

Ditch Your Day Job!

The easiest way to
make a living as a
writer

(Second Edition: updated for 2016)

by
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ideas4writers

www.ideas4writers.co.uk

Ditch Your Day Job!

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1. Introduction

How often do you think about leaving your job and becoming a writer instead? Maybe you sometimes think about it for a while but decide it's an impossible dream or something you'll have to put off until you retire. Nonsense!

I'm about to show you how you can begin your writing career today and be making a decent living from it within a few short weeks or months (depending on how much time and effort you put into it). Just set aside an hour or so each evening for the next few weeks to get your new career going, and in a surprisingly short time you could be completely independent. (How you decide to tell your boss where to stick his job is entirely up to you!)

What will your life be like then? Well, it'll probably be very similar to mine! You can picture it now: no alarm clock, no getting up while it's still dark outside, no commuting, no traffic jams, no dress code, no boss, no office politics, no telephones that ring constantly, no irate customers to deal with, no pointless meetings, no performance reviews, no threat of redundancy, no stress, choose your own hours, take time off whenever you like (at a moment's notice, with no need to get anyone's permission), have free time during the day to do things you couldn't otherwise get to, work where you like – at home, in bed, at the beach, in the open air, at the library, at your favourite coffee shop, and so on. Plus there's no limit to the amount you can earn.

It's not a pipe dream; you really *can* do this!

2. How to do it

Here's a very brief overview of how to do it. We'll explore each of these points in more detail later:

1. Write two or three newspaper or magazine articles based on the anniversaries of famous births, deaths or historic events that are coming up in the next few months.
2. Search for as many paying markets as you can find to submit these sample articles to.
3. Keep doing this until one of them accepts your work. Then start writing regular anniversary-based articles for them while you continue looking for additional markets – which will now be much easier since you are already a published writer.
4. Repeat this process until you're earning a decent wage from *multiple* markets.
5. **Ditch your day job!**
6. Self-syndicate: if you're clever about it you should be able to sell the same articles over and over again to different markets – leaving you with tons of free time to work on other projects, such as that novel you've never had time to write.

Newspapers and magazines (both online and offline) love these kinds of article – and so do their readers. Many radio shows, TV magazine shows and news websites feature them too. You can earn good money by writing anniversary articles and features for these markets.

In fact, it's probably the easiest way to launch your writing career.

3. Wait...!

Don't write any articles yet, because their length and style will vary depending on the markets you choose to write for. We'll look at this in a minute.

I'll also show you the best place to find newsworthy anniversaries to write about.

And we'll look at some ideas for increasing the saleability of your articles.

Don't actually ditch your job until you're *consistently* selling enough of your writing to cover your outgoings, and you have plenty of pre-approved article ideas lined up for the next few months. We'll explore this in more detail below.

Until you're firmly established as a writer you'll have to write in your spare time – evenings, lunch hours, weekends, or whatever time you can find. But this extra effort should only take a few weeks and will be more than worth it (read the introduction again, paying particular attention to the paragraph about what your life will be like once you've ditched your day job!)

In the meantime, your earnings from writing anniversary articles will be a useful bit of extra income. It's a brilliant form of insurance – a back-up source of income in case you ever lose your job. I recommend using it to build up a safety fund to fall back on if anything goes wrong. It's also a great way of earning a second income if you need extra money and aren't brave enough to actually ditch your job, or if (for some reason) you don't actually want to ditch it. At the very least you might be able to switch to part-time working.

4. Finding anniversaries to write about

You can get all the anniversaries you'll ever need from *The Date-A-Base Book*, published annually by ideas4writers (disclaimer: this is my company – see the links below.) Each edition gives details of thousands of newsworthy and notable anniversaries, including famous births and deaths, significant events, discoveries, inventions, and so on. You'll be able to see what will be making the news later this year, next year, or even the year after – and make money by writing about it.

The Date-A-Base Book allows you to work months in advance, so you'll have plenty of time to choose the articles you'd like to write about, decide how you'd like to tackle them (the angles or hooks you'll use to get editors interested and secure the best rates of pay), get your ideas pre-approved by the editors of the various markets you write for (so you don't waste time writing articles you can't sell), research and write the articles the editors commission, and have them edited, polished and published (or broadcast) to coincide with the anniversaries when they occur.

I've included a complete sample chapter (September) from *The Date-A-Base Book 2015* at the end of this book.

You can download an full sample copy of *The Date-A-Base Book* (last year's edition) from www.ideas4writers.co.uk/datesample so you can see what it's like.

You can buy the latest editions from www.ideas4writers.co.uk/dates.

They cost about the same as regular paperback books, but they're much bigger. Just one

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article sale should cover the cost of your copy several times over. If writing is your business, it's also an allowable expenditure, so you should be able to offset the cost of each year's edition against tax.

5. Absolute beginners start here

A great way to get started is to go through the current edition of *The Date-A-Base Book* from January to December and choose all the entries that interest you.

If you've never had anything published before, pick an anniversary that's coming up in the near future and write a letter about it to the editor of your local newspaper or your favourite magazine. (Make sure they publish readers' letters, of course.) You'll need to find a way of making your letter interesting and relevant to the publication and its readers. Look for a local angle or hook; perhaps you can spot a connection to a well-known local person or business.

It might take a few attempts, but once you've had a couple of letters published, try aiming for the 'star letter' slot if they have one. And once you've achieved that, try sending the editor an email asking about the possibility of him publishing some short articles based on anniversaries like the ones you've been writing about in your letters. Enclose a sample article so he can see the sort of thing you're planning to write. Again, if it's a local newspaper then there needs to be a local angle for every one of these articles.

Tip: there is always at least one local angle to every anniversary. You just have to find the local newspapers or magazines which cover that location. See the [full-scale example](#) later on for lots of ideas about this.

Local newspapers are a great way of getting started and gaining experience, but you'll have much greater scope with regional and national newspapers, where far more of the anniversaries will be relevant. These papers can be harder to get into though – at least until you've been published – which is why I recommend targeting local ones first. But if you live in a small town and can't find any local connections to any of the anniversaries, try writing letters (and then articles) for a regional or county-wide newspaper instead.

You should expect to get paid for these articles, of course. You won't get paid for the letters, but there might be a prize for the 'star letter'. The letters are still worth writing though, partly for the practice but mainly as a way of getting the editor's attention. The more interesting they are and the more they get readers talking (and, even better, commenting on them), the better it will be for you, and the sooner your career will take off.

Once you've had a few short articles published, ask the editor if you can write some longer ones (for more money of course). In the case of a magazine, send him three sample articles (which could all be about the same anniversary) that would fill half a page, a full page or a double-page spread in that publication. You can use the same sample articles over and over again for each publication you target – there's no need to write a new one every time. Save that for when they start paying you!

Email is fine for all of this – you'll find the address of the editorial desk in every copy of the newspaper or magazine, and it should also be on their website.

Don't be disheartened if the local or regional newspapers in your area aren't interested. There are

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hundreds more newspapers all over the country, and many thousands more all around the world. One of the biggest advantages of anniversary articles is that as well as having a local angle most of them are also universal – they're equally relevant wherever you live and wherever the publication is based. A newspaper in Australia or South Africa or Canada might be just as interested as one in the UK or the USA. You'll see this in practice when we look at the [full-scale example](#).

6. Need training?

If you don't think your writing is quite up to a high enough standard yet, it's a good idea to take an article-writing course. There are plenty of excellent courses available (see the [resources](#) section). Or, if you prefer, you could read a book about how to write articles. But make sure you do the exercises in it – most people learn by *doing* rather than by just reading about it.

My personal recommendation would be to pick one of the courses, even though they're more expensive than a book. You'll be taken through the whole process and graded on the exercises so you can see what mistakes you're making and how to correct them. You'll also have a personal tutor you can talk to (usually by email) and get your questions answered.

If you complete any of the courses listed in the [resources section](#) (which I've carefully hand-picked) you'll be fully equipped for success.

7. Your first articles

Anniversary articles are easy to write. Good ones are in high demand, and they *never* go out of fashion.

The first two or three full-length articles you write should be samples of your work – you aren't (necessarily) trying to sell them. Their main purpose is to demonstrate your capability and style of writing to editors.

Having said that, if you *do* manage to get them published that's great news and will make your job of finding more outlets for your work a lot easier. When you submit your sample articles to other editors in the future, make sure you tell them where and when they were published. Don't try to get them published again at this stage; just continue to use them as samples and ask the editors if they'd like you to write more anniversary-based articles like them.

8. Searching for paying markets

You can search for local, regional and national newspapers very easily.

Examples:

Go to google.com and enter one of the following in the search box:

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- newspapers London
- newspapers Cornwall
- newspapers north-east England
- newspapers UK
- newspapers Miami
- newspapers Florida
- newspapers USA

Most magazines have websites, and most of them have articles on those websites that have previously appeared in their magazines. (Or they might let you download or order a free sample copy of their magazine.) This will give you a good idea of the type and length of article they're looking for.

You can find lists of magazines online (see the [resources](#) section) or search for the subject you're interested in + the word 'magazine' (+ the country if it's relevant).

Examples:

Go to google.com and enter one of the following in the search box:

- gadget magazines
- cycling magazines UK
- county magazine Cornwall
- women's magazines South Africa

Note: it doesn't matter if there aren't any anniversary-based articles in the copies you study. They might still be interested in publishing your articles when they see what you have to offer. (And in fact there might actually be several anniversary-based articles in that publication, it's just that they've been adapted into other things and you can't immediately spot them. We'll look at some examples of this later on in the [full-scale example](#).)

9. How long should the articles be?

Each publication will have a slightly different requirement in terms of the length of article they're looking for. While their page sizes might be similar, they'll use different size fonts, margins, columns, photos, headlines, sub-headings, quotes, sidebars, and so on, so the word counts of their articles will differ. So a half-page article might be 400 words in some publications but 350, 375 or even 450 in others.

The best way of finding out what they're looking for is to look at the articles on the publication's website – and read their writer's guidelines page if they have one. Or look at some articles in a sample copy. Count the number of words in some of them to see how long your own articles should be.

TIP: here's a much easier way to count the number of words. Copy the whole text of the article into your word processor and get it to tell you how many words there are. If your word processor doesn't display an automatic word count, click on the File menu then select Properties and look on the Statistics page. (This method is for OpenOffice Writer, but most word processors work in a similar way. If you can't find the word count function, click on the Help menu option or press the F1 key and search for 'word count'.)

