

Daly City Library & Recreation Services
Active Adult/Senior Services
presents



Current Events with Frank Damon

Doelger Senior Center has been fortunate to have Frank Damon leading both our Current Events and History discussion groups for the last 6 years. During this time of physical distancing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Frank is sharing his current events discussion topics online. Starting on Monday, January 4, 2021 at 1:30 pm Frank will offer Current Events discussion groups each Monday on ZOOM.

Daly City Active Adult/Senior Services invites you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Current Events with Frank Damon

Time: 1:30 pm – 2:30 pm every Monday

Join Zoom meeting with following link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87222786510?pwd=d0VucFhGYzhMMXVhSUNJTmdFWDNwdz09>

Meeting ID: 872 2278 6510

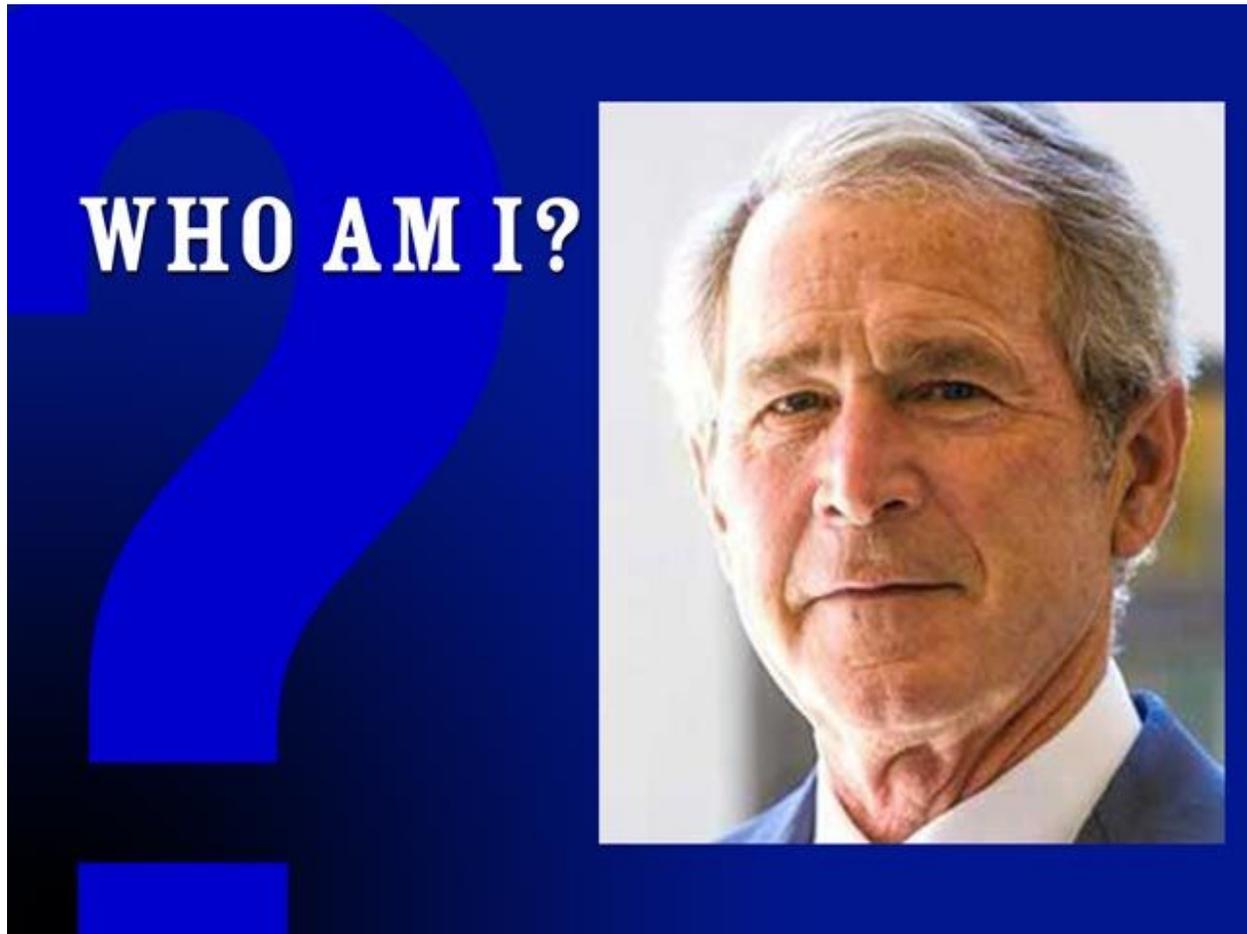
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Frank received his BA degree from the University of San Francisco with a dual major in Political Science and American History. He also earned his MA in Political Science and teaching credentials at USF. Over the course of his career, Frank taught in the San Mateo Union High School District and at Marin Catholic High School, Terra Nova High School, Golden Gate University, College of San Mateo, Skyline College and Canada College.

