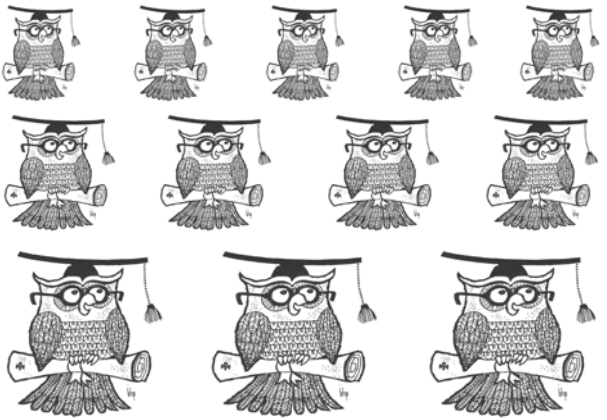
The Space Coast Area Mensa



Volume 17, No. 6 **June, 1999**

The

SCAM
Space Coast Area Mensa

Newsletter

Editor J.T. Moran
Assembly/Circulation
Wynn Rostek
Events Coordinator/Gofer
Jon Warner
Cover Artist
Barbara Peer
Profreader
Helen Lee Moore

We will appreciate your submissions **legibly handwritten, typed,** in **e-mail text,** or on **3.5 disk** in **IBM text** or **word-processing format.** We can receive your submissions by mail at: **P.O. Box 457, Sharpes FL 32959,** or submit via e-mail to: **morwood@brevard.net**

Subscription — $10.00 for 12 issues.

Happy June Birthday

02 - Glen Martine
03 - Joyce Drew
03 - Stacy Strickland
05 - Joyce Megginson Kircher
08 - Robert Jex
08 - Robert Ruhge
15 - Phyllis Cole
15 - Henry Rhodes
16 - Edward Bittar
17 - Art Belefant
21 - Richard Kerlin
23 - Keith Pelan
24 - Sam Kirschten

Welcome to SCAM

Julie Cook - Titusville
John Dibble - Cocoa
Carrie Ethridge - Albuquerque, NM

Welcome Back to SCAM

Anne Hodge - Satellite Beach
Kristina Keys - Rockledge
Sharon Lancaster-Wilson - Malabar

On the Firing Line

J.T. Moran

SCAM Editor

As I begin to put this issue of the SCAM together, I realize just how quickly a month passes. It seems like only a short while ago I was preparing the May issue. I have also realized the feeling of accomplishment that comes from having friends tell you just how good those issues have looked. But, really, there is little for me to brag about, and in some ways I believe that the earliest issues of the SCAM were superior efforts.

Prior to, and during my predecessor's first stint as Editor, the newsletter was put together using the old, tried-and-true method of cut-and-paste. REAL paste, as the articles were assembled on a pasteboard, waxed, photographed, and a master plate made from the photo. THEN the newsletter was printed. Along the way, Helen's successors began using computers to assemble the SCAM, by receiving the articles in the (snail)mail and then manually inputting the text into their word processing or desktop publishing software, finally printing out the ready-for-the-printer copy.

About the time Doug Paul (Current LocSec and Editor Emeritus) took the reins, almost everything submitted for publication came in electronically, either through the e-mail or on floppy disk. This made the production of the SCAM much easier technically.

Now it is my turn, and my contribution to the evolution of the newsletter is the electronic *PRINTING* of each issue. Beginning with the May issue, I have begun transmitting the final copy of the newsletter directly to our printer, ***A Better Copy***, where it is downloaded directly to their Toshiba printer. This is how the clarity of text and graphics was achieved. A few glitches still need to be ironed out, but they will soon be taken care of.

I may be complimented for technical improvement, but I can do little to improve on the quality of the newsletter itself.

That credit belongs to the contributors.

You might be a Redneck Jedi if:

Your father has ever said to you, "Shoot, son, come on over to the dark side..it'll be a hoot."

Doug in Deep(er)

Douglas Paul, LocSec

I've got good news, and I've got bad news. Which do you want first?

The bad news is that as of 10 May 1999, 34 SCAM members have let their memberships lapse. Some have been active members, coming to and hosting events, giving of their time and sharing their lives with us. Others have remained names on the SCAM membership roster for years. Either way, we've lost friends, and we don't intend to give them up without a fight! SCAM will be contacting these folks and trying its best to convince them to return to our fold. We'd appreciate any help or ideas you all might have on the retention subject.

The good news is that we now have a working, current website out there in cyberspace. At the last ExComm meeting (see Minutes for details) I was appointed Webmaster, and I have succeeded in putting together a basic set of pages for us on the GO! Network. The financial impact to SCAM is exactly $0.00 per year for that service. If you're on the web, go to:

http://homepages.go.com/~spacecoastmensa/default.html

to view our new internet presence. I'll be working on improving the pages on a fairly constant basis, and I'd appreciate input from both HTML junkies and also those who don't know beans about the net but DO know what looks good.

See you out there.

The People Have Spoken!

The Results of the 1999 SCAM Election Ballot Count!

Out of 29 ballots cast, 27 qualified and 2 were disqualified. The results of the balloting are as follows:

**Bob Tuck ..... **	**24 votes**
**Ray Paul ..... **	**22 votes**
**Clara Woodall-Moran ... **	**20 votes**
**Fran Hinson ..... **	**19 votes**
**Doug Paul ..... **	**17 votes**
**Kathy Hornak ..... **	**13 votes**
**Rita Johnson-Aronna .... **	**9 votes**
**Dennis Schindler ..... **	**1 vote**

Thanks to all for running, and congratulations to the members of the 1999 - 2000 SCAM ExComm.

