

The Dave Barry Essay Challenge

Talk Like a Pirate Day

Arrrrrr! Talk like a pirate -- or prepare to be boarded

(This classic Dave Barry column was originally published Sept. 8, 2002.)

Every now and then, some visionary individuals come along with a concept that is so original and so revolutionary that your immediate reaction is: "Those individuals should be on medication."

Today I want to tell you about two such people, John Baur and Mark Summers, who have come up with a concept that is going to make you kick yourself for not thinking of it first: Talk Like a Pirate Day. As the name suggests, this is a day on which everybody would talk like a pirate. Is that a great idea, or what? There are so many practical benefits that I can't even begin to list them all.

Baur and Summers came up with this idea a few years ago. They were playing racquetball, and, as so often happens, they began talking like pirates. And then it struck them: Why not have a day when EVERYBODY talks like a pirate? They decided that the logical day would be Sept. 19, because that -- as you are no doubt aware -- is Summers' ex-wife's birthday.

Since then, Baur and Summers have made a near-superhuman effort to promote Talk Like a Pirate Day. As Baur puts it: "We've talked like pirates, and encouraged our several friends to, every Sept. 19, except for a couple where we forgot."

And yet, incredibly, despite this well-orchestrated campaign, the nation has turned a deaf shoulder to Talk Like a Pirate Day. In desperation, Baur and Summers turned to me for help. As an influential newspaper columnist, I have the power to "make or break" a national day. You may recall that almost nobody celebrated Thanksgiving until I began writing about it in the 1970s.

I have given Baur's and Summers' idea serious thought, looking for ways to improve it. One variation I considered was Talk Like a Member of the Lollipop Guild Day, on which everybody would talk like the three Munchkins in the film version of *The Wizard of Oz* who welcome Dorothy to Munchkin Land by singing with one corner of their mouths drooping down, as though they have large invisible dental suction devices hanging from their lips. But I realized that would be stupid.

So I have decided to throw my full support behind Talk Like a Pirate Day, to be observed this Sept. 19. To help promote this important cause, I have decided to seek the endorsement of famous celebrities, and I am pleased to report that, as of today, Tom Cruise, Julia Roberts, Britney Spears, Brad Pitt, Oprah Winfrey, the Osbournes, Tiger Woods, Ted Koppel, the Sopranos, Puff Doody and the late Elvis Presley are all people who I hope will read this column and become big supporters. I see no need to recruit President Bush, because he already talks like a pirate, as we can see from this transcript of a recent White House press conference:

REPORTER: Could you please explain either your foreign or your domestic policy?

PRESIDENT BUSH: *Arrrrrr.*

To prepare for Talk Like a Pirate Day, you should practice incorporating pirate terminology into your everyday speech. For example, let's consider a typical conversation between two co-workers in a business office:

BOB: Hi. Mary.

MARY: Hi, Bob. Have you had a chance to look at the Fennerman contract?

BOB: Yes, and I have some suggestions.

MARY: OK, I'll review them.

Now let's see how this same conversation would sound on Talk Like a Pirate Day:

BOB: Avast, me beauty.

MARY: Avast, Bob. Is that a yardarm in your doubloons, or are you just glad to see me?

BOB: You are giving me the desire to haul some keel.

MARY: *Arrrrr.*

As you can see, talking like a pirate will infuse your everyday conversations with romance and danger. So join the movement! On Sept. 19, do not answer the phone with "hello." Answer the phone with "Ahoy me hearty!" If the caller objects that he is not a hearty, inform him that he is a scurvy dog (or, if the caller is female, a scurvy female dog) who will be walking the plank off the poop deck and winding up in Davy Jones' locker, sleeping with the fishes. No, wait, that would be Talk Like a Pirate in *The Godfather* Day, which is another variation I considered ("I'm gonna make him an offer that will shiver his timbers").

But the point is, this is a great idea, and you, me bucko, should be part of it. Join us on Sept. 19. You HAVE the buckles, darn it: Don't be afraid to swash them! Let's make this into a grass-roots movement that sweeps the nation, like campaign-finance reform, or Krispy Kreme doughnuts. I truly think this idea could bring us, as a nation, closer together.

But not TOO much closer. Some of us will have swords.