If you are interested in joining *Current Events with Frank Damon*, please go to www.dalycityseniors.org/current-events or contact Frank directly at frankdamon@my.smccd.edu.

Man in the News

In the year 2000, he was involved in one of the closest presidential campaigns in history. Although he lost the popular vote to Al Gore, a Supreme Court decision handed him Florida's electoral votes, and the election as the 43rd president of the United States. He came from an important political family; his grandfather was a senator and international diplomat, and his father was the 41st president. He served five years as the governor of Texas before winning the 2000 Republican nomination. Early in his first presidential term, the U.S. suffered deadly terror attacks on September 11, 2001. Under his command, the U.S. military started wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, neither of which had ended when he left the White House in 2009. He has kept a low profile since leaving office. But his recent appearances on the campaign trail in support of his younger brother has allowed other candidates to criticize his presidential record.



Who am I? (George W. Bush.) Who is my brother? (Jeb Bush.)

Death of A Supreme Court Justice

Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia passed away during a trip to Texas. What does the Supreme Court specialize in? (Important cases from lower courts that turn on interpretations of the U.S. Constitution.) Justice Scalia was 79 years old, and had spent more than 29 years on the Court. His passing will affect everything from current Court cases to the 2016 presidential campaign. President Reagan appointed Antonin Scalia to the Supreme Court in 1986. By that time, Scalia had already served as an adviser to two presidents, and had established himself as one of the foremost conservative legal minds in the U.S.

Scalia was known as a proponent of “originalism,” which is a specific approach to interpreting the Constitution. That view is summed up in his quote here. Can you explain what it means?

During his nearly three decades as an associate justice, Scalia became one of the most influential and powerful conservatives on the Court. He supported capital punishment, and opposed gun control. He voted for Citizens United, and against gay rights. He also regularly opposed guaranteeing equal rights to minority groups. Justice Scalia became well known for his strongly worded opinions and his brash speeches, but he was well-liked by his fellow justices. In fact, he and Ruth Bader Ginsburg, one of the most liberal Supreme Court justices, were best friends.

Death of a Supreme Court justice

Antonin Scalia
(1936-2016)



Ronald Reagan named him to the Supreme Court in 1986.

“[The Constitution] means today not what current society, much less the court, thinks it ought to mean, but what it meant when it was adopted.”

Supreme Court justices serve for life, or until they retire. How do the words here from the Constitution define the procedure for selecting a new justice? (The president nominates someone, and the U.S. Senate provides “advice and consent.”) Do you know what “advice and consent” means here? (Nominees go through a Senate hearing, and then wait for a Senate vote either confirming or denying their nomination.) How many votes are needed for confirmation? (51 votes.)

President Obama says he plans to fulfill his presidential responsibility by nominating someone soon. But the Senate Republican leadership has already vowed to block an Obama nomination. How can they do this? (By not even bringing it up for a vote.) Republicans justify this by saying Obama only has a year left in office, and shouldn’t have the power to change the composition of the Court at this point. In response, Democratic Senator Elizabeth Warren made the statement shown below. Do you agree with what she says here? Why or why not?

Others pointed out that a number of justices were appointed in the last year of a president’s term, most recently Justice Kennedy, with no outcry from the opposite party. Several Republican candidates have threatened to make the Supreme Court appointment a major theme of the 2016 campaign. Senator Ted Cruz has already threatened to filibuster any Obama appointee. Do you think this will be an effective strategy for these candidates?