10. Altering article length – the easy way

As we've just seen, if you're sending the same article to several publications you'll probably need to alter the length slightly. Traditionally, editors trim articles to fit their publications by deleting sentences or paragraphs from the bottom upwards. So it makes sense to structure your articles so that anything that gets cut from the end can be safely removed without destroying the article's integrity or losing any vital information (such as website and email addresses, phone numbers, the name of the book you're writing about, and so on).

You might send some publications the full-length version of your article (say 400 words), while others might receive a trimmed version (perhaps 350 or 375 words). In each case, the main points of the article will be identical. Structuring your articles in this way means you can vary their length very easily (by trimming the end) without having to rewrite anything or worrying about how you'll fit everything into a smaller space.

Note: the text in the 'trimmable' zone should still be well worth having, of course, if the publication has enough space to print it. So it shouldn't be worthless 'filler' material. But it also shouldn't be *vital* information that you can't afford to lose – clever writers put that sort of thing earlier in the article, which makes trimming the article to fit the required space a very simple task.

As I mentioned earlier, it's a good idea to write *three* versions of each of your two or three sample articles, each of a different length. For example, if you're planning to write articles for magazines you could write a short version (half a magazine page), a medium version (a full page of a magazine) and a long version (a double-page spread).

Send them by email to the editor of each publication you target, along with a covering note explaining that you can supply as many anniversary-based articles as they need, and to whatever length they require.

11. Top tips

- If you're clever about it you should be able to send the same article (with minor alterations, and adjusted for length as we discussed above) to multiple markets, so you get paid many times over for the same piece of work. This is a form of [self-syndication](#), and we'll look at it in more detail later. It should also give you plenty of free time to work on other projects, such as novels, short stories, scripts, screenplays, and so on – which might be the sort of writing you'd prefer to be doing.
- Don't write exclusively for a single publication unless they offer you a lucrative exclusive contract that pays you a decent wage. It's usually far better to have multiple markets on the go, so you have plenty of flexibility: if one market dries up you'll still have all the others, and you should easily be able to find another market to replace the one that failed.

(If you do end up signing an exclusive deal you could always write for other publications under a different name. Just make sure the publication that gave you the exclusive deal never finds out about it!)

12. More great tips

- Your chances of success will improve if you let the editor know you can write longer or shorter articles to suit his needs.
- If you can write articles at very short notice (within 24 hours) let him know that too, as he might sometimes have space he's desperate to fill just before going to press. This will usually be because another writer (or an advertiser) has let him down and failed to submit their work in time. This is particularly the case with daily and weekly newspapers. Monthly publications tend to work several months in advance, so it's less of an issue for them – though it can (and does) still happen.
- Always address the editor by name (first name is usually fine). You'll get a much better response and he's far more likely to reply – if only to say he doesn't want your articles right now. Emails addressed to 'The Editor' or which just say 'Dear Sir' or 'Hello' or 'Hi' will generally get deleted after barely a glance. The editor's name will usually be on their website and in every copy of their publication, so it only takes a few seconds to look it up.

13. Getting your articles pre-approved

Once you've established good working relationships with the editors of the publications you'll write for regularly, you'll be able to send them lists of the anniversary-related articles you'd like to write (picked from *The Date-A-Base Book*), along with a couple of lines for each one that suggest the specific topic or angle you could cover.

Example:

(Article for a monthly cycling magazine)

Issue: January 2012

Hook: 125th anniversary of the first pneumatic bicycle tyre (invented by John Dunlop, 1887)

Angle: Early tyres. Why pneumatic tyres were better than solids. The evolution of tyres and tread patterns. Why solid tyres are making a comeback.

You could send each editor several pages of ideas like this, and wait to see which ones they commission before you do any research and writing. That way, you only do the work if you've got at least one guaranteed sale for each article, and you're never left with articles you can't sell.

One anniversary (or hook) could lead to several different articles (or angles), of course. In the example above you could write other articles on tubed tyres versus tubeless ones, the history of the puncture repair kit, how to repair a puncture at home or when you're out on a ride, how the pneumatic tyre changed the fortune of John Dunlop and his company, other aspects of bicycle suspension systems, different tyres for different cycling conditions (road, racing, off-road, hills, mountains, stunts), and so on. See the [full-scale example](#) for some more ideas.

Sometimes you'll have an idea for a one-off article for a magazine or newspaper that you haven't written for before. In this case it's a good idea to fire off an email to the editor asking if he'd be interested in an article about whatever anniversary/angle you've chosen. Again, don't write the

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article in advance, because you might not be able to sell it. But as you don't have a working relationship with him, give him a bit more information about what your proposed article would cover – at least four or five sentences or a bullet point outline. You should also state the proposed word count, but also mention that you're flexible and can adapt the article's length to suit his requirements.

Enclose a copy of another article of yours that has been published somewhere else (it doesn't matter what the subject matter is, as long as it was published somewhere). It would help a great deal if you can also list three to five other publications that have published your work, along with the titles of the articles and the dates when they were published. (They should all have been published recently – don't bother mentioning articles that were published more than a year ago.)

You might end up spending more of your time sending query messages to editors with lists of your articles ideas than actually writing articles, especially at the start of your career. But this is far better than spending your time writing complete articles which you later discover no one wants.

14. Spreading your wings

You don't have to limit yourself to writing articles, of course. You could write TV/radio features, books, biographies, short stories, novels, stage plays, screenplays, poems, jokes, and so on. See the [full-scale example](#) for some ideas about how you might put together a longer piece of writing based on one of the anniversaries.

15. Going full-time

If you want to make a full-time career out of this – and hopefully you will – you'll need to find enough newspapers or magazines that are willing to pay you for your work on a regular basis. (This applies equally to TV/radio stations, and so on.)

You'll also need to register as self-employed with the relevant authorities. The small business adviser at your local bank will be able to tell you how to do this. His advice should be free of charge.

16. The clever bit – self-syndication

You should often be able to sell the exact same article to several different markets – as long as their readerships or audiences don't overlap. For example, you could sell the same article to a national newspaper in several different countries, or to several local newspapers in the same country, or to many local or regional newspapers in several different countries. As we discussed above, you might need to alter the word count slightly to fit their requirements, trimming your full-length article from the bottom up.

You should *never* try to sell an article to a local or regional newspaper if an identical (or near-identical) version is also going to appear in a national newspaper in that same country, because

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some readers will end up seeing it twice. Similarly, you should avoid submitting articles where they are likely to be seen or heard multiple times: local newspapers that all serve the same area, two or more national newspapers in the same country, a newspaper and a radio or TV station that cover the same region, and so on.

However, if a local newspaper accepts your article, you could write a *different* version of it for a radio or TV station, or for a regional or national newspaper. Or you could write an extended version, or look at the subject from a different angle – see the [full-scale example](#) for some ideas.

And of course you can write several different articles about the person or event, each covering a different aspect, and send them to different magazines. The anniversary of the birth or death of a famous politician who was also known as a keen cyclist might be of interest to both cycling magazines and political magazines (and perhaps other publications too if you make the effort to find out more about his life and interests).

You'll probably have most of your research materials to hand as you write the first article (or just a click away if you do your research online), so writing several more articles about the same anniversary in the same writing session should mean very little extra work.

(Don't forget to try to get all of the articles pre-approved before you write them.)

17. A full-scale example

Here's an example, taken from *The Date-A-Base Book 2016*. The entry for 21 September 1866 (150 years ago), the birth of the British science fiction novelist H. G. Wells, caught my eye.

This entry is pretty newsworthy in itself. H. G. Wells was (and still is) a hugely important writer whose stories are still well known today, so we know his 150th birthday is going to be big news and will be featured all over the press and media. Articles about him should be welcomed by national newspapers, general magazines, science magazines, science fiction magazines and websites and blogs, news websites, and so on. TV and radio networks will undoubtedly cover the story too, so they'll be looking for ideas for shows, features, documentaries, interview subjects, and so on.

Let's start by looking at his life. Wells was born in Kent, England, so you could write a feature on his life, stories and legacy for a Kent or south-east regional newspaper and the county magazine.

The newspaper(s) covering the specific part of Kent where he was born (Bromley) should also be interested in an article that not only chronicles his life and achievements but looks at the schools he went to, the houses he lived in, his early life in the town, and so on. At the age of 13 he became a pupil-teacher at the National School in Wookey, Somerset, and that area will have its own local newspaper(s) too, so there's scope for an additional (but more or less identical) article there, since the readerships of the local newspapers serving these two towns won't overlap. He attended several other schools and lived in other towns too, so you can do the same thing for those areas. And then you can do the same thing for the other towns he lived in later in his life.

We could then move on to consider his work, which includes the classic novels *The War of the Worlds*, *The Time Machine*, *The Invisible Man* and *The Island of Doctor Moreau*. There's a great opportunity here to write literary criticisms of each of these (and the many other novels and non-fiction books he wrote) and look at how they've stood the test of time. You could also review the

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film adaptations of each of them. And you could look at the books, films, TV series, music, plays and other things they later influenced, as well as the science fiction, dystopian, utopian and steampunk movements, and so on. Writers including Isaac Asimov, Ray Bradbury, Frank Herbert and Ursula LeGuin all admit to being influenced by him. You could also look at the things that inspired him to write about those themes, and examine the ideas behind them.

Political publications and websites might be interested in his views on politics – he was a socialist and a member of the Fabian Society (at least for a while), as well as a noted pacifist.

He also had health issues, breaking his leg and being confined to bed as a young boy, which stimulated his love of books and writing. How did other writers develop their love of books? It might be worth finding out, and making an article out of it. He later suffered from diabetes, which led him to co-found the charity now known as Diabetes UK. Since diabetes is a growing problem, a great many people and publications will be interested in this, and you could easily link articles and features about diabetes and the charity he founded to the anniversary of his birth. You could even write articles that help the charity to promote itself and its work, linking it back to Wells. And what about the other co-founder, Dr R. D. Lawrence? How did he and Wells meet? How did they work together to found the charity? What were their aims? Did they achieve those aims?

During a break in his schooling Wells endured an unhappy apprenticeship to a draper – which might lead you to think about other writers and the unhappy or unsuitable jobs they've had, and how they eventually escaped from them.

During the 1930s his books were banned by the Nazis and burned. You might like to list other writers and works which suffered the same fate. And which books might the Nazis burn today if they were still around? How about other organisations in other countries?

All of this information is readily available on the Wikipedia page about him, and there are plenty of links and references at the bottom of that page to explore for further ideas. You could also look him up in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* or the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, both of which are available online, and may be accessible free of charge via your local library membership – it's well worth enquiring or checking the resources section of their website. You might also find other books and biographies about him, and you'll undoubtedly find reviews and critiques of his works in books about literary classics. You can easily find all of these things in just a few minutes online, or in a single visit to your local library, and they will all undoubtedly lead to ideas for further articles.

