

# The Calendar

By Jim Turner

My brother's return address on the package told me that he had remembered my birthday, which he never forgets. The size of the parcel was a good clue he had not sent his famous home-cooked barbecue. That gift always is delivered in person and in a cooler to keep it warm. This 12" x 11" package was thin, and as I gently pulled away the tape, I was greeted by an attractive rose-colored booklet. On the center of the cover was a picture of an hourglass with more than half the sand remaining in the top globe. Though I have always thought my brother to be more a realist than an optimist, I love him for thinking I might live to be 140. The treasure he sent was a *Time Passages Commemorative Yearbook* and below the hourglass was emblazoned the year 1943.

You might have seen these before and maybe even own one commemorating your birth year. Each month of the year is preceded by a full-page, black-and-white photo of some period icon or special event, and each day of the month offers pieces of information about what happened on that particular day. Naturally, I turned immediately to the sixth day of September, anticipating some glorious happening like the discovery of a brilliant cure for a dreaded disease. It was not so. That day's caption, my birth date, told a different story: "79 killed and 117 injured when nine cars from Pennsylvania Railroad's Washington to New York train derails near Frankford Junction, PA." I disclaim any responsibility. I just got here, for goodness sake.

My mother always delighted in reminding me that I was born on Labor Day. She liked to embellish this with her testimony that her doctor had urged her to quit the baby business after my brother Bill was born. I was never sure why she enjoyed reminding me of how she almost died when I was born. Unfortunately for her, this information seems to have given me license to live life just on the edge of trouble—because that's where I stayed during much of my youth. After all, what could I possibly do that would be worse than almost murdering my own mother when I was only minutes old? I must not have been all bad though, 'cause Mom lived for nearly 56 more years after that Labor Day event.

Intrigued by this unfortunate event on my first Labor Day on Earth, I searched Google for more on the train catastrophe and read some more of the details about the crash. I wish I had skipped that exercise. Then I moved on to investigate some other Labor Day happenings during that year. September was heavy with war-related stories such as the Allied invasion of mainland Italy on the third of September and the 503rd Parachute Regiment assault on New Guinea on the fifth. Then, on the seventh, there was a tragic fire in Houston, Texas, at the Gulf Hotel which took 55 lives. But nothing else of historical note happened on the sixth. I'll bet I could have convinced my mother that I was the only good news in September 1943. Earlier in the year, on February 7, it was announced that all shoe sales were suspended until February 9, when they would become rationed to three pairs per person for the rest of the year. 1943 would have been a challenging shoe year for the women in my life.

Some not-so-bad things happened in 1943, too. Count Heel won the Triple Crown, horse racing's equivalent of the World Series. Benny Goodman recorded "Taking a Chance on Love." Oscar Hammerstein and Richard Rodgers teamed up to create the Broadway musical *Oklahoma*. Ingrid Bergman and Gary Cooper starred in the new film, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, while Frank Sinatra broke millions of hearts and was indirectly responsible for the formation of the groupies cult known as Bobby-Soxers. Rita Hayworth and Orson Wells married in Santa Monica, California. In March, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned convictions against Jehovah's Witnesses who had been convicted of selling books without a license. The court felt the lower court conviction had violated their rights of freedom of speech and religion. By April the Department of Labor had issued a report showing that workers were currently averaging 44.5 hours of work each week and salaries were averaging between 77 cents and \$1.02 per hour. Esther Williams posed for photographers in a two-piece swim suit. And on August 22, Tommy Dorsey's hit song "In the Blue of the Evening" was the #1 single of the week. On December 8, a five-year-old Natalie Wood appeared in her first movie.

The calendar plays such an important role in our lives that it is hard to remember how we all functioned before Bill Gates invented it as a component of his Microsoft

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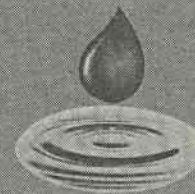
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