**Beginnings**

**I am about to do a new thing;**

**now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?**

***(Isaiah 43:19)***

**Babies are such a nice way to start people. *(Don Herold)***

**There were 4.1 million babies born in the U.S. last year, the most since 1990. *(USA Today, as it appeared in The Week magazine, December 16, 2005)***

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**If a man will begin in certainties he shall end in doubts; but if he will be content to begin in doubts, he shall end in certainties. *(Francis Bacon, philosopher)***

**The baseball pitcher who only hit one home run in 400 times at bat in a 20-year career; and that one on his first trip to the plate in a major league game, was knuckleballer Hoyt Wilhelm. (*L. M. Boyd)***

**Begin this year as though you too were really not the same -- Like every January first, brand new in your old name. *(Marnie Pomeroy, in January 1)***

**Every butterfly starts out with a pump in its stomach. With which it inflates its wings. After it emerges from the chrysalis. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**It is very much better sometimes to have a panic feeling beforehand, and then be quite calm when things happen, than to be extremely calm beforehand and to get into a panic when things happen. *(Winston Churchill)***

**An old day passes, a new day arrives. The important thing is to make it meaningful. *(The Dalai Lama)***

**Did January 1 remain New Year’s?: Not everywhere. Through the Middle Ages the New Year was celebrated at different times in different places and periods, most often at the spring equinox in March. When Pope Gregory XIII tweaked the Julian calendar in the late 16th century, his Gregorian calendar**

**also set Jan. 1 as the start of the new year. But the Protestant British, and subsequently the American colonies, resisted this Catholic invention, sticking with the Julian calendar and observing New Year’s Day on March 25, the Feast of the Annunciation. That lasted until 1752, when the Brits and colonists finally gave in and adopted the Gregorian calendar, and began marking the new year on Jan. 1. *(The Week magazine December 31, 2021 / January 7, 2022)***

**I was so ugly when I was born that the doctor slapped my mother. *(Phyllis Diller)***

**“Daddy,” a little girl asked her father, “do all fairy tales begin with ‘Once upon a time?’” “No, sweetheart,” he answered. “Some begin with ‘If I am elected.’” *(Tidbits)***

**It can’t be a good sign when your fortune cookie starts out with “Are you sitting down?” *(Tom Wilson, in Ziggy comic strip)***

**Information in the first Girl Scout handbook, 1913: Housekeeping, first aid, camping, how to stop a runaway horse, and how to tie up a burglar with eight inches of cord. *(***[***www.girlscouts***](http://www.girlscouts/)***.org)***

**O God of Second Chances and New Beginnings, Here I am again. *(Nancy Spiegelberg)***

**When did New Year’s become tied to Jan. 17: It began with the ancient Romans. When Julius Caesar revamped the lunar calendar in 45 B. C. – adding leap years to compensate for the inconvenient fact that Earth’s rotation around the sun takes 365.24 days, and not an even 365 --- the resulting Julian calendar established Jan. 1 as the first day of the year. (Previously it’d been tied to the vernal equinox in March – a fact reflected by the number-derived names of the later months: September meaning the seventh month, October the eighth, and so forth.) January’s name derived from Janus, who was the god of new beginnings but also had two faces – so the dawn of the New Year was tied to both looking back at the old and ahead to the new. Romans celebrated Jan. 1 by giving offerings to Janus and exchanging gifts of figs and honey. *(The Week magazine December 31, 2021 / January 7, 2022)***