Minutes of the ExComm Meeting

by

Fran Hinson, RecSec
(bhinson01@earthlink.net)

The ExComm met on 01 May 1999 at the home of J.T. Moran and Clara Woodall-Moran in Port St. John. The meeting was called to order at 16:35.
Members present were Doug Paul, Ray Paul, Jon Warner, Bob Tuck and Fran Hinson.
Guests in attendance were J. T. Moran, Clara Woodall-Moran and Ellen Paul.

Correspondence:

Doug received e-mail from a couple in Sebastian.
Moved Ray Paul, **second** Fran Hinson to approve the Minutes of the April meeting as published. **Passed** unanimously.

Officer Reports:

LocSec: No report
Asst. LocSec: No report
Treasurer: Ray distributed copies of the Treasurer's Report and Monthly Account Summary as of 26 April 1999.
RecSec: No report
Member-at-Large: No report

Committee Reports:

Bylaws: No report
Editor: No report
Membership: Jon reported that SCAM had 219 members as of 31 March 1999.
NomElComm: No report
Publicity: No report
Scholarship: Ellen reported that the applications are ready for the 1999 SCAM Scholarship.
SIGHT: No report
SIGs: No report
Testing: Seven people attended the April test session.
Ways & Means: No report

Unfinished Business:

Jon Warner **moved** to appoint Carole Forsythe, Kathy Harbaugh and Dennis Schindler to the 1999 Audit Committee. The motion was **seconded** by Bob Tuck and **passed** with four (4) votes in favor and Treasurer Ray Paul abstaining.

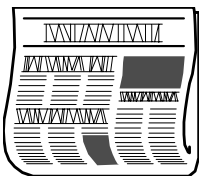
New Business:

The SCAM Web page is a mess and seriously out of date. The Webmaster has been asked several times to update and maintain the site, to no avail. Jon Warner **moved** to thank Chris Baker for his past efforts on

behalf of SCAM, relieve him of his post and appoint Doug Paul as our new Webmaster. The motion was **seconded** by Bob Tuck and **passed** unanimously.

Open Forum: No one had anything to present.
Announcements: Cinco de Mayo is Genny Paul's adoption anniversary.
Next Meeting: The next meeting of the ExComm will be held at 12:00 noon on Sunday, 6 June 1999 at the home of Doug and Ellen Paul in Rockledge.
Moved Ray, **second** Fran, to adjourn. **Passed** unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 17:12.

What Goes Around...



by

Wynn Rostek, Circulation Chief

I was a little late showing up for FS&L, so by the time I got there, Kathi, Clara and J.T. had almost finished the folding, stapling, and labeling. Jon showed up shortly after I did to round out the FS&L crew. The first part of the job was rapidly completed, leaving only the bulk rate processing to be done.

While I've made a special point to tell you who has been attending FS&L, and what has happened there, I don't believe I've ever explained the most interesting part of FS&L, the sorting and bundling.

In order to get the bulk rate, the Post Office insists that you follow a few simple rules. It's very easy if you only follow a few common sense steps. First you sort all the newsletters by zip code from lowest to highest. After doing that, you remove all items that have an odd digit as the second digit of the zip code.

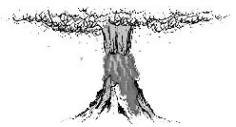
From the pile that remains, you must remove all items addressed to anyone whose last name starts with C or E. Set these items aside in their own pile. If the first name starts with a Q or a Y, they have to remain in the C and E pile.

You are now almost done sorting the first pile. Go through the pile once more and take the square root of the zip code and multiply by Pi. Round the result up to the next largest integer. If that number is a prime number, place the item in the prime pile.

The prime pile is then sorted in inverse order based on the third digit of the zip code, unless it is a Tuesday, in which case you use the fourth digit of the zip code. If it is a leap year, you use the fourth digit on Wednesdays unless it's after the fifteenth of the month, in which case you go back to using the third digit.

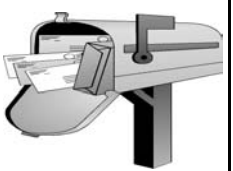
You bundle all the items in the prime pile

Oh, my... the sacrifices we



make for SCAM!

We Get Mail!



or.....

At least, Doug does!

together, and place a large pink sticker with a "P" on it in the lower left corner of the first item in the stack. Persons without a pet may make special arrangements with their local Post Office for the "P" stickers. The C and E pile is shuffled at least four times, and then dropped edgewise from a height of no less than five feet. The results are scraped into a pile, wrapped in aluminum foil and jammed into the back of the box.

What's left of the original pile is now dealt into three equal piles. The first pile is tied with old red yarn and a "lose and discard" label is affixed. The second pile is jammed into an old dry cleaner bag, and a "shred and mangle" sticker is attached. The last pile is poured loose into a mailing box and a "mysterious stain" sticker is applied to theside of the box.

That's all there is to sorting and bundling bulk rate, except for that virgin and the volcano thing, but you only have to do that once a year.

Dear Doug,

How are you? Say hello to Ellen for me. I hope to see you in St. Pete this month. Won't it be fun to NOT be in charge?

I'd like to respond to your column in SCAM for April. I have been actively involved with the Literacy Council of Sarasota since I moved here in 1998. I have written several articles for 4M about the subject which were reprinted by Merrill Fortner in Browbeat. If you should want to reprint them, feel free.