“[The president] shall nominate, and by and with the **advice and consent** of the Senate, shall appoint ... judges of the Supreme Court, and all other officers of the United States.”

— *U.S. Constitution: Article II, Section 2, Clause*



“I can't find a clause that says
“...except when there's a
year left in the term of a
Democratic President.”

— *Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA)*

“If the Democrats want to
replace [Scalia], they need
to win the election.”

— *Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX)*



Supreme Court vacancies are usually filled relatively quickly. One of the reasons for this comes down to simple math. What does this mean? (Until the vacancy is filled, there are only eight justices on the Court instead of nine; this even number could easily lead to tie votes.) This is especially likely because of the political split on the current Supreme Court. How is this shown in the image here? (The four justices on the left usually vote along liberal lines, while the four on the right are usually conservative voters.)

Justice Scalia represented the fifth vote of the conservative majority — although this bloc was not always solid. Why? (Justice Anthony Kennedy was often considered a swing vote, as he sometimes voted with the liberal justices.) Some very important cases on the Court's docket were expected to come down to a 5-4 vote with the Court's conservative majority prevailing. What happens now in case of a tie? (The ruling of the lower court stands.)

The Court's current docket includes a number of extremely important cases affecting millions of Americans. These cases involve major issues like the power of unions, immigration, climate change rules, affirmative action, abortion rights, voting districts, and more. But any of these cases that end up in a tie vote can be challenged and end up right back in the Supreme Court again.



Should We Kill Off Our Deadliest Enemy

Believe it or not, the tiny insect shown here is our deadliest enemy. *Anopheles gambiae* — annOFF-eh-leez GAM-bee-ay — is a common mosquito species. It is also the carrier of the parasite that causes malaria. This disease kills as many as 700,000 people every year in Africa and Asia. When one adds in the deaths caused by other mosquito-borne diseases, including the others listed here, this adds up to approximately one million human deaths caused by mosquitoes, more than is caused by any other species. Do you know what species is in second place? (*Homo sapiens* — humans.)

For this reason, some scientists have started to investigate the idea of eradicating the mosquito species that carry these diseases. This would involve manipulating the DNA of male mosquitoes so they would only produce infertile offspring. This would cause a ripple effect on subsequent generations, until the entire species becomes extinct. From the quote here, how long would this take? (About ten years.) These ideas are all still just theoretical. There are many details to work out, and practical considerations. It is hard to know what getting rid of a mosquito species would do to the food chain, or what other unforeseen consequences there could be. There are also ethical questions about intentionally killing off an entire species — although there is not likely to be much sympathy for *Anopheles gambiae*.

Should we kill off our deadliest enemy?

Every year, one million people die from a mosquito-borne disease.

- Dengue fever
- Malaria
- West Nile virus
- Yellow fever

Photo: James D. Gathany, PD-USGOV-HHS-CDC



“Technology could eradicate the malaria mosquito, and malaria with it, within 10 years.”

— Dr. Olivia Judson

Mosquitoes exist on every continent in the world, except one. Which one? (Antarctica.) Though they are very adaptable to different environments, individual mosquitoes have very short lifespans. Males live for about a week, and some females live for two weeks in the wild. They mostly survive by drinking the juice out of fruit. How do they do this? (By piercing the skin with their proboscis — proh-BOSS-iss.) For male mosquitoes, this is diet enough; it is only the female mosquito that sucks blood from animals. What do they get from this blood? (Protein to help them develop their eggs.)

When mosquitoes bite, they inject saliva into the wound. This saliva contains an anti-coagulant so the blood won't clot in their proboscis as they drink it. Mosquitoes lay their eggs in water, usually hundreds at a time. Why do they lay so many? (To make sure enough survive to adulthood.)

When they hatch, they take the form of larvae. You see these as the long, straight ones in the photo on the left. One of them has curled up into the next stage of the mosquito's life. Do you know what this stage is called? (The pupa stage.) Once they become full adults, they reach maturity quickly, and almost immediately start reproducing. As you see here, only a handful of the 3,500 mosquito species pass diseases to animals and humans. This means that if we were to decide to get rid of the disease-carrying species, there would still be plenty of mosquitoes left in the world.

