

## Who's There?



Knock knock. Who's there? October 31st. October 31st who? Did you know that October 31st is Knock-Knock Joke Day? It is no coincidence that this holiday coincides with Halloween. As children rove door-to-door asking "Trick or treat," they can offer knock-knock jokes as compensation for their candy and goodies.

The origin of the knock-knock joke is anything but clear-cut, but clever historians have uncovered bits of American popular culture that present a convoluted history of its creation. Before the knock-knock joke, there was the "Do You Know" joke. Around the year 1900, it was common for joke tellers to ask something like, "Do you know Arthur?" To which the person would reply, "Arthur who?" The jokester would then reveal the punchline: "Arthurmometer!" This groan-worthy punchline, with its silly play on words, foreshadowed the sort of punchlines knock-knock jokes would become famous for. But where did the door-knocking imagery come from?

In 1929, author Henry Bett wrote the book *The Games of Children: Their Origin and History*. In it, Bett describes a common game called "Buff" in which a player would tap with a stick and say "Knock knock," to which another player would respond, "Who's there?" Is it coincidence that by the mid-1930s the joke form and the children's game had been combined? Knock-knock jokes were suddenly everywhere. Businesses held knock-knock joke contests. Bands incorporated knock-knock jokes into their songs. In 1936, the nomination of Col. Frank Knox as the Republican vice-presidential candidate inspired radio stations and newspapers in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, to tell Knox-Knox jokes.

Meanwhile, the *Kerrville Times* newspaper in Texas expressed sheer bafflement over the knock-knock joke phenomenon: "Who started it, where, and what it is called is a mystery." At the end of 1936, psychologist D.A. Laird called the compulsion to tell knock-knock jokes a mania and a sickness.

## October Birthdays

In astrology, those born from October 1–23 balance the scales of Libra. Libras are peaceful and fair, and value balance and symmetry. For this reason, they often champion justice and equality. Those born from October 24–31 are Scorpions of Scorpio. Scorpions are passionate, dedicated, and resourceful. Scorpions may seem intimidating, but they are just no-nonsense people who value honesty and loyalty above all else.

Kathy B. 10/09  
Angie N. 10/16  
Cole F. 10/22  
Brenda J. 10/30

## Turn of the Tide



In Cornwall, in the United Kingdom, October 31 brings the holiday of Allantide. Like Halloween, Allantide is believed to be a day when the barrier between the living and the dead is lifted. For this reason, Allantide is a day when people seek the advice of fortune tellers who can commune with the spirits. Walnuts thrown into fires confirm the fidelity of spouses. Molten lead cast into water hardens into a shape that foretells future employment. Thanks to its proximity to the harvest season, Allantide also boasts several harvest traditions. It is common to visit an Allan Market and buy a bright red Allan apple to gift to children. Girls will sleep with these under their pillows in the hopes of dreaming of their future husbands. Not sleeping with the Allan apple under your pillow

October 2021

# Halstad Living Center & Heritage House

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## Celebrating October

**Country Music Month**

**Stamp Collecting Month**

**Positive Attitude Month**

**International Coffee Day**

*October 1*

**World Space Week**

*October 4–10*

**World Teachers Day**

*October 5*

**Mad Hatter Day**

*October 6*

**Columbus Day**

*October 11*

**Wear Something Gaudy Day**

*October 17*

**Freedom of Speech Week**

*October 18–24*

**World Origami Days**

*October 24–November 11*

**Cranky Coworkers Day**

*October 27*

**All Hallows' Eve or  
Halloween**

*October 31*

## Mission ImPASTable

In 1995, pasta producers from all over the world convened in Rome for the first World Pasta Congress. It was decided that October 25 would be designated World Pasta Day, a day to celebrate the versatility and sheer deliciousness of this global food.

