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# NEWSLETTER

## April 2007

### April Fools' Day: Origin and History

*April, 1 - The uncertain origins of a foolish day*

by David Johnson and Shmuel Ross

*April Fools' Day*, sometimes called All Fools' Day, is one of the lightest hearted days of the year. Its origins are uncertain. Some see it as a celebration related to the turn of the seasons, while others believe it stems from the adoption of a new calendar. New Year's Day Moves

Ancient cultures, including those as varied as the Romans and the Hindus, celebrated New Year's Day on or around April 1. It closely follows the vernal equinox (March 20th or March 21st.) In medieval times, much of Europe celebrated March 25, the Feast of Annunciation, as the beginning of the new year.

In 1582, Pope Gregory XIII ordered a new calendar (the Gregorian Calendar) to replace the old Julian Calendar. The new calendar called for New Year's Day to be celebrated Jan. 1. That year, France adopted the reformed calendar and shifted New Year's day to Jan. 1. According to a popular explanation, many people either refused to accept the new date, or did not learn about it, and continued to celebrate New Year's Day on April 1. Other people began to make fun of these traditionalists, sending them on "fool's errands" or trying to trick them into believing something false. Eventually, the practice spread throughout Europe.

#### *Problems With This Explanation*

There are at least two difficulties with this explanation. The first is that it doesn't fully account for the spread of April Fools' Day to other European countries. The Gregorian calendar was not adopted by England until 1752, for example, but April Fools' Day was already well established there by that point. The second is that we have no direct historical evidence for this explanation, only conjecture, and that conjecture appears to have been made more recently.

#### *Constantine and Kugel*

Another explanation of the origins of April Fools' Day was provided by Joseph Boskin, a professor of history at Boston University. He explained that the practice began during the reign of Constantine, when a group of court jesters and fools told the Roman emperor that they could do a better job of running the empire. Constantine, amused, allowed a jester named Kugel to be king for one day. Kugel passed an edict calling for absurdity on that day, and the custom became an annual event.

"In a way," explained Prof. Boskin, "it was a very serious day. In those times fools were really wise men. It was the role of jesters to put things in perspective with humor."

This explanation was brought to the public's attention in an Associated Press article printed by many newspapers in 1983. There was only one catch: Boskin made the whole thing up. It took a couple of weeks for the AP to realize that they'd been victims of an April Fools' joke themselves.

#### *Spring Fever*

It is worth noting that many different cultures have had days of foolishness around the start of April, give or take a couple of weeks. The Romans had a festival named Hilaria on March 25, rejoicing in the resurrection of Attis. The Hindu calendar has Holi, and the Jewish calendar has Purim. Perhaps there's something about the time of year, with its turn from winter to spring, that lends itself to lighthearted celebrations.

#### *Observances Around the World*

April Fools' Day is observed throughout the Western world. Practices include sending someone on a "fool's errand," looking for things that don't exist; playing pranks; and trying to get people to believe ridiculous things.

The French call April 1 *Poisson d'Avril*, or "April Fish." French children sometimes tape a picture of a fish on the back of their schoolmates, crying "*Poisson d'Avril*" when the prank is discovered.

For more information visit: <http://www.infoplease.com/spot/aprilfools1.html>



LIVE it

LOVE it



LEARN it

#### **What is Jazz Appreciation Month?**

The concept is simple: designate one month for an annual public spotlight on jazz. Jazz Appreciation Month (or JAM) is intended to draw public attention to the glories of jazz as both an historical and a living treasure. The idea is to encourage musicians, concert halls, schools, colleges, museums, libraries, and public broadcasters to offer special programs on jazz every April.

#### **What are the purposes of Jazz Appreciation Month?**

To draw greater public attention to the extraordinary heritage and history of jazz and its importance as an American cultural heritage. In addition, JAM is intended to stimulate the current jazz scene and encourage people of all ages to participate in jazz—to study the music, attend concerts, listen to jazz on radio and recordings, read books about jazz, and support institutional jazz programs.

