

Editor's notes:

November 2009, Volume 24-3

November Poem

*November's sky is chilled and drear:
November's leaf is red and sear*

-- Sir Walter Scott

Scientists have hit the nail on the head in a new study that examined who's better at pounding nails -- men or women. The results may surprise you: Women are more accurate when hammering nails, at least when the lighting is good, but men do better in the dark.

The scientists used a mechanical plate to measure force and accuracy when different test subjects pounded at nails. Women aimed their hammers 10 percent better than men in the light, but men were 25 percent more accurate in the dark. Why? The University of Massachusetts at Amherst researchers aren't sure.

One possibility: Men and women have differences in their ability to perceive objects depending on lighting conditions, and that may affect their motor skills. More research will have to be done. How is this significant and why? We don't know. We're waiting on pins and needles (or is it nails and spikes?) to find out.

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There are numerous dates to observe this month and here are a few of them:

All Saints Day, November 1 -- Originally observed on May 13, Pope Gregory IV transferred the date of the celebration to November 1 because the many pilgrims who came to Rome for the "Feast of the Pantheon" could be fed more easily following the harvest in the fall.

20th Anniversary of the Fall of the Berlin Wall, November 9 -- It was 20 years ago that the infamous Berlin Wall, a symbol of the Cold War, came tumbling down after 28 years. The 27.9 mile wall was built on August 13, 1961.

Remembrance Day, November 11 -- This legal holiday, intended to honour the war dead, originally commemorated the armistice signed November 11, 1918, to end World War I.

We wear poppies on this day to memorialize the thousands of our soldiers buried in Flanders, a region in Belgium, and in France and the Netherlands where fields were covered by poppies during the spring. The poppies became associated with the war as a result of their mention in the poem, "In Flanders Fields" by Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae.

World Scrabble Championship, November 26-29 - This month in Johor Bahru, Malaysia, roughly 100 people will compete for the title of world champion player of Scrabble, the popular board game that has sold 100 million sets worldwide.

American architect Alfred Butts invented the game in the early 1930s, while unemployed during the Depression. He studied the front page of *The New York Times* to analyze the frequency at which letters of the alphabet appeared so as to determine how many of each he should include in the game. Butts, who named his game Criss Cross Words, sold the rights to James Brunot in the late 1940s. Brunot renamed it Scrabble, a word that means "to grope frantically." The game is now produced by Milton Bradley. Scrabble is found in one out of every three homes. Between one and two million sets are sold each year in North America.

Wanna be creative? Limit yourself

Ever been completely stuck when trying to come up with an idea? It's a common problem, says innovation expert Jeffrey Baumgartner. His cure? The dictionary. He suggests randomly selecting a word and then trying to reformulate your ideas while incorporating the word you've selected.

It's surprising how well this works, says Baumgartner. "The concept is based on a simple but little known truth: Freedom inhibits creativity." There's nothing like a restriction to get you thinking, he contends.

The Fall of the Berlin Wall

November 9th marks the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. My cousin, Dr. Friedhelm Pedde, is a Near Eastern Archaeologist at the Assur-Projekt in the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin, Germany and was in Berlin at the time the wall came down. I have asked him to write an article about the occasion, to provide both historical context and to add personal observations and anecdotes and even some of the hundreds of photographs he took as hundreds of thousands of East Berliners streamed through holes in the wall into West Berlin. It was an incredibly significant time in history and should never be forgotten. I originally wanted to make the article part of this month's Messenger newsletter, but the scope of the article is too large to do that. I didn't want to condense it down to fit into available space in The Messenger. It is too important for that.

If you would like to read Friedhelm's article, please send me an email at spedde@helixcourier.com with 'Fall of the Wall' in the subject line. I will forward a PDF file of the article to you when it is ready, sometime in November. I have read part of the article already and I'm sure you will find it informative and interesting. I will also add you to the Helix Courier Limited email list, through which you will get monthly PDF files of the Helix Messenger newsletter. Physical delivery of the Messenger newsletter will of course continue as always with your monthly invoice. *Sieg Pedde, President, Helix Courier Limited.*

Five Marks of a Great Leader

A number of years ago, the great historian Paul Johnson, wrote an article about the qualities needed in leaders. He discussed the characteristics of great leaders in both business and politics. In light of some of the disappointing performances in leaders in both Canada and the United States, it is remarkable how prescient the author was. In fact, his assessments are extraordinarily accurate, given that at the time that he wrote his article, the economy was still booming and people still had some trust in their leaders.

