

A Riveting History

During World War II, six million women joined the American workforce to support the war effort and fill the roles of men who had shipped off to fight. In honor of these women, March 21 has been designated Rosie the Riveter Day, in homage to the denim-clad everywoman who graced the posters and propaganda of the era.

The story of Rosie the Riveter is multi-faceted. It begins with a song entitled “Rose the Riveter” written by Red Evans and John Jacob Loeb in 1942. In the tune, Rosie is an assembly-line worker. While the character of Rosie is likely based on a real person, the true identity of Rosie is in dispute. There are several candidates: Rosina Bonavita, who worked on Convair aircrafts; Rosalind Walter, who built F4U Corsair fighter planes; Adeline Rose O’Malley, who was a riveter for Boeing; and Rose Will Monroe, who built B-24 bombers. Monroe later gained fame for her role as Rosie the Riveter in a short film promoting the war effort.

The most popular image of Rosie the Riveter during wartime came from Normal Rockwell. On his cover of the *Saturday Evening Post* from May 29, 1943, a buff woman wears blue overalls and goggles with a riveter in her lap. She eats a sandwich and steps on a copy of Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*. The name *Rosie* is inscribed on her lunch pail, linking her with the popular song.



The most famous depiction of Rosie the Riveter was never called Rosie. J. Howard Miller’s illustration of a jumpsuit-clad, polka-dot bandana-wearing, bicep-flexing woman exclaiming “We Can Do It!” was used to improve worker morale at Westinghouse Electric. The poster likely hung on factory walls for a couple of weeks in February of 1943 before being lost to history. It was only rediscovered in 1982. Miller’s illustration has since come to embody Rosie the Riveter as an American cultural icon. Today, Rosie is not a figure of war propaganda but has new life as a symbol of feminine strength.

March Birthdays

- Rose G.** 3/1
- Don H.** 3/2
- Gloria G.** 3/13
- Betty D.** 3/23
- Barbara P.** 3/24
- Gene H.** 3/26
- Preston W.** 3/30

The Great Escape



On March 24, 1944, the British bomber pilot Leslie “Johnny” Bull poked his head out of the ground and took his first breath of freedom after suffering as a prisoner of war in the Nazi-controlled Stalag Luft III camp.

The so-called “Great Escape” had begun, one of the most daring mass breakouts ever attempted during wartime. The camp housed over 10,000 Allied service members. The location of the camp was chosen in part due to its sandy soil, which made any attempts to tunnel out extremely difficult. This did not deter Royal Air Force Squadron Leader Roger Bushell from devising a grand tunneling scheme. He also procured civilian clothes for escapees and forged travel documents and equipment for the 600 digging inmates. On the moonless night of March 24, 76 men tunneled to freedom. Seventy-three were captured, but the dramatic “Great Escape” became the stuff of legend and a Hollywood blockbuster.

Our Lady of Mercy

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Celebrating March

Women’s History Month

International Mirth Month

Dr. Seuss Day
March 2

Purim Begins
March 6

International Women’s Day
March 8

95th Academy Awards
March 12

St. Patrick’s Day
March 17

Mothering Sunday
March 19

Welderly Week
March 20–24

Nowruz Begins
March 21

Ramadan Begins
March 22

**American Crossword
Puzzles Week**
March 31–April 2

Spanish Main

Visitors to Spain take pains to find a restaurant that serves delicious paella. This hearty mix of rice and meat or seafood is Spain’s national dish and, for those who prepare it, a matter of national pride. Taste the dish on March 27, Spanish Paella Day, and you’ll taste centuries of Spanish history.

Paella originated in Valencia, the sunny locale sitting on the Mediterranean coast. Local lore tells of how the dish was a favorite of hungry farmworkers who tossed rice and whatever food they could find into a pan—roots, vegetables, scraps of meat, or even eel from a nearby stream—and cooked it over open fires. During the 19th century, it became fashionable for rich city folk to visit the seaside. These aristocrats brought the dish back to their kitchens where they introduced expensive ingredients like chicken and saffron, a spice that imparts paella with both its alluring golden color and earthy floral flavor.

Saffron is considered an essential ingredient in any paella, and Spain takes pride in the cultivation of this rare and expensive spice. Saffron comes from the crocus flower. Its vivid crimson stigmas sprout from inside the petals like threads. These delicate threads cannot be harvested by machine but must be handpicked, a process that contributes to saffron’s extravagant price.

Saffron is not native to Spain but comes from Asia Minor and was introduced to Spain by Moorish conquerors in the 10th century. If one digs a bit deeper into the history of paella, it appears that this dish has Arab origins, too. Servants of the royal courts of Arabic Spain would take home lavish leftovers and add them to pans of rice. Some believe that the word *paella* derives from the Arabic word *baqiyah*, which means “leftovers.”

So how did this Moorish dish of Valencia become a symbol of Spain? It was dictator Francisco Franco’s favorite dish. He declared it the official dish of Spain as part of his strategy to create a national identity.

A Doll's Debut

Ruth Handler watched her daughter ignore baby dolls in favor of playing with paper dolls of adult women. Handler realized that some young girls did not want to play mother to babies, but rather they wanted to use their imaginations to envision their futures as adults through play. Handler's solution was to introduce a new doll to the market. On March 9, 1959, Barbie made her debut at the American Toy Fair in New York City, and her popularity has endured for nearly 65 years.



Handler based her design, a slim 11-inch-tall woman with wavy blonde hair and a full feminine figure, on a German doll named Lilli. Lilli was first introduced not as a doll for German girls, but as a bold and quick-witted woman in a newspaper comic strip geared toward men. Lilli's popularity grew so much that she became a toy for children.

