

# What day is it? It depends on who you ask!

**C**alendar creativity has no boundaries. That's why calendars come in all sizes and shapes, with subject matter as varied as the imagination allows. And some of the calendars for 2003 were in circulation as early as last October!

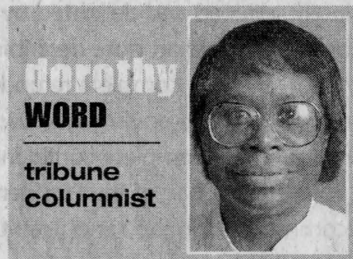
Grace Whitehead and Mickey Jackson are two of the many friends I call my "calendar-providers." Both of them have that special knack of selecting and giving uniquely appropriate calendars.

Grace's specialty is finding lovely calendars of children around the world and calendars about inspiring, black female role models. Mickey picks Afrocentric calendars that feature stunning, captivating black art.

For years I could always count on getting a Canadian calendar from Verda Kinzie who lived in Cambridge, Ontario. We were friends since college days and kept in touch until her death in 1999.

Verda's Canadian calendars were part of her Christmas Greeting tradition. For me, comparing the Canadian and American Holidays, month by month, was interesting.

Naturally, some of Canada's holidays are different from ours. Easter Monday (after Easter Sunday); Vic-



toria Day, the third or fourth Monday in May; Canada Day, July 1; Civic Holiday, the first Monday in August; Thanksgiving Day, the second Monday in October; Boxing Day, December 26.

Ontario is next door to French-speaking Quebec. And sometimes Verda would send me a bilingual calendar in French and English.

From "way up North in Alaska," each year, very faithfully, Beth Jacobs sends me one of their business calendars. When Beth and George got married and moved to Tok, Alaska, I considered them "pioneers."

Now, over 30 years later, I call them successful business entrepreneurs – real "movers and shakers" – and subjected to an occasional earthquake!

My most recent 2003 calendar is a genuine Chinese calendar printed in Hong Kong. Taiwan-born Choy Ning presented it to me and then

had to explain it to me. It is framed in the traditional red and gold colors, and each month is loaded with information in Chinese and English.

I asked Choy Ning to show me New Year's Day on the Chinese calendar. I was surprised to learn that the Chinese New Year is not a day but a New Year's Season lasting for 15 days! Well, I think a culture 6,000 years old is entitled to a 15-day celebration.

However, I wasn't quite ready to hear about all 15 days, so I asked Choy Ning to just tell me how the New Year's Season begins in China.

New Year's Eve will be Jan. 31, she said. Houses are cleaned and decorated. Good Luck words are written on red paper strips and hung up around door entrances. Lots of food is prepared on New Year's Eve so everybody can rest, relax and enjoy the first day of the New Year.

On New Year's Eve the children are allowed to stay up past midnight to wish their elders "long life." Early in the morning on New Year's Day, the children dress in red outfits and when they see their grandparents, other elders and adults they kneel or bow and say, "Happy New Year" or other lucky words.

The elders then give each child a

red envelope with money in it. The children get to keep some of the money, but most of the money will be given to their mothers for safe-keeping.

Family, friends and neighbors will visit bringing with them fruit baskets, tea or candy. They greet each other with Good Luck words. During the New Year Season you do not say bad words or break plates or anything made of glass. That is the way to avoid bad luck in the new year.

The festivities go on for 14 more days.

Now I know a little more about the Chinese calendar and the New Year Season. I am already aware of the Hebrew calendar because I have a Jewish friend, Sharon Solomon, who lives in Evansville.

The Jewish New Year begins in autumn but not at the same time each year. The new year varies from year to year according to the phases of the moon.

Look at September and October on your 2003 calendar. Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur are the most sacred days of the Jewish year. A time to express regrets for bad deeds of the past and a time to express hope for good deeds in the coming year.

I must admit that I sometimes forget to send a "Happy New Year" card to Sharon in the fall, so I try to make up for it by sending a Hanukkah card in December.

Calendars can regulate, dictate and perhaps motivate our actions. What would we do without them?

*Dorothy Word is a retired teacher.*

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