**Morning comes whether you set the alarm or not. *(Ursula K. Le Guin)***

**When high temperatures and poisonous chemicals from Mount St. Helens wiped out almost every living thing in Spirit Lake, they also set the biological clock back billions of years – perhaps to the moment of creation. Scientists from Oregon State University have discovered microorganisms in the lake that may resemble the first creatures that appeared on the primordial earth. The volcano’s heat, says John Baross, an O.S.U. microbiologist, “could convert primitive gases into proteins and macromolecules” – the first steps toward life. The blast deposited metals and sulfur in the lake and heated sulfur-coated rocks in the volcano’s crater to 194 degrees Fahrenheit – just the right conditions for the strange bacteria to thrive in. The microbes absorb food through their porous skins, feeding on iron, magnesium, ammonia, carbon monoxide and sulfur. Some live without oxygen, as scientists suspect the first bacteria on Earth did. The Spirit Lake microorganisms are also similar to chemical-eating bacteria discovered in hot underwater plumes off the Galapagos Islands. That coincidence suggests that such hydrothermal vents may have been the original caldrons of life. Sidney Fox of the University of Miami has simulated the conditions peculiar to thermal vents, with intriguing results. He finds that amino acids, the simple building blocks of proteins, combine into protein-like molecules in minutes and into bacteria-like blobs in less than 24 hours. By studying these molecules and the creatures of Spirit Lake, scientists may soon have a clearer idea of how life began. *(Newsweek)***

**Who began New Year’s? Early Egyptian, Babylonian, and Chinese civilizations all had rituals to mark the beginning of a new year. As early as 3,000 B. C., the ancient Egyptians held the festival Wepet Renpet (“opening of the year”) - not on January 1, but tied to the annual flooding of the Nile River around mid-July. The holiday celebrated fertility and rebirth, and in addition to solemn religious rituals it involved dancing, feasting, and prodigious beer drinking. Some 4,000 years ago, the ancient Babylonians held the 12-day feast of Akitu to celebrate the beginning of the agricultural season around the spring equinox. Statues of the gods were paraded through the streets, feasts were held, and either a new king was crowned or the reigning king’s rule was symbolically renewed. The earliest Chinese New Year celebrations date back more than 3,000 years; they likewise were tied to the spring planting season, and began with the new moon after the winter solstice. *(The Week magazine December 31, 2021 / January 7, 2022)***

**A team of explorers led by British millionaire Neil McGrigor has apparently found the true source of the Nile. The group, which included New Zealanders Cam McLeay and Garth MacIntyre, is the first to travel the entire 4,163-mile length of the river, from the Nile Delta in Egypt to its source – not Lake Victoria, as was once thought, but deep in the Nyungwe Forest in Rwanda. The explorers endured ferocious rapids, crocodile attacks, and an ambush by Ugandan gunmen. “It’s been the hardest, longest, and most arduous expedition I’ve ever done,” said McGrigor, “but we are absolutely elated.” *(The Week magazine, April 21, 2006)***

**Nothing in recent years, on television or anywhere else, has improved on a good story that begins “Once upon a time . . .” *(William J. Bennett, in The Children’s Book of Virtues)***

**The Pilgrims were so unimpressed with the significance of what they were doing that none among them bothered to keep colony records for the first dozen years. That’s the way of many a great undertaking, ain’t it? The whole world is littered with mysterious signs of undocumented early traffic. One historian says nobody really knows who discovered what. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Driving tip: If you rear-end a car on the freeway, your first move should be to hang up the phone. *(Tom Adams, in Comic Highlights)***

**All beginnings require that you unlock new doors. *(Rebbe Nachman of Breslov)***

**Ring out the old, ring in the new,  
Ring out the false, ring in the true.  
Ring out a slowly dying cause,   
Ring in the nobler, purer laws.  
Ring in the valiant man and free,   
the larger heart, the kindlier hand;  
Ring out the darkness of the land,  
Ring in the Christ that is to be. *(Alfred Tennyson, in Ring Out Wild Bells)***

**There is a woman at the beginning of all great things. *(Delamaratine)***

**The most beautiful words, those that give the most genuine help, are often born in a silence filled with suffering. *(Ladislaus Boras)***

**The world is round and the place which may seem like the end may also be the beginning. *(Ivy Baker Priest)***

**Endings are elusive, middles are nowhere to be found, but worst of all is to begin, to begin, to begin*. (Donald Barthelme, writer)***

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