#### **Why is it needed?**

Many people do not fully appreciate the joys, power, and glories of jazz. JAM is an effort by those who are passionate about jazz to share it with those who are not as familiar with it. JAM will encourage people to take jazz more seriously as a vital part of America's cultural patrimony and as a great gift to the world, as well as to have fun with it.

#### **What is the Smithsonian doing to celebrate Jazz Appreciation Month?**

The noted producer-musician Quincy Jones helped the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History announce the Jazz Appreciation Month initiative, at a press conference in July 2001. Branford Marsalis helped kick off the first JAM, in April 2002. The Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra, the museum's acclaimed 18-member big band, performed a weekend of concerts. There were lectures, educational offerings, and an exhibition. Also, in honor of Jazz Appreciation Month, the museum will continue to collaborate with other national institutions in a range of educational and outreach activities as it has in the past. To assist teachers, librarians, and others in celebrating JAM, the Museum has published a series of posters and the brochure *How to Celebrate Jazz Appreciation Month*.

#### **Why was April chosen?**

April was chosen for two reasons. First, April maximizes JAM's educational potential because it is the end of the school year when schools can not only participate, but student jazz ensembles can culminate year-long preparations and play at their best. Secondly, April is also the birth month of a number of leading figures in jazz: Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, Bessie Smith, Johnny Dodds, Billie Holiday, Charles Mingus, Lionel Hampton, Gerry Mulligan, Shorty Rogers, Tito Puente, and Herbie Hancock.

For further reading go to [www.smithsonianjazz.org](http://www.smithsonianjazz.org)



## **EASTER – APRIL, 8**

Easter is an annual festival commemorating the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the principal feast of the Christian year. It is celebrated on a Sunday on varying dates between March 22 and April 25 and is therefore called a movable feast. The dates of several other ecclesiastical festivals, extending over a period between Septuagesima Sunday (the ninth Sunday before Easter) and the first Sunday of Advent, are fixed in relation to the date of Easter.

Connected with the observance of Easter are the 40-day penitential season of Lent, beginning on Ash Wednesday and concluding at midnight on Holy Saturday, the day before Easter Sunday; Holy Week, commencing on Palm Sunday, including Good Friday, the day of the crucifixion, and terminating with Holy Saturday; and the Octave of Easter, extending from Easter Sunday through the following Sunday. During the Octave of Easter in early Christian times, the newly baptized wore white garments, white being the liturgical color of Easter and signifying light, purity, and joy.

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### **Easter in United States of America**

Easter in the US is celebrated in many different ways by many different religions. Mostly it is celebrated with traditional church services and family festive celebrations. On Easter Sunday in New York and other cities, large street parades are held where people show off their new clothes and Easter bonnets. The parade is often led by someone carrying a candle or a cross. American children play a game called Easter Egg Roll. The world's most famous Mardi Gras carnival is held each year in New Orleans. It has parades, jazz bands and parties where everybody dresses up and joins in the fun. Groups of people called krewes prepare decorated floats with a Mardi Gras king and queen. Mardi Gras means 'Fat Tuesday' and only refers to Shrove Tuesday. The day after Mardi Gras is Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent. Easter is a time to eat special foods. In US it is baked ham, potatoes and vegetables. In the US at Easter Hot Cross Buns are served as well.



### **Easter Egg Roll**

A group of people roll eggs down a steep incline, racing to see which egg gets to the bottom first. Since the eggs are pretty much the same, and the hill is pretty much the same, the determining factor seems to be the speed of release, making this a game that favors hyperactive kids with fast reflexes. The rules of an Easter Egg Roll are to see who can roll an egg the greatest distance or can make the roll without breaking it, usually down a grassy hillside or slope. Maybe the most famous egg rolling takes place on the White House Lawn. Hundreds of children come with baskets filled with brightly decorated eggs and roll them down the famous lawn, hoping the President of the United States is watching the fun.

