

Editorial

Ides of March Could Signify More Auspicious Times Ahead

Ever since an oracle divined the assassination of Julius Caesar on the Ides of March, the date has carried an ominous connotation.

The Ides of March, which referred to March 15 on the early Roman calendar, could bring an equal sense of foreboding in modern times. With the economy still flatlined and the consumer outlook gloomy, we have cause for concern entering the prime selling season.

However, the Romans originally con-

sidered the Ides of March an auspicious day on their calendar and celebrated the day with festivities dedicated to Mars, who in early Roman history was the god of spring, nature and fertility.

The date could also promise fruitfulness in current times as some positive trends are working in favor of retailers this month that could help them turn a corner heading into spring.

As the weather begins to change, consumers will begin to emerge from their

winter hibernation, eager to resume outdoor activities. If spring breaks early, retailers may hear the registers start ringing this month.

The switch to daylight savings this month should also spur buying activity as commuters take advantage of longer daylight hours to get to work by bike. Commuters may take advantage of transportation fringe benefits extended by their employers to spend on commuting accessories.

And American consumers expecting to see a tax credit this spring as a result of the economic stimulus plan may already be planning how to spend that windfall. Enthusiasts who have for months put aside purchases of a new aero wheelset or electric drivetrain they've been dreaming about may indulge their wishes.

With these trends working in our favor, the Ides of March could give us reason to celebrate the arrival of spring.

Guest Editorial

Let's Look Up, Reach Up, Go Up Together as an Industry

Familiar words to anyone who's ever taken a SCUBA course, "Look up, reach up, go up" is advice underwater divers are encouraged to heed before ascending to the surface. Visibility isn't always good, so before you start moving up, you look up to confirm that no apparent obstacles are in your path. Then, you reach up with one arm because this helps guide your ascent.

In business and in life, sometimes the conditions around us are murky. It's important to have some sense of where we are and where we want to go, if we expect to reach our destination reasonably intact. In any business with more than one employee, if each person in the organization doesn't see the same destination, then the company's results will be diminished by some amount.

Have you ever seen this demonstrated? Here's how it's usually done: A facilitator segments the audience into random groups of 6 to 8 people. As each group is assembled the facilitator explains that they are going to hear, one at a time, an important story containing several vital details. It's up to each group member to listen carefully and be able to repeat the story with all of the details to another group member. The story is told to the first person, who then relays it to the second and so on. The last person to hear the story tells it to the whole room. At that point the exact wording of the original story is displayed on a screen. The results are instructive and often hilarious because the story as told by the last person can vary wildly from the original. A business that desires to

move up must look to where it's going and each person in the business must be able to envision the same goal.

What about an industry that desires to move up? As you read this, many ambassadors from our industry are returning from this year's Bike Summit. In meeting after meeting they have been telling our elected officials a consistent story: Bicycling can be a significant part of the solution to a number of problems this country faces. From reducing dependence on fossil fuels to improving our air quality to reducing congestion to making the lives of adults and children healthier, there are few other ways to invest tax dollars that can deliver such profound, long-term results as encouraging more people to ride bikes.

Yet the Bike Summit marks the begin-

ning, not the end of this ride. The budget debate is expected to continue for many more months. If we desire to see more investments made to cycling infrastructure and education, we must all add our voices to the chorus. When we do, let's speak in one voice. Contact Bikes Belong, IMBA or the League of American Bicyclists to offer your support of what they are doing. Be sure to also support your state and local advocates and help them promote shovel-ready community projects as funding becomes available. This is one time we can look up, reach up and go up together.

Mark Graff is co-founder of Smart-Etailing.com, a life member of the L.A.B and a founder and past president of Bicycle Colorado.