

OCTOBER 2017

# Gem News

The Village Assisted Living and Memory Care 1919 Brinker Road Denton, T.X. 76208



## Celebrating October

**Emotional Wellness Month**

**Vegetarian Awareness Month**

**Roller Skating Month**

**Mystery Series Week**

*October 1-7*

**Guardian Angels Day**

*October 2*

**Face Your Fears Day**

*October 10*

**Mulligan Day**

*October 17*

**Chemistry Week**

*October 22-28*

**World Pasta Day**

*October 25*

**All Hallows Eve**

*October 31*

## Go Nuts for Squirrels in October

Squirrels will be busy throughout October burying nuts in the ground in preparation for the long, cold winter. No wonder October is both Squirrel Awareness Month and Nut Month. Nuts such as acorns, hickory, pecans, and black walnuts are the most important part of a squirrel's diet, for they give the squirrel the protein and fatty acids they need to survive. But the truth is that squirrels, like humans, require a balanced diet to stay healthy. They may love nuts, but they also need to eat berries, seeds, young plants, and even insects to get the nutrition they need. Like humans, squirrels also sometimes don't realize that too much of a good thing could make them sick. Many squirrels adore peanuts, but peanuts can harbor a fungus in their shells that is poisonous to squirrels.

These furry critters, often seen scurrying up and down trees in the backyard, are easy to take for granted. Yet the squirrel is a highly adaptable animal; there are 285 different species located all over the world. Tree squirrels, such as North America's eastern gray squirrel, play an important role in forest regeneration. The gray squirrel often eats damaged seeds and nuts first and stores the best seeds to eat later. Burying these seeds gives hardwood trees a greater chance to thrive. With a 17-inch body and a 20-inch tail, the Indian giant flying squirrel is impressive for its size and has the ability to soar up to 300 feet. These squirrels do not really fly but glide on thin membranes of skin that are attached to their front and hind legs like a parachute. Ground squirrels, including marmots, woodchucks, and prairie dogs, have evolved to live outside of forests, instead digging vast underground burrows in mountains and grasslands. These species, unlike their tree-dwelling cousins, are also highly social and communicative. The next time you watch the silly acrobatics of these backyard visitors, take some time to appreciate how squirrels have been able to find success in habitats all over the world.

## A Curious Holiday



If you're intrigued by the great mysteries of the world—from UFOs to the Bermuda Triangle to the strange statues of Easter Island—then you'll love Curious Events Day on October 9, a day to indulge your favorite conspiracy theories. Here are a few doozies:

Stonehenge remains one of the world's most mysterious places, with scientists still baffled as to how and why it was built. The structure, made of 100 stone monoliths arranged in a circular pattern, is not only 5,000 years old but also took over 1,500 years to build. Perhaps the most curious puzzle of all is that many of the monoliths are bluestones, the smallest of which weigh several tons, and are believed to have been quarried 200 miles away. How did these prehistoric humans, with the most primitive of tools, extract and transport these hulking stones? And why? While many have theories as to the purpose of Stonehenge—burial ground, astronomical calendar, ceremonial site, center of magic—there is no evidence as to its purpose.

Under the crystal-clear waters of Bimini Island in the Bahamas lies a strange sight—a half-mile-long structure composed of rectangular limestone blocks resembling a wall or road. Divers who first discovered the site in 1968 immediately believed that it was manmade. Many scientific explorations have yielded varying results. Despite the insistence that the wall is a naturally occurring phenomenon of beachrock typical to the area, some believe that this underwater causeway is evidence of the lost city of Atlantis.

In 1954, a man landed at the Haneda Airport in Japan and presented his passport to immigration officers. The only problem was that his passport was from Taured, a country the man claimed existed on the border of Spain and France. His Taured passport had been stamped from many countries. The man, distraught when told his country did not exist, was taken to a hotel by local police, but he disappeared overnight, along with his official Taured passport and driver's license.