Note: neither Wikipedia nor Encyclopaedia Britannica are known for being 100% reliable, so it's important to cross-check your facts with other sources. But if they both give the same information then it should be safe to trust it.

In case you don't manage to sell all of these articles (or can't get them all commissioned), or you don't have time to write them all, don't throw anything away – you can use it all again in the future. Wells died in 1946, so the 75th anniversary of his death (in August 2021) isn't that far away (5 years at the time of writing). Make a note of this date and where you've kept your articles and notes, as you should be able to sell everything then. You might also be able to resell the articles that were published the first time around.

Tip: Never throw away your articles or ideas, and always keep copies of the articles you've had published. You never know when you might be able to sell them again. It's a good idea to store everything in a secure place and index it all so you can find it easily. It's also a good idea to keep a calendar that shows when you can publish your used and unused articles and ideas next time around.

18. More advanced

Some editors may tell you they don't want your articles because they can cover the stories themselves using their in-house staff. That doesn't mean you can't write for them as well.

What most editors (and TV/radio producers and so on) are looking for is something original; something that hasn't been done before. They don't (necessarily) want a summary of a famous person's life, or a potted history and timeline of an event – though it's always worth offering these things as options on your pre-approval list, as they're the easiest articles to write.

In cases like this, you'll probably have more success if you propose something different, or more compelling, or a new angle – something that ties in with the date of the event, but which will run alongside the more general features written by their own staff.

If you're writing about a person, for example, don't just focus on his life and accomplishments; have a look at the other things that went on in his life, and external things that were happening at the same time:

- the specific problems he encountered and how he overcame them or lived with them
- his hobbies, interests and passions
- his relatives and relationships
- how he was affected by wars, embargoes, government restrictions, rivalry, financial depressions, strikes, patent and legal disputes, and so on

A small amount of research on some of these could also lead to interesting articles for hobby or trade magazines – which might provide you with yet another market for your work. Remember the example from earlier, where you might discover that a famous scientist or politician who died 100 years ago was also a keen cyclist, or took part in races. Or perhaps he invented or upgraded a component or accessory or technique that became an important part of modern cycling. There are plenty of cycling magazines on the market that would undoubtedly be interested.

It's also worth searching for events, and famous people's interests (and other aspects of their lives), that tie in with your own life and interests. You might already read magazines and visit websites related to these things, so these will be excellent markets to target.

19. Going further

As always, it's a good idea to look outside the box.

For example, you might try looking at an event through the eyes of someone who was there at the time, to give an historical article a more personal feel. Write a dramatised account of what it was (probably) like to have been there and to have witnessed it or lived through it.

Or you could think about how the world might have been different if a particular person hadn't been born, or if he'd done something else, or if an event hadn't taken place, or if it had happened in a

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different way or at a different time or in a different place. This is a great way of coming up with ideas for speculative fiction and alternative history stories.

You could also use an event, or a series of them, or an alternative history of them, as background detail in a novel or screenplay. Have your characters think about the events, and talk about them. Perhaps they could influence one or more events, or be influenced by them. Perhaps they could meet the person whose anniversary it is, or witness his death or go to his funeral. Perhaps their lives change as a result of that person's death, even if they never met him.

Another option is to look for anniversaries that trigger memories and reminiscences in your mind. These could lead to all sorts of writing projects, including articles, short stories, novels, memoirs, poems, and more.

When you're looking for markets for your work, don't limit yourself to printed publications. There are plenty of online publications that need writers. Since you're planning to make a career out of this, look for the ones that will pay you.

Note: payment doesn't necessarily have to be in the form of money. For example, you might write articles for an artist's website or blog or book or magazine, and in exchange she (or one of her colleagues) might provide photos or illustrations for your articles (which can further improve your articles sales). Or perhaps she could design book covers for you – see the section on [Collected Works](#).

As we've discussed previously, don't limit yourself to your own country – there's a whole world out there that's interested in what you have to say, and most anniversaries have both local and universal aspects to them.

20. Cheating

This is something I would never do myself, but so many people do it that it's worth mentioning. The thing is, you don't have to write all of these articles yourself. In fact you don't have to write *any* of them yourself. You can simply get your ideas pre-approved and then pass the writing part over to someone else, specifying the topic, hook, angle, style or tone, and word count you need.

For example, you can easily find talented article writers on websites such as [fiverr.com](#), which (as the name implies) charges \$5 per task.

You might wonder how good an article can be if it only costs you \$5. But there are lots of well-educated English-speaking people living in low-waged countries where \$5 is a lot of money. If they can churn out 10 articles per day, that's \$50 earned (\$40 actually because fiverr keeps \$1 per task for itself). That might be the equivalent of a week's wages over there, so being able to earn that in a single day – while working from home – is a big deal for them. You might have to try a few writers before you find one that produces articles to your standard, but once you do it's worth sticking with them.

You can then put your name on the article and send it off to the editor as if you'd written it yourself, earning considerably more than \$5 for doing so. So you make your money by finding paid outlets for articles and commissioning them, rather than by writing the articles yourself. That makes you a kind of broker rather than a writer.

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Even if an article isn't quite what you wanted, you can always edit it a little and rephrase it the way you would have done if you'd written it yourself. It's still a lot faster and easier than writing the whole thing from scratch.

If you don't have the writing skills, or if you get overwhelmed with too many editors wanting articles from you, this is an option you could consider. If you can find enough paid markets (and there really is no shortage of them) and work with multiple writers, you could make a fortune.

21. Collected works

Once you've been writing for a while and you've written a good number of articles on the same theme or subject (such as cycling, or famous politicians or scientists, or whatever your main interests or specialisms are) you could consider putting a collection of them into book form. How many articles you'd need would depend on their length. You'd probably need at least 40 to 50 longer articles, or up to 200 shorter ones.

If you have a weekly column, it might take you a couple of years or more to build up enough articles. But a book of your collected columns is still worth doing, and by that time you should have a decent following of readers who will be interested in buying it. (All you have to do is mention it in your column and let your readers know where they can buy it.)

If you have columns in several different publications you can obviously do this for each of them. So you might end up with several books to your name without doing any additional writing.

22. Timing

Timing is vitally important, of course. You need to start work well in advance of the anniversary, so that your finished piece of writing appears in print – or on stage or screen or radio – at exactly the right time. As I mentioned earlier, most monthly magazines work several months in advance. If you're writing an article for the December issue they might want the finished piece by September at the latest, and perhaps as early as June or July. If you're writing for the stage or screen you might need to have your script ready more than a year before the anniversary occurs. If you're going to get your ideas pre-approved before you write them (which you definitely should) then you'll need to allow enough time for this extra step too.

All of which means you should look at getting the next edition of *The Date-A-Base Book* as soon as it becomes available!

23. Pass it on

If you know anyone who hates their job or who has ever expressed an interest in becoming a writer but can't seem to find the time to do it, please give them a copy of this book. You can forward it to as many people as you like, free of charge, or you can print out a copy and send it to them.

24. Keep in touch

I would dearly love to hear from you if you manage to make a successful career from writing anniversary articles in the way I've discussed in this book. Let me know what sort of job you were doing before you became a writer, how you felt about that job, how it felt to ditch it (and how you did it!) and how much of a difference being a writer has made to your life.

You can email me at dave@ideas4writers.co.uk

Good luck!

Dave Haslett
March 2015 (and updated February 2016)

Keep reading for some useful resources and a complete sample chapter from *The Date-A-Base Book 2016* to help you get started.

25. Resources

The Date-A-Base Book

Free sample copy (last year's edition): www.ideas4writers.co.uk/datesample

Current editions: www.ideas4writers.co.uk/dates

Recommended article-writing courses

www.writersbureau.com/courses/article-writing/

www.writers-online.co.uk/Writing-Courses/Courses/36/Article_writing_and_Freelance_Journalism

www.stonebridge.uk.com/course/writing-saleable-articles

Magazine Listings

UK:

www.amazon.co.uk (Newsstand department)

www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk

USA:

www.amazon.com (Magazine Subscriptions department)

www.magazines.com

For other countries go to google.com and search for:

magazines + subject + country

Full chapter for September
from *The Date-A-Base Book 2016*

400 years ago (15 Sep 1616)

The first free public school in Europe was established in Frascati, Italy by Spanish priest Joseph Calasanz.

250 years ago (6 Sep 1766)

Birth of John Dalton, pioneering British chemist, physicist and meteorologist who helped develop modern atomic theory. He is also known for his research into colour blindness.

250 years ago (25 Sep 1766)

Birth of Armand-Emmanuel de Vignerot du Plessis, Duc de Richelieu, Prime Minister of France (1815–18, 1820–21).

250 years ago (29 Sep 1766)

Birth of Charlotte, Princess Royal, eldest daughter of King George III of the United Kingdom. Queen consort of Württemberg (1806–16).

200 years ago (5 Sep 1816)

King Louis XVIII of France dissolved the *Chambre introuvable* (Unobtainable Chamber). The lower chamber of the French parliament was dominated by Ultra-royalists who refused to accept the results of the French Revolution and were determined to restore France to its previous state, favouring the aristocracy and clergy.

200 years ago (11 Sep 1816)

Birth of Carl Zeiss, German industrialist. Renowned for his high quality lenses and optical instruments.

200 years ago (15 Sep 1816)

The British schooner *HMS Whiting* ran aground on Doom Bar in Cornwall and was wrecked. (The Royal Navy had seized the ship from the USA in May 1812 for trading with the French. It was previously known as *Arrow*.)

175 years ago (8 Sep 1841)

Birth of Antonin Dvořák, Czech composer.

175 years ago (11 Sep 1841)

Following U.S. President John Tyler's second veto of the Banking Bill, his entire cabinet (apart from Secretary of State Daniel Webster) resigned. This was an attempt to force Tyler himself to resign. When he did not, he was expelled from the Whig Party and received hundreds of death threats. There was also an attempt to impeach him the following year.

175 years ago (21 Sep 1841)

The London to Brighton railway line opened.

175 years ago (24 Sep 1841)

The Sultan of Brunei ceded Sarawak to British adventurer James Brooke in return for his help in fighting piracy and insurgency. Brooke was appointed Governor of Sarawak and became the first White Rajah. Sarawak was an independent state until 1888 when it became a British protectorate.

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175 years ago (28 Sep 1841)

Birth of Georges Clemenceau, Prime Minister of France (1906–09, 1917–20). He played a leading role in the Allied victory in WWI and was one of the principal architects of the Treaty of Versailles.

150 years ago (1 Sep 1866)

Birth of James Corbett, ('Gentleman Jim'), American world heavyweight boxing champion (1892–97).

