

## **\*A Likely Story \***

Many thousands of years ago, in a far off land now known as Europe, there lived a very old man by the name of Methuselah. He enjoyed his life and living it, but he wanted to be remembered by his grandchildren, of which he had many. So he summoned a man name Pierre (but who was called Pair, by his friends) to come to the castle.

"Pair," said Methuselah, "My reign on this earth is drawing to a close, and if I am to be remembered by my offspring, I need a method for recording time and history with words and numbers to define it by. There is a full moon tonight, and by the time the moon is full again, you must present me with a calendar to record history!"

Pair, although he'd studied with the masters, Aristotle and Socrates, was considered by many to be off-center, odd, queer, or at least isolated in his thinking! Pair set about his task with diligence. He decided that he should begin with the least and work toward the most—"logic", thought he.

Pair's mother had two sisters, one named Esmerelda and the other Minerva. Esmeralda was on her death-bed with a very short time to live so he began by listing her as sick aunt or second, as it became to be known. He followed by Aunt Min or min-aunt, which became minute to denote time!

The next day while Pair was conversing with a neighbor, a flock of wild birds settled in his yard. An argument ensued between them as to whom claimed ownership. After a careful count, seven hundred thirty were tallied, and they decided to split them equally, 365 ours (hours) and 365 yours (years).

Pair's mind wandered about, searching for methods and names for recording time. One day while titling back in his chair with his feet upon a stool, he become overbalanced and fell, striking his head on the tentpole behind him, and there he layed dazed and weak! "A prayer answered!" thought he and inscribed upon his manuscript, dazed (days) and weak (week).

He needed a word to group the days and weeks into a cluster. About that time, his seven year old tongue-tied nephew walked by, and they began talking about freckles.

"You've got spots all over your face!" stated Pair, "Do you have the measles?"

"No, Uncle Pair, I already had 'em 'onth."

"Good enough," thought Pair. "My cluster word shall be had 'em onth", make that just "em onth" (month) as we say today.

Pair's birds acquired a poultry disease and some of their feathers decayed and emitted a foul aroma.

"If they smell that bad now in ten years they'll be really decayed, so I could call ten years a decade!"

Standing alone by itself, half the way up the mountain above the village grew a very large olive tree. Nature had been cruel to it, and over the years, gales and lightning battered its limbs, twisting and killing many of them. Its fruit became bitter and some of the taller limbs were used as gallows to execute thieves by hanging. It was referred to as the "sin tree" and one hundred men's fates ended upon its branches.

"I'll just record in my records that the denominations were named."

He needed some for the month designations. Perhaps some of his family names would work. While gathering rocks one day with his brothers, Janick and Febert, he became exhausted, and suggested a little break.

"Jan, you weary? Feb you weary? Me, too!" So January and February came into being.

A stranger approached and joined the resting three.

"Pray give us thy name so we can be acquaintances," spoke Pair. "Papa refers to me as Marblehead," the boy replied, "but my real name is Charles."

"Mar, cha hungry?" Pair asked.

Over the years the hungry was omitted leaving March.

The following day, the town crier on his daily round shouted out the day's happenings. After reporting the death count at the coliseum, where Christians were feed for the lions, and the amount of rain on the plain in Spain, he recited his paid commercial for hair care, or "hea kea" as he phrased it. Miffed at the pronunciation, Pair chided him for the omission of the consonant "R". The crier produced a pouch containing what appeared to be an aspirin.

"What do you call that?" he asked of Pair.

"Surely it must be a pill!" Pair replied.

"Aha!" shouted the crier "You who promote the letter "R" would no doubt have it called a prill!"

Why not, thought Pair, make that April, no use arguing. Sure, and May also as well for the following month!

A street vendor appeared at Pair's door the following day, hawking his wares of straps, laces, and tobacco. Hagglng over the price, Pair tried to "Jew-him down", (the practice of bartering). He considered himself very proficient at the art, and promptly named the month "Jewin" (June).

Pair was a strict disciplinarian with his children. When upon finding the gate enclosing the goat gate ajar, and the goats frequenting the thoroughfare, he angrily reprimanded his oldest son.

"I'm innocent," the boy responded. "August done it."

"Did jew lie?" admonished the parent.

"No," the boy repeated, "August done it and he'd do it again, 'cept timber gates close easier than those made of stone!"

Thus, the summer months received their names "Jewlie" (July), August and 'Cept Timber!