Helping someone to become more literate in English is not only a noble cause, but it benefits society as well. There are two areas of focus in the Literacy effort, Basic Literacy and ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages). Training to be a tutor using the Laubach Literacy methods is a short process, available to anyone, and qualifies one to tutor anywhere in the country. Prior teacher training is not necessary.

The two areas are distinctly different. ESOL students are often quite literate in their own language and are usually highly motivated. Basic students are those who came up through the school system and somehow fell through the cracks. Neither group can read, write, or communicate well enough to perform the functions necessary to survive in our culture. They

From:

June Brasgalla

A Personally

Rewarding Occupation

cannot take a drivers' test, handle a bank account, apply for a job, fill out forms, communicate with their childrens' school, read a newspaper, or vote in elections.

When you become a tutor, you work at your own convenience. The time and place are up to you and your student. I meet twice a week for one hour at my student's home, although the library provides a lovely space for our use. I am committed to 6 months. Often, it takes less time, and other tutors spend years with their student, becoming a valued family friend over time.

Mundane is not the word to describe what I do. It is neither dull nor routine. My current student has had me helping with her husband's tax form, registering her child for school, and learning the words so that she can begin teaching gymnastics in English. Today we are going to the Bookmobile to show her how to utilize the county library system.

Many local Mensans have also worked in the literacy field. One member here volunteers in an elementary school one day a week and plans challenging art projects and field trips for them. Another works in the county jail, helping young men and women work toward getting a GED. The National Literacy Committee, chaired by Jackie Abrams, awarded a grant to our local group so that it may continue its good work.

Moral leadership implies showing the way to right behavior. Helping someone one-on-one has always proven more effective in improving the quality of life than larger efforts. What better way to show moral leadership?

Intelligence has no value if it doesn't produce something worthwhile. A friend of mine used to joke, "What's the good of being dumb if you don't act it?" Reverse that to read "smart" and it fits!

Thanks, Doug. I always enjoy your newsletter. It's great to see a newsletter with so many contributors. And your group has always had some of the BEST people in it!

You might be a Redneck Jedi if:

You have a cousin who bears a strong resemblance to Chewbacca.

A View from the Right

Reach Out!: At Last!... Things That Make You Go...BOOM!

by

J.T. Moran
(buckmaster@juno.com)

Lab Workers

reached new heights in the pursuit of knowledge!

All of the advances in both offensive and defensive practices were a result of one thing: The Powder. The introduction of chemical power into the practice of warfare resulted in ever-more powerful weaponry, and a matching increase in the efficacy of protective armor.

The powder that Paolo brought back with him from the East was originally known as black powder. It was so-called due to its coloration. This first variant was crude, made up of a mixture that was 50% nitrate of potassium (much lower than the day rate of potassium), a whitish substance first found underneath manure piles; 25% brimstone, a yellow substance first found on the brim of old volcanoes; and 25% charred coal. This admixture worked well enough for fireworks and rockets, but was a mite weak as a propellant for khannon balls (or cannon balls). So the weaponsmiths of the day took their best shots at improving the formulation and eventually came up with a mixture of 75% potassium nitrate, 15% charcoal, and 10% sulfur. This formulation worked so well that it remained basically unchanged for the following ***five centuries!***

However, there is something about perfection that makes a man want to improve upon it, and gunpowder proved to be no exception. But, surprisingly, the new and improved explosives arose mainly from needs in areas outside that of the military. Most advances came from industrial needs in such fields as mining. Black powder simply did not produce a large enough blast for use in hard-rock mining. So the chemists of the day began experimenting with what they classified as "high explosives". They were so named because of the heights reached by many of the laboratory roofs (and laboratory workers) when the experimental mixtures "blew up" in their faces. But out of the experiments rose the knowledge that the nitrates were the key, and that many substances that were perfectly harmless in their own right could be made into explosives by treating them with a nitrating agent.

One of the first such was starch. By treating it with a flammable derivative of nitric acid, it would explode, taking the starch right out of anyone nearby. But the yield was too small for any practical use. An improved version used wood products, and thus nitrated paper, or nitrocellulose, became an early replacement for powder in underground blasting, due

Alfred... had a

prize-winning idea!

to being up to four times as effective. At nearly the same time the compound "nitroglycerin" was discovered. This was a truly high explosive, but it had one flaw, that of being about as touchy as a disgruntled postal worker with a hangover. So its use was very limited, until about ten years later.

At that time a chemist was working with the nitroglycerin, trying various ways of making it easier to handle without the loss of too much of its explosive power. Everything he tried, though, simply reduced its effectiveness. Until one day, a mineralogist friend named Al dropped by. He saw his friend in a blue funk and asked him what was wrong.

"Well, Al," he replied to his visitor, "I just can't seem to solve this nitroglycerin problem. I've tried mixing it with just about everything, and it remains unusable."

"Hmm, how about trying some of this," he said, proffering a package.

"What is it?" the chemist inquired.

"Oh, a finely ground mix of silicate and calcium from the dry seabed. It is called diatomaceous earth, used by some folks for their plantings."

"Diatoma…gosh! What a dynamite idea! I really think it will work! And if it does, I will make sure that when the credit is being passed around, you don't get the short end of the stick.."

"Nah, don't mention it. You've done all the dangerous work."

"Oh, all right, if that is the way you want it, Alfred. No Bell will go down in history as the inventor of this explosive."