150 years ago (4 Sep 1866)

Birth of Simon Lake, American engineer, naval architect and inventor. Best known for the *Argonaut* – the first submarine to operate extensively in the open sea.

150 years ago (7 Sep 1866)

Birth of Tristan Bernard, French playwright, novelist, journalist and lawyer.

150 years ago (8 Sep 1866)

The world's first known sextuplets were born, to James and Jennie Bushnell of Chicago, Illinois, USA. (2 of the babies died in their first year but the others survived to adulthood. Their parents were deeply humiliated that they were the parents of sextuplets and kept it a secret, even from the children themselves.)

150 years ago (10 Sep 1866)

Birth of Jeppe Aakjær, Danish regionalist poet and novelist who wrote about his native Jutland.

150 years ago (12 Sep 1866)

The musical play *The Black Crook* opened on Broadway. Many commentators consider it the prototype of the modern musical.

150 years ago (14 Sep 1866)

George K. Anderson of Tennessee, USA was granted a patent for the typewriter ribbon. (The first commercially successful typewriter was patented by Christopher Latham Sholes in June 1868.)

150 years ago (21 Sep 1866)

Birth of Charles Nicolle, French bacteriologist. Winner of the 1928 Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine for his discovery that typhus was transmitted by lice.

150 years ago (21 Sep 1866)

Birth of H. G. Wells, British science fiction novelist (*The War of the Worlds*, *The Time Machine*, *The Invisible Man*, *The Island of Doctor Moreau*).

150 years ago (22 Sep 1866)

Paraguayan War – the Battle of Curupayty. Paraguayan forces successfully repelled an attack by the allied forces of Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay.

150 years ago (25 Sep 1866)

Birth of Thomas Hunt Morgan, American evolutionary biologist and geneticist. Best known for his experiments on fruit flies. Winner of the 1933 Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine for his research on the role of the chromosome in heredity.

125 years ago (9 Sep 1891 – or 19th?)

Death of Jules Grévy, President of France (1879–87).

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125 years ago (14 Sep 1891)

The first penalty kick in the English Football League was taken by Wolverhampton Wanderers in their match against Accrington. (The world's first penalty kick was taken by Airdrieonians in June 1891.)

125 years ago (16 Sep 1891)

Birth of Karl Dönitz, German naval commander who became President of Germany for 20 days in 1945 following the death of Adolf Hitler.

125 years ago (18 Sep 1891)

British colonial politician Leander Starr Jameson became Chief Magistrate (effectively the Administrator) of the British South Africa Company Territory (now Zimbabwe).

125 years ago (18 Sep 1891)

Harriet Maxwell Converse of New York, USA became the first white woman to be named a chief of the Six Nations Tribe.

125 years ago (28 Sep 1891)

Death of Herman Melville, American novelist, short story writer and poet. Best known for his novel *Moby Dick*.

100 years ago (1 Sep 1916)

World War I: Bulgaria declared war on Romania.

100 years ago (3 Sep 1916)

World War I: the first German airship to be shot down over Britain. The airship *SLIII* had just bombed St. Albans in Hertfordshire when it was spotted by searchlights, hit by incendiary ammunition, and crashed near Cuffley. There were no survivors.

100 years ago (5 Sep 1916)

Birth of Frank Shuster, Canadian comedian and writer. Known for his 50-year comedy partnership with Johnny Wayne (Wayne and Shuster).

100 years ago (5 Sep 1916)

Birth of Frank Yerby, African American historical novelist. He spent most of his life in Spain due to racial discrimination in the USA.

100 years ago (8 Sep 1916)

Two American sisters, Adelina and August Van Buren, became the first women to cross the USA on motorcycles. They set off from New York City on 4th July and arrived in Los Angeles, California on 8th September. They continued to San Diego, arriving on 12th September, and then to Tijuana, Mexico. During the crossing they got lost in the desert and had to be rescued when their water ran out, and were arrested for 'wearing men's clothing'.

100 years ago (11 Sep 1916)

The Quebec Bridge in Canada collapsed for the second time while it was being constructed, killing 13 workers. (It had previously collapsed in August 1907 when 75 workers were killed – the world's worst bridge construction disaster. It was finally completed in August 1919 and opened that December. Its centre span is the longest cantilevered bridge span in the world at 549 metres [1,800 feet].)

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100 years ago (13 Sep 1916)

Birth of Roald Dahl, British novelist, short story writer and screenwriter (*Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *James and the Giant Peach*, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, *Matilda*, *Fantastic Mr. Fox*, *The BFG* and more).

100 years ago (13 Sep 1916)

Death of Mary the elephant, Asian circus elephant hanged in Tennessee, USA after she killed an assistant trainer who poked her face (she was later found to have a severely infected tooth in that spot). Reports vary – some claim she gored the trainer to death with her tusks (female Asian elephants don't have tusks). Her death is now considered a case of animal abuse.

100 years ago (14 Sep 1916)

Birth of Eric Bentley, British-born American theatre critic, theatrical director, singer, playwright and translator. He introduced the works of many European playwrights to U.S. audiences.

100 years ago (14 Sep 1916 – or 4th?)

Death of José Echegaray y Eizaguirre, Spanish playwright, mathematician and statesman. Winner of the 1904 Nobel Prize for Literature.

100 years ago (15 Sep 1916)

The first use of a tank in battle. The D1 was used by the British Army during the WWI Battle of Flers–Courcelette (part of the Battle of the Somme in France).

100 years ago (15 Sep 1916)

Birth of Margaret Lockwood, British stage, film and television actress. One of the most popular stars of the 1940s (*The Lady Vanishes*, *The Man in Grey*, *Love Story*, *Wicked Lady* and more).

100 years ago (15 Sep 1916)

Birth of Frederick C. Weyand, U.S. Army general. Commander of U.S. military operations in Vietnam (1972–73). U.S. Army Chief of Staff (1974–76).

100 years ago (16 Sep 1916)

Birth of Robert Llewellyn Bradshaw, first Premier of Saint Kitts and Nevis (1967–78) who helped lead the country to independence. (It did not become fully independent from the UK until 5 years after his death.)

100 years ago (17 Sep 1916)

World War I: German fighter ace Manfred von Richthofen ('The Red Baron') won his first aerial combat, over Cambrai, France. (He is credited with more than 80 air combat victories.)

100 years ago (17 Sep 1916)

Birth of Mary Stewart, British novelist. Chiefly known for her popular gothic romance novels, but best known for her trilogy of historical fantasy novels about the magician Merlin.

100 years ago (18 Sep 1916)

Birth of Rossano Brazzi, immensely popular Italian film and television actor and 1940s screen idol. He gave up a promising legal career to pursue acting and also worked with the Italian Resistance during WWII. His films include *Little Women*, *The Barefoot Contessa*, *Three Coins in the Fountain* and *South Pacific*.

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100 years ago (20 Sep 1916)

Birth of Sid Chaplin, British novelist, television screenwriter, short story writer and poet. Noted for his works set in north-east England during the 1940s and 50s.

100 years ago (20 Sep 1916)

Birth of Malik Meraj Khalid, Pakistani left-wing statesman and Marxist philosopher. Acting Prime Minister of Pakistan (1996–97).

100 years ago (21 Sep 1916)

Birth of Françoise Giroud, Swiss-born French journalist, writer, screenwriter and politician. Co-founder and editor of *L'Express*. Editor of *Elle*. Minister of Women's Affairs (1974–76). Minister of Culture (1976–77).

100 years ago (23 Sep 1916)

Birth of Aldo Moro, Prime Minister of Italy (1963–68, 1974–76). Kidnapped and killed by left-wing terrorists in 1978.

100 years ago (27 Sep 1916)

Zewditu I became Empress of Ethiopia – the first female head of an internationally recognized African state.

100 years ago (27 Sep 1916)

Birth of S. Yizhar, Israeli novelist, scholar and politician.

100 years ago (28 Sep 1916)

Birth of Peter Finch, award-winning British-born stage and film actor (*Far from the Madding Crowd*, *Sunday Bloody Sunday*, *Network*).

100 years ago (28 Sep 1916)

Birth of Olga Lepeshinskaya, Russian ballerina and teacher. One of the most popular stars of the Bolshoi Ballet for 30 years. She won many awards and honours including the Stalin Prize (4 times), the Order of Lenin, and People's Artist of USSR.

100 years ago (29 Sep 1916)

American business magnate John D. Rockefeller became the world's first billionaire. (He is considered the richest person in history. His fortune at the time of his death in 1937 was worth more than 1.5% of the U.S. economy – equivalent to \$336 billion today.)

90 years ago (1 Sep 1926)

France established the Lebanese Republic (now Lebanon).

90 years ago (8 Sep 1926)

Germany was admitted to the League of Nations. (Spain immediately withdrew in protest, as Brazil had done in June.)

90 years ago (11 Sep 1926)

The Aloha Tower in Honolulu Harbor, Hawaii was officially opened. The lighthouse is one of the most important landmarks in Hawaii.

90 years ago (23 Sep 1926)

Birth of John Coltrane, iconic American jazz saxophonist, bandleader and composer. (Died 1967.)

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90 years ago (26 Sep 1926)

Birth of Julie London, American jazz / pop singer and film and television actress. Known for the song *Cry Me a River* and for her role as nurse Dixie McCall in the TV series *Emergency!* (Died 2000.)

80 years ago (5 Sep 1936)

Death of Gustave Kahn, French Symbolist poet, art critic and literary theorist. He claimed to be the inventor of free verse, and was one of its leading exponents.

80 years ago (6 Sep 1936)

British aviation pioneer Beryl Markham became the first person to fly non-stop from Britain to North America, and the first woman to fly solo from east to west across the Atlantic Ocean.

80 years ago (7 Sep 1936)

The last surviving thylacine (the Tasmanian tiger or Tasmanian wolf) died at Hobart Zoo, Tasmania, and the species became extinct.

80 years ago (7 Sep 1936)

Birth of Buddy Holly, influential American rock and roll singer and songwriter (*Peggy Sue, That'll be the Day, Oh Boy!*). (Died 1959.)

80 years ago (9 Sep 1936)

Adolf Hitler revealed his Four-Year Plan in a speech before the Labour Front in Nuremberg. He stated that Germany was overpopulated and could not feed itself from its own resources. It should extend its living space and/or the source of its food. In order to achieve this, the German Army must become operational within 4 years and the German economy must become fit for war within 4 years. (Hermann Göring was put in charge of the implementing the plan on 18th October and was granted extraordinary powers.)