Growing among the grasses of the European plains were noxious sticker weeds called Oct, because of their eight rows of prickles. They would become lodged in the harness of oxen that towed their crude sleds and carts, causing festering sores on the animals' shoulders. Because the stickers didn't appear until late autumn, Pair used the term for the tenth month, labeling it, "Oct-Tow-Burr".

A slightly different species of the weed grew further south in the countries of Mesopotamia and Vemberland. Attempting to rescind the spread of the annoying burrs, an agricultural embargo was place on grains grown in those countries. Signs, posted /No Vem Burrs!/ were erected. They felt that they may as well include in de ban, de brown cockle Burr, which grew not in clusters, but resembled in its appearance the vember burr, so the restriction encompassed also de similar burr, as Pair recorded, naming November and December as the last months.

With only a week remaining before he had to appear with his calendar, Pair pondered names for days of the week. Because it was the sabbath, and a bright sparkling day, he reasoned, why not start the week with

Sunday?

Travelers in the area were sparse, but occasionally one, or maybe a group, would pass by and tell colorful stories of far away places. That very morning, a short man with yellowish skin passed through the village leading a donkey. Nobody was able to converse with him, so Pair was sent for. Pair also found difficulty exchanging banter with the foreigner, but through sign language he learned that he hailed from a land called China, in route to Damascus. That evening, with thoughts of the stranger, he inscribed the second day of the week Chinamonday, later shortened to Monday.

The high priest of the village stopped one morning asking for a sip of water to soothe his perched lips. Of course, Pair supplied the request, as well as wine and manna. As they rested, the priest inquired as to his odd name.

"Are you a twin?" he asked, pointing out that pair meant two. Pair explained that Pair was merely a nickname, short for Pierre. Perhaps I should name a day after myself, thought he, but vanity might be looked upon as a sin by the Almighty. Maybe, though, my being Pair, calling the day Two'sday might be acceptable!

The trade winds in Europe and the Middle East played a very important role in the early days, as the sloops and gondolas traveling the Mediterranean Sea needed wind to propel their vessels. Travelers and freights became stranded when the doldrums existed, a period of time when not even a whisper of a breeze would blow, stranding vessels. As important as the wind is, I'll just give it a place on my calendar, Windsday, thought Pair.

If a job is worth doing, it's worth doing well, was advice drilled into Pair's head by his father. The days when Pair and his brothers had to clean the sheep and goat pens remained fresh on his mind. When the parent determined that an adequate job was not rendered, the second rendition would be painstakingly supervised and unduly difficult. Scraping animal droppings in the sweltering heat causes an intense thirst. Certainly a thorough and thirsty day should be immortalized by Thirstday.

In Methuselah's days, diet was restricted to those who were devoutly religious, and followers tried to comply with the regimen presented them. The sixth day of the week required dining only on fish or sea food. Pair wasn't overly fond of fish, but when cooked in olive oil until it was a crispy brown, it was tolerable, hence, Friday.

Most of Western Europe's night were clear and warm in the summer, and the stars shone brightly, and were studied by many as, the heavenly lights were a map for travelers. Pair had discussed the patterns and positions of the major stars with the masters. Aristotle instructed him as to identifying the planets and asteroids, as well as their names and locations. One seemed to hang directly over his tent, and held the name Saturn.

"For the final day of the week, then long remember, Saturday!"

Pair was about to meet his deadline, but he had to assemble all the information and position it on some parchment with his quill and buzzard blood ink. Tearing the parchment into a dozen squares, he labeled the days and months of the year, inserting names and numbers. The numbers came from Pair and his two sons' hands and their bare feet, after discarding their thongs. The digits of toes and fingers totaled thirty, also a full moon's tenure.

The following day, Pair presented his formula for a calendar to Methuselah.

"Is this adequate?" inquired Pair.

"How should I know?" Methuselah asked. "I'm unschooled in recordings, but if you feel that it's workable, then by all means deliver it to our Minister of Finance, he who holds the proceeds of our people's savings. Have him make two thousand copies, which we will donate to our subscribers for advertising purposes."

"Now that we have a calendar, instruct the town crier to deliver notices for payment for water drawn from our wells, taxes on tents and livestock, fuel gathered from the hillside, and a toll for traveling the cobblestone byways. The first day of every month, from this time on, this practice will be repeated. We shall refer to the notices as bills, and I'm sure that all this will keep me in the memory of our citizens for years to come!"

The Bitter End