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Issue 04
Mapril 2007

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**Volume 456-BR8 Issue 04,
Mapril 2007**

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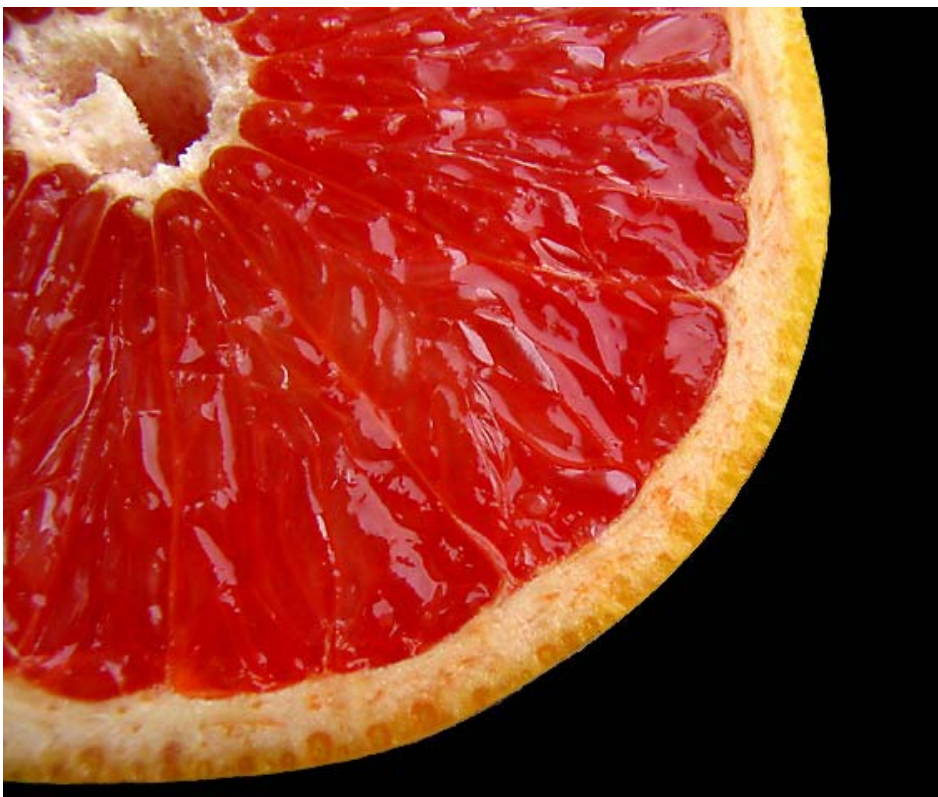
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Axes & Alleys

Winners of the Waukeegan Clambake!



As you've no doubt been aware since grade school, February is National Grapefruit Month. What you may not know is that every day in the *Axes & Alleys* offices begins with a grapefruit and prayer breakfast. DJ Trickyfingers from the Creative Department is in charge of procuring and preparing the grapefruit, and he does such a good job.

We then sit around the table, each with a half of grapefruit, and sprinkle Sweet & Low on top. It leaves such a wonderful aftertaste. You wouldn't believe it unless you tried it. We each have our own way of eating the grapefruit. Angus Lopez, our office manager, takes the simple route by mashing the grapefruit directly into his face. It's messy, but it gets the job done.

Finally we all stand up and hold hands for our daily prayer, led by photographer Bernard Roosten. He usually keeps it brief, although one time he recited a prayer for over a half hour in which he gave thanks for each pair of shoes he'd ever owned. So, this issue we offer our thankful prayers for the mild winter so that come summer, there will be plenty of juicy, delicious grapefruit for us to eat.

xxx 000

Delores R. Grunion
Editor-In-Chief

The Mapril Cover Girl: Drew Barrymore



**Drew Barrymore
is the first
Axes & Alleys
cover-girl to ever
give a member of the
editorial staff a
high-five. Her name
is an anagram of
"warm robe dryer."**