80 years ago (11 Sep 1936)

The Boulder Dam (now the Hoover Dam) in Nevada, USA was dedicated by U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

80 years ago (14 Sep 1936)

American neurologists Walter Freeman and James Watts performed the first prefrontal lobotomy in the USA.

80 years ago (14 Sep 1936)

Death of Irving Thalberg, Academy Award-winning American film producer who was largely responsible for the success of MGM.

80 years ago (19 Sep 1936)

Birth of Al Oerter, American discus thrower. The first athlete to win a gold medal for the same event at 4 consecutive Olympics (1956, 1960, 1964, 1968). (Died 2007.)

80 years ago (24 Sep 1936)

Birth of Jim Henson, American puppeteer. Creator of the Muppets. (Died 1990.)

80 years ago (25 Sep 1936)

Birth of Juliet Prowse, Indian-born South African actress and dancer. (Died 1996.)

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80 years ago (30 Sep 1936)

Pinewood Studios in England was officially opened.

75 years ago (1 Sep 1941)

World War II: Nazi Germany issued a decree ordering all Jews in Germany and occupied territories to wear a yellow Star of David badge.

75 years ago (3 Sep 1941?)

Holocaust: the first gas chamber experiments were conducted at Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland. Karl Fritzsche, the deputy camp commandant, used Zyklon B (a cyanide-based pesticide) to kill a group of Soviet prisoners of war. This method of extermination proved effective and led to the deaths of more than 1 million people in Nazi extermination camps.

(Some sources give the date as the end of August 1941.)

75 years ago (4 Sep 1941)

World War II: the Greer incident. In a disputed incident, a German submarine apparently fired 2 torpedoes at the U.S. destroyer *USS Greer* which was en route to Iceland. (Both torpedoes missed). Germany, however, claimed that the Greer had initiated the attack, targeting its submarine with depth charges. The Greer was flying the American flag and the USA had not yet entered the war. (On 11th September U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared the incident an act of piracy and said any German submarines spotted in waters which the USA considered vital to its defence would be shot on sight.)

75 years ago (8 Sep 1941 – 27 Jan 1944)

World War II: the siege of Leningrad (Russia, Soviet Union). Soviet victory.

75 years ago (9 Sep 1941)

Birth of Otis Redding, American soul singer and songwriter. (Died 1967.)

75 years ago (10 Sep 1941)

Birth of Stephen Jay Gould, influential American palaeontologist, evolutionary biologist, popular science writer and teacher. Noted for his theory of punctuated equilibrium. (Died 2002.)

75 years ago (10 Sep 1941)

Birth of Gunpei (also spelled Gumpei) Yokoi, Japanese inventor, video game designer and entrepreneur who created the Nintendo Game Boy. (Died 1997.)

75 years ago (11 Sep 1941)

Construction work began on the Pentagon – the headquarters of the U.S. Department of Defense – in Arlington, Virginia. (It opened in Jan 1943.)

75 years ago (11 Sep 1941)

Death of Christian (also spelled Khristian) Rakovsky, Bulgarian socialist revolutionary and Russian Bolshevik politician who became a leading political figure and diplomat in the Soviet Union. (Sentenced to 20 years hard labour in 1938 for conspiring to overthrow Stalin. Executed on Stalin's orders in the Medvedev Forest massacre.)

75 years ago (12 Sep 1941 – or 9th?)

Death of Hans Spemann, German embryologist. Winner of the 1935 Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine for discovering the organiser effect in embryonic development.

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75 years ago (16 Sep 1941)

The Shah of Iran, Reza Khan Pahlavi, abdicated and was succeeded by his son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi.

75 years ago (19 Sep 1941)

Birth of Cass Elliot, ('Mama Cass'), American singer. Best known as a member of The Mamas & the Papas. (Died 1974.)

75 years ago (24 Sep 1941)

Birth of Linda McCartney, American-born British photographer, singer, musician, animal rights activist and promoter of vegetarianism. Wife of the Beatles musician Paul McCartney. (Died 1998.)

75 years ago (26 Sep 1941)

The U.S. Army Military Police Corps was established.

75 years ago (27 Sep 1941)

Liberty Fleet Day. 14 'emergency' ships were launched at shipyards across the USA. The first was the *SS Patrick Henry* – the first of 2,710 Liberty Ships produced between 1941 and 1945.

75 years ago (29 – 30 Sep 1941)

Holocaust: Babi Yar massacre, near Kiev, Ukraine. The Nazis killed more than 33,000 Jews, machine-gunning them into a ravine.

75 years ago (29 Sep 1941)

Birth of Fred West, British serial killer who killed at least 11 young women (including family members) with his wife Rosemary at their home in Gloucester. (Committed suicide in 1995.)

70 years ago (2 Sep 1946)

The Interim Government of India was formed. Its role was to assist India and Pakistan's transition from British rule to independence (in Aug 1947).

70 years ago (2 Sep 1946)

Birth of Billy Preston, American R&B / rock / soul / funk / gospel keyboard player, singer and songwriter. He worked with acts including Little Richard, Syreeta, Sam Cooke, the Beatles, Sly & the Family Stone, the Rolling Stones, Ray Charles, and Eric Clapton as well as being a successful solo artist. (Died 2006.)

70 years ago (5 Sep 1946)

Birth of Freddie Mercury, Zanzibar-born British rock singer and songwriter (Queen). (Died 1991.)

70 years ago (19 Sep 1946)

Former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill gave a speech at the University of Zurich, Switzerland in which he called for a United States of Europe and the creation of a Council of Europe. (The Council of Europe was founded in May 1949. Churchill became PM again in October 1951.)

70 years ago (20 Sep 1946)

The first Cannes Film Festival was held. (It ran until 5th October.)

70 years ago (24 Sep 1946)

Cathay Pacific Airways was founded in Hong Kong.

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70 years ago (27 Sep 1946)

Birth of Robin Nedwell, British stage and television actor. Best known for his role as Duncan Waring in the TV comedy series *Doctor in the House*. Also known for the TV series *The Lovers*, the comedy drama *Shillingbury Tales* and more. (Died 1999.)

70 years ago (29 Sep 1946)

The BBC Third Programme was launched. The national radio network became one of the leading cultural and intellectual forces in Britain. (It was incorporated into BBC Radio 3 in 1970.)

65 years ago (1 Sep 1951)

The ANZUS Pact, a security treaty, was signed by the USA, Australia and New Zealand in San Francisco, California, USA.

65 years ago (4 Sep 1951)

The first live coast-to-coast TV broadcast in the USA: U.S. President Harry S. Truman's opening speech from the Japanese peace treaty conference in San Francisco, California (see below.)

65 years ago (8 Sep 1951)

49 countries signed the San Francisco Peace Treaty (also known as the Treaty of San Francisco, or the Treaty of Peace with Japan).

65 years ago (10 Sep 1951)

Britain began an economic boycott of Iran following Iran's nationalisation of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company.

65 years ago (11 Sep 1951)

Florence Chadwick of the USA became the first woman to swim the English Channel in both directions. (The France-England stage was completed on 8th August 1950. The more difficult England-France stage was completed on 10th September 1951. She broke the women's record for swimming the channel on both occasions.)

65 years ago (11 Sep 1951)

Igor Stravinsky's opera *The Rake's Progress* was performed for the first time, in Venice, Italy.

65 years ago (13 Sep – 15 Oct 1951)

Korean War – the Battle of Heartbreak Ridge. United Nations victory.

65 years ago (18 Sep 1951)

Birth of Dee Dee Ramone, American punk rock musician and songwriter (The Ramones). (Died 2002.) (Some sources give his year of birth as 1952 but this appears to be incorrect.)

65 years ago (22 Sep 1951)

The first live coast-to-coast TV broadcast of a sporting event in the USA. NBC broadcast a college football game between Duke University and the University of Pittsburgh.

60 years ago (3 Sep 1956)

Birth of Pat McGeown, Northern Irish political figure. Best known for taking part in a 1981 hunger strike while in prison for his role in an IRA bombing in Belfast. He resumed his political activities upon his release. (Died in 1996 from heart disease caused by the hunger strike.)

Ditch Your Day Job!

60 years ago (4 Sep 1956)

IBM introduced the world's first commercial hard disk drive – the 350 Disk Storage Unit. It could hold 5Mb of data on a tower of fifty 24-inch magnetised platters. (On 13th September IBM launched the 305 RAMAC computer – the first commercial computer to be equipped with a hard drive. It was officially announced in Sept 1958, though it had already been in use for 2 years.)

60 years ago (8 Sep 1956)

Birth of Fad Gadget (real name: Frank Tovey), British avant-garde electronic musician and singer. Noted for his bleak lyrics, expressionless voice and mechanised industrial sounds. (Died 2002.)

60 years ago (9 Sep 1956)

Elvis Presley made his first appearance on The Ed Sullivan Show.

60 years ago (11 Sep 1956)

Death of Billy Bishop, Canadian WWI fighter pilot. The top Canadian fighter ace of the war – he shot down 72 enemy aircraft. Awarded the Victoria Cross. He also helped found the Royal Canadian Air Force.

60 years ago (12 Sep 1956)

Quiz-rigging scandal: the first episode of the television quiz show *Twenty-One* was broadcast in the USA. Producer Dan Enright called it 'a dismal failure' as neither contestant could answer the questions. Subsequent episodes were rigged – contestants were given a coaching session ahead of each broadcast, which included the answers they were expected to give. The show became the subject of a Senate investigation that almost led to the demise of the TV quiz show genre. (The film *Quiz Show* is based on these events.)

60 years ago (12 Sep 1956)

Birth of Leslie Cheung, award-winning Hong Kong singer and film actor. Enormously popular throughout Asia. One of the founders of Cantopop. (Died 2003.)

60 years ago (12 Sep 1956)

Death of Hans Carossa, prize-winning German novelist and poet. Noted for his autobiographical novels.

60 years ago (16 Sep 1956)

The first regular television service began in Australia (TCN9 Sydney). It was officially opened on 27th October.

60 years ago (16 Sep 1956)

Play-Doh modelling compound went on sale in the USA. (It was originally sold as a wallpaper cleaning compound but was relaunched as a modelling compound when the inventor's nephew discovered that nursery school children were using it to make Christmas ornaments.)

60 years ago (22 Sep 1956)

Death of Frederick Soddy, British chemist. Winner of the 1921 Nobel Prize for Chemistry for his investigations of radioactive substances and for his contributions to the theory of isotopes. He was also a co-discoverer of plutonium.

60 years ago (25 Sep 1956)

The first undersea transatlantic telephone cable, TAT-1, went into service. It could carry 36 simultaneous calls (later increased to 48 and then to 72). (It was retired in 1978. Earlier cables had only carried telegraph signals.)

Ditch Your Day Job!

