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The Fifth Month

Of all the numbered months in the year, May, named for the Greek goddess Maia, is one clearly worthy of celebration.

The month begins with May Day (viva the latest revolution) and ends with Memorial Day. It was chosen by the early christians as the month to honor the Virgin Mary (which they did by refraining from marriage). In modern times, most of us experience "tax freedom day" this month—the moment when we have worked long enough to make that portion of our earnings necessary to pay our total taxes for the year. Modern times also have seen the days of May designated as American Bike Month, Better Sleep Month, Foot Health Month, Better Hearing Month, National Barbecue Month, and as the official beginning of Gazpacho Afficionado Time.

On a more somber note, May 20 is the anniversary of the hydrogen bomb, first successfully detonated over a tiny atoll in the South Pacific 34 years ago.

The number five itself (*OW*: *pimp*, *L*: *quinque*, *Gr*: *pente*), in addition to signifying May, is replete with its own interesting associations¹.

Here are just a few of the items mentioned in the litany of fives (see how many you can define—the answers are on page 566):

Five Blessings (wu fu) of the chinese
Five Books of Moses (Pentateuch) that comprise the Old Testament
Five Days of the work week
Five Cardinal Relations between men (Confucianism)
Five Nations
Five Sacred Wounds
Five Senses
Fifth Column
Fifth Estate
Fifth House
Fifth Wheel
Fifth Business
Fifth Dimension
Fifth Element

Of course, there is still the possibility, though remote, that none of these holidays and numerologic associations holds any significance for you. Fear not. There's a method to this madness. In the future, the *Journal* will be inserting questions and answers from the *Nuclear Medicine Self-Study Program I*, published by The Society of Nuclear Medicine. Space allowing, we will insert up to 5 questions in each issue of the *Journal*, and on a separate page list the answers and explanations. So take five— and when you come back we'll begin with Radiobiology and Radiation Protection, Question 1.

¹*Websters New Unabridged Dictionary*, Second Edition, Springfield, MA: C&C Merriam Co.; 1944.