WRITTEN CORRESPONDENCES FROM GOOD NATURED GENTLEMEN WHO HAVE READ OUR PREVIOUS INSTALLMENTS AND WISH TO COMMENT ON SOME ASPECTS THEREOF

To Whom It May Concern,
Your article on college by Garnet "Collegebound" Bruell (*My Essay About College*, Volume 456-BR7, Issue 14) is full of crap. I met Garnet at the campus diner the other day and he's nothing like he describes in the essay. I asked him about various colors and, you know what? He doesn't like colors. When I asked him if he wanted to share my sandwich with me he said he wasn't hungry, contradicting his statement that he likes to eat! How can you print such lies?

Provost Teresa A. Sullivan
University of Michigan, MI

To Whom it May Concern,
Thank you for your interest in the Papacy and in the Holy Catholic Church. While the I do enjoy meeting and speaking with Catholics the world over, I am often too busy with prayers and services to answer each letter personally. Please continue partaking in the Seven Sacraments and thank you for your letter.
Love in Christ Through an Intermediary,
Pope Benedict XVI
Vatican City

To the Editors of *Axes & Alleys*,
There are several major problems with your so-called comic in the last issue. First of all, the American flag patch is on the left arm of an astronaut's suit, not the right as depicted in this illustration. Secondly, astronaut helmets do not feature any jutting antennae, as these would be too delicate for EVA and may snag on something, jeopardizing communication with the shuttle or lander. Third, there is no mission patch present on either the chest or shoulder. Also, there is no such thing as aliens. At least not like they're depicted here. Please do your research before publishing this nonsense. It perpetuates ignorance and could cause children to lose interest in manned space exploration programs.
Catharine Coleman
Cape Kennedy, FL

Dear Mrs. Occupant,
Would you be interested in learning more about brass? Send away today for your free brass information pamphlet from the Brass Advisory Council.
The Brass Advisory Council
Grand Rapids, MI

Dear Editors,
Why is that your magazine is only scratch-and-sniff in the Czech Republic Edition? Here in Poprad, we can only get the Slovakia Edition and are hence unable to scratch or sniff anything at all. Our olfactory senses have become dulled. Back before the fall of the Iron Curtain, we used to be able to get the Czechoslovakia Edition, which was edited by the Party, but at least could be smelled. Why have you granted only the Czech Republic with the

scintillating world of scents? Also, could you please start reprinting the Ruthania Edition?
Bost Malichi
Poprad, Slovakia

Dear *Axes & Alleys*,
Does your magazine have anything to do with Peruvian supermodel Alexis Andaliz? She is really hot and has a name similar to that of your magazine. Is this just a coincidence? Because she's totally hot. I even have her picture as my desktop wallpaper.
Maria Thymagissine
Llanddewi Brefi, UK

Dear *Axes & Alleys*,
The contents of my pocket are: two quarters totaling fifty cents, a safety pin, and one glove.
Sincerely,
Henrietta Stevenson
Glendale, SC

To the Editors,
People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) is the world's largest animal rights organization, with more than 1.6 million members and supporters dedicated to animal protection. This letter concerns your recent glorification of the mistreatment of animals at Magic Muffin's Research Campus in Monrovia, MV (*Mammals Move Muffins*, Volume 456-BR8 Issue 02). Numerous animals, including snakes, monkeys and sloths have been subjected to cruel treatment in a salacious effort to "improve" human life. On behalf of our members and supporters in Montsylvania, we respectfully ask that you print a retraction of your propaganda piece for the animal slavery industry and publish an article provided by our media department: *The Immorality of Muffin Industrialization and Animals*.
Dan Paden, Researcher
Domestic Animal and Wildlife Rescue & Information Department, PETA

Dear Delores R. Grunion,
My name is Billy Green and I am a ten year old boy with a horrible disease called Billy Green Syndrome. This disease is genetic and was named after my father. The doctors said that it was incurable and, like my father, I would die before the age of eleven. But then last night Jesus, and his brother James, appeared to me in a dream and told me that I would be miraculously cured, but if only I would write a letter to your magazine. Jesus, and his brother James, said that if you refused to print my letter then I would be miraculously cured and everything would be alright and my mommy would stop crying. So please don't print this letter or allow it to appear in your magazine. I don't want to die.
Billy Thompson Jr.,
Harrisburg, PA

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Enjoy adhesive paper.