According to Johnson, there are five essential characteristics of true leadership. Do you recognize anyone either in politics or in business that fits the profile (or who is sorely in need of some of these qualities)?

Moral courage -- This matters most and unfortunately, is in very short supply. True leaders stick to their beliefs and carry on a course of action that underscores their beliefs no matter what the criticism. Neither friends, allies, nor great adversity can dissuade them from sticking to their principals. And, Johnson adds, it is not enough to show spine in a single flash. It is courage shown over the long haul that demonstrates the true mettle of a person.

Johnson sees the actions of Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War as "obstinate, persistent, self-reinforcing courage." It was also Winston Churchill, often the lone, solitary voice in marshalling the fight against Adolf Hitler, who showed incredible moral courage.

Judgment -- Courage without judgment is a lost cause, and in fact, can be dangerous. Judgment does not require that one be intellectually gifted. Some very smart people with exceptionally high IQs have shown appallingly poor judgment. Is it education? Do you turn to people who have graduated summa cum laude from a top university when you need advice? Hardly! According to Johnson, being able to judge well is "often linked to an ability to mix with and learn from other people -- not so much from experts but from common people, those who lack the arrogance of power or the desire to show off their intelligence but who nevertheless think deeply about life's trials." Sometimes their wisdom comes from having been tossed about

and having survived what Shakespeare described as "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune." The person of judgment develops the habit of asking questions and seeks answers from these wise people.

A sense of priority -- A great leader knows that he is constantly bombarded with a variety of problems, some very great and some very insignificant. It takes extraordinary "horse sense" to sort out what is truly important and should be addressed and what isn't. (Paul Johnson calls it "horse sense" because he feels that it's a sense that's "not given to most human beings.") Once again, intelligence is no guarantee that you have this ability.

The disposal and concentration of effort -- Leaders must allocate their time and energy. Winston Churchill said it best when he replied to the question of "To what do you attribute your success?" Churchill's amusing reply was, "Conservation of energy. Never stand up when you can sit down, and never sit down when you can lie down." In other words, constant motion and activity is not a sure sign of leadership.

Humour -- Maybe it's just the harshness of life that makes us more disposed to a leader who has a sense of humour. President Reagan seemed to have a quip for every occasion. Johnson notes that there have been very few leaders who didn't exhibit some sense of humour. This includes some of the worst tyrants the world has known.

Up, Down, or Sideways?

Depending on who you listen to, things in the world economies are either getting better or getting worse. In other words, no one really knows what is going to happen. Our modus operandi at Helix in our many years in business has always been to expect the best but prepare for the worst. No matter what happens in the coming months and years, Helix Courier Limited is going to be around for a long, long time.

When times get tough, business consolidations often take place. We have noticed this too in the local messenger/courier industry. In the last month alone, two of our local competitors have changed hands, continuing a trend that has carried on over a time period of two years or so. When we at Helix are approached about purchasing another courier/messenger company, we look at it to see if an acquisition would meet with our overall objectives and not detract from our rather obsessive goal to do the best that we can to serve you. We passed on recent 'opportunities' for a number of reasons and

in fact it has been over ten years since our last acquisition.

And what about us, here at Helix? Is Helix Courier Limited for sale? Will it ever be?

Not likely. We are solid financially, love what we do, and have a strong loyalty and kinship with our customers, suppliers, and with the great crew that reports to work here every day. After 41 years in business here in London, we're not leaving.

We are your ally. We help you meet your obligations to your own clients and customers by getting your documents or parts delivered safely and on time. And, as with every good business relationship, we help each other. For your help as a friend and customer of Helix Courier Limited, we thank you.

If there is anything we can help you with that we aren't already doing for you, talk to us. Sharon Coll would like to work with you to ensure that we are doing everything we can to best represent you. Call Sharon at 519-453-0501 or email her at sharon@helixcourier.com.