Stable explosive compounds were needed for use in artillery shells. For nearly a century the primary compound was picric acid, which until its use as an explosive was discovered had been used as a yellow dye. This explains why the earliest Twinkies were so dangerous to one's health. However, in the search for a replacement, serendipity reared her fickle head once again.

A Germane scientist was moping about his lab one day when a friend arrived. Seeing his morose countenance the visitor asked what was wrong.

"Ah, our leader, the Kiester, has demanded a new and more powerful explosive for our big cannons. But nothing I try seems to work."

"Hmm…did you try nitroglycerin?"

"Yes, too unstable"

" Try nitrocellulose?"

"Not powerful enough."

"Well…try nitrotoluene?"

"Trinitrotoluene? No, I…dang, what a great idea! It just blows me away!"

Artillery shells now had a truly effective, stable compound for the warheads. As well, nitrocellulose, when treated with ether and alcohol, turned out to be the nearly perfect propellant, for both cannons and small arms. It could be manufactured in uniform sized pellets for each application and the shell casings could be loaded with consistent amounts of the propellant. It also burned so hot that it was considered "smokeless", and left almost no residue in the barrel. This last was of great importance in the development of military firearms, as the fouling caused by black powder residue could build up heavily enough to render a weapon unusable.

Bigger is not always better

Good things <u>can</u> come in small packages

Although it now seemed like there was enough explosive power available to render armor useless, it was noted that such explosions were surface effects. That is, where a shell exploded, the effect of the blast was primarily up and out. Like the heavy broadsword of old, such weaponry could only bludgeon the armor. What was needed was a way to direct the force. And, it was found that by shaping the explosive charge into a concave form, the force of the explosion could be "focused." Now it became possible for even the thick armor of tanks to be penetrated by a shell or rocket, much as a lance point would go through a jousting knight's heavy plate mail. The armored might of the battlefield tank was no longer an insurmountable problem for the common foot soldier.

But explosives, like all other weapons, were subject to the laws of nature. The only way you could make a bigger explosion was to use more explosives. Which meant bigger shells and bombs. Which in turn required bigger delivery systems, such as cannons and rockets. Which meant shorter ranges, due to the heavier weights of the units. This just went to prove that you really can have too much of a good thing.

Just as muscle power had been replaced by chemical power, what was needed was a new type of power. Something unconventional. A clearly new kind of power. And, of course, when man sets his sights on destruction, he usually comes up with the means to accomplish it.

Early in the Century a postal clerk named Albert

June 1999 Calendar of SCAM Events

Membership in American Mensa, Ltd. makes you eligible to attend SCAM social functions. Escorted and invited guests of a member or host are welcome. Adult family members of Mensans are encouraged to participate in SCAM activities, as are well behaved children. However, attendance at any social function in a **private home** is subject to the hospitality of the host. Compliance with published house rules is required, and "Kitty" payment is **not optional.** As a courtesy, notify the host if you plan to attend. When reservations **are** required, you may not be able to participate if you fail to call. ***S-S***moking***; NS- N***o ***Smoking; SS-S***eparate ***S***moking Area***; P-P***ets in the home***; NP-N***o ***P***ets present***; BYO_-B***ring ***Y***our ***O***wn: ***_S***nacks, ***_D***rinks, ***_E***verything.

4th **6:30 p.m.** **Firearms & Fried Rice**
Friday **$3 + Meal Cost** **SS/NP**
Time to get your guns out of storage and loose a few rounds at the targets. It's fun and therapeutic. Meet us at the gun site Range, 124 S. Banana River Dr., Merritt Island.
J.T. Moran 632-0854

6th **4:00 p.m.** **ExComm Meeting**
Sunday **Free** **SS/NP**
The Executive Committee will be meeting this afternoon. Members are encouraged to attend and to participate.
Doug Paul (LocSec) 639-6923 (Host)

7th **7:00 p.m.** **C.A.B.A.G.E. North**
Monday **Free** **SS/NP**
Treat yourself! Coffee, games, books, at Barnes & Noble Book Sellers on Merritt Island.
Doug & Ellen Paul 639-6923

10th **Thursday** **Newsletter & Calendar Deadline**
Call Jon, 635-8581, to schedule an event; see page 3 for NL info.

13th **12 Noon** **Triskadekaphilia Treat**
Sunday **$15.37, including tax & tip** **SS/NP**
A palatable profusion of pabulum & provender (as you know, food for thought & tummy) at the Eau Gallie Yacht Club, Datura Dr., Indian Harbor Beach (north of Eau Gallie Causeway, off So.Patrick Dr.) Best Brevard brunch, 5-star chef. Variety of eggs, meats, chicken, salads, waffles, fruits, incredible desserts, beverage. Upscale casual dress.
Barbara Peer 449-0727 (R.S.V.P. ***GREATLY*** appreciated)

16th **7:00 p.m.** **C.A.B.A.G.E. South**
Wednesday **Free** **SS/NP**
Treat yourself! Coffee, games, books at Books-A-Million, Melbourne.

Doug & Ellen Paul 639-6923

21st **7:00 p.m.** **C.A.B.A.G.E. North**
Monday **Free** **SS/NP**
Treat yourself! Coffee, games, books at Books-A-Million, Merritt Island.
Doug & Ellen Paul 639-6923

26th **6:30 p.m.** **S.N.O.R.T.**
Saturday **Meal Cost** **SS/NP**
Once again we travel to Melbourne to feast on fine Japanese cuisine at Miyako's Restaurant at 1511 S. Harbor City Blvd., (U.S. 1).
J.T. Moran 632-0854

30th **7:00 p.m.** **C.A.B.A.G.E. South**
Treat yourself! Coffee, games, books at Barnes & Noble, Melbourne.