What If ANTS Built a SPACESHIP?

If ants built space ships most people assume they wouldn't be very big because ants are quite small. Formic spaceships wouldn't be as tiny as many assume, though, because ant colonies can get to be pretty large, covering acres of land to depths of several feet. Still, a spaceship built by a colony of ants wouldn't be terribly huge.

The traditional image of ants created through science media is usually one of strife involving raids, slavery, and death. What if the space race brought the colonies together? I like to imagine that a space program would bring the entire race of ants together in a type of social insect utopia. In that case they would need a bigger ship.

A natural design for such a ship would be the shape of an ant itself, stylized of course to avoid infringing on the sensibilities of any species. From antennae to the end of the abdomen it would measure perhaps 12.7 kilometers long. The widest diameter of the ship would be across the abdomen, at around 6.1 kilometers. The internal superstructure of the abdomen, legs, thorax, and head are to consist of enclosures which can be adjusted to the direction of thrust, providing a simulation of gravity. When the ship is in free-fall, the carpeted hallways will provide gripping points for the ants. Propulsion comes through a hydrogen-fueled Bussard ramjet.

The long, protruding antennae of the ship and the mandibles located at the front of the head are to produce the field for the craft's ramjet. Interstellar

hydrogen is to be guided through the mandibles and into the mouth, through the central fusion mass conduit modeled on an ant's gut, and finally into the six fusion propulsion systems located at the tip of each of the leg structures. The fusion system will then provide thrust and power for the ship.

Biomass for the ants' consumption would be located throughout the abdomen. Special fungus and aphid farms will be installed towards the front of this section for those species who require them. Otherwise the storage facilities will contain vegetable matter.

The thorax of the ship would contain gigantic environmental systems to handle the air and water needs of the ant colonies. The air processors will use oxygen and nitrogen generated by the biomass in the abdomen to supply the vast majority of atmosphere for the rest of the ship, while secondary storage and generation equipment remains on permanent stand-by in case of emergency. Since ants get most of their water from food, the water reclamation system required is much simpler as it is mostly there for the benefit of the biomass. The filtration and recycling system is to be connected to the biomass storage facility through an open circulation system, constantly cycling water from the abdomen to the processing equipment and back.

Connected to the fusion power plant at the rear of the abdomen through a set of tracheae, electrical distribution can be efficiently routed throughout the ship without sacrificing living or storage space. It can then be



used as a secondary source for heating due to its proximity to the heating system.

The heating system will rely both on electricity coming from the fusion plant and the warmth from the moist, hot air created by the decomposition of vegetable matter in the fungus farms. After reaching the distribution junction, this air is then passed through the environmental system to extract its moisture, whence it passes to all points beyond.

Living space for the individual colonies will be located in the remaining areas of the abdomen. The fore section of the abdomen will feature environments dedicated mainly to those species residing in tropical and desert biomes, as these decks are closest to the heat distribution system. The top-most section will contain species from dry temperate locations, while the aft decks will contain species from wet temperate locations and those from cold or sub-arctic regions. Colonies residing near the engineering centers of the thorax will be those from environmental regions representing an extreme mix of temperatures and moistures.

The ship's head is, naturally, to be the command and control centre. The lower portion will ensconce the main computer and auxiliary control systems (such as the Bussard field adjustment computer and environmental control). The upper portion, complete with multi-faceted view screens and other sensors built into the eyes, is the Bridge, which will be staffed by specially grown controller and navigator drones.

Astrogation and propulsion would be controlled directly from the Bridge. At the same time, command officer drones can issue orders to their various colonies through pheromone disseminating pneumatic tubes specific to each species. The pneumatic system carries a control pheromone to the appropriate colony located in the abdomen. From there a pheromone disbursement officer carries the message throughout the colony.