Mosquito facts:

- Adult males live only five to seven days; females can live up to two weeks.
- Only female mosquitoes drink blood.
- Out of about 3,500 mosquito species, only a few actually spread diseases.



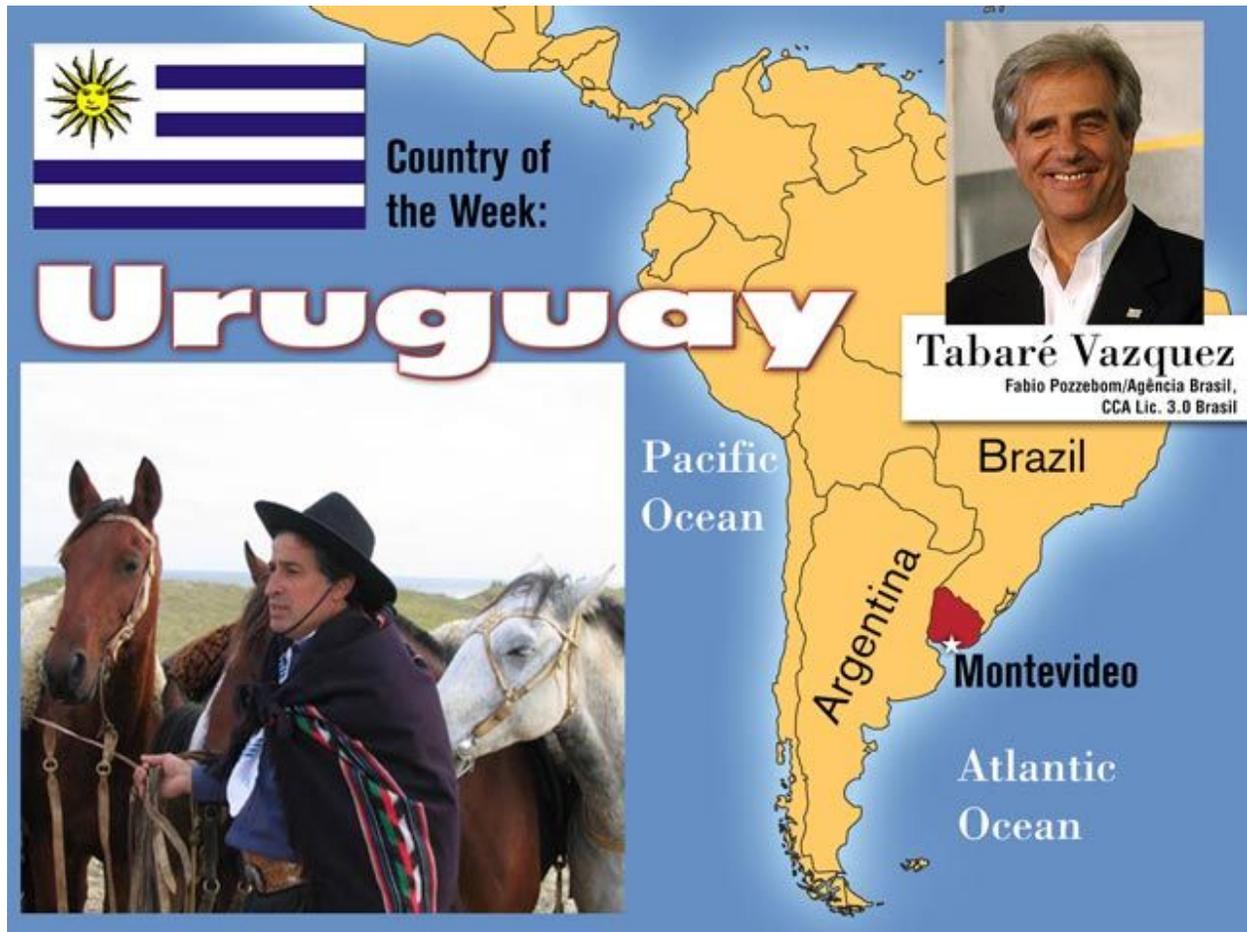
Photo: James Gathany, CDC

Country of the Week Uruguay

Tucked in between Brazil and Argentina is Uruguay, the second-smallest country in South America. Can you guess the smallest? (Suriname.) Although Uruguay only has about 3.4 million people, it is very important to South America — so much so that Spain, Portugal, Brazil, and Argentina have all tried to control it in the last 200 years. From the map, can you guess one reason Uruguay is so important? (Access to the Atlantic Ocean.)

