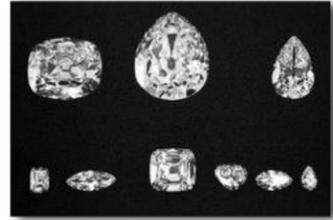


The Cullinan Diamond



On January 26, 1905, Frederick Wells, the surface manager of the Premier Mine in Transvaal, now South Africa, made one of the world's most

stunning discoveries. Just 29 feet below the surface, he found a massive, blue-white diamond, which he cut from the rock with his pocketknife. He immediately took it to his office to be weighed and inspected. At 3,106 carats, it was the largest diamond the world had ever seen. Newspapers called it the "Cullinan diamond," after Sir Thomas Cullinan, owner of the mine. It was such a fantastic discovery that it was put on public display at the Standard Bank in Johannesburg, where visitors could catch a glimpse of the world's largest diamond.

In April of that year, the Cullinan diamond was destined for London. A team of detectives guarded its transport on a steamboat, where it was locked securely inside the captain's safe... or so people thought. This, in fact, was a diversion. The real diamond was shipped to England in an unmarked box via regular post. Upon its safe arrival in England, it went to Buckingham Palace, where it was admired by King Edward VII. The Transvaal government had purchased the diamond and in 1907 presented it as a gift to His Majesty the King, who accepted it and declared that it would become part of the Crown Jewels.

Splitting and cutting the diamond into various workable pieces took eight months, with three people working 14 hours a day. It is said that Dutch diamond cutter Joseph Asscher had a doctor and nurse on hand while he was cleaving the massive diamond. Thank goodness, for he fainted after successfully dividing the gem. The two largest stones remain part of the Crown Jewels, set in the Sovereign's Sceptre with Cross and the Imperial State Crown, respectively. The seven remaining large stones and 95 smaller brilliant gems were set in various pieces of jewelry for the royal family.

January Birthdays

In astrology, those born between January 1–19 are the horned goats of Capricorn. As goats climb to great heights, Capricorns strive to get to the top, using discipline and common sense to find fame, prestige, and wealth. Those born between January 20–31 are the Water Bearers of Aquarius. As the water of life heals the land, so Aquarians are the humanitarians of the zodiac. Free-spirited, nonconformist, compassionate, and visionary, they support giving "power to the people."

- J.R.R. Tolkien (author) – January 3, 1892
- Joan of Arc (heroine) – January 6, 1412
- Zora Neale Hurston (writer) – January 7, 1891
- Elvis Presley (musician) – January 8, 1935
- Rod Stewart (musician) – January 10, 1945
- Martin Luther King Jr. (activist) – Jan. 15, 1929
- Muhammad Ali (boxer) – January 17, 1942
- George Burns (comedian) – January 20, 1896
- Virginia Woolf (writer) – January 25, 1882
- Nolan Ryan (ballplayer) – January 31, 1947



Blanca Valdes	1/1
Nancy Fraim	1/20
Earl Cornwell	1/21



Laughter as Medicine

Laughing affects the muscular, cardiovascular, respiratory, endocrine, immune and nervous systems, reducing stress, quelling anxiety, and improving mood. There is even a preventative value to laughing. According to studies, the mind knows if you are faking a laugh, but the body does not, so even fake laughing is helpful! Find reasons to laugh, especially with others, and experience these health benefits for yourself! May 2020 be the year of laughter!

Casa Chronicle

Casa de Flores Assisted Living

The Texas Oil Boom



Texas is known around the world as a leading producer of oil, but this booming industry did not exist until January 10, 1901, when the black gold was struck at Spindletop in Beaumont. Spindletop Hill was a small hill of earth pushed upward by an underground dome of salt. Self-taught geologist Patillo Higgins suspected that oil might be hidden somewhere under Spindletop. The area was known for its sulfur springs and seeps of gas that could be lit on fire. Higgins convinced engineer Anthony Lucas to finance a drilling operation at Spindletop, but they soon ran out of money. Lucas, unwilling to give up on Spindletop, sought the support of Pennsylvania oilmen to continue his drilling. Higgins, sadly, was excluded from the deal. Too bad, too, because on that fateful January day, after drilling had reached 1,020 feet, Lucas struck oil. Texas had never seen such a geyser. Oil shot 150 feet into the air, making it the most powerful gusher ever struck. The Lucas Geyser, as the Spindletop find came to be known, was shooting off 100,000 barrels of oil a day, more than all the other oil wells in America. It took nine days before the gusher was brought under control.