60 years ago (27 Sep 1956)

American test pilot Milburn G. Apt became the first man to exceed Mach 3 (3 times the speed of sound), flying a Bell X-2 rocket plane over Edwards Air Force Base in California. The plane tumbled and crashed on its way back to base after the flight, and he was killed.

60 years ago (27 Sep 1956)

Death of Babe Didrikson Zaharias, American sportswoman. One of the greatest athletes of the 20th century. A star of basketball, track and field, and golf.

60 years ago (28 Sep 1956)

Death of William Boeing, American aviation pioneer and aircraft manufacturer who founded the Boeing Company.

60 years ago (30 Sep 1956 – 24 Sep 1957)

Algerian War – the Battle of Algiers. French victory.

50 years ago (6 Sep 1966)

Death of Margaret Sanger, American nurse and birth control activist. She opened the first birth control clinic in the USA and coined the term 'birth control'.

50 years ago (6 Sep 1966)

Death of Hendrik Verwoerd, Prime Minister of South Africa (1958–66) who developed and implemented apartheid. (Assassinated.)

50 years ago (8 Sep 1966)

The Severn Bridge was officially opened. It links England and Wales, spanning the River Severn and River Wye.

50 years ago (8 Sep 1966)

The first episode of the science fiction television series *Star Trek* was broadcast on NBC in the USA.

50 years ago (8 Sep 1966)

The first episode of the television series *Tarzan* was broadcast on NBC in the USA.

50 years ago (9 Sep 1966)

The National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act was signed into law in the USA following an alarming increase in deaths and injuries on the roads. It led to the creation of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration which introduced many important safety-related changes to road and vehicle design and driver behaviour.

50 years ago (12 Sep 1966)

NASA launched its *Gemini II* manned spacecraft with astronauts Pete Conrad and Dick Gordon on board. (It returned to Earth safely on 15th September after performing tethering, docking, space walk and artificial gravity tests.)

50 years ago (12 Sep 1966)

The first episode of the television sitcom *Family Affair* was broadcast on CBS in the USA. (It ran until September 1971.)

Ditch Your Day Job!

50 years ago (12 Sep 1966)

The first episode of the musical sitcom *The Monkees* was broadcast on NBC TV in the USA. (It ran until March 1968 and launched the music career of the pop/rock band The Monkees.)

50 years ago (14 Sep 1966)

Death of Gertrude Berg, award-winning American actress, producer and screenwriter. Best known for her popular long-running comedy drama *The Rise of the Goldbergs* (later known as *The Goldbergs*) which appeared on radio, television, stage and film.

50 years ago (15 Sep 1966)

In response to the University of Texas at Austin spree shooting (1st August 1966) U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson urged Congress to pass gun control legislation. (It was passed 2 years later.)

50 years ago (16 Sep 1966)

The Metropolitan Opera House officially opened at the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, New York City, USA.

50 years ago (17 Sep 1966)

The first episode of the action/adventure series *Mission: Impossible* was broadcast on CBS TV in the USA. (It ran until 1973, then from 1988 to 1990, and then became a popular series of movies starring Tom Cruise.)

50 years ago (20 Sep 1966)

NASA launched its lunar lander *Surveyor 2* on a mission to achieve a soft landing on the Moon and photograph its surface for the Apollo missions. (The mission failed: a mid-course correction failure caused the spacecraft to start tumbling, and it crashed into the lunar surface on 23rd September.)

50 years ago (21 Sep 1966)

Death of Paul Reynaud, Prime Minister of France (1940 for 3 months) who attempted (unsuccessfully) to save France from Nazi occupation.

50 years ago (28 Sep 1966)

Death of André Breton, French writer and poet. One of the key founders of Surrealism.

50 years ago (29 Sep 1966)

The Chevrolet Camaro went on sale in the USA. It was designed to compete with the Ford Mustang.

50 years ago (30 Sep 1966)

Botswana gained its independence from the UK. Seretse Khama became its first president.

50 years ago (30 Sep 1966)

Nazi war criminals Albert Speer and Baldur von Schirach were released from Spandau Prison after 20 years. Their release was a worldwide media event. (Spandau now held just one remaining prisoner, Deputy Führer Rudolf Hess. He remained there until his death in 1987. The prison was then demolished to prevent it from becoming a neo-Nazi shrine.)

40 years ago (1 Sep 1976)

Meadowlands Racetrack opened in East Rutherford, New Jersey, USA.

Ditch Your Day Job!

40 years ago (3 Sep 1976)

NASA's *Viking 2* lander landed on Mars. It photographed the surface, analysed soil samples and searched for signs of life. One of the experiments gave a positive result for life, but the result is now disputed and is generally considered a false positive.

40 years ago (5 Sep 1976?)

The first episode of the television series *The Muppet Show* was broadcast on ITV in the UK (after failing to get picked up by U.S. networks). (Various dates are given for the first episode including 5th, 13th and 19th September. The 5th and 13th might be the dates when two pilot shows made in 1974 and 1975 were broadcast, with Series 1 beginning on 19th – but we're not entirely sure. It ran for 5 series until March 1981.)

40 years ago (9 Sep 1976)

Death of Mao Zedong, (Chairman Mao), Chinese communist leader. The founding father and chairman (head of state) of the People's Republic of China. (His funeral took place on 18th September in Tiananmen Square, Beijing and was attended by millions of people.)

40 years ago (10 Sep 1976)

Death of Dalton Trumbo, American screenwriter and novelist. Blacklisted by Hollywood for refusing to testify about alleged communist involvement, during which time he wrote under pseudonyms and won an Academy Award. Best known for *Kitty Foyle*, *Thirty Seconds over Tokyo*, *The Brave One*, *Exodus* and *Spartacus*.

40 years ago (16 Sep 1976)

The Episcopalian Church in the USA approved the ordination of women as priests and bishops. (The first women – the Philadelphia 11 – had already been ordained in July 1974, though the church had labelled their ordination invalid and irregular.)

40 years ago (16 Sep 1976)

Shavarsh Karapetyan, the world champion finswimmer, saved the lives of 20 passengers on a trolleybus which crashed into Yerevan Lake in Armenia and sank. (He was seriously injured during the rescue and it ended his sports career. He also famously rescued several people from a burning building in February 1985.)

40 years ago (17 Sep 1976)

NASA unveiled its first Space Shuttle *Enterprise*. It was only used for testing and did not have an engine or heat shield so was incapable of space flight. Its first test flight was on 18th February 1977. (The first shuttle to fly into space, Columbia, was launched on 12th April 1981.)

40 years ago (18 Sep 1976)

The Reverend Sun Myung Moon held a 'God Bless America' festival and rally at the Washington Monument in Washington D.C., USA. About 300,000 people attended.

40 years ago (22 Sep 1976)

The first episode of the crime drama series *Charlie's Angels* was broadcast on ABC TV in the USA. (It ran for 5 series until June 1981.)

40 years ago (24 Sep 1976)

The Government of Rhodesia agreed to introduce black majority rule within 2 years. (It was introduced on 1st June 1979. Rhodesia was renamed Zimbabwe–Rhodesia the same day. It became Zimbabwe in April 1980.)

Ditch Your Day Job!

40 years ago (26 Sep 1976)

Death of Leopold Ruzicka, Croatian-born Swiss chemist. Joint winner of the 1939 Nobel Prize for Chemistry for his work on polymethylenes and terpenes.

40 years ago (28 Sep 1976)

The album *Songs in the Key of Life* by Stevie Wonder was released.

30 years ago (4 Sep 1986)

Death of Hank Greenberg, ('Hammerin' Hank'), American baseball player who became the sport's first Jewish superstar.

30 years ago (5 Sep 1986)

Pan Am Flight 73 hijacking, Karachi Airport, Pakistan. Members of the Palestinian Abu Nidal Organisation hijacked a Pan Am jet with approximately 360 passengers on board. 22 people were killed and over 150 injured when authorities stormed the plane.

30 years ago (6 Sep 1986)

Terrorists from the Abu Nidal Organisation killed 22 people in the Neve Shalom synagogue in Istanbul, Turkey. (See also: 5th September above.)

30 years ago (6 Sep 1986)

Death of Blanche Sweet, American silent film actress.

30 years ago (7 Sep 1986)

Desmond Tutu became Archbishop of Cape Town – the first black person to lead the Anglican Church in South Africa.

30 years ago (7 Sep 1986)

General Augusto Pinochet, President of Chile, escaped with minor injuries when his motorcade was violently attacked in an assassination attempt near Santiago. 5 bodyguards were killed.

30 years ago (8 – 17 Sep 1986)

A wave of Middle Eastern terrorist bombings hit Paris, France. In 5 attacks on a post office, restaurant, bar, police headquarters and a clothing store, 11 people were killed and 159 injured.

30 years ago (8 Sep 1986)

The Oprah Winfrey Show was first broadcast in the USA.

30 years ago (9 Sep 1986)

American educator Frank Reed, director of the Lebanese International School in Beirut, Lebanon, was taken hostage by Islamic militants. (Released April 1990.)

30 years ago (12 Sep 1986)

Death of Jacques Henri Lartigue, French photographer and artist. Noted for his informal approach to everyday subjects. He was more concerned with capturing spontaneity and movement than in craft or technique.

30 years ago (12 Sep 1986)

Joseph Cicippio, acting controller of the American University of Beirut, Lebanon, was kidnapped by Islamic Jihad. (Released December 1991.)

Ditch Your Day Job!

30 years ago (15 Sep 1986)

The first episode of the legal drama series *LA Law* was broadcast on NBC TV in the USA.

30 years ago (16 Sep 1986)

A fire at a gold mine in Kinross, South Africa killed 177 people and injured more than 200.

30 years ago (16 Sep 1986)

Unisys, the information technology company, was founded when the Sperry and Burroughs corporations merged.

30 years ago (17 Sep 1986)

Death of Pat Phoenix, British stage, film and television actress. Best known for playing Elsie Tanner in the soap opera *Coronation Street*.

30 years ago (25 Sep 1986)

Death of Nikolay Nikolayevich Semyonov, Russian physical chemist. Joint winner of the 1956 Nobel Prize for Chemistry for his work on the mechanism of chemical reactions.

30 years ago (26 Sep 1986)

William Rehnquist became Chief Justice of the United States.

30 years ago (27 Sep 1986)

Death of Cliff Burton, American heavy metal bass guitarist (Metallica). (Crushed by the band's tour bus in Sweden during their European tour.)

30 years ago (30 Sep 1986)

Mordechai Vanunu, an Israeli nuclear technician, was kidnapped in Rome, Italy by Mossad (an Israeli intelligence agency). He was later sentenced to 18 years in prison for revealing details of Israel's secret nuclear weapons programme to the British press. (Published in *The Sunday Times* on 5th October).