Colony Queens would spend the majority of their time at the Queen's Deck, located in the bottom aft section of the abdomen, directly above the main docking bay. Most eggs will be kept in the temperature controlled storage decks, while some will be carried directly to the docking bay for placement on the landing pods used for colonizing suitable planets. The single airlock located in the extreme aft section allows for launching colonization pods, as well as for the jettisoning of trash and waste.

As you can see, a multi-species advanced interstellar craft for ants is a feasible idea for the most part. There are some problems surrounding ant cognition, manufacturing methods, and economic systems, but these can be overcome in time. Remember that Mankind took only six decades to advance from flight to space travel, and that ants have already been flying for millions of years. After coming along with me on this beautiful journey into the possible, don't you also think it would be wonderful for ants to reach for the stars, come together in filial admiration, and build a fancy, ant-shaped spaceship? I thought you would.

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ARGONAUTICA

THE MARCH OF PROGRESS

**Institute for Theoretical
Physics Warns Against**

THE DANGERS OF TIME TRAVEL!



Time travel is not, and may never be, possible. However, a committee at the prestigious Flagstaff Institute of Theoretical Physics has released a new report detailing just how stupidly dangerous travel to the past or future may be. The report is of special concern to our growing corps of chrononauts.

"If you go back in time," stated Dr. Steven Hawkins at a press conference held in the Luau Room of the Particle Physics Research Institute and Brothel "you may affect causality in numerous ways; say by killing your parents before they screw you into existence, or rolling your ATV over the sherwlike creatures which gave rise to all modern-day mammals." However, Dr. Hawkins warns against an even greater threat. "The real danger isn't from paradoxes. It's from disease."

The group warned that the past is rife with all manner of pestilence, disease, and infections including, but not limited to, every disease ever. The FITP committee hypothesizes that a time traveler venturing, for instance, to 25 AD to prevent the Crucifixion would perhaps succumb to amoebic dysentery within two days before he could prevent the salvation of mankind.

"It wouldn't be a pretty death either," stated Hawkins. "Even the 19th and early 20th Centuries aren't safe. We advise not venturing back more than a couple of decades if time travel is ever invented. Which it won't be, because it's not possible."

According to a high-level official at NACTA, the National American Chronambulatory Travel Administration, the report is of grave concern to the nation's fourth largest department. Both the Armstrong Administration and NACTA refused to comment for this article.

So, while it may be interesting to see what Napoleon could have done with machine guns and a logistics planning computer, any chrononaut who heads to Austerlitz with a crate Kalashnikovs and a planeload of MREs is going to be too distracted by small pox, diphtheria or cholera to enjoy the battle. Furthermore, photographs of Napoleon with a mustache could be taken, which would demoralize modern-day Corsicans.

The future may be safe, though people in the future will probably imprison and quarantine you before you even have time to look up your great, great grandchildren in some sort of futuristic phone book. You'd actually be quite easy for a group of futuristic, leopard-human hybrids to capture and we imagine they will take many photographs of you with their prosthetic audio-visual communication hands.

"If you have to go back, say to prevent Buddhism or something," Hawkins concludes "it would be best to wear a containment suit that you burn as soon as you return to the present. Of course, you won't ever do that, because time travel isn't possible."

The Axes & Alleys HISTORIGON

During This Month in History:

2005 AD: After one hundred years, Jules Verne continues to remain dead.

2004 AD: After purchasing a piece of the True Cross online, Ron Stanley of Kenosha, WI , wonders why the Romans made crosses out of plastic.

1988 AD: Brian Warner of Fort Lauderdale, FL, decides to try on some of his mother's lipstick. He is disgusted to find out later that lipstick often contains fish scales.

1980 AD: Members of the band KISS are convicted of treason for selling nuclear secrets to the Iranians.

1954 AD: Adlai Stevenson invents the game of Beer Pong, also known as Beirut.

1944 AD: Nazi Fuehrer Adolph Hitler enjoys an apricot.

1889 AD: While attempting to design a revolutionary new kite, Alexander Graham Bell accidentally invents the telephone again.

