

Washington Digest

Diary Doesn't Have to Tell Earth-Shaking Occurrences

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WASHINGTON.—The nation, and particularly the nation's capital, where we are highly national and international-conscious, is suffering as never before from the result of memories, good and bad. The Roosevelt epoch produced a rash of reminiscences—200 books about FDR, 32 of them just since his death.

Currently we have with us the Churchill war memoirs, as they are called, although when I was young and read "The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes," I thought a memoir was something printed after a man's death. Of course Sherlock came back, so I suppose that legitimizes the terminology.

Winston Churchill was a great diary-keeper, as was his fellow-countryman, Samuel Pepys, whose stuff was so hot that the British government still hasn't released all of it. Franklin Roosevelt never kept a diary. His secretary of the treasury made up for this lack.



Henry Morgenthau assembled 900 volumes of about 350 pages each, totaling about 80 million words. The task must have kept three stenographers a day working in relays. He had the diaries bound, some said at government expense, although I dare say he paid for it in the end.

His was a lazy method. He didn't have to depend on his memory. He had a dictograph in his office, and every word spoken in the supposed sanctity of his chamber in the treasury, overlooking the wide sweep of lawn and park that flows down to the Potomac, was duly transcribed. When the news of this epic achievement became public a terrible howl resulted and some of the volumes were returned to the government archives. What a man!

I wonder if diary-keepers are normal. I would hate to admit to a psychologist that I have kept a diary for years, even decades. I still keep one. I don't know how long ago I started, but I still have one slim, green volume, dated 1904, in my possession. The year 1904—that was just 15 years after another entry, not in my diary, but in my father's (diary-keeping is congenital) which stated "fine boy arrived 5 p. m." I may say the "fine" is the natural exaggeration of a proud parent who didn't know what he was in for.

At any rate, if diary-keeping is used against me, I have two out—hardly anything, even of mild interest, is or will be recorded on the faded pages of my journals, and secondly, because I write such a vile hand that I can decipher only a few lines here and there myself.

My mother should have most of the blame for my bad handwriting, just as she is to blame for the fact that I can write at all. She was herself a writer and, unique as it was in those good old days, she possessed a typewriter, a stubby little affair, affectionately known as "the Blick."

Of course it was quite improper to expose a child of pre-school age to a typewriter. It was not my mother's fault. Back in the '90s, some of us weren't vaccinated for anything but smallpox. I was too young to understand that at the time, and since typewriters were as rare as porcelain bathtubs in a city of 20,000, who could guess their evil influence? I suppose I oughtn't to accuse my parents because I became thoroughly injured to the use of the typewriter long before I could balance a pencil, and this fact did my handwriting no good.

At that time what was called "Spencerian" still was taught in the schools of New York state, but very few mastered it even without the curlicues and shading of earlier days. And just as I was getting so I could make the wobbly "M's" and the terrible "Q's", along came a new Pharaoh to my scholastic Egypt and introduced the "vertical system." That was probably where my uneducation really began. I unlearned the Spencerian all right, but I was never able to go vertical.

Nothing Important Is Ever Entered

But to get back to diary-keeping, at least my diary-keeping. The illegibility of the entries in my diaries isn't really as important as the unimportance of their contents.

Let me illustrate from one with a worn leather cover which I have at hand. It is dated 1914, a good year for a diary, but a bad diary for the world. The record of war days should have been chronicled dramatically as the beginning of the end of an epoch, an epoch which breathed its last in the midst of another war. But did my record do that? Let's look at June 29, 1914.

Do we find the entry: "YESTERDAY ARCHDUKE FERDINAND WAS ASSASSINATED AT SARAJEVO?" We do not. We find this:

June 29. Lundi S. Pierre, S. Paul Bought Berlitz Greek Rustom Bey

(The book was purchased in Paris, where the year's record began. The entry was made in Washington.)

While the ancient throne of Hapsburg was receiving the blood bath that was to sweep a half dozen rulers into oblivion I was buying a Berlitz textbook for the purpose of studying some foreign language—I have no idea which one except that it was one I never learned. Rustom Bey, I remember was the Turkish ambassador whom I had to interview.