Beaumont suddenly grew from a sleepy Gulf-Coast backwater into a Texas boomtown. Its population tripled in a mere three months. New oil companies formed and searched for new wells. Refineries sprang up all over the Gulf Coast. In its first year, Spindletop produced 3.5 million barrels of oil. In its second year, it produced 17.4 million. John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil, which had previously held a monopoly in the petroleum industry, was crushed by new Texas-based competitors like Texaco and Gulf Oil.

By 1904, production at Spindletop had declined significantly, dropping to 10,000 barrels per day. This prompted more drilling and more significant finds, but by World War I, oil production at Spindletop had mostly ceased. Texas, however, had changed forever, and the Texas oil boom became the engine that propelled the growth of America. Today, visitors to Beaumont can find the Boomtown Museum and its exhibits chronicling the lasting importance of the Lucas Geyser at Spindletop.

Celebrating January

Get Organized Month

Skating Month

Polka Music Month

First Foot Day

January 1

Bird Day

January 5

Static Electricity Day

January 9

International Kite Day

January 14

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

January 20

Compliment Day

January 24

Inspire Your Heart with Art Day

January 31

Hi-Yo, Silver!



On January 31, 1933, a Detroit radio station hit broadcasting gold when it aired the first episode of a western series called *The Lone Ranger*. It was an instant hit, and 2,956 radio episodes were produced, followed by a series of books and television shows, a half-dozen movies, and countless games and toys. *The Lone Ranger* phenomenon became a cultural touchstone for an American nation hungry to romanticize its Wild West roots.

Perhaps the greatest appeal of the Lone Ranger was in his strict moral code. He may have hidden behind his signature black mask, but he never hid his desire for truth and justice. The Lone Ranger always used perfect grammar and never swore or used slang. He never drank or smoked. Scenes never took place in rough saloons but in restaurants serving food rather than liquor. The Lone Ranger had a pistol, as any western hero should, but he never shot to kill. He instead used his gun to disarm others and bring them to jail. Criminals were never glamorized with wealth or fame, nor did they enjoy positions of power. These decisions were made deliberately by the show's creators, Fran Striker and George W. Trendle. They intended *The Lone Ranger* to be wholesome family entertainment with a hero destined to become an honorable American icon.

The Lone Ranger hit the American public during a particularly fragile time. Many Americans were suffering during the Great Depression and had lost faith in their government and social institutions. The public needed a working-class hero—an ordinary man with extraordinary abilities—who promised to protect those who couldn't help themselves and bring order to a lawless frontier. Such a hero was easily adaptable to any era or medium. As such, *The Lone Ranger* transitioned easily into books, television, and the big screen over the decades. While *The Lone Ranger* has suffered its critics, especially due to its depiction of Native Americans, the Lone Ranger himself has endured as a symbol of justice and truth.

The Last Shall Be First

New Year's Day is also Z Day, a day when those who are always last on alphabetical lists are finally allowed to be first. The holiday was created by Tom Zager, who decided that alphabetical order should be reversed so that all those with "Z" names might finally enjoy the pleasure of being first. This begs a larger question, though: Why is our alphabet in ABC order? To answer these questions, we must go all the way back to the Phoenicians, who inhabited Egypt 4,000 years ago. While Egyptian writing was based on hieroglyphics, the Phoenicians developed a set of symbols to represent the sounds of their language. Their first alphabet evolved from hieroglyphics and consisted of 22 simple symbols, an alphabet that was used by maritime merchants sailing around modern Lebanon, Syria, and Israel. Over the millennia, this alphabet slowly transformed into Greek, Latin, Old English, Middle English, and then Modern English. Despite these transformations, the letter order has largely stayed the same. Some of the earliest Phoenician alphabets begin with *abcdef*.