Sponsors Needed!!!

For S.C.A.M. social events. No experience necessary. Requirements include willingness to enjoy the company of old friends and potential new ones. Host in-home or out, fine dining events or nature walks. Contact Jon Warner at 635-8581 for further information or to sign up today.

We've Got The Answers!

Doug's Complaints

1) [B] Nashville, TN
2) [E] Woonsocket, RI
3) [D] Stamford, CT
4) [A] Minneapolis, MN
5) [C] Chattanooga, TN

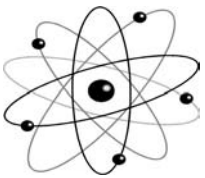
Ellen's Quirky Definitions

1. temperate
2. because
3. pale
4. carpenter
5. resource

Ellen's May Quiz: The Missing Answer!

5. The Princess Bride (1987)
(Count Rugen)

Try not to make too many atoms jealous...



they may start a'fussin'!

Einzwei was feeling particularly disgruntled. So much so that he came up with a theory that the smallest of particles known in nature could be induced to release the largest amount of power. He referred to this theory as "Nature Going Postal." While many scientists brushed off the idea that this "postman" could possibly know what he was talking about, they were unable to disprove his theory. So it was closely scrutinized during the Second Global Conflict, and the scientists decided there just might be something to it. So the race was on to see which side would obtain the "ultimate" explosive.

Happily, the good guys did. The scientists of the West discovered that if you "enriched" some uranium atoms, the other atoms got so jealous that they simply blew up. And while each atom's explosive power wasn't much, there were a whole **LOT** of atoms in a couple of pounds of uranium. And, after some further testing, they found that if you enriched all of the uranium atoms, but then slammed them all together with conventional explosives, they got really pissed off and blew apart at the speed of light. They referred to this as the "Albert Einzwei One-Two Punch." The West now could destroy cities with one bomb, and after a couple of demonstrations on enemy cities, the war was quickly over. One nation was effectively the military master of the world. But, not for long. Soon after, the powers of the East had stolen the Secret and declared that they would rule their half of the world as they saw fit. And so, a state of uneasy peace once again existed between enemies.

Even when one side improved upon the "ultimate" explosive, the status quo was soon reestablished. Scientists for the West discovered that if you used the One-Two as a detonator, you could induce hydrogen atoms to huddle together so closely that they "fussed." And this act of "Fussin" released far greater amounts of energy. The whole process was referred to in scientific circles as the "H2 – OH! Effect."

However, the East quickly obtained the secret of "Fussin" and soon both sides were again feuding. It was a situation so unstable that something had to give. Unfortunately, it did. The leader of the Eastern Hegemony was a brutal and ruthless individual who came to power through assassination and murder. Once ensconced as Supreme Ruler, he turned his

Man's been endowed with

a mushroom shaped cloud

avaricious heart and eyes to the West, demanding that countries of the Enlightenment, which bordered his realm, be ceded to him. The West tried appeasement, only to find that feeding a rabid dog only makes it come back for more. So the West finally said "Enough, and no more!" Needless to say, this enraged the Madman of the East, who soon issued an ultimatum: "Surrender, or I shall destroy you." The West did not believe this, as no one even considered that he could be mad enough to begin the Final Conflict, the war that could only end in the destruction of both sides.

Unfortunately, he was. Soon after, the Leader of the West was alerted that the Hegemony had launched all of its missiles. As he was in the Great Land on the continent far to the west of the others, he knew he had a little time remaining. Just time enough to order the launching of the West's own missiles. And then he sat back, musing on what could have been, and listening to the music on his radio. One of his favorite groups were playing a song he considered prophetic. As the alarm sirens began to sound, and as the light of the first fireballs illuminated his office, he heard the singers: "…someone will set the spark off…"

Thus passed the great lands of Atlantis and Lemuria, taking with them almost all forms of life on the planet.

Thousands of millennia later…the world is once more green and at peace. Until a four-limbed creature named Nogg reared up on his hind legs, gripping a rock in a forepaw while eyeing a challenger for his female. And so, the Great Wheel began to slowly turn again.

And that's the way it really happened…give or take a lie or two.

Nogg:

Complaint Department Manager

Postscript:

I hope you have enjoyed my rather overlong foray into the realm of the imagination. I did not intend to PUNish my readers when I started this, and I surely did not envision it continuing for twelve months and about 15,000 words! It just seemed to take on a life of its own. There was no moral to it, but if you need to see one, make one up. I won't mind.

But Nogg might.

And he has a rock.

Bob-at-Large

Roadside ramblings & tales told by trash

by

Bob Tuck

Member-at-Large

All roads led

to Rome

SCAMsters taking part in our "Adopt-a-Highway" Project, take heart! Roads, and road building have been among the first signs of an advancing civilization since antiquity. The writings of the 1st-century Greek geographer Strabo record the system of roads radiating from ancient Babylon. Earlier, Herodotus, the 5th century BC Greek historian, mentioned the highways built in Egypt to move materials used in building the pyramids and other monumental structures constructed under the pharaohs. Herodotus also told how Darius I, the Great, who ascended the throne in 521 BC, reorganized the vast Persian Empire and built highways, particularly the Royal Road (I have traveled parts of its route), which allowed the Persian King-of-Kings' postal system to operate so that "neither rain nor snow nor heat of day nor gloom of night could stay his couriers upon their appointed rounds."