1681 AD: Edward Teach grows a beard.

1602 AD: William Shakespeare scratches a dirty sonnet into a lavatory wall.

1578 AD: Samurai warrior Akakawa shames rival Tokogura with a beautiful and exquisitely composed haiku about how good crabmeat tastes.

1537 AD: Shortly before Spaniards arrive there, the Island of California joins the rest of North America.

1381 AD: Janth throws herself beneath the wheels of the advancing Juggernaut and has little to no effect on its progress.

1215 AD: At Runnymede, English King John first attempts to sign the name "Tohn" and then "Dohn" before the nobles make him write his real name on The Magna Carta.

923 AD: A Tatar named Multigin gets very angry when he stubs his toe. He raids a neighboring village, slaughtering the entire population and takes their herd of goats. This makes him feel better.

701 AD: In order to impress a beautiful, dark haired and blue eyed young girl with ample bosoms, Erthik begins writing the *Beowulf Saga*.

575 AD: Five year old Muhammad begins a life-long fascination with raisins.

483 AD: No one notices that the Nestorian Church has had a schism with the Orthodox Church.

102 AD: Pan Chau's expeditionary force reaches the Caspian Sea. He sends reports home stating that there isn't anything interesting out that way.

25 AD: An irate man in strange clothes, speaking in an unknown language attempts to stop several soldiers as they crucify a Jewish man. He fails to stop them due to a crippling and fatal bout of dysentery .

17 BC: Japeth of Judea thinks he could use a new smock.

274 BC: Rendithes of Corinth pens the most beautiful poem ever written. A visitor from nearby Porlock knocks over an olive oil lamp, causing a fire which burns down Rendithes' house with all its contents.

440 BC: After wandering the entire Mediterranean, Herodotus remembers where he left his change purse.

765 BC: Ancestors of the Ainu people of Japan amuse themselves by using a wooden board with a snow monkey tied loosely on top to plug up geyser holes, then watch the resulting expressions on the monkeys' faces when the geyser erupts.

901 BC: Cruthoatlec drags a valuable load of jade to his home across the isthmus of Panama, creating the first and short-lived Panama Canal.

1300 BC: A Phoenician named Dehrem steps on a sea snail and has an idea.

3, 809 BC: A trader, who by pure coincidence is named Seanconnery, invents cuneiform.

12,003 BC: Shurprizh, a resident of Southwest Asia, produces the first play in history. It is remarkably similar to an unaired episode slated for the second season of *My Mother the Car*.

109,800 BC: After dropping a goose egg on a rock near the fire, Omak eats it, finding that the heat has transformed the egg into a congealed, rubbery substance. He spits it out and goes to look for some berries.

507,032 BC: A human band wins its third consecutive war against a nearby group of chimpanzees, thanks mostly to Churdu's excellent rock-hurling prowess.

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ON THE SUBJECT OF CATHY

AN EDITORIAL BY A PLASTIC MANNEQUIN



I am not a historian of the comic strip *Cathy*. As a child I read the strip regularly. As an adult, I've glanced over *Cathy* from time to time. Because of this unique experience with the work of Cathy Guisewite, one could say I am more like Heinrich Schliemann finding a frozen moment in the development of Troy. Like Schliemann, all I see is ruination.

As a child I loved *Cathy*. Each week I would eagerly open the funny pages to read about her looking for a date, being fat, wanting to exercise, eating too many chocolates, talking to her cat, talking to her mother on the phone; virtually any of the boring things a young professional woman might do.

I wanted to meet Cathy. Not the character, but the woman who created her. In fact, I will admit to having a small crush on Cathy Guisewite at the age of seven. She seemed to know something about all the normal things in life, stuff a seven year old didn't know yet. And since the strip was drawn very much as a seven year old would draw, I thought her character was cute and figured she would be, too.

