

SQUARE ROOT DAY?!

Forget groundhogs, Valentines & Presidents.
A California teacher celebrated a different
holiday last February!

by Bridget Malit

On February 2, we celebrated Groundhog Day, when a groundhog pokes his head out of his hole to see if spring is on the way. Ron Gordon, a high school teacher in Redwood City, California, pokes *his* head out on another holiday: Square Root Day. Huh?

A number's *square root* is a number that, when multiplied by itself, equals the original number. (For example, the square root of 4 is 2, because $2 \times 2 = 4$.) Ron says he "stumbled upon" the holiday back in 1981. He noticed that the date he was writing on a check on September 9th—9/9/81—was interesting because it resembled the equation $9 \times 9 = 81$. Ron has received national TV and newspaper coverage for inventing this not-annual holiday. He told MATH, "I realized that the previous Square Root Day had been 17 years ago, and that there wouldn't be another one again for 20 years. So this was a big deal!"

The most recent Square Root Day took place last

February, on Groundhog Day. To celebrate both holidays, Ron's children, Rachel, Tyler, and Kyle, chopped up vegetable *roots* into *squares* (get it?) and mailed the meal to Punxsutawney Phil, the famous groundhog in Pennsylvania.

Rachel, age 15, told us, "Cutting roots was fun, even though it made me feel like a *square*!" Kyle, age 11, liked the day so much, he asked his dad why it wasn't a school holiday! Maybe next time, Kyle...if we all spread the word.



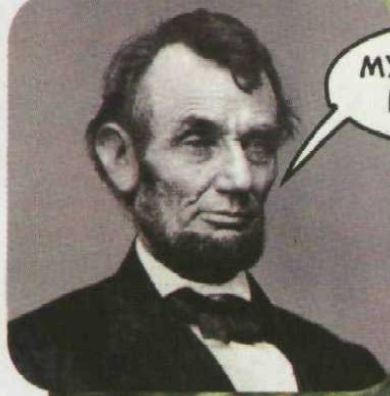
The Gordon family prepares to cut roots into squares. (Left to right:) Tyler, Kyle, Rachel, Ron, and Linda.

WHAT TO DO

Read the article and "The Dirt on Square Roots" below. Use the information to answer the questions on page 9.

THE DIRT ON SQUARE ROOTS

- ✓ When a *square root* is multiplied times itself, the product is called a *square*.
- ✓ Another way to write a number multiplied by itself is by using 2 as an exponent. For example, $9^2 = 9 \times 9 = 81$. Or, to say it out loud: "9 squared."
- ✓ The symbol $\sqrt{\quad}$ represents square roots. So $\sqrt{81}$ means the square root of 81.



MY HOLIDAY IS BEST!



I'M GOING BACK IN MY HOLE.



NO, MY HOLIDAY IS BEST!

1 In Ron Gordon's Square Root Day, the month and the day are the same number. When multiplied together, they equal the last two digits of the year. So, on 2/2/04, which number is the...

a. square?

b. square root?

c. How would you write this date's "multiplication problem" using an exponent instead?

d. How would you write this date's "square root problem" using the square root symbol?

2 In what month and on what day will Square Root Day fall in 2036?

3 What is the next year Square Root Day will happen in each of the following months?

a. March:

b. April:

c. July:

d. August:

e. September:

4 Ron told us that other than 2/2/04, there are two other Square Root Days that fall on holidays once every century. Figure out the Square Root Day (month/day/year) for each of the following months, and write down the name of the other holiday that is on that day. (Hint: The second one is a Mexican celebration.)

a. January:

b. May:

WRITE NOW

Ron says that although he is not the official authority on Square Root Days, he does not think that October, November, or December have them. If they did, when would the next ones be? How often would these special Square Root Days occur? Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper.

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