ingalls Wilder – Feb. 7, 1867
- Thomas Edison – Feb. 11, 1846
- L.L. Bean – Feb. 13, 1873
- Frederick Douglass – Feb. 14, 1818
- Smokey Robinson – Feb. 19, 1940
- Nina Simone – Feb. 21, 1933
- Julius Erving – Feb. 22, 1950
- Zeppo Marx – Feb. 25, 1901
- Jackie Gleason – Feb. 26, 1916
- Elizabeth Taylor – Feb. 27, 1932

Venice Unmasked *cont. from pg. 1*

It was also during this era that Venetian mask-makers were elevated to a special standing in Venetian society, enjoying preferential laws and their own artistic guild.

By the 18th century, masks were a way of life for Venetians, and laws permitted mask-wearing for six months of the year. Some historians believe that masks were a response to Venice’s strict class hierarchy. Ordinary people

and aristocrats alike wore masks to hide their true identities. So disguised, people could anonymously engage in Venice’s many popular but ill-reputed pastimes such as gambling. Is it any wonder that Venetian mask-makers held such power in society? In 1979, Venetian artisans revived the tradition of mask-making. Since then, masks and costumes have become lavish works of art, symbols of Venice’s enduring Carnival.

A Monstrous Tradition

February 12 rings in the Chinese New Year, the Year of the Ox. A visitor to China will find homes decorated in red. Come midnight, loud fireworks will boom and crackle. These time-honored traditions spring from the myth of the monster Nian, half-dragon, half-kyrin, a hooved and one-horned beast. Nian lived at the bottom of the sea but would rise from the depths each New Year’s Eve to ravage the villages. So, each New Year’s, the villagers would flee to the mountains. One year, a beggar arrived to find the village

deserted. Only an old woman remained, and in return for shelter, the beggar promised to scare Nian away. The beggar decorated the woman’s house with red. When terrible Nian arrived at midnight, it roared in anger when it saw the red door. The beggar lit firecrackers to terrorize Nian. Dressed all in red, he laughed in Nian’s terrible face, and the monster fled. To this day, every New Year’s Eve, the Chinese still drape their homes with red and light firecrackers at midnight to ward off evil.

Auburn Hill Digest

February 2021

Celebrating February

Black History Month

Bird Feeding Month

Mend a Broken Heart Month

Women’s Heart Week

February 1–7

Groundhog Day

February 2

Canadian Maple Syrup Day

February 6

Chinese New Year:

Year of the Ox

February 12

Valentine’s Day

February 14

Mardi Gras

February 16

International Toast Day

February 25

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Venice Unmasked

Venice is often called Italy’s “City of Love,” and for good reason. Is there anything more romantic than a gondola ride through the city’s famous canals, with a gondolier serenading you with Italian love songs? It is no coincidence that history’s most notorious lover, Casanova, called Venice home. Casanova was born in an era when Venice was a European Las Vegas, famous for its annual *Carnival*, the Venetian version of Mardi Gras that has been celebrated since the year 1162. This year’s Carnival, running from January 30 through February 16, is made all the more special because it coincides with Valentine’s Day.

Venice’s Carnival began in 1162 with the military victory of the Venetian Republic over Ulrico di Treven, a powerful ally of the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I, who attempted to strip Venice of its independence. After Ulrico di Treven’s defeat, Venetians gathered in San Marco Square for dancing and rejoicing. This informal celebration continued for centuries until it was made an official holiday during the Renaissance.

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Sleep on It

If you’re feeling sleepy on February 28, feel free to nod off wherever you’re sitting or standing, for it is Public Sleeping Day. For some, sleeping in public is taboo behavior and an embarrassing social faux pas. But in some places, such as Japan, napping in public on a bench, on the subway, at the mall, or even in the office is considered a sign of hard work and diligence. The perception is that a person is

working so hard that they are exhausted and cannot help themselves from falling asleep on the spot. The Japanese even have a term for it: *inemuri*. While some translate it as “sleeping on the job,” a more faithful translation is “being present while asleep.” Curling up for an intentional nap is frowned upon, but falling asleep unintentionally while trying your hardest to “be present” is quite acceptable.

An Olympic “Miracle”



U.S. Coach Herb Brooks was cut from the 1960 Olympic hockey team.