Handler discovered Lilli on a visit to Germany. She brought the doll home, made a few changes, and named her Barbie after her own daughter Barbara. Handler, founder of the Mattel toy company, utilized a sponsorship deal she had signed with *The Mickey Mouse Club* to advertise the doll on television to children. By 1961, Barbie had grown so popular that Mattel gave her a boyfriend—Ken, named after Handler's son—and a best friend named Midge. In 1964, they gave Barbie a sister named Skipper. Kids across the world wanted the dolls and to dress them in fashionable clothes, hats, shoes, etc. Other popular accessories include Barbie's Dream House and Dream Kitchen.

As popular as Barbie has been, though, she has always generated plenty of controversy. During the 1950s, she was viewed as challenging women's traditional roles. Throughout the 1960s, Barbie was a nurse, astronaut, and executive. Then again, her unrealistic figure (a holdover from the Lilli age) has been criticized as perpetuating negative body images for young girls. Regardless, Barbie has weathered these storms, bringing in one billion dollars for Mattel each year.

The Time Has Come

On March 12, people will turn their clocks one hour forward for the start of daylight saving time (DST). In 1784, Ben Franklin published a satirical essay in Paris suggesting that clocks move forward an hour in spring and fall back again in the fall, but the notion was not taken seriously in America until World War I when the first clock adjustment was made to conserve energy.

Each year, opponents of DST argue that the time change has serious negative impacts on health. Sleep deprivation and "circadian misalignment," the mismatch between our biological rhythms and the natural light cycle, may increase levels of the stress hormone cortisol in our bodies, leading to a slew of health problems like strokes, heart attacks, obesity, diabetes, and seasonal depression. One year ago, the U.S. Senate passed the Sunshine Protection Act, making DST permanent. The House of Representatives has yet to vote on the matter.

Root Cause



Rah, rah, sis, boom, bah! Hooray for Cheerleading Week from March 6–12! The first cheers did not come from organized squads of uniformed college women waving pom-poms. It was at Princeton University in 1884 that the crowd first cheered in unison: "Rah, rah, rah! Tiger, tiger, tiger! Sis, sis, sis! Boom, boom, boom! Aaaaaah! Princeton, Princeton, Princeton!" A Princeton graduate named Thomas Peebles then brought the idea to the University of Minnesota. Peebles became the school's football coach and, during scrimmages, would spontaneously burst into the Princeton cheer. Minnesota student Johnny Campbell then decided to develop a cheer for the Gophers: "Rah, rah, rah! Ski, OO, mah!" During a game on November 2, 1898, Campbell leaped from the stands to lead the crowd in his chant, consequently becoming the first cheerleader.

India's Local Color

The Hindu festival of Holi has been celebrated on the Indian subcontinent since the fourth century. It is celebrated at the end of winter, on the date of the last full moon of the first month of spring, and falls this year on March 8.

The holiday has many names: the Festival of Spring, the Festival of Colors, and the Festival of Love. Like many spring festivals, Holi is a holiday of rebirth and renewal. Historically, Holi was an agricultural festival, a time to give thanks to the fertile land and the crops it brings. For Hindus, it is also a holiday of forgiveness and new starts. People forgive past wrongs, resolve conflicts, and renew relationships. This forgiveness is a way of cleansing oneself of emotional impurities.



One of the defining legends of Holi is that of the deities Radha and Krishna and their divine love. Krishna despaired that the fair-skinned Radha would find his dark skin unattractive. Krishna's mother Yashoda told him to ask Radha to color his face any color she liked. Radha accepted the idea and the two became united in love. One of the most famous rituals of Holi is the throwing of colored water and powder. Many people end the day covered in the colors of the rainbow as a commemorative remembrance of the gods Radha and Krishna and their love for each other.

Still another legend celebrates the triumph of good over evil. King Hiranyakashipu was lord of several powerful demons who made him as powerful as a god. The king's sister Holika demanded that the king's son Prahlada worship him, but Prahlada refused, staying true to the god Vishnu. When Holika attempted to burn Prahlada on a pyre, Vishnu intervened and destroyed Holika and the evil king. This is why, on the eve of Holi, great bonfires are burned to commemorate the defeat of the demoness Holika and the triumph of good over evil. It is from the vanquishing of Holika that the festival of Holi gets its name.

American Hero

March 10 is Harriet Tubman Day, a day to honor the legacy of the famed abolitionist and social activist. Tubman embodies the ideals that shape America: freedom, courage, leadership, and justice.

Born into slavery, Tubman escaped to the North in 1849 and became a "conductor" on the Underground Railroad. With a \$40,000 bounty on her head, Tubman made 13 missions to free 70 enslaved people. Her extensive knowledge of the South made her an invaluable asset to the Union army during the Civil War. She became a spy and scout, often donning disguises to infiltrate cities under Confederate control. She provided vital information about Confederate supply routes and troop movements to Union commanders. Tubman even became a Union militia leader, leading a regiment to attack Confederate mines, storehouses, and crops in South Carolina. It took decades for her to receive recognition for her military service after the war, but she was finally awarded a pension in 1899.

The Power of Parks



After being stuck in the house all winter, stretch your legs on March 30, Take a Walk in the Park Day, by strolling through your favorite local park. Parks are vital public resources. They have been proven time and again to increase property values, improve local economies, and decrease crime. Most importantly, they offer opportunities for people to get outside! They are public spaces for people to gather. Fields, trails, and courts offer opportunities for people to exercise and get healthy. Natural landscapes filled with trees and flowers not only provide valuable habitat for animal life and clear air but they offer tranquil retreats for visitors. Spending time surrounded by nature reduces stress, improves mood, and increases happiness.