25 years ago (2 Sep 1991)

Death of Alfonso Garcia Robles, Mexican diplomat, politician and nuclear disarmament advocate. Joint winner of the 1982 Nobel Peace Prize.

25 years ago (3 Sep 1991)

Hamlet chicken processing plant fire, North Carolina, USA. A fire broke out at the Imperial Foods plant when a hydraulic line failed. Workers were trapped behind locked fire doors. 25 people were killed and 55 injured. (The owner was jailed for 4 years. The federal government took over the enforcement of many of North Carolina's industrial safety laws.)

25 years ago (3 Sep 1991)

Death of Frank Capra, Academy Award-winning American film director. Best known for *It's a Wonderful Life*.

25 years ago (4 Sep 1991)

Death of Charlie Barnet, American jazz / swing / big band saxophonist, composer and bandleader.

Ditch Your Day Job!

25 years ago (5 Sep 1991)

The Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (1989) came into effect. The convention, established by the International Labour Organization, is the major binding international convention concerning indigenous peoples. It was a forerunner of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which was adopted in September 2007 (though it is non-binding).

25 years ago (6 Sep 1991)

The Soviet Union formally recognised the independence of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

25 years ago (6 Sep 1991)

The Russian city of Leningrad was renamed Saint Petersburg, restoring its original name.

25 years ago (7 Sep 1991)

Death of Edwin Mattison McMillan, American nuclear physicist. Winner of the 1951 Nobel Prize for Chemistry for discovering neptunium – the first element heavier than uranium.

25 years ago (8 Sep 1991)

The Republic of Macedonia declared its independence from Yugoslavia.

25 years ago (8 Sep 1991)

Death of Alex North, award-winning American composer and conductor. Particularly noted for his film scores (*Death of a Salesman*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and many more).

25 years ago (9 Sep 1991)

Tajikistan declared its independence from the Soviet Union.

25 years ago (12 Sep 1991)

NASA launched the *Upper Atmosphere Research Satellite* (UARS) to study the Earth's atmosphere, particularly the ozone layer. (It operated until June 2005 when its funding was cut, and it re-entered the Earth's atmosphere in September 2011.)

25 years ago (13 Sep 1991)

Death of Joe Pasternak, Hungarian-born American film producer.

25 years ago (14 Sep 1991)

South Africa's National Peace Accord, aimed at ending political violence, was signed by the government, the ANC, the Inkatha Freedom Party, and other organisations.

25 years ago (16 Sep 1991)

A U.S. judge dismissed all charges against Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North, a National Security Council staff member, who had been convicted for his role in the Iran–Contra scandal in 1989.

25 years ago (17 Sep 1991)

Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, North Korea and South Korea joined the United Nations.

25 years ago (17 Sep 1991)

Finnish software engineer Linus Torvalds released the first version of the Linux kernel (version 0.01). (See also: 5th October 1991.)

Ditch Your Day Job!

25 years ago (17 Sep 1991)

Death of Zino Francescatti, French violin virtuoso who championed contemporary violin music.

25 years ago (19 Sep 1991)

The United Nations Security Council ruled that Iraq could sell oil to fund an oil-for-food programme. (Iraq's sale of oil had been banned following the Gulf War, leading to hardship for its people.)

25 years ago (19 Sep 1991)

NCR Corporation was acquired by AT&T for \$7.4 billion. (In January 1997 NCR was re-established as a stand-alone company.)

25 years ago (19 Sep 1991)

Ötzi the Iceman, a 5,300-year-old mummified body, was discovered by a tourist in the Tirolean Alps on the Italian–Austrian border.

25 years ago (21 – 30 Sep 1991)

Inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) discovered documents relating to Iraq's nuclear weapons programme. In a stand-off with Iraqi officials, the inspectors were prevented from leaving the site for 4 days. (In August 2004 the head of Iraq's nuclear programme said its nuclear weapons programme was halted by sanctions and inspections in July 1991 and never restarted.)

25 years ago (22 Sep 1991)

Photographs and transcripts of the Dead Sea Scrolls were made available to researchers and the public for the first time, by the Huntington Library, San Marino, California, USA.

25 years ago (22 Sep 1991)

Sponsorship of ITV television programmes in the UK was permitted.

25 years ago (23 Sep 1991)

Armenia declared its independence from the Soviet Union.

25 years ago (24 Sep 1991)

British hostage Jackie Mann, a former fighter pilot who took part in the Battle of Britain, was released by Islamic extremists in Beirut, Lebanon after being kidnapped in May 1989.

25 years ago (24 Sep 1991)

The album *Nevermind* by the American grunge rock band Nirvana was released.

25 years ago (24 Sep 1991)

The album *Blood Sugar Sex Magik* by the American rock band Red Hot Chili Peppers was released.

25 years ago (24 Sep 1991)

Death of Dr. Seuss (Theodor Geisel), popular American children's writer, illustrator and film-maker (*How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, *The Cat in the Hat*, *Green Eggs and Ham* and many more).

25 years ago (25 Sep 1991)

Death of Klaus Barbie, 'the Butcher of Lyon', Nazi war criminal.

Ditch Your Day Job!

25 years ago (26 Sep 1991)

American dental patient Kimberly Bergalis, who claimed she had been infected with HIV/AIDS by her dentist, appeared before Congress to plea for mandatory AIDS testing for healthcare workers and their patients. (She died on 8th December.)

25 years ago (26 Sep 1991)

Eight people entered Biosphere 2 in Oracle, Arizona, USA to begin a 2-year research mission in a sealed environment. (Completed September 1993.)

25 years ago (27 Sep 1991)

Following the signing of the START I treaty in July, U.S. President George H. W. Bush announced the elimination of all U.S. land-based tactical nuclear arms and the removal of short-range nuclear arms from all U.S. ships and submarines. He also stood down all intercontinental ballistic missiles that were scheduled for deactivation (in 7 years' time) under the terms of the treaty. (In response, Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev announced that his country would also cut its nuclear arsenal.)

25 years ago (28 Sep 1991)

Death of Miles Davis, American jazz trumpeter, bandleader and composer.

25 years ago (29 Sep 1991)

Military coup in Haiti. President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted and went into exile in Venezuela and the USA. The USA, backed by the UN, suspended economic and military aid, imposed trade sanctions, and later intervened (Operation Uphold Decency – September 1994), allowing Aristide to regain the presidency in October 1994.

20 years ago (3 Sep 1996)

Ruth Perry became the first female head of state of Liberia. (She was Chairperson of the interim Council of State until August 1997.)

20 years ago (3 Sep 1996 – or 2nd?)

Death of Emily Kame Kngwarreye, Australian artist. One of the most prominent and successful contemporary Aboriginal artists.

20 years ago (4 Sep 1996)

The insurance company Lloyd's of London was forced to restructure to prevent itself from becoming insolvent following a series of huge payouts, particularly for asbestosis compensation in the USA. A new reinsurance company, Equitas, was founded, which took over Lloyd's pre-1993 liabilities and was split off as a separate company.

20 years ago (9 Sep 1996)

Death of Bill Monroe, American bluegrass singer, songwriter and mandolin player. Known as 'the father of bluegrass'.

20 years ago (10 Sep 1996)

The UN adopted the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. (It has not yet entered into force as it still needs to be ratified by China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan and the USA.)

20 years ago (10 Sep 1996)

Death of Joanne Dru, American film and television actress. Best known for playing the leading lady in Westerns such as *Red River*, *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* and *Wagonmaster*, and for the 1949 drama *All the King's Men*.

Ditch Your Day Job!

20 years ago (11 Sep 1996)

Union Pacific Railroad in the USA acquired Southern Pacific Railroad.

20 years ago (13 Sep 1996)

Death of Tupac Shakur (also known as 2Pac), American rapper and actor. (Died from injuries suffered in a drive-by shooting in Las Vegas on 7th September.)

20 years ago (14 Sep 1996)

The first national elections since the end of the civil war were held in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

20 years ago (14 Sep 1996)

Death of Juliet Prowse, Indian-born South African–British stage, film and television actress and dancer. Best known for the films *G. I. Blues* and noted for her relationships with Frank Sinatra and Elvis Presley. Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev proclaimed her dancing ‘immoral’.

20 years ago (16 Sep 1996)

Death of McGeorge Bundy, U.S. National Security Advisor (1961–66). One of the main architects of U.S. foreign policy during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. Best known for his role in the escalation of the USA’s involvement in the Vietnam War.

20 years ago (16 Sep 1996)

Death of Gene Nelson, American actor, dancer, screenwriter and director. Best known for his role as Will Parker in the film musical *Oklahoma!*

20 years ago (17 Sep 1996)

Death of Spiro Agnew, Vice-President of the United States (1969–73).

20 years ago (20 Sep 1996)

Death of Paul Erdos, prolific Hungarian mathematician who produced the most mathematical papers ever. Known for his work in number theory and combinatorics. He was also a legendary eccentric.

20 years ago (21 Sep 1996)

The Defense of Marriage Act came into effect in the USA. It allowed states to refuse to recognise same-sex marriages that had taken place in other states. (Section 3 of the Act, which denied same-sex partners the same federal recognition and rights to benefits as heterosexual partners, was declared unconstitutional in 2013.)

20 years ago (21 Sep 1996)

John F. Kennedy, Jr., son of former U.S. President John F. Kennedy, married Carolyn Bessette on Cumberland Island, Georgia, USA.

20 years ago (22 Sep 1996)

Death of Ludmilla Chiriaeff, Latvian-born Canadian ballet dancer, choreographer and director who founded the company that later became Les Grands Ballets Canadiens.

20 years ago (22 Sep 1996)

Death of Bob Dent, Australian cancer sufferer. The first person in the world to lawfully end his life by means of voluntary euthanasia.

Ditch Your Day Job!

20 years ago (22 Sep 1996)

Death of Dorothy Lamour, American film actress and WWII pin-up. Best known for the *Road to...* comedies with Bing Crosby and Bob Hope.

20 years ago (23 Sep 1996)

The Metropolitan Police in London raided several suspected IRA houses and warehouses. 1 terrorist suspect was shot dead and 5 were arrested. About 10 tons of home-made explosives and weapons were seized, preventing suspected imminent attacks.

20 years ago (23 Sep 1996)

Death of Fujiko Fujio (pseudonym of Fujimoto Hiroshi), Japanese manga artist. Known for his partnership with Abiko Motoo, who shared the pseudonym.