On February 22, 1980, no one expected an American hockey team made up of collegiate players to defeat Russia’s Olympic hockey powerhouse. The Soviets hadn’t lost an Olympic match since 1968 and had won four straight gold medals. Even with a sold-out crowd and home-ice advantage, hopes of an American Olympic victory were slim. It would take a miracle.

The American team was the youngest in U.S. Olympic history, with an average age of 21 years. Coach Herb Brooks drafted his team from two powerhouse college hockey teams, the University of Minnesota and Boston University, bitter rivals. But Brooks was looking for more than just talent on the ice. He also subjected potential players to a 300-question psychological test that examined their performance under extreme

Striking Gold

On February 10, 1942, Glenn Miller and His Orchestra received a unique trophy from his record label, RCA Victor. As congratulations for selling 1.2 million copies of the song “Chattanooga Choo Choo,” a feat no other artist had yet to achieve, Miller was gifted the first gold record. The record wasn’t solid gold, but rather a vinyl record sprayed with gold, but soon other record labels began to follow suit, taking it upon themselves to award their



In addition to gold, the RIAA also awards platinum, multi-platinum, and diamond records.

stress. Not only were the Americans playing against legendary Russian players like Vladislav Tretiak, Valeri Kharlamov, and Viacheslav Fetisov, but they had to play under the cloud of a decades-long Cold War between the U.S. and the Soviets. Matters of both sport and politics made the two nations adversaries.

If fans expected a blowout, they were pleasantly disappointed. The game was a relentless back-and-forth battle for the lead. Russia’s superior talent was on full display, but the young and scrappy Americans took a 4–3 lead with 10 minutes left to play and were able to hold off for a win. It was as much a political victory as a sporting one. Two days later, the U.S. would take the gold against Finland, but history would forever remember the Americans’ “Miracle on Ice” against Russia.

musicians with gold records. Today the issuance of gold records is left to the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA). The RIAA awarded Perry Como the first official Gold Record for “Catch a Falling Star” in 1958 after it sold 500,000 copies. A visit to Chattanooga’s former rail station, which has been transformed into a landmark hotel where train cars serve as rooms, reminds visitors of Glenn Miller’s extraordinary honor all those years ago.

A Crackerjack Idea



Crackerjack is a slang term meaning “exceptionally good.”

In 1896, Fritz and Louis Rueckheim created a formula that prevented the popular snack mix of sugar-coated popcorn and peanuts from sticking together. One customer found it so wonderful that he exclaimed, “That’s a crackerjack!” The *Cracker Jack* name was born. It wasn’t until February 19, 1913, that Cracker Jack placed the first of their

famous prizes inside a box. These were small prizes such as metal tops, tiny joke books, paper dolls, and even miniature furniture. When Cracker Jack began offering prizes in a set or series, sales soared; people wanted to collect entire sets. Perhaps the most famous prizes of all were the baseball cards of 1914. Today, a complete set is worth thousands.

Making Black History

In 1915, historian and journalist Dr. Carter G. Woodson founded the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH). He was just the second African American after W. E. B. Du Bois to obtain a Ph.D. from Harvard University and one of the first scholars to study the African diaspora. As a member of the American Historical Association (AHA), Woodson realized that the AHA had no interest in the history of African Americans. He set out on his own to create an institution where African American scholars could study black history without misrepresentation. The ASALH was the result of those efforts.



Dr. Carter G. Woodson is often called the “Father of Black History.”

For over a decade, Woodson worked with the most prominent black intellectuals and activists in America to promote his cause: W. E. B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, John E. Bruce, T. Thomas Fortune, and Hubert Henry Harrison. In 1926, Woodson brought more prominence to his movement by

championing “Negro History Week” during the second week of February. He wanted the week to coincide with the birthdays of abolitionist leader Frederick Douglass and President Abraham Lincoln, two key figures of African American history. This event was an opportunity for schools and communities to organize celebrations of African Americans and their contributions to American society by offering free lectures and performances and establishing black history clubs.

During the coming decades, mayors from cities all across America proclaimed the second week of February “Negro History Week.” Then, in 1970, Black students and educators at Kent State University expanded on Woodson’s vision and declared the entire month of February Black History Month. In 1976, President Gerald Ford followed suit, officially recognizing Black History Month nationwide.