The country's lowlands are ideal for raising livestock, making it one of the top beef-exporting countries in the region. Gauchos, like the one you see here, still work the large ranches in Uruguay's interior. What are gauchos? (South American cowboys.) Uruguay also shares several important rivers, such as the Uruguay River and the Rio de la Plata, with Argentina. These rivers are vital for transporting goods to ports on the Atlantic, including the country's largest city and capital, Montevideo.

Uruguay's major crops include soybeans, wheat, and rice. These exports, and the country's thriving plastics industry, give Uruguay the best GDP in South America. What does GDP mean? (Gross domestic product.) Uruguay also ranks first in Latin America for literacy, safety, democracy, lack of corruption, and income equality. President Tabaré Vazquez — tah-bah-REY VAHS-kez — became president for the second time in 2015. He is a leftist who has worked hard to lower poverty and improve education and working standards in Uruguay.



Uruguay's name comes from an Indian language called Guarani — gwah-rah-NEE. It translates to “river of the painted birds.” What other nation in South America has a similar-sounding name? (Paraguay's name means “Large River” in Guarani.) The only inhabitants of Uruguay before the arrival of the Europeans were the Charrua people, a small tribe driven south by the Guarani. Today, only about 6 percent of the people are partly Native American. More than 90 percent of the people are of European descent, mostly Spanish and Italian. About 4 percent are African.

Uruguay's reputation as one of the safest countries in the world has helped its tourism industry. People are drawn to its miles of white sand beaches, as you see here, as well as the country's historical features. One of the most famous landmarks in Montevideo is the “Puerta de la Ciudadela,” or “Door of the Old City.” This monument portrays José Gervasio Artigas — the father of Uruguayan independence. In 1811, he led the fight to free Uruguay from Spain. Troops from Brazil invaded Montevideo just a few years later, so Uruguay had to win its freedom again, becoming fully independent in 1828. Uruguay is the smallest nation to ever win soccer's World Cup, triumphing in 1930 and 1950. The team is nicknamed “La Celeste,” the Spanish word for the color of their uniforms. What color is this? (Sky blue.) This color, which symbolizes freedom and independence, can also be seen on the country's flag.



Jose Gervasio Artigas

World Cup championship team, 1950

This Week in History: Hattie McDaniel wins her Academy Award

On February 29th, 1940, many of Hollywood's most important people arrived at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles. They were there for the Academy Awards ceremony. This was only the twelfth time the awards had been given. What is the popular nickname for this award? (The Oscar, supposedly because it looked like someone's "Uncle Oscar.") But while many of the Oscar nominees were gathered at tables in the front of the hotel's Cocoanut Grove nightclub, one of them was not. Actress Hattie McDaniel had to sit at a small table in the back of the room with her manager and a friend. In fact, McDaniel almost hadn't been able to get into the ceremony at all. Can you guess why? (The Ambassador Hotel did not allow African American guests.) But these insults to her dignity did not seem to matter much by the end of the ceremony.

That night, Hattie McDaniel won the Oscar for Best Supporting Actress, making her the first African American to win an Academy Award. Hattie McDaniel was born in Kansas in 1895. Both of her parents had once been enslaved. But her father had gone on to fight for the Union in the Civil War, and her mother soon became a respected singer. The family moved to Denver, Colorado, where Hattie graduated from high school. Soon, she and several of her talented siblings formed an entertainment act that toured for several years. Hattie moved to Los Angeles in 1931 to play a maid on a popular radio show featuring her brother Sam. Her performance was so funny that many movie producers wanted to cast her in their films as the sassy domestic servant. At first, she was very popular with both black and white audiences. After a few years, however, some African Americans criticized McDaniel for only playing maids. The quote here shows her response.

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY February 29, 1940:
Hattie McDaniel wins her Academy Award



McDaniel accepting her award

"I'd rather play a maid than be a maid."
— Hattie McDaniel



As Mammy in "Gone With the Wind" (with Vivien Leigh)

Was this a good response to criticism? Why or why not?