In all justice, it may not be entirely the fault of my diary-making that I didn't record the assassination of the archduke. Nobody in America took the tragedy very seriously. At that time few Americans expected much else from Europe's royal families but assassinations or less respectable peccadillos.

I ought to have known better than that since I had been helping cover the French foreign office for the two years preceding. But I had been drenched with war talk over there and had shaken it off when I returned. Europe almost immediately shrank into a dreamy domain of picture-book memory with no connection whatever with my work-a-day world.

Later on, to be sure, there is evidence that I, on second thought, felt I hadn't done my diary justice insofar as Ferdinand was concerned. But I always was feeling that way about my diary and never doing anything about it.

This, as I said, keeps my diaries from having the slightest value other than to exude a somewhat conscious-stricken odor and remind me that the good young days were no better than those bad old ones insofar as my habits and conduct were concerned, for an honest diary certainly has to be well edited to conceal one's true character. You note in its pages some high resolve or noble undertaking which was more important to you at the moment of recording than the opening of the Panama canal or the result of a presidential election. In a short year you read it over and are utterly unable to recall the slightest thing about the events chronicled.

Sometimes my old diaries, even though they record no event of great historical significance, sound quite timely. For example on October 3, 1914:

"Not much doing. I don't seem to be able to save my money." . . . October 8: "The Belgian secretary appears, we consume quantities of beer and tells me his life story—a bore, but business." (Just the weary routine of the hard-working reporter)

Fortunately my space is running out. Nothing is more interesting to write or read about than oneself. Nothing is less interesting to anyone else. But I wish to prove my point, namely, that no matter how important diary-keeping may have been for the Churchills, the Marco Pulos or the Plutarchs, and perhaps therefore as harmful as important, mine was neither.

And I marvel that any newsman, press or radio, who lives in the midst of alarms, who "was there" when most things happened and told all in breathless detail via the copy-desk or microphone to millions of wide-eyed readers or listeners would ever think of writing it down afterward.

Note for instance a recent diary entry for June 5, 1947, which a brittle clipping of even date declares not only vibrantly but with perfect inexactitude "may go down in history as the day of the beginning of the real peace after World War II." (Lest you have forgotten, that was the day Secretary of State George C. Marshall proposed at Harvard university a new approach to European rehabilitation which later became the Marshall plan, then ERP, and finally the economic cooperation administration.)

Note my diary for that date: "A meeting of the Association of Radio News Analysts, Kaltenborn to dinner."



Healthy Plants Needed To Assure Good Crop

Healthy plants, like healthy humans, are better fitted to fight off insect and disease attacks than are undernourished ones. Enemies have a tougher time getting under the guard of well fed plants. Such plants have stronger root systems and harder, better developed growth above ground. They can stand on their feet and defend themselves.

Whether your crops are well fed or undernourished depends on the condition of your soil. If your soil is loose, mellow, high in organic matter, of good tilth and carries plenty of plant food, it can give your crops a body-building diet. If your soil is worn down by overcropping and



failure to put back plant nutrients and organic matter, it cannot support healthy, sturdy crop growth.

Any farmer can build his soil's fertility and crop producing ability by good management methods. He can get bigger crop yields per acre through use of fertilizer carrying nitrogen, phosphate and potash as needed. He can build soil structure by growing deep-rooted legumes such as alfalfa or sweet clover in the rotation. Roots of the legumes will open tight soil and let air and water in. Plowed under, the legumes will add to the soil's organic matter supply. Crops following in the rotation will have more "elbow room" to seek water and nutrients deep down in the soil. The organic matter supply can be further increased by returning manure and crop aftermath to the soil.

Farm Meat Dollar



About a third of the American farmers' cash income last year came from the sale of meat animals. Meat packers paid out almost 10 billion dollars for livestock. From their total cash income, livestock producers paid out large amounts for stock, feed, help and increased operating costs.

Legumes, Grasses and Cereals Used for Silage

The term grass silage now includes all ensiled crops except corn and the sorghos and is different from them in that special precautions must be taken upon ensiling for the best preservation.

Grass silage may be made successfully from many crops: Legumes, such as alfalfa, clovers, soybeans, lespedeza and peas; cereals, such as oats, wheat, rye and barley; grasses, such as timothy, sudan grass, canary grass, broom grass and orchard grass, and mixtures of these crops.