<http://www.easterbunnys.net/eastereggroll.htm>



## Earth Day – April, 22

Earth Day, event first observed internationally on April 22, 1970, to emphasize the necessity for the conservation of the world's natural resources. Starting as a student-led campus movement, initially observed on March 21, Earth Day has become a major educational and media event. Environmentalists use it as an occasion to sum up current environmental problems of the planet: the pollution of air, water, and soils; the destruction of habitats; the decimation of hundreds of thousands of plant and animal species; and the depletion of nonrenewable resources. The emphasis is on solutions that will slow and possibly reverse the negative effects of human activities. Such solutions include recycling of manufactured materials; fuel and energy conservation, banning the use of harmful chemicals, halting the destruction of major habitats such as rain forests, and protecting endangered species.



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**Earth Day – Every Day**

### The EARTH is made of the following CHEMICAL ELEMENTS:

- oxygen 46.6 %
- aluminum 8.1
- iron 5
- sodium 2.8
- magnesium 2.1
- calcium 3.6
- potassium 2.6
- silicon 27.7
- other 1.5

### Here is an example of how long it takes garbage to break down:

- plastics take 500 years
- aluminum cans take 500 years
- organic materials take 6 months
- cotton, rags, and paper take 6 months.

### FAST FACTS about EARTH:

- circumference: 24,901.5 miles
- diameter: Nearly 8,000 miles
- surface area: 196,935,000 sq miles
- percent of earth's ocean approximately 70% \*
- percent of earth's land: approximately 30%
- highest point: Mt Everest 29, 028 above sea level

\*lowest point: Dead Sea 1,302 below sea level\* of the 70 percent of water; 97 percent is salt water, 3 percent is fresh water

<http://www.planetpals.com/planet2.html>

### Other Interesting FACTS:

- Earth is referred to as the BLUE PLANET. WHY? Because from space, the oceans combined with our atmosphere make our planet look blue
- Earth is estimated to be 3-5 Billion Years old.
- Earth is estimated to weigh 6,585,600,000,000,000,000 tons.
- The area of the earth is almost 200 million square miles.
- Earth travels through space at 66,700 miles per hour.
- Earth's oceans are an average of 2 Miles deep.
- Earth's rotation on its axis makes a day at 24 hours...
- Earth's orbit around the sun makes a year at nearly 365 and 1/2 days
- Earth is tipped at 23 and 1/2 degrees in orbit. That axis is what causes our seasons.
- Antarctica is the coldest place on earth. The continent is almost entirely covered in ICE !
- Only 11 percent of the earth's surface is used to grow food.
- Breeze carries about 100 Million tons of sand particles around the earth yearly. That means if you live in America-you could have Sand that came from the Gobi desert in China.



Fascinating Fun Fast Facts

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## Celebrate Arbor Day on April 27, 2007!

Arbor Day, annual observance dedicated to the planting and conservation of trees. On Arbor Day, many people plant trees and bushes in their communities. Arbor Day educational programs provide information about trees, tree care, and the natural environment. In the United States, National Arbor Day is observed on the last Friday in April. However, because the ideal time to plant trees varies with the climate, many individual states observe Arbor Day on other dates. Many southern states observe Arbor Day as early as January or February, while in some northern areas Arbor Day is not held until May.

Arbor Day was conceived in the 1870s by Julius Sterling Morton, a Nebraska newspaper editor. Like many pioneers who settled the treeless plains of Nebraska, Morton believed that planting trees would help beautify the state, provide shade, and prevent soil erosion by creating windbreaks. In 1872 he proposed a tree-planting day at a meeting of Nebraska's board of agriculture. The first Arbor Day celebrations were held on April 10 of that year, with prizes awarded to the individual or group who planted the most trees. Sponsors estimated that more than one million trees were planted on the first Arbor Day.

In 1874 Nebraska governor Robert W. Furnas proclaimed a statewide Arbor Day, to be observed on April 8. In 1885 the state of Nebraska made Arbor Day an annual legal holiday and changed its date of observance to April 22, to coincide with Morton's birthday. The holiday was soon adopted by other states. Since the 1880s Arbor Day has become popular as a school activity. Today, Arbor Day is observed in many countries throughout the world.

