

Celebrating with lefties on Friday the 13th!

by MARK PAVILONS

An international recognition day came and went last week, in a double-header of mystique and superstition

Friday, August 13, was International Left-Handers Day. The August 13 day was created by the UK's Left-Handers Club.

I have embraced my right brain and celebrated my left-handedness. I always notice when someone I encounter is a lefty, and smile as I find another member of this prestigious and limited club.

There are only 708 million lefties on the planet or maybe 9% of the population.

While today our clan often goes unnoticed, we were criticized, even killed throughout history.

In my early school days, teachers often insisted that all students, including left-handers, learn to write with their right hand. Teachers thought that students would have an easier time if they were not "different" from right-handed writers. Some thought that using the left hand was just a bad habit. Some even slapped or punished left-handed kids who had trouble!

They tried this on me and my mom was adamant that I remain "special" and just as I was.

Thanks mom!

Going back a couple of hundred years and lefties were considered in league with Lucifer himself. Some say the Prince of Darkness is a lefty, too.

The Latin word for left is "sinister" and in French, you can call me "gauche."

There's no scientific evidence as to what causes people like me to be special and extra smart and creative.

Me and my fellow southpaws have "a symmetrical brain," meaning that the left and right portions of their brain are shaped alike. Right-handers often have an asymmetrical brain.

I have found that being different does have its disadvantages. More often than not, people poke fun at us for being clumsy and not being able to operate a can opener, scissors or other gadgets.

In 1998, Burger King poked fun at our clan, saying they developed a "left-handed Whopper."

Friday the 13th was also a strange and fun holiday for some.

Here in Ontario, motorcycle enthusiasts flock to Port Dover, for an event that typically draws thousands of participants. This year's event was scaled back due to the pandemic.

I'm a fan of horror and the supernatural, but never thought much about the legends surrounding Friday the 13th.

It typically occurs up to three times a year, but for 2021, this was the only one.

The next one is May, 13, 2022.

The fear of the number 13 and the fear of Friday likely occurred in the late 1800s. For Norse and Marvel lovers, Loki wasn't invited to dinner with 12 Norse gods, but he showed up anyway and caused quite a ruckus.

One of my favourite historic groups ? the Knights Templar ? were among thousands of religious orders who were rounded up on Friday, October 13, 1307. Many were arrested for blasphemy at the command of France's King Philip IV. Many were later tortured, coerced into making false confessions, and executed.

When the knights were burned at the stake in Paris, the order's leader, Jacques de Molay, cried out, ?God knows who is wrong and has sinned. Soon, a calamity will occur to those who have condemned us to death.? The holy warrior's curse and wrongful death put a hex on Friday the 13th through the ages.

The Last Supper was attended by 13 people, Christ and his 12 disciples. The number 13 is associated with the 13th disciple, Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Christ who was then arrested by Roman soldiers and crucified on Good Friday.

It doesn't really matter if there's any rhyme or reason to it. According to surveys, some 60 million people world-wide still fear this day. Some refused to leave their house, dine out, conduct business or carry out any major decision.

Many hotels don't have a 13th floor, but several do in Vegas. If your hotel does have a 13th floor, management is more than happy to move you.

As you may be aware, quite a few of today's skyscrapers and hotels don't have 13th floors or a room 13.

More than 60 million people worldwide have a phobia of Friday the 13th to varying degrees.

Friggatriskaidekaphobia is a combination of Friday (for a Norse god) and fear of 13.

On the flip side, in some countries, Friday the 13th is considered lucky.

In some Hispanic countries, Tuesday the 13th is the unlucky one. In fact, the title of the 1980 American horror classic Friday the 13th was changed to Martes 13 (?Tuesday the 13th?) for Spanish-speaking audiences.

One of the best horror writers of all time, Stephen King, is not a fan of Friday the 13th at all.

Franklin Roosevelt had such an irrational fear of Friday the 13th that he would avoid traveling on Fridays. Jack the Ripper claimed his final victim on Friday the 13th in 1888.

While I didn't receive any gifts last Friday, I also didn't walk under any ladders. I didn't mark the day in any way, shape or form.

I wish I had. It would have been quite the party ? a bunch of ?sinister??lefties, wearing black robes, eating cake with 13 candles!

Maybe next year!