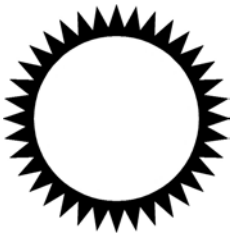
Nevertheless, the earliest surviving ancient roads are Roman. The Roman Republic built the Appian Way about 312 BC and the Flaminian Way about 220 BC. At the height of its power, the Roman Empire had a road system of about 50,000 miles, consisting of 29 highways radiating from the city of Rome, and a network of roads covering every important conquered province.

Roman roads were three to four feet thick, and consisted of three layers of successively finer stones set in mortar, with a layer of fitted stone blocks on top. By Roman law, the right of use of the roads belonged to all the public, but maintenance of the roadway was the responsibility of the inhabitants of the district through which the road ran. This suggests the "Adopt-a-Highway" Program has some ancient roots.

The Roman system effectively maintained good roads as long as a strong central authority existed. During the Middle Ages, from about the 5th to the 15th century, national road systems largely vanished.

Our resident SCAM Road Warrior, Jon Warner, schedules SCAM's quarterly "Adopt-a-Highway" cleanups along U.S. Route 1 to avoid Florida's abundant sunlight and heat. The day of our most recent endeavor missed the kickoff of the Babylonian Year 2748 of the Era of Nabonassar by a mere 24 hours. The Sun rose at 06:49 EDT, and our plucky band began attacking its allotted two-mile roadside stretch of flotsam and jetsam around eight.

Old Sol was not kind to



some Scamsters

Over-exposure to sun's radiant energy a week previously precluded active participation of one of our usual group. So, I found myself musing upon the fact that nuclear fusion reactions deep within the Sun's twenty-nine-million-degree core nearly a million years ago -- when Florida's fauna boasted sabretooth cats and mastodons -- had forged packets of energy that took a thousand-thousand years to force their way upward through layer upon layer of four-hundred-thirty-two-thousand-mile-thick star-stuff, bursting from the solar surface in 1999 and traveling a mere eight minutes to Earth, only to smite LocSec Doug Paul's unprotected epidermis with painfully damaging effects.

Thoughts of the Sun naturally led to ponderings about the Moon. Just two days past its First Quarter phase, our natural satellite wouldn't rise until 2:49 p. m. EDT. From the beginning of the year, SCAM columnist Art Belefant had tasked me to come up with a good explanation of the term "Blue Moon." I found a plausible one, but hadn't had an opportunity to tell Art. Here it is.

According to Joe Rao, in Natural History Magazine, March 1999, p. 79: Celestial Events, Moon Math: “The expression “once in a blue moon” suggests an indefinite interval, yet the frequency of Blue Moons can be precisely calculated. The Moon's phases recur on the same dates every nineteen years -- a rhythm known as the Metonic Cycle. Packed into this period are 235 lunar months (236 full Moons), but only 228 calendar months, and thus eight Blue Moons. So, mathematically, “once in a blue moon” is eight chances in 228, or 3.5 percent. Why the second Moon is called Blue is not known, but it probably has to do with the Old English word belewe, meaning, “to betray.” The Moon, this theory states, is belewe because it betrays the usual perception of one full Moon per month."

Early Christianity's Nicene Council, AD 325, used the Metonic cycle, named after its Greek discoverer (I suspect the Babylonians already had the knowledge), the astronomer Meton, who flourished around 432 BC, to fix Easter's date each year. The Church calls the number of a calendar year in the Metonic cycle the "Golden Number." To obtain the Golden Number for any year in the Christian Era, add one to the number of the year and divide the result by 19, remembering that decimals were unknown to Fourth Century Europeans. The

Some Road Warriors engaged in a

little spicy conversation

remainder is the Golden Number. If there is none, the number is 19. (If you're wondering, the Golden Number for 1999 is five: 1999 plus one divided by 19 equals 105 and FIVE-nineteenths.)

As our small Westside team worked northward along the highway strip, conversation turned to spices, particularly cardamom and saffron and their health effects and culinary benefits. Spices, those aromatic flavorings made from pungent plants parts, especially referred to plants native to tropical Asia and the Moluccas, or Spice Islands, of Indonesia. The term frequently also includes herbs, which are the fragrant leaves of herbaceous plants, many of which are native to temperate regions. With few exceptions, the spices and herbs we know and use today were used early in human history, and the spice trade with the Orient flourished well before the coming of Christianity. Their discoveries probably predate the earliest civilizations, when the aromatic effects produced by what are now called essential oils, found in various plant parts attracted early humans. Many of these same oils evolved as toxins or repellents against animals, such as the leaves of the mint plant and the bark of the cinnamon tree, which developed as protection against grass-eating hoofed animals and bark-boring insects.

In agreement with the lively discussion taking place around me, spices and herbs, besides their long use in preserving foods and enhancing food flavor, played important, sometimes magical, roles in medicine. Before today's industrially prepared medicines, herbal remedies were commonly prescribed. They were often effective. Some present-day practitioners are rediscovering this.

Economic developments that began in the Middle East before 2000 BC reflect the great value put on spices. For many centuries Arab merchants controlled the lucrative commerce in cinnamon, cassia, and pepper through overland trade routes to India. Roads, again, you see.