The illustration by Purdue university shows method of dumping silage that saves in labor and quality.

Activated Charcoal Used To Prevent 2,4-D Harm

Crop plants can be protected from harm by 2,4-D used for killing weeds by pre-planting treatment with powdered activated charcoal. The treatment is of especial value for crops that are set out as young plants already rooted. This is done by dusting the roots with the activated charcoal powder before planting, greatly reducing loss caused by 2,4-D.



Veterans Lose Again

WAR VETERANS GOT ANOTHER KICK in the pants the other day when 23 vice presidents of steel companies vetoed the allocation of 60,000 tons of steel for prefabricated housing. This means that veteran cooperatives, formed to finance prefabricated housing developments, will have to fold up or go in for the more expensive conventional houses, which most veterans can't afford.

The 23 steel vice-presidents are members of a so-called steel products advisory committee to Commerce Secretary Charles Sawyer which passes on volunteer steel allocations under a law passed by congress last year. However, the committee functions more like a little "supreme court" in determining who can buy steel.

Also, it does more dictating than advising, apparently, for the commerce department had okayed the 60,000-ton allocation, a third of what the prefab industry requested for new low-cost homes.

The steel moguls pointed out that prefabricated houses require four times as much steel as conventional homes built of wood, brick, et cetera. This explanation, however, is small comfort to war veterans and others who cannot afford conventional dwellings.

American Veterans committee has made a vigorous protest to congress about the steel magnates' action.

Psychological Warfare

U. S. DEFENSE CHIEFS haven't said so publicly, but one reason they have been so energetic in urging heavy rearmament is the fear of another Pearl Harbor. Vividly remembering how General Marshall was out horseback riding the morning of Pearl Harbor, they don't want to be caught again.

This is understandable. However, there is another kind of Pearl Harbor which may hit the U. S. this time. And U. S. defense chiefs will be just as guilty of neglect if they are caught napping.

The most important, neglected chapter of war-prevention today is psychological warfare. You can call this propaganda, softening-the-enemy-from-the-rear or just plain winning friends. But the real fact is that this job of selling ideas, of making the people of another country believe in you, of winning the Russian people over to the U. S., has become almost the most important phase of modern peace and modern warfare.

Actually it boils down to the art of making it difficult for the 14 men in the Kremlin to declare war by persuading the Russian people that they themselves don't want war. At present, the Kremlin can take Russia into war overnight and the people have nothing to say about it.

An A-1 man, George Allen, has taken over this division, but he is still short of cash and barely had a chance to get started.

Truman Wants No Advice

REMINISCING WITH FRIENDS RECENTLY, Mayor David Lawrence of Pittsburgh, who is Democratic national committeeman from Pennsylvania, uncorked the following barbed comments:

"Back in the days when I used to call on Franklin Roosevelt, he always made a point of asking me: 'How are things going in Pennsylvania? What are they saying about me?'"

"F. D. R. always wanted to know the score, especially about any trends in public opinion. But Harry Truman, while I admire his honesty and sincerity, never asks us questions like that. It isn't that he isn't interested, but he depends too much on a little clique of White House advisers to tell him what's going on in the country. And more often than not he gets bum advice."

"When the Democratic national committee had its last meeting in Washington, we expected Chairman Howard McGrath to invite us to get our problems off our chests when we called on the President. We thought that would be the first order of business, as it used to be in the old days. But neither McGrath nor the President made a move to ask us. Finally, some of us spoke up on our own."

"Yes, there's a big change at the White House," concluded Mayor Lawrence, "and I doubt that it's helping the party."

Marines Paint Houses

THE MARINE CORPS has a great record—from the halls of Montezuma to the shores of Tripoli. But in Washington marine brass-hats seem to think that enlisted men are to be used on such unheroic jobs as bartending and housecleaning.

Recently it was a new kind of war. The marines were sent over the top as housepainters.

For 12 hours a day they painted the house of the assistant commanding general.

FIRST AID to the AILING HOUSE

by Roger C. Whitman

QUESTION: There is a little crack directly over my sink where it forms a joint with the plaster wall. The white plaster used for filling the crack always comes out. What can be done?