I thought she lived nearby. Then again, I thought all the comics writers lived nearby. Dick Browne wrote *Hagar the Horrible* from up the street. Bil Keane lived in town with the *Family Circus*. Lynn Johnston owned the awesome house near my elementary school, pouring out *For Better or For Worse*. This was reinforced by the fact that *Peanuts* creator Charles Schultz really did live in my town. So I thought Ms. Guisewite was probably somewhere in the neighbourhood and I desperately wanted to meet her.

Things haven't changed much in the last twenty years. The visual style of *Cathy* is surprisingly still very much familiar to elementary school students. It's amazing that after two decades, she hasn't been able to control her urge for sweets. She finally got that man she was after, but their dialogue isn't much different than it was before. Her concerns are still quite parochial. For instance, Cathy still thinks she's fat and makes jokes about exercise.

This last is difficult to wrap one's head around. Everyone in the *Cathyverse* is the same size, so one assumes either Cathy has never been fat or she only knows fat people. Both propositions are quite sad. The former suggests Cathy as the victim of a persistent body dysmorphic disorder. The latter is a dystopian proposition that Cathy lives in a dark, gritty world of people unable to control their urges, doomed to an early death from heart disease, high blood pressure, or diabetes. Diabetes seems most likely as insulin is never mentioned.

I no longer wish to meet Cathy Guisewite. Her concerns are parochially vapid and her output offers no deep analysis on the human condition. Probably a woman in her late twenties or thirties when I was a child, she must now be in her late forties or fifties. If *Cathy* suggests anything about her, on top of being too old for me she's incredibly dull. I would make her angry when she showed me the latest strip and I told her how bad it was.

I'm not her demographic and that's okay. I am not, of course, seven years old any longer. I am not a stereotypical young professional woman sitting in my apartment with my cats reading the comics in my sweatpants. I am not a middle-aged biddy wont to chuckle at the latest stereotypically male thing Cathy's companion does.

I'm sure me, aged seven, would be disappointed with this outcome, but I won't listen to him. He didn't know how to tie his shoes then. He couldn't recognize that *Cathy* is filler; one of the worst comic strips ever to be granted a syndication contract, and one upon which can be saddled all the accusations of decadence and boorishness ever levied against our culture.

Cathy was and is the early warning sign of a culture about to fall, of a grand civilization tottering toward its grave. When historians look back at the United States, Cathy Guisewite will be held up as one of the first signals that something was wrong. They will shake their heads at our folly and ask, "Why was nothing done?"



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THE DIM-AGES

**A Journey
Through History
Featuring Jimmy the Leper**



Children's stories are chock full of knights, squires, castles with moats, and damsels who require a healthy amount of rescuing. Of course, these elements have about as much basis in historical fact as the wizards, witches and dragons that also populate the same stories. That is to say that there were real witches, real dragons, real knights and real castles, but the real ones have little in common with their romantic, faerie-tale counterparts.

This is the true story of the Dark Ages, as some call it. Yes, there was a period of time from 500—1000 AD, but what we've been told about it is based in 19th Century Romanticism, Roman propaganda and other fictional generalizations. The Dark Ages, while certainly dark, weren't any less well-lit than any other period in history. No matter what was going on, the lives of the vast majority of people didn't change a bit, despite the varying empires and cultures which rose and fell. For Jimmy, the peasant with leprosy and his fellow diseased, poverty-ridden ilk, it didn't matter if you had a consul, an emperor or a lord oppressing you. You were still being oppressed.

The schoolmarm's old yarn is that the Roman Empire, grand as it were, collapsed and that Barbarism spread throughout Europe. Knowledge was lost, learning stopped, and poverty and superstition reigned for a thousand years until some enterprising artists decided to start painting with perspective and to make really big versions of Greek statuary. Here we hit the Renaissance and have a happy ending for Jimmy the Leper. As always, the truth is just a bit more complicated.