The later discovery of sea routes allowed Roman-controlled Alexandria, Egypt, to grow into a commercial center. Then, from the 13th to the 15th century, Venice, Italy, monopolized spice trade with the Middle East. Venice demanded such exorbitant prices, however, that Portugal and Spain looked eastward for routes to the Spice Islands around Africa's Cape of Good Hope. Christopher Columbus's voyages turned sights westward, and,

although many early explorers set out to find gold, such expeditions gained much of their financial backing from the spice trade.

Therefore, Europeans came to the shores of the Americas. Thus, in AD 1999, we SCAMsters picked our way among trash strewn alongside a road built in what once was Spanish overseas colonial territory.

One spice under discussion, cardamom, Elettaria cardamomum, a member of the ginger family, I have learned, is the common name for certain plant species native to India and southeastern Asia, and for their aromatic seeds. The true cardamom has large leaves and white flowers with blue stripes and yellow borders. It grows about ten feet tall. The fruit, a small capsule, holds eight to 16 brown seeds. These seeds are the spice upon which my co-workers were commenting.

Saffron, the other spice figuring in the conversation, holds special place among commodities prized by humans. It ranks among the few spices that are not readily available. A bright, orange-yellow flavoring and coloring material, saffron consists of the dried stigmas and style branches of the saffron crocus, Crocus sativus, a member of the iris family. The stigmas give a deep yellow color and inimitable aroma and flavor to Mediterranean cooking and Oriental dishes. Cultivated for centuries and mentioned by classical writers and in the Bible (Canticles 4:14), saffron powder was the ancient world's principal yellow dye and an ingredient of medicines and perfumes, besides its flavoring qualities. A single ounce of saffron powder requires the stigmas of about 4,000 plants; about 200,000 hand-extracted stigmas make up a pound. Saffron always has been the most expensive spice -- a fact confirmed by one of my fellow trash-collectors regarding price she paid.

Aluminum cans were

everywhere

Meanwhile, I supposed, the roadside debris we found had tales to tell. There were car parts and fragments of trim. Enough wires and connectors to outfit a spacecraft lay strewn along the verge. Wads of grocery labels, fast food containers, bottles, and glass shards lurked amid wayside vegetation. They went into our ample plastic bags. Most ubiquitous, however, were aluminum beer cans.

Now, aluminum ranks as the most abundant metallic element in the earth's crust. Yet its extraction originally required so much effort that in 1886 the world production of aluminum was less than 100

pounds, and its price exceeded $5 per pound. By 1989, the estimated world production of primary aluminum reached 18 million metric tons, with an estimated four million metric tons produced in the United States alone. Aluminum's price had fallen to less than $1 per pound.

Aluminum looms large only in modern times. The use of beer, on the other hand, probably dates back more than ten thousand years. Although no one knows its exact origins, some agricultural historians believe that the first beer may have been produced accidentally when rain soaked, and the Sun subsequently warmed, a stash of grain. If wild, airborne yeast, which thrives in just these warm, moist conditions, spontaneously fermented this mixture, the result would have been a sort of beer.

Brewskis?

At any rate, early beer makers used very simple brewing processes and fermented beer for only a brief period, one to two days at most. Not until around AD 1100 did brewing techniques become more sophisticated. In Europe brewers banded together to form guilds -- societies that protected their trade and set beer making standards. Hops entered the brewing process around 1300, but English beer makers refused to add the bitter tasting plant to their brews until the 16th century. The first beer brewed with hops in England was bitter ale.

For centuries brewers heated grain over open fires. The result was a dark, smoky malt that produced equally dark beer. The industrial revolution in the mid-1800s allowed brewers to invent methods to dry malt in large rotating heated drums, leaving the grain light in color and producing a pale, golden beer. The next major technological development in the late 19th century, the invention of compressed gas refrigeration, meant brewers no longer had to schedule the various heating and cooling phases of the brewing process according to seasonal outdoor temperatures. Refrigeration also meant beer could be shipped greater distances without spoiling. This innovation paved the way for the proliferation of today's large brand beers. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, the American brewing industry rapidly consolidated.

By 1983, six breweries accounted for almost 90 percent of the beer sold in the United States. As of the early 1990s, the largest American breweries, such as Anheuser-Busch and the Miller Brewing Company, were producing nearly 60 million barrels per year.

We SCAM "Adopt-a-Highway" volunteers could readily attest these effects along our stretch of U.S. 1. Although recycled metal now accounts for over twenty percent of total aluminum consumption in the United States, our observations suggest motorists could raise the percentage, if only they restrained themselves.

Trudging along the highway, long tongs in hand, one gets an intimate view of the road surface and insights into the properties of asphalt. The black, cementlike material varies in consistency from solid to semisolid, depending upon temperature. It originally came from natural deposits and can be poured when heated to the temperature of boiling water. Most asphalt used commercially now is derived from petroleum, however. Natural asphalt was used extensively in past times. Ancient Babylonians used it as a building material. The Old Testament books of Genesis and Exodus refer to asphalt several times as a caulking material. Natural asphalt deposits occur in pits or lakes as residue from crude petroleum that has seeped up through fissures in the earth. The La Brea tar pits in Los Angeles are typical deposits in which the prehistoric floral and faunal remains occur. Pitch Lake, Trinidad, is natural asphalt pool.

Asphalt street paving in the United States began in 1870. By 1903, asphalt covered more than 42 million square yards of U.S. streets.