ANSWER: Before the war it was possible to get a neat, flexible metal moulding that was made for a crack such as yours, or to cover the crack at the top of a bathtub. If you cannot find any of this, fill the crack with a light-colored caulking compound. This resembles putty, but never becomes hard or brittle. After forcing it into the crack, run your finger along the surface to smooth it, and after a few days, touch it up with enamel to match the wall.

QUESTION: Is there any way to remove the discoloration on my new plasterwork caused by rain soaking through the sheathing and insulation?

ANSWER: Stains on the plaster from the rain have gone all the way through and cannot be removed. After the plaster has dried out you can paint the walls. The alternative is to cut out the stained part of the plaster and replaster.

QUESTION: Is the periodic use of yeast helpful or detrimental to a septic tank? What effect will the use of drain cleaners have on a septic tank? Is there any specially designed product on the market to keep septic tanks in better working order?

ANSWER: Small quantities of a drain cleaner can be safely used, but large quantities will stop bacterial action. In such cases, a large volume of water should be run into the tank to carry off the chemicals. Bacterial action can then be restarted by dissolving six cakes of yeast in lukewarm water in a wash-basin and flushing it into the tank.

ASK ME ANOTHER?

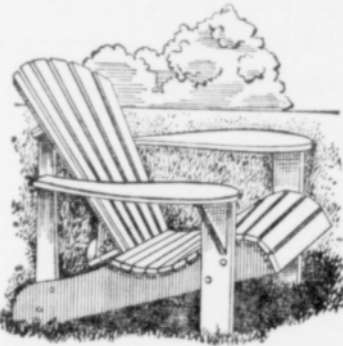
A General Quiz

THE QUESTIONS

1. Are there any American flowers that bloom all year around?
2. Can a starfish turn hand-springs?
3. How fine is a strand of spider web?
4. Is the water in a river the same level all the way across?
5. What proportion of America's population are red-headed?
6. Which farm crop is most typical of Alaska?

THE ANSWERS

1. No, but some, like the chickweed, bloom ten months out of a year.
2. Yes. One scientist even claims he taught a starfish to use a certain arm when turning over.
3. Usually only one thirty-thousandths of an inch in diameter.
4. In the Northern Hemisphere the water will be higher along the right bank than the left. In Southern Hemisphere, this is reversed.
5. About 13 per cent.
6. Potatoes.



Build This Set of Lawn Furniture Yourself.

If in need of lawn furniture, build it yourself and save money. Full size patterns are available that simplify building the matching chairs and settee illustrated above. A smaller size chair, suitable for children two to eight years of age, can also be constructed from a pattern. Youngsters will be happy to join the family circle if they have a chair they can call their own. Nothing seems to be quite so important to the young ones as having things "just like Dad's."

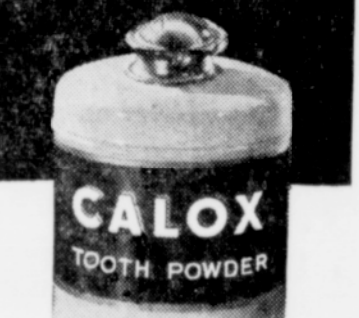
The Full Size Woodworking Pattern provides a complete list of materials needed, step by step directions and full size patterns for cutting each part. It's the dress pattern idea applied to the flat surface of lumber. No special tools or skill are required. All the materials specified by each pattern are stock size and readily available at lumber yards everywhere. So, for fun over a weekend, build one or more of these pieces. Get the youngster to help. Have him sandpaper each piece, let him hold the pieces as you drill holes. Explain why you use glue and screws at every joint to hold parts together and to keep moisture out. If he's lent a hand building this chair you'll find him taking considerably better care of it.

Materials for two chairs can be purchased for less than one chair costs ready made. Make adult size chairs from Pattern No. 32 and a matching settee from Pattern No. 33. Child size chair is Pattern No. 32. Send 25c for each pattern No. 32. Pattern No. 33. Send 35c for Pattern No. 33 to East-Bld Pattern Company, Department W., Pleasantville, N. Y.

Oil Consumption
Americans consume 420 gallons of oil products per person each year. Britishers use 42 gallons and the peoples of all other nations average 14 gallons.



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