In 1938, McDaniel won the prized role of Mammy in the movie version of the popular book “Gone With the Wind.” This news brought more criticism from the black community. What kind of character is Mammy? (A slave who stays with the family even after she learns that she has been freed.) This role was a stretch for Hattie McDaniel, containing many serious moments for an actor known mostly for comedy. But she had already worked in films with star Clark Gable and several other cast members. Who does Vivien Leigh play in “Gone With the Wind”? (Scarlett O’Hara, the scheming and scrappy young Southern woman.) As Mammy, McDaniel got to scold the spoiled Scarlett and scoff at arrogant Rhett Butler. But some people still felt that her acting relied too much on stereotypes about African Americans. Have you ever seen this movie? If so, would you agree with this criticism?

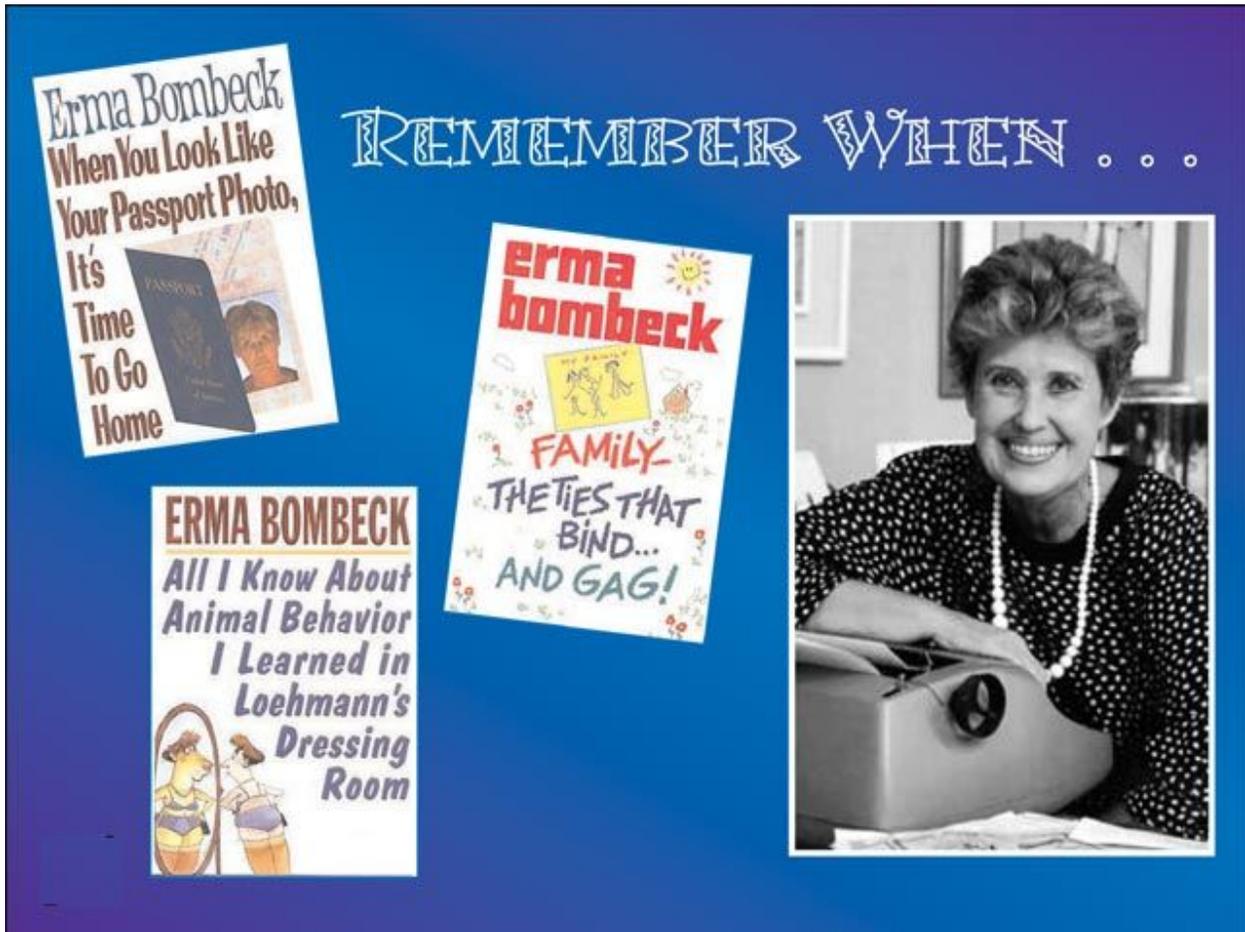
Hattie McDaniel’s great reviews for her portrayal of Mammy helped her become the first black American to ever be nominated for an Oscar. When McDaniel was told she could not attend the ceremony at the Ambassador, producer David Selznick used his considerable Hollywood power to make sure the hotel changed its racist policy for one night. Is it hard to imagine that this all happened less than 80 years ago? In her acceptance speech, McDaniel said she wanted to be a credit to her race and to the film industry. However, this industry failed to create roles where she could play anything but a maid or a cook. So she continued to play them, only to be criticized by black activists who thought she was selling out. Do you think that criticism was fair? Why or why not? When Hattie McDaniel passed away in 1952, she left her Oscar to Howard University. But this statue eventually went missing, and its whereabouts are still unknown.