SCAM's first "Adopt-a-Highway" foray in mid-1998 revealed many objects ground into and partly buried by the road's asphalt surface. In the far future, archaeologists may uncover many items hidden beneath the road surface. Like kitchen middens from ancient Middle Eastern sites, the scraps of our society will reveal something of our culture. The word "midden," by the way, means "a refuse heap" and comes from the Middle English midding, a term of Scandinavian origin. Such heaps, often containing buried relics of industry and art, have been found in all parts of the world. They are important in investigations of cultures that left no written records or permanent architectural remains, such as the communities of the Native North Americans and of Stone, Bronze, and early Iron Age Europeans. The earliest kitchen middens studied by archaeologists are in Denmark, where *kkenm ddinger* ("kitchen leavings"), so large and ancient that they originally were thought to be natural formations, were

SCAMsters

collected a heap of refuse

excavated in the 19th century. The custom of placing camps on the abandoned refuse piles of former habitations created some middens more than a thousand feet long and ten feet deep along the Danish beaches (in other parts of the world middens as deep as a hundred feet have been found). Contemporary archaeologists have unearthed not only animal debris such as shells and bones from them, but also artifacts such as knives, scrapers, hammers, sling-stones, and pottery.

Think what our own SCAM "Adopt-a-Highway" site someday will yield! How many far-future archaeological students will labor to fathom the secrets of our primitive culture's votive objects dedicated to the great gods "Coca-Cola " and "Budweiser "?

Quirky Definitions

by Ellen Paul

This quiz will test your ability to think about words and their definitions in a manner different from that which you usually do. Our prior Editor developed a puzzle like this and I liked it so much, I had to try my hand at the concept. I hope I am as adept as she was at giving our readership some mental exercise.

Below you will find five items that, when each portion is redefined, will produce an entirely different word. The **/** designates each portion of the new word to be formed. An example is **"prisoner/portion of land."** The answer is *"contract"* as a prisoner can also be called a *con*, and a portion of land is also known as a *tract*.

Got it? Good. Try your hand at these:

1. **gauge/fed**
2. **exist/reason**
3. **father/French article**
4. **fish/come in**
5. **about/originator**

(The answers will be found on page 16)

You might be a Redneck Jedi if:

At least one wing of your X-Wing is primer colored.

Gourmet's Guide

"Shopping"

by

Arthur Belefant
(belefant@winnie.fit.edu)

Men zero in on a purchase

While wandering through a shopping mall this holiday season I began to wonder about the American penchant for shopping. In the U.S. shopping is a major activity for both men and women. However, in general, men and women approach shopping differently.

For most women, "to shop" is an intransitive verb, there is no object. Shopping itself is the primary function. For men, "to shop" is a transitive verb, they shop for something, a car, a wrench, or an amplifier. This difference is so pervasive that I began to wonder how it came about. Is it strictly cultural or is it genetic?

First we must look at the shopping function itself, as we now know it. In anthropological terms it is recent, a couple of millennia old perhaps, if we count the Greek *agoras* as a shopping mall, whereas humans have existed as a separate species as *Homo erectus* for more than two million years, and as pre-humans for perhaps 7.5 million years.

Prior the rise of humans as a separate species, proto- or pre-humans foraged for their food much as the chimpanzees do today. Each animal would look through its environment for what it could catch or gather to eat, such as worms, grubs, fruit, eggs, and small animals. There was no differentiation between the sexes. Each animal ate what it could find or catch.

Some time before or after we became humans, when we formed family bonds in which the family shared the food obtained, a sexual differentiation of food acquisition occurred. How it occurred, or why, I cannot judge, but it was probably related to child bearing and rearing. What happened was that men became hunters and women became gatherers. Those families in which specialization of food acquisition occurred, according to Darwinian theory, survived better and transmitted more of their genes to the gene pool, eventually programming men to be hunters and women to be gatherers. These were genetic differences between men and women. These sex-related genes are in our bodies now.

When you look at modern men and women, they do not have the necessity to go out and personally obtain the wherewithal for their diets, but the innate need to hunt or gather still exists, and this is reflected in our need to shop and how we shop. Shopping is a sublimated form of hunting and gathering.

Men hunt. That is, they shop for specific items,

...while women gather what they find to their liking

just as our hunter ancestors did. They go after a mammoth, a walrus, a suit, a shirt, or other specific item.

Women gather. They go into the environment (the forest, the mall) as our gatherer ancestors did to see what they could find, a berry, a tuber, a grub, a lipstick, a purse, a trinket, or anything lying there that can be gathered. No particular object is in mind. Whatever that can be found which may fulfill some need is acceptable.

Most women can enjoyably spend the whole afternoon shopping from store to store, examining every item on every rack in every store like a gatherer looking in each bush and under each log, sometimes bringing home a miscellany of items and sometimes nothing at all.

Most men hate shopping. If they need or want anything, be it a deer or a door, they will go directly to the place that can supply it, having studied the matter before they left their dens, make their acquisitions and return home without any deviations. If the target object is not there, so be it.

Another day, another hunt.

Where Do I Go To Complain?

by Doug Paul

Oh, oh...Doug is really on the warpath this month! He has complaints for organizations from all over the country. One thing you have to say for him, though, is that he ALWAYS knows where to go to be heard. Do you? Here are 5 well-known companies... see if you can match them to their corporate headquarters.

1) Aladdin Industries
2) CVS Pharmacies
3) Godiva Chocolatiers
4) American Express
5) Bi-Lo Stores

A - Minneapolis, MN
B - Nashville, TN
C - Chattanooga, TN
D - Stamford, CT
E - Woonsocket, RI

(The answers will be found on Page 16)