In 2005, archaeologists unearthed 4,000-year-old noodles from a site in China, confirming the belief that the Chinese likely invented the first pastas made of grain and water. These noodles were not like the dried, flour-based pastas we find at grocery stores today, but were made of millet, a grain more like rice than wheat. Does this discovery prove that the Italian merchant Marco Polo brought pasta from China to Italy in 1295? Not quite. While it is very likely that Marco Polo brought Chinese noodles and all kinds of Chinese artifacts back to Italy, pasta was already a common staple in and around the Mediterranean long before Marco Polo's travels east.

Historians think it is far more likely that Italy's famous pastas originated in the Middle East. Written records show that by the fifth century, Arabs were eating *itriyah*, a dough made of flour and water that could be rolled thin, cut into strips, dried, and reconstituted with water. Arab traders traveling the famed Silk Road could easily pack and store this nutritious staple. As the Arabs expanded westward into the Mediterranean, going so far as to conquer Sicily and southern Italy around the year 900, they likely introduced their version of pasta to the region.

In Italy, pasta became both a mass-produced food staple and an art form. Southern Italy's dry, sunny climate was conducive to the growing of hard durum wheat and allowed for the proper drying of long strands of pasta. Tomatoes, another southern Italian staple, would provide the base for many delectable pasta sauces. Innovative pasta makers would devise over 350 unique pasta shapes, each designed to hold and enhance its own sauce. Over centuries of culinary perfectionism, pasta would become a beloved food consumed on every continent of the globe, worthy of its own holiday.





Here we are getting our craft on! We all had a great time creating our fall wreaths for our doors!



## Hats Off

You don't have to be a fan of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* to celebrate Mad Hatter Day on October 6. Carroll attempted to illustrate his book himself but soon turned to famed illustrator John Tenniel for help. It was Tenniel who depicted the Mad Hatter character with a card in his hatband reading, "In this size 10/6." Here, the 10/6 refers not to the date October 6, but the hat's price of 10 shillings and six pence. While the interpretation of the hat card may have been mistaken, the hatter's "madness" is a matter of historical fact.

In the mid-19th century, the process of turning fur into felt involved the use of the chemical mercury nitrate, a poison that caused shakes, speech problems, unpredictable behavior, and hallucinations in many hatters. The idiom "mad as a hatter" developed as a result. Of course, one needn't be mad to celebrate this offbeat holiday. Instead, enjoy Lewis Carroll's classic novel of fantasy and nonsense, and perhaps engage in some nonsensical antics yourself.

## Alien Visitor



On October 19, 2017, astronomer Robert Weryk was using a telescope at Hawaii's

Haleakala Observatory when he noticed something strange, an object perhaps 3,000 feet long and 500 feet wide traveling away from the sun out of our solar system. The object was called *Oumuamua*, a Hawaiian term meaning "scout." Astronomers first called it a comet and then an asteroid but soon realized that it was neither. *Oumuamua* became the first known interstellar object to visit our solar system, an object not bound to any orbit or any particular star. After its discovery, some theorized that it was a nitrogen iceberg or a broken shard of a distant planet. Others went so far as to speculate that it was an alien listening device! But, as Carl Sagan said, "Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence," which we do not yet have.



Bergeson Nursery Trip!



Golf Cart Rides & Cougar Pride!



## Don't Be Scared

Each October, scarecrows begin to appear in and around the village of Pietrebais in Belgium. In some years, hundreds of scarecrows appear. In others, a scant dozen or fewer. No one knows why or how the tradition began 21 years ago in the year 2000, but it is a tradition that has continued ever since.

In the 1500s, it was common for farmers to hire guards to protect their crops from animal pests and thieves. The guards sometimes slept in the fields in straw huts or stood watch on wooden platforms. But as farms grew, farmers could no longer afford to employ vast numbers of guards. They began instead to use human-like watchers. These first scarecrows were erected in the spring, topped with animal skulls or fashioned out of rotting vegetables, or hung on crosses in the image of Christ's crucifixion. They served one purpose: to scare pests like crows away from valuable crops. It seems that these scarecrows have earned a spooky reputation ever since. But in Belgium, there is no need to fear. The scarecrows are often dressed like happy or silly villagers welcoming visitors to Pietrebais.

