

Editor's notes:

November 2010, Volume 25-3

November got its name from the Latin "novembris mensis," meaning "ninth month." Plutarch, a first-century Greek biographer and historian, attributed the change to the eleventh month to Numa Pompilius, a Roman king: "Many will have it that it was Numa who added the two months of Januarius and Februarius, for in the beginning they had a year of ten months." Numa supposedly also shortened November to 29 days; Julius Caesar returned it to 30 days.

Here are a few dates of note this month:

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.

All Souls Day, November 2 -- This day commemorates the departed. Begun by Abbott Saint Odilo of Cluny in 1048, all priests are to say mass for the souls in the purgatory. November 2 was chosen so the memory of all the "holy spirits" -- both of the saints in Heaven and of the souls in purgatory -- could be celebrated on successive days, and in this manner express the Christian belief in the "Communion of Saints."

Sandwich Day, November 3 -- This day celebrates the anniversary of John Montagu, Fourth Earl of Sandwich and England's first Lord of the Admiralty. Born in 1718, Montagu is credited with creating the world's first form of fast food. Supposedly he placed a piece of meat between two slices of bread as a time-saving nourishment while engaged in a 24-hour long gambling session in 1762.

Anniversary of the Opening of the Berlin Wall, November 9 -- In 1989, Germans celebrated the opening of the Berlin Wall. After 28 years, this symbol of the Cold War came tumbling down on this date. The 27.9 mile wall was built on August 13, 1961. The Wall did more than just divide the great city of Berlin; it marked the contrast between the riches and freedoms of Western countries and the stark and impoverished people of communist regimes.

Remembrance Day, November 11 -- Canadians observe Remembrance Day, also known as Armistice Day, on this day. Remembrance Day commemorates the signing of the armistice that ended World War I on November 11, 1918, and pays tribute to those who died in all of Canada's wars.



Anniversary of the Great East Coast Power Blackout, November 9 -- On this date in 1965 at 5:27 p.m., a backup relay at a power generation station in Queenston, Ontario, failed and overloaded the power grid. This produced a power failure which blacked out an area from Ontario and Quebec to Florida and Chicago to New York City. It affected more than 30 million people in an area of 80,000 square miles.

Capitalism Saved the Miners

Of all the headlines that described the ordeal and subsequent success of the Chilean miners' rescue, this one from *The Wall Street Journal*, October 14, was the best.

In a very smart and perceptive article, Daniel Henninger writes that these miners were alive because of the free market system, and had this accident occurred 25 years ago, the miners would have been dead.

What happened in the intervening 25 years? Simple: the Center Rock drill bit. This is the miracle drill that was used to drill through half a mile of rock. It was manufactured by Center Rock Inc., a private company in Berlin, Pennsylvania. The drill's rig came from Schramm Inc. in West Chester, Pennsylvania. Centre Rock's president, Brandon Fisher offered the drill to the Chileans when they started their rescue efforts.

This miracle drill is "a piece of tough technology, developed by a small company in it for the money, for profit. That's why they innovated down-the-hole hammer drilling. If they make money, they can do more innovation."

Henninger adds that "this profit = innovation dynamic was everywhere at that Chilean mine." The high-strength cable winding around the big wheel atop that simple rig is from Germany. Japan supplied the super-flexible, fiber-optic communications cable that linked the miners to the world above. Another company, Cupron Inc., in Richmond, "supplied socks made with copper fiber that consumed foot bacteria, and minimized odor and infection."

Capitalism can produce these miracle products because only in an open economy, "someone innovates something useful, makes money from it, and re-innovates, or someone else trumps their innovation. Most of the time, no one notices. All it does is create jobs, wealth and well-being. But without this system running in the background, without the year-over-year progress embedded in these capitalist innovations, those trapped miners would be dead."

The colour red: Man's best bet when looking for a date?

Clothes make the man, as the old saying goes, and colour makes a difference as well. A study published in the *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, found that the colour red tends to make men appear more powerful and sexually attractive to women.

Researchers showed a panel some photos of men and asked the women to rate their personal qualities, such as attractiveness, kindness, and general likeability. In some experiments, the photographs' borders were different colours, including red; in others, the shirt of the subject was digitally altered to appear in a variety of colours.

The colour red tended to make the men in the photos appear more attractive, but not necessarily kinder or more likeable. The effect was consistent across cultures that included the United States, Germany, and China.

The scientists note that the colour red seems to have the same effect in animals. Non-human male primates such as mandrills and some species of baboon sport red colouring that's associated with dominance, and females mate more often with these "alpha males," who provide them with protection and other resources.

Don't let one failure turn you into a failure

If Donald Trump can repeatedly file for bankruptcy and not be considered a failure, no one should claim defeat. Though everyone faces setbacks in life, few of us should really call ourselves "losers." Part of success is dealing with and overcoming failure. Keep your confidence and follow this advice:

- **Change your perspective.** Don't think of every unsuccessful attempt as a failure. Few people succeed at everything the first time; most of us attain our goals only through repeated effort. Take the negativity out of failure by viewing it as a learning experience. And do your best to learn everything you can about what happened and why.

- **Try new approaches.** Persistence is important, but repeating the same actions over and over again, hoping that this time you'll succeed, probably won't get you any closer to your objective. Look at your previous unsuccessful efforts and decide what to change. Keep making adjustments, using your experience as a guide.

Political Party Animals

If you are following the mid-term elections south of the border, you might wonder how an elephant come to symbolize the Republican Party and a donkey the Democrats.

In 1870, political cartoonist Thomas Nast of Harper's Weekly Magazine depicted Democratic President Andrew Jackson as a donkey because his opponents called him Andrew Jackass. In 1874, Nast used an elephant to represent the large Republican vote which won President Ulysses S. Grant re-election. The animals later became symbolic of the parties themselves.

Forewarned is forearmed . . . or maybe not

Are you ready for the unexpected? Don't be too sure. In a study conducted by a psychology professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, volunteers were asked to watch a video showing people tossing a basketball to one another. The volunteers were told to count the number of passes between players dressed in white suits.

Some were warned about what would happen next: A figure in a gorilla suit entered the picture, faced the camera, pounded his chest, and then walked off. All the volunteers who had been told to expect the visitation noted it after the video was over, but only half of the other group apparently spotted the intruder.

But among those who were forewarned about the gorilla, only 17 percent spotted other unusual activity in the video, like the background curtain suddenly changing colour. Meanwhile, 29 percent of the students who weren't told to expect the gorilla noticed these secondary changes.

What does it all mean? Despite being forewarned, it's still all too easy to miss what you're not looking for, the researchers say.

- **Define the problem better.** Analyze the situation - what you want to achieve, what your strategy is, why it didn't work, and so on. Ask yourself if you're really viewing the problem correctly. If you need money, for example, one option is to increase revenue -- but you could also try cutting expenses. Think about what you're really trying to do.

- **Don't be a perfectionist.** You may have an idealized vision of what success will look and feel like. Though that can be motivational, it may not be realistic. Succeeding at one goal won't eliminate all your problems. Be clear on what will satisfy your objectives, and don't obsess about superficial details.

- **Don't label yourself.** You may have failed, but you're not a failure until you stop trying. Think of yourself as someone still striving toward a goal, and you'll be better able to maintain your patience and perseverance for the long haul.

*In Flanders Fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.*

John McCrae