

## Sherman Says Essential information survives in pages of Farmers' Almanac

by David F. Sherman



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While I still have not made up my mind about the proposed normalization of relations between the United States and Cuba, I do know one thing for sure: Venus will enter Cetus and the moon will be at the highest point in the sky on my birthday.

Thanks to the 2015 Farmers' Almanac, we have 200 pages of awesome information. Contents include "Must-have ingredients for healthier and happier living, the best days of 2015, garden make-over and growing tips, natural remedies, recipes and tons of useful advice you can't live without."

The "Best Days" chart - which I don't recall seeing in previous editions - offers little to enhance my upcoming birthday. Out of 34 listed activities, my birthday is best for only four, including traveling for pleasure. It is not good for more practical pursuits such as baking, brewing, washing windows, asking for a loan or castrating farm animals.

This information was gathered, according to Almanac staff, based on the phases of the moon and its position in the zodiac.

"Many people believe that if you do the tasks on the dates listed, you will get the best results possible," they say.

So if you want to ask for a loan, do so on Feb. 3 or 4. Good to know.

The health section of the Almanac includes an examination of how the term "Charley horse" came to be. Some say it is derived from a lame horse with that name who was put to

work in the Chicago White Sox ballpark in the 1890s. Others say it refers to pitcher Charley Radbourne (nicknamed "Old Hoss") who got cramps whenever he toiled from the mound in the 1880s.

The Almanac fails to pin the tail of authenticity on either tale, but does provide seven home remedies. Included is drinking dill pickle juice and rubbing magnesium oil into the cramp.

The publication is best known for its weather forecasting. It's worth noting that the Almanac called for "light snow, flurries and cold" during the week that the lake effect snowstorm paralyzed numerous suburban communities south of Buffalo last month. However, it did predict "A storm hugs the Atlantic coast bringing winds, copious precipitation" less than 10 days later.

Look for fair weather turning unsettled with snow and rain during my birthday week. The news is worse that week for those who garden by the phases of the moon.

"Any seed planted now will tend to rot."

Another feature is a section on "Memorable Animals." Some hail from the entertainment industry, such as Lassie, Flipper and Mr. Ed, while animated creatures also make the grade. That roster includes Snoopy, Pluto and Rin-Tin-Tin.

Listed among "Notable Animals of Legend" are Punxsutawney Phil, Mrs. O'Leary's cow and five beasts that no one has been able to prove real or imaginary.

"The existence of these creatures has yet to be proven by the scientific community, but [are] worth a mention." Good to know.

A full page dedicated to Abraham Lincoln includes 10 facts about the 16th president as the 150th anniversary of his assassination approaches. For exam-

ple, did you know that Lincoln fed his cat "Tabby" at the White House table with a gold fork? When Mrs. Lincoln objected, the president said, "If it was good enough for Buchanan (his predecessor), it is good enough for Tabby."

According to the Social Security Administration, the popular name for baby boys in 2013 was Noah. For girls, it was Sophia. Liam and Emma were close seconds.

The results were far simpler a century earlier. Tops in 1914 were John and Mary with William and Helen placing second.

Astrologers and readers have their own category in the classifieds. There you can find a listing from "Brother Roy" who describes himself as a "spiri-

tual root worker." His healing abilities are guaranteed. His two telephone numbers both have an area code linking him to southeast Georgia. Good to know.

Every page in the 2015 edition has something to snag your interest, and perhaps, even make you chuckle. And who couldn't stand a dose of humor?

(David F. Sherman is managing editor of Bee Group Newspapers and a columnist for the Weekly Independent Newspapers of Western New York, a group of community newspapers with a combined circulation of 286,500 readers. Opinions expressed here are those of the author. He can be reached at dsherman@beenews.com.)

## Cuomo doesn't care about people with developmental disabilities

Recently, the governor vetoed four bills critical to people with developmental disabilities - four bills that passed the legislature without a single negative vote. Gov. Cuomo does not appreciate nor does he understand the serious issues facing these people and their families. He demonstrated that by his utter lack of communication with advocates prior to taking action - something I consider completely unacceptable.

These bills would have begun to address the growing waiting list of people living at home in critical need of service. Many have parents that are too disabled by age to care for them any longer. Simply put, parents can't be caregivers forever. Recently, during highly emotional testimony at hearings held across the state, these families spoke about how the lack of any alternatives is pushing many to the brink. One family member said her only solace lay in thoughts of suicide.

My son, Ricky, is developmentally disabled. At 54 years old, he lives in an intermediate care facility. When he was born, doctors advised me to "forget about him" because he would live life as a "vegetable." They were wrong. But there was nowhere I could take Ricky where he could learn or play. There was nowhere that accepted him. As a young mother, I labored tirelessly for civil rights and equal opportunities for developmentally disabled people, including the basic right to education - a

right my four other children were given through the public school system. Over the course of 54 years, we've had many highs and many lows. When we won integrated busing, it was a high. When Ricky was accepted to the Cantalician Center for Learning, it was a high. When he was welcomed by Opportunities Unlimited, it was another high. When Ricky became ill in his late 20s, his residency came into question. He was eventually accepted to Opportunities Unlimited's intermediate care facility. In his more than 25 years at this facility, he has flourished. The nurses, staff and residents have become his second family. He enjoys working and continuing his education, hanging out with his friends and celebrating birthdays and holidays with both of his families. When Gov. Cuomo took action against those bills, it was a low. My son is not a vegetable and does not deserve to be treated like one. And neither do the hundreds of people living at home in critical need of service.

With a record budget surplus of more than \$6.8 billion, now is the time for the state to make a real and concerted effort to finally address this problem. Now is the time for the state to fund critical services to people with developmental disabilities rather than undermine their civil rights. Contact your legislator today, and implore him or her to urge Gov. Cuomo to reconsider these bills.

Lorraine Ciruolo

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Entered as Second Class Matter at the Post Office at Grand Island, New York 14072 November 15, 1944

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**News Deadline:** 3 PM TUESDAY for the following Friday. Office Hours: 9 am - 5 pm Monday through Friday.

**Display Ads Deadline:** TUESDAY 5 PM

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