## Departmental Change

The title for the world's first department store likely belongs to Harding, Howell and Co.'s Grand Fashionable Magazine located at 89 Pall Mall in St. James's, London. Opened in 1796, the women's store was divided into four sections: furs and fans, haberdashery (sewing pieces), jewelry and clocks, and hats. Thanks to the Industrial Revolution, a new middle class contributed to the rise of this new form of shopping and eventually to a new holiday, Department Store Day, on October 16.

How times have changed. With the advent of online shopping, it seems department stores may be dying off. People would rather shop on Amazon from the comfort of their kitchen table than travel to Macy's at the mall. But are department stores really dead? If only we could return to the era of glass atriums, brass clocks, grand elevators, and floorwalkers.

## Straight to the Top



For many, the idea of spinning in one place is enough to make them dizzy, but that's the whole purpose behind International Top Spinning Day on October 12. Tops are some of the oldest known toys in the world. Archaeologists discovered clay tops buried in the ruins of the ancient city of Ur in Mesopotamia, dating back to 3500 BC. Why is the motion of a spinning top so engrossing? Is it because it appears to defy gravity? Are we naturally attracted to the way it spins just like Earth rotates on its axis? This gravity-defying spin, known as the *gyroscopic effect*, is an impressive motion that uses inertia, gravity, momentum, and centrifugal force to stay balanced and upright. Of course, every top falls over eventually, thanks to the friction between its spinning point and the surface it is spinning on. But it was Iacopo Simonelli who made his homemade top spin for over 40 minutes with a single twist of the fingers. Humankind has certainly come a long way from spinning acorns and pennies.

## Nightmares and Moonlight



In the spooky spirit of the Halloween season, the last Friday in October is known as Frankenstein Friday, after Mary Shelley's fictional novel about a mad scientist who created a monster. More

interesting than the fiction are the facts surrounding why Shelley set out to write her gothic masterpiece.

In June of 1816, the 18-year-old Shelley was invited to Geneva, Switzerland, along with the poet (and her future husband) Percy Bysshe Shelley, her stepsister Claire Clairmont, the poet Lord Byron, and Lord Byron's doctor (and writer of vampire stories) John Polidori. On a rather cliché dark and stormy night, after reading from a volume of German ghost stories, Lord Byron challenged all the guests present to write their own scary tale. It was out of this challenge that Mary Shelley penned *Frankenstein*.

In a preface to her book written in 1831, Shelley wrote about how she suffered from a lack of ideas. After staying up late philosophically discussing "the nature and principle of life," and how one Dr. Erasmus Darwin had attempted to make dead matter move by administering electrical jolts, Shelley fell asleep only to be hounded by a nightmare: a man attempting to breathe life into a terrifying figure. She awoke with a start to find bright moonlight streaming in through her window. She realized that if the dream had frightened her, then it would frighten audiences. On the next morning she began writing *Frankenstein*. Of all the writers present, only Shelley finished her novel.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* has become world-famous and is lauded as the first science fiction story ever written. It is also a philosophical masterpiece, examining the relationship between creator and created, and forcing us to wonder how much knowledge is too much. And of course, it is important to remember that Frankenstein is the name of the doctor, not the monster that the doctor created.

## All Hail the Kale

October 4 of this year heralds the fourth celebration of Kale Day. Kale, sometimes called "the king of leafy vegetables," is full of health benefits. It is also easy to cultivate, growing from spring all the way into winter, when frosts actually make kale sweeter. But kale has become more than a vegetable; it has achieved cult status, complete with T-shirts, bumper stickers, and celebrity endorsements. When did kale become popular? When public relations guru Oberon Sinclair decided it should, that's when. The savvy PR woman made kale cool when she got the trendiest restaurants and celebrities to endorse the leafy green. She even went so far as to create the fictitious American Kale Association to lend her advertising campaign credibility. But we can forgive Oberon for duping us with such sneaky tactics. Kale, after all, is a healthy vegetable. And she did it not for the money or the fame, but because she loves kale. Oberon's movement gained such a following that Columbia University Professor Dr. Drew Ramsey founded the first Kale Day in 2013, giving us all reason to "kale-abrate."