20 years ago (25 Sep 1996)

The last Magdalene Laundry (also known as Magdalene Asylums) was closed in Ireland. The laundries housed thousands of 'fallen women', removing them from society. They were forced to work long hours in commercial laundries for no pay, and were often abused. Those who died were buried in mass graves. The nuns who ran the laundries often didn't know the women's names and kept no records. (Ireland issued a formal apology in 2013 and launched a compensation scheme for survivors. There were also Magdalene Laundries/Asylums in Australia, Canada, England and the USA. Those in Ireland were the last to close.)

20 years ago (25 Sep 1996)

Death of Nicu Ceausescu, Romanian public figure and socialite. Son of Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, and once considered his potential successor. Jailed for 20 years in 1990 for misuse of government funds. (Released 1992 as he was suffering from cirrhosis, from which he died.)

20 years ago (26 Sep 1996)

American astronaut Shannon Lucid returned to Earth after a 5-month stay on the Russian space station *Mir*. She broke the record for the longest stay in space by a non-Russian, and the longest stay in space by a woman (record broken by Sunita Williams in 2007).

20 years ago (27 Sep 1996)

The Taliban seized control of Kabul, Afghanistan, ousted President Burhanuddin Rabbani and executed former President Mohammad Najibullah.

20 years ago (27 Sep 1996)

Julie N. oil spill, Portland, Maine, USA. A Liberian oil tanker crashed into the Million Dollar Bridge, ripping a 30-foot hole in its hull. More than 179,600 gallons (679,860 litres) of heating oil was spilled into the Fore River, causing widespread contamination.

20 years ago (27 Sep 1996)

Scientists at the U.S. National Cancer Institute reported that a common genetic mutation found only in white people could slow the progress of AIDS and sometimes provided complete immunity. About 1 in 5 people have the mutation and 1 in 100 have a double dose which gives them complete immunity. Their report was published in the journal *Science*.

20 years ago (29 Sep 1996)

The Nintendo 64 video game system was released in the USA. (Japan: 23rd June, Europe: 1st March 1997.)

Ditch Your Day Job!

20 years ago (29 Sep 1996 – or 28th?)

Death of Leslie Crowther, British comedian, television presenter and game show host. Best known for *Crackerjack* and *The Price is Right*.

20 years ago (30 Sep 1996)

British woman Mandy Allwood gave birth to octuplets. She was only 19 weeks pregnant and none of the babies survived. She had refused to have a selective reduction of the number of fetuses she was carrying – the case was widely covered in the media.

15 years ago (9 Sep 2001)

Pärnu methanol tragedy, Estonia. Two employees stole 1.6 tonnes of methanol from an industrial processing plant and sold it to a counterfeit drinks manufacturer, claiming it was laboratory-grade alcohol. The manufacturer used it in counterfeit versions of several popular drinks brands, and hundreds of people were subsequently poisoned. 68 died and 43 became severely disabled. (Sentencing was unexpectedly lenient.)

15 years ago (9 – 10 Sep 2001)

Norwegian parliamentary election. The governing Labour Party won the most seats but not enough to govern outright. A centre-right coalition was formed and Kjell Magne Bondevik was elected Prime Minister. (He took office on 19th October.)

15 years ago (10 Sep 2001)

Former British Army major Charles Ingram won £1 million (\$1.6 million) on the television quiz show *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?* He was subsequently found to have cheated (an accomplice in the audience coughed when the correct answer was read out from the available choices). (Ingram, his wife, and the accomplice were given suspended prison sentences and substantial fines.)

15 years ago (11 Sep 2001)

September 11th terrorist attacks on the USA (also known as 9/11). 2,973 people were killed.

15 years ago (12 Sep 2001)

U.S. President George W. Bush vowed that the USA would use all of its resources to avenge the attacks of September 11th.

15 years ago (12 Sep 2001)

In response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the USA, Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty was invoked for the first time. It declares that an armed attack against one member state is considered an armed attack against all member states. (This ensured that the USA had the full support of the Allies in dealing with the terrorist attacks.)

15 years ago (13 Sep 2001)

The Australian airline Ansett Australia ceased trading due to the global airline depression following the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

15 years ago (16 – 18 Sep 2001)

Typhoon Nari hit Taiwan, causing massive flooding and mudslides. 104 people were killed. Parts of Taipei's metro system were put out of action for 3 months.

Ditch Your Day Job!

15 years ago (18 Sep – 9 Oct 2001)

Anthrax attacks in the USA. Contaminated letters were sent to 2 U.S. Senators and various news and media organisations in New York and Florida. 5 people died and at least 12 were infected. Dozens of buildings were contaminated and had to be fumigated and staff were given powerful antibiotics as a precaution. Senate offices, the U.S. Capitol and the Supreme Court were shut down for testing later in October, and traces were found in the State Department and CIA Headquarters. The total cost of the damage was put at \$1 billion (£625 million).

15 years ago (19 Sep 2001)

The USA began sending combat troops, aircraft and ships to the Gulf and Indian Ocean in response to the September 11th terrorist attacks. (Air strikes in Afghanistan began on 7th – 8th October.)

15 years ago (20 Sep 2001)

U.S. President George W. Bush declared a ‘war on terror’ in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

15 years ago (21 Sep 2001)

The U.S. Congress approved a \$15 billion bailout to help the airline industry which was struggling after the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

15 years ago (22 Sep 2001)

The U.S. space probe *Deep Space 1* flew within 2,200 km (1,400 miles) of Comet Borrelly, sending back images of its nucleus.

15 years ago (27 Sep 2001)

U.S. President George W. Bush announced that the federal government would take over airport security following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. He also announced a range of airline security measures including reinforcing cockpit doors, banning passengers from entering the cockpit, and placing air marshals on commercial flights.

15 years ago (27 Sep 2001)

Zug massacre, Switzerland. A man entered the local parliament building, opened fire, detonated a home-made bomb, and then killed himself. 14 people (plus the perpetrator) were killed and 18 wounded. His suicide note stated that he believed there was a plot against him. It was the first assault of this type in Switzerland.

10 years ago (2 Sep 2006)

Death of Bob Mathias, American athlete and politician. Gold medallist at the 1948 and 1952 Olympics (decathlon). U.S. Congressman representing California (1967–75).

10 years ago (3 Sep 2006)

The European Space Agency’s lunar probe *SMART-1* was deliberately crashed into the Moon at 4,500 mph to simulate a meteor impact and to expose underground materials, such as water ice, for analysis. (It was launched in September 2003 and had orbited and studied the Moon since November 2004.)

10 years ago (4 Sep 2006)

Death of Steve Irwin, Australian wildlife conservationist and television personality. Noted for his exuberant personality and reckless enthusiasm. Best known for hosting the television series *The Crocodile Hunter*. (Stung in the chest by a stingray while filming *The Ocean’s Deadliest*.)

Ditch Your Day Job!

10 years ago (4 Sep 2006)

Death of Colin Thiele, award-winning Australian writer and educator. Best known for his children's novels and picture books.

10 years ago (4 Sep 2006)

Death of Astrid Varnay, Swedish-born American opera singer. One of the leading Wagnerian sopranos of her era.

10 years ago (8 Sep 2006)

Death of Peter Brock, Australian racing driver. One of Australia's most successful racing drivers. He dominated the Australian Touring Car circuit for almost 40 years.

10 years ago (10 Sep 2006)

Death of Patty Berg, American golfer. A founding member and first president of the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA). Winner of 15 major women's titles – still the record.

10 years ago (10 Sep 2006)

Death of Taufa'ahau Tupou IV, King of Tonga (1965–2006).

10 years ago (13 Sep 2006)

The dwarf planet Eris was officially named. (It was discovered in January 2005.)

10 years ago (13 Sep 2006)

Death of Ann Richards, American politician. Governor of Texas (1991–95).

10 years ago (15 Sep 2006)

Death of Raymond Baxter, British radio/television presenter. Best known for presenting the science and technology TV series *Tomorrow's World*. He was also a BBC radio commentator who covered the first flight of Concorde, the funerals of King George VI and Winston Churchill, and the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II.

10 years ago (15 Sep 2006)

Death of Oriana Fallaci, iconic Italian journalist, war correspondent and political interviewer. Noted for her passionate, opinionated writing and candid interviews with world leaders.

10 years ago (17 Sep 2006)

Fourpeaked Mountain in Alaska, USA erupted for the first time in over 10,000 years.

10 years ago (18 Sep 2006)

Rioters ransacked the state television building in Budapest, Hungary after Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány revealed that he and his party had lied during the 2006 general election.

10 years ago (19 Sep 2006)

Military coup in Thailand. Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra was ousted and replaced by the Commander-in-chief of the Royal Thai Army, Sonthi Boonyaratglin.

10 years ago (19 Sep 2006)

Death of Martha Holmes, American photographer and photojournalist. Best known for her freelance work for Life magazine. Noted for her intimate portraits of celebrities, politicians and sports figures.

Ditch Your Day Job!

10 years ago (21 Sep 2006)

Wal-Mart Stores launched a \$4 generic drug programme in Florida, USA. Around 300 generic drugs were available on prescription at \$4 for a 30-day supply. The test launch in the Tampa Bay area was quickly expanded to cover the whole state, and on 28th November, due to high demand, it was expanded to cover all of its pharmacies in the USA – much faster than was envisioned in the original plan. (Many competing stores have since launched similar programmes.)

10 years ago (21 Sep 2006)

Death of Boz Burrell, British rock bassist (King Crimson, Bad Company).

10 years ago (23 Sep 2006)

Japan launched its *Hinode* (formerly *Solar-B*) spacecraft to study the Sun's magnetic fields. (A 3-year mission was planned, but at the time of writing it remains in operation.)

10 years ago (23 Sep 2006)

Death of Sir Malcolm Arnold, Academy Award-winning British composer, trumpeter and conductor. Best known for his film scores, most notably *Bridge on the River Kwai*. He also composed symphonies, concertos and ballets.

10 years ago (23 Sep 2006)

Death of Etta Baker, influential American folk/blues guitarist.

10 years ago (26 Sep 2006)

Death of Byron Nelson, American golfer, teacher and commentator. He dominated the sport in the 1930s and 40s.

10 years ago (26 Sep 2006)

Death of Tokyo Rose (real name: Iva Toguri D'Aquino), American broadcaster of Japanese propaganda to Allied troops stationed in the South Pacific during WWII. (She was convicted of treason and served 6 years in prison.)

10 years ago (29 Sep 2006)

Death of Michael A. Monsoor, U.S. Navy SEAL. Posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions in Iraq – he threw himself on a grenade to save his colleagues. This was not his only demonstration of gallantry – he was also posthumously awarded a Silver Star, Bronze Star and Purple Heart.

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