The Sound of Silence



The first week of January brings Silent Record Week. Why on earth would someone go through the trouble of putting a silent record on the turntable? In 1952, experimental composer John Cage wrote his piece 4'33", which "consisted" of four minutes and 33 seconds of silence. During the silence, any environmental sounds were supposed to be considered music. In 1959, a jukebox at the University of Detroit won fame for including three silent records. Anyone who wanted a bit of silence could buy it for the price of a song. Rumor has it that the silent records were so popular that they developed noisy scratches and had to be repeatedly replaced. Many would argue that silence is valuable. Cage agreed. It was after his study of Zen Buddhism and the religion's emphasis on silence and stillness of the mind that he composed his silent masterpiece.

Brain Games



As we age, we might misplace our keys or forget the names of people we know. These forms of memory loss might lead to worries about cognitive decline and even the onset of diseases such as Alzheimer's and dementia. Enter the industry of brain teasers and brain games, which promise to strengthen our minds and stave off cognitive decline. January is International Brain Teaser Month, but can these brain games actually fulfill the promises of mental acuity they so readily advertise?

Computerized brain-training programs are a \$1.3 billion-a-year industry. Some of the world's best neuroscientists have even designed brain games they tout as the best on the market. If you have bought into the notion that playing daily brain games can help keep your mind sharp, you are by no means alone. Sure, there is abundant evidence to suggest that living in an enriched environment with lots of stimulation can create positive changes in the brain. However, can a computer screen replicate such enriched environments? The general consensus of the scientific community is "no." There is no conclusive evidence that routinely playing brain games will improve cognitive performance in everyday life. Nor does evidence exist that brain teasers will ward off any form of cognitive slowing or brain disease associated with aging.

This does not mean that people should avoid brain teasers, especially if they enjoy them. However, other studies do show how exercise and socialization have positive effects on cognition. So perhaps the best solution is to play your brain games with a friend, rather than sitting alone in front of a computer. Better yet, take that friend and join a juggling club or play bridge, and then enjoy a lunch of brain-friendly foods such as vegetables. It seems that the healthiest modes of living for both the body and the brain are the ones we have been practicing for centuries: eating healthfully, exercising, and spending time with friends and family.

Pedestrian Crossing

During the late 19th century, pedestrianism, or competitive walking, was all the rage. The frenzy for pedestrianism reached a fever pitch on January 13, 1879, when champion British pedestrian Ada Anderson showcased her talents in America for the first time. Anderson had already become England's preeminent pedestrian, thanks to her training by another champion racewalker, William Gale. Anderson was at her physical peak and adept at sleep deprivation by the time she arrived in America. Her manager wanted to showcase his star at Gilmore's Garden (now Madison Square Garden) in New York City but was rebuffed by the venue's owner, who believed Anderson would never be able to complete the feat of walking 2,700 quarter-miles in 2,700 quarter-hours. The event moved to Brooklyn's Mozart Garden. Anderson began her trek on December 16, 1878. Thousands watched her walk for 28 straight days, during which she took just nine-minute sleeping breaks until at last, she completed her walk on January 13th. Because of heavy wagers placed on the event, police protected her during her last laps. After crossing the finish line, she was hailed as the world's greatest pedestrian.

Mummers the Word



Each year on New Year's Day, the Mummers Parade makes its way through Philadelphia. The parade is one of the oldest folk festivals in the United States, with roots dating back to the mid-17th century, when Swedish and Finnish immigrants would go door-to-door visiting neighbors on the day after Christmas. The parade is related to the English and Irish traditions of mummers' plays, folk plays performed in streets and pubs by amateur costumed actors. Today, the parade is a New Year's spectacle full of clowns, string bands, elaborate floats, and fancy costumes. At 11 hours long, the parade may also be the longest held in America.