## Mistaken Invasion



It was on October 30, 1938, a Sunday evening and prime time for listening to the radio, that Orson Welles broadcast H.G. Wells' science fiction story *The War of the Worlds*, a dramatization of a Martian invasion of Earth. No one

anticipated that the story would cause a national panic. The broadcast began with an innocuous weather report and live music, which was interrupted with a news report detailing the sudden invasion of Earth by hideous aliens. When the actors realistically announced that Martians were wiping out major cities, listeners flew into a panic. As many as a million people believed the invasion was real. Welles thought the controversy would ruin his career, but the wild performance earned him a Hollywood contract and superstardom.

## Light and Prosperity



Diwali, India's most important holiday of the year, begins on October 19. The Diwali story differs depending on where in India you live. In the north of India, it celebrates the return of the warrior prince Lord Rama to the ancient city of Ayodhya after he defeated Ravana, the king of the demons, by lighting rows of clay lamps. Southern India celebrates it as the day Lord Krishna, the god of love and compassion, defeated the demon Narakasura. In Western India, Diwali marks the day that Lord Vishnu, one of Hinduism's main gods, the Preserver of all earth from destruction, sent the evil King Bali, who had conquered the heavens, to rule over the underworld. Each of these three stories highlights the most important lesson of Diwali: the victory of good over evil and of light over darkness. This is why Diwali is known as the Festival of Light.

There is another key piece of Diwali. It originally coincided with the last harvest of the year before the onset of winter and darkness. On this day, farms and businesses begged for blessings from Lakshmi, goddess of wealth, for the new financial year. This is why the day after the last day of Diwali is still considered the beginning of the new fiscal year for all businesses in India.

Diwali lasts for five days. Families typically spend the first day cleaning the house and honoring Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, by buying gold, silver, and other luxury items. That night, the ritual lamps are first lit. On the second day, families decorate the floor of their homes with colorful patterns made of sand and powder called *rangoli*. The designs reflect local traditions and beliefs. The third day is the main holiday, Diwali night, and falls on the darkest night of the new moon. Lamps are lit and doors are opened to encourage Lakshmi to enter. Friendships are celebrated, sweets are shared, and fireworks are set off. The fourth day is a celebration of marriage, and the fifth day is a celebration of brothers and sisters, a way of strengthening family ties. At the end of Diwali, the lights may go out, but the darkness is conquered.

## October Birthdays

In astrology, those born from October 1 to 22 balance the scales of Libra. Libra epitomizes fairness and harmony in all dealings large and small. Sincere, beautiful, and romantic, Libra will work hard to keep all relationships on an even keel with boundless grace and charm. Those born between October 23 and 31 are Scorpios. Scorpios are passionate, deep, and intense, qualities that help them counsel others in deep and meaningful ways. Resourceful and determined, Scorpios give their all when it comes to following their hearts.

Julie Andrews (actress) – October 1, 1935  
 Ray Kroc (entrepreneur) – October 5, 1902  
 Jesse Jackson (activist) – October 8, 1941  
 Luciano Pavarotti (singer) – October 12, 1935  
 e. e. cummings (poet) – October 14, 1894  
 Evel Knievel (daredevil) – October 17, 1938  
 Johnny Carson (TV host) – October 23, 1925  
 Pablo Picasso (artist) – October 25, 1881  
 Sylvia Plath (writer) – October 27, 1932  
 Bill Gates (billionaire) – October 28, 1955

## pleading the case



these small letters aren't an editing mistake. october 14 is lowercase day. originally, alphabets were written entirely in uppercase, or capital, letters. when written quickly and in succession, these large letters were confined to the upper and lower lines of the page and easy to read. then writers got fancy, creating letters that flowed over and under the lines. it is from these fancy letters that writers developed the first lowercase letters, which became popular and were adopted by writers throughout europe. the term *lowercase* developed much later from manual typesetting. because lowercase letters were used more often, they were kept in a "lower case" within easy reach of the typesetter. the capital letters were held farther away in an "upper case." has your appreciation of lowercase letters changed as a result of reading this paragraph?