First there's one major fallacy to dispel: the classical glory and grandeur of the intellectual paradise of Greece and Rome. Despite what Mrs. Rowland taught you in middle school, the Roman Empire was full of squalor, filth, disease and hunger. In the Greco-Roman world, as in the Dark Ages, practically everyone lived in filth and poverty. Which is better: the cramped, dark tenement or the cramped, dark hovel? They were poor people, they were diseased and they were oppressed by people who, while not being particularly healthier or cleaner, were certainly richer. If you want to know how truly grand life was in Rome, don't ask Pliny the Elder, ask Jimmus the Galley Slave.

To put this in perspective, let's say you put all the people who ever existed into a large bag and pull out a million at a time. Your chances of retrieving one rich, healthy and clean person are about the same as those of procuring a bag large enough to hold every person who ever existed.

The Greeks' main claims to fame, though, are their culture, learning and art. Well, not all of the Greeks. Only a handful excelled at this and for the most part they weren't highly paid or not killed. Some weren't both (look up Socrates some time). They did invent geometry.

But then they made it a religion and refused to allow any practical applications of geometry. You know, it would cheapen rectangles and whatnot if everyone knew about them. Some people were so upset with the Pythagoreans for hiding the wonders of the perfect solids that they lynched them upon discovering these great truths were being kept from them. How enlightened.

Also, they invented democracy. Well, they invented something sort of like democracy. That is to say they invented something close enough to democracy that we took their name and used it to describe the idealized version of our current system. No slaves, women, or people busy finding food, please.

The people who made up the bulk of the population? They didn't care. Rectangles, perfect forms and democracy didn't help get the dung smell out of a tunic. And you were in real trouble if you lived near the city's sewage system, if your city was lucky enough to have one. Nope, Jimexanos the Leper didn't get an iota of relief from *The Republic*. It's ever so slightly difficult for your people to appreciate your culture's great literary works when the vast majority of your people are illiterate wretches.

The Romans, however, were the real masters of culture and learning, which they mastered by ripping off other people's ideas. The Romans' ideas were "adopted" from the Greeks, Phoenicians, Carthaginians, and Etruscans. The Romans were famous for their roads, many of which they found intact after the Persians had forgotten to take them when they left. Those famous Roman roads were a great benefit to the common people, who were able to utilize them as they were force-marched in chains down the roads so that they could be whipped as they built the next section of road.

No, the truly unique cultural achievement of the Romans was murder. They loved murder; it was their favorite. While the slaves and Plebeians watched other slaves and Plebeians being murdered in the Coliseum, the Patricians were busy murdering each other to see who could win the right to be the next consul or emperor to get murdered. Eventually the so-called Barbarians got into the game by murdering lots of Romans and the Empire collapsed. All the while, Jimmus the Galley Slave was still a leper living in filth who got to see an occasional sculpture and mighty temple on those few occasions when his galley would dock. But, in the end he was still a leper and a slave.

And then around 500 AD the Dark Ages began. Actually, it was 476, but it's easier to just round up. So, the crux of the issue is this question: did the collapse of the Roman Empire cause regular folk roundabout Northern Europe any more problems than they already had?

Northern Europe hadn't quite benefited from all this prosperity, enrichment and enlightening. Actually, it kept on doing its dirt-strewn, illiterate best throughout the existence of Rome. It was cold, heavily forested and inhabited by bloodthirsty drunks. We call these people Celts. There were also some Goths involved who eventually founded Austria. Good for them. No matter what was going on or which empire happened to be in ascendancy at the time, they remained bloodthirsty, drunken farmers. Occasionally one of their leaders got the bright idea to ravage those enlightened softies to the South. You see, the real benefit bestowed upon Northern Europe by the Roman Empire was centuries of warfare and enslavement. The collapse of Rome actually improved these peoples' lives slightly, as it meant they could go south and bring more loot back home.

A good example of how the collapse of the Roman Empire affected Northern Europe might be the city of Aachen. From Neolithic times up to the era of Greece and Rome it was a minor, backwoods village where farming and stone quarrying happened. Then, a few centuries after Rome fell, Aachen became the capital of a large empire, home to massive palaces and cathedrals and, under Charlemagne, a center of learning and culture. It doesn't exactly seem to follow that the collapse of Rome caused a Dark Age in Aachen, especially since the so-called Dark Age turned it from a stone pit to a powerful cultural and political center.