The National Arbor Day Foundation, a nonprofit organization based in Nebraska City, Nebraska, oversees and coordinates Arbor Day activities. The Foundation also conducts year-round educational and conservation programs.

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### DO YOU KNOW?

#### APRIL IS:

- KEEP AMERICA BEAUTIFUL MONTH
- NATIONAL AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH
- NATIONAL YOUTH SPORTS SAFETY MONTH
- ALCOHOL AND DRUG AWARENESS MONTH
- MATHEMATICS EDUCATION MONTH
- NATIONAL POETRY MONTH
- SCHOOL LIBRARY MEDIA MONTH
- ANIMAL CRUELTY PREVENTION MONTH



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**AMERICAN CORNER BITOLA  
MONTHLY PROGRAM -APRIL 2007**

Tuesday April 3<sup>rd</sup> at 18:30 o'clock  
**English Conversation Hour \* PLEASE SIGN IN TO ATTEND\***

April 4<sup>th</sup> – April 17<sup>th</sup>  
**Poster Display in Honor of Jazz Appreciation Month**

Tuesday April 10<sup>th</sup> at 18:30 o'clock  
**English Conversation Hour \* PLEASE SIGN IN TO ATTEND\***

Wednesday April 11<sup>th</sup> at 18:00 o'clock  
**Children Story Telling Hour \*PLEASE SIGN IN YOUR CHILD TO ATTEND\***

Friday April 13<sup>th</sup> at 14:00 o'clock  
**Video Showing “Ansel Adams”**  
*An intimate portrait of a great artist and ardent environmentalist*

Tuesday April 17<sup>th</sup> at 18:30 o'clock  
**English Conversation Hour \* PLEASE SIGN IN TO ATTEND\***

April 18<sup>th</sup> – April 28<sup>th</sup>  
Paper Show Display in Honor of Earth Day  
**Biodiversity: Nature’s Vast Diminishing Abundance**

**In honor of Earth Day – April 22nd**  
Saturday April 21<sup>st</sup> at 13:00 o'clock  
**“A Call for Action on Climate Change”**  
Presented by the local NGO MOLIKA

Tuesday April 24<sup>th</sup> at 18:30 o'clock  
**English Conversation Hour \* PLEASE SIGN IN TO ATTEND\***

Thursday April 26th at 18:00 o'clock  
**Video Showing “Saturn’s Titan - Voyage to the Mystery Moon”**  
*Filled with incredible images beamed back during the mission, NOVA takes a dramatic voyage of discovery to an exotic world unimaginably far from our own*

Saturday April 28<sup>th</sup> at 12noon  
**Youth Debate Club**

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM MARCH 2007 PROGRAMS



American Corner Bitola organized the informative presentation “**Summer Work/Travel Program in the United States: The Visa Process and Fulbright Scholarship Opportunities**” on March 7th with guest speaker Nik Granger, Vice Consul and Jeanne Clark, Assistant Public Affairs Officer from the US Embassy Skopje. Practical and beneficial information was delivered to an audience of 60 people on this program and the visa process, which is acknowledged as the largest obstacle in

the students eyes to why they do not apply for these types of programs. This program was able to clarify for those interested students the process to receiving a visa, the necessary documents, and that the United States welcomes international students whom met all the requirements. The second part of the presentation provided information on the Fulbright Scholarship program, the open competitions and how to apply. This event was covered by the TV station TERA.

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In honor of Women’s History Month the American Corner Bitola organized the presentation “**Women, Society and the Future**” with Tara Lynn Trepanier, Peace Corps volunteer from Demir Hisar. The audience of 21 people, which pleasantly surprising was majority male, had the opportunity to hear and discuss how women are portrayed in the media. Tara gave several examples of how “objectification of women” is used in advertisements, case studies

showing how this affects society and examples of how society can take a stand against this. Also discussed was the effect to young children who are exposed to this type of negative portrayal of women. This program was covered by the local TV Station ORBIS.