Remembering When

Remember Erma Bombeck? She was a humor columnist who made us laugh and cry with the power of her words. Her columns ran in hundreds of newspapers around the world, and her books regularly topped the bestseller lists. But she never forgot where she came from, or why she started writing.

Erma Fiste was born on February 21st, 1927 in Dayton, Ohio. When she was nine, her father died of a stroke. The bank repossessed her childhood home, including all of the furniture, and she and her mother had to move in with her grandmother. To cope with this adversity, Erma developed a wisecracking approach to life. At the age of twelve, she started writing a humor column for her junior high school newspaper. How do you think humor helps people cope with difficult situations?

Bombeck went on to study English at Ohio University and the University of Dayton. She also worked part time as a reporter at the “Dayton Journal Herald,” writing obituaries and feature stories. At the age of 20, she was diagnosed with kidney disease. But Erma was determined to go on with her life and not be controlled by her disease. What does this tell you about her character?



In 1949, she married William Bombeck, a high school teacher who later became a principal. The couple was told they could not have any children of their own, so they adopted a daughter. Later, they were happily surprised to learn that the doctors had been wrong, and Erma

gave birth to two other children during the 1950s. While raising her children, Bombeck earned three dollars per column writing for a neighborhood newspaper. This column caught the attention of someone at the Akron Journal Herald, which invited her to write a column called “At Wit’s End.” This column, which began in 1965, soon became wildly popular. The newspaper’s editor submitted it to Newsday, which syndicated it in 38 newspapers across the country. Within five years, this number had grown to 500 papers every week.

Erma Bombeck became one of America’s most beloved columnists, writing about the everyday trials of suburban housewives. Her first book, also called “At Wit’s End,” was a collection of her columns. For the next 30 years, Erma wrote about being a mother, wife, journalist, and woman. Two of her most well known books are “The Grass is Always Greener Over the Septic Tank,” and “If Life is a Bowl of Cherries, What am I Doing in the Pits?” What do you think of these titles and the other titles shown here? Why do you think these books were so popular? Do you have a favorite Erma Bombeck book? In 1972, Congress approved a constitutional amendment guaranteeing equal rights for women.

It surprised a lot of people when Erma Bombeck, voice of the American housewife, came out in support of the Equal Rights Amendment or ERA. Some stores even pulled her books from their shelves. Why do you think the ERA was controversial? But Bombeck saw no conflict; discrimination of any kind had always angered her. Do you remember what happened with the ERA? (Congress voted to approve it, but not enough states ratified it so it failed.) During the course of her career, Bombeck published more than four thousand syndicated columns in 900 papers nationwide, and wrote 15 best-selling books. She died of complications from a kidney transplant in 1996 at the age of 69. Erma Bombeck once said, “When I stand before God at the end of my life, I would hope that I would not have a single bit of talent left, and could say, ‘I used everything you gave me.’” Have you ever written stories about things that have happened in your life? What else do you remember about Erma Bombeck?