The supposedly backwards people of Northern Europe in the Dark Ages turned out to be fairly skilled engineers and structural designers. During a period devoid of learning, they managed to go from building wooden forts called mot and baileys, to building huge walled cities, massive castles and ridiculously intricate and enormous cathedrals. Granted, they didn't have 100,000 seat capacity coliseums, but they certainly knew how to stack their stones. Of course the person stacking the stones would have been Jimmy the Peasant, who besides having no rights or money, also had to grow food for everyone, give up a few months out of the year to be trampled by knights in battle and spend another few months hauling stones to build those mighty cathedrals. He probably had leprosy, too.

Speaking of cathedrals, the Dark Ages were known for theocracy and superstition. Though it's not exactly fair to single them out in that respect. After all, the Romans believed in a pantheon of fickle gods (ooh, Janus god of doorways!) and the Pythagoreans actually believed that dodecahedrons were sacred (though they didn't give a fig about parallelograms). Of course the Renaissance and "Age of Reason" mark the end of all this. Europe spent those couple of centuries celebrating Reason by fighting religious wars, burning suspected witches, and lynching smart guys.

As you can see, Jimmus, Jimexanos and Jimmy weren't doing too well regardless of what period in history they lived or which culture happened to be waxing or waning. Whether they were forced to build a Parthenon, an aqueduct or a castle, they were still whipped if they didn't go fast enough. Whether they were being marched off to war against the Persians, the Parthians or the Muslims, they were still put out in front and armed with farm equipment. Whether their home was Athens, Rome or Aachen, they were still living in filth, disease and squalor.

None of this though, should be taken as an attempt to defend the Dark Ages as a wonderful period in human history. The point is that the Europe your teachers taught you about during the Dark Ages was rife with disease, poverty, oppression and superstition, just like every other time period for which we have records. Remember that the next time you see a story about the Middle Ages. Also, remember that everything your teacher told you was wrong. You don't listen to that woman, you listen to me.



The BEMCO

BAG•O•MYSTERY



**is it candy? The head of John the Baptist? Tigers?
you never know what's inside the BAG•O•MYSTERY!**



Katie Stalin

Out and About



Grand Canyon, AZ – So, here it is. I've come to the most well-known geological feature in the United States and I'm looking over the edge. There's a river down there at the bottom. There's some very high canyon walls. It's most impressive. But, you know what? I've got a problem with it. All the stupid families.

I'm visiting one of the things in nature which holds the most impact for visitors, and there's a bunch of snot-nosed, whiny little brats running around. How the hell am I supposed to enjoy this grand, natural beauty with these rug rats everywhere?

Earlier in the day I paid for a mule ride tour and hike of the canyon. Things were okay for about the first ten minutes, but then this noise kept bothering me. Finally I looked around for it and it turns out a kid two mules behind was playing some handheld game. That was the noise. Okay, I can deal. I've been a bored kid before. But then we get to the bottom and these two elementary school kids start whining. They're tired. They have to pee. It's no fun for them. One of them kicked their mule, which was great because the thing totally kicked him back. That kid got knocked right into the Colorado River. It was hilarious. So hilarious it made up for all his crying.

Then I took a whitewater rafting trip down the river. This was so awesome, I couldn't believe it. Yeah, no nachos, but it was really exciting and the guide was so cute. Of course one of those stupid kids had to ruin all the fun. We stopped near some of these awesome Navajo adobe ruins and camped out in front of them. While me and the guide are having some adult fun in one of the upper storeys of the Navajo city, this little bastard starts up crying about his lost cards. They were from some cartoon show and he wouldn't shut up. So of course Jeb, the guide, had to go down and help out. And I didn't get any action!

They couldn't find his cards, so the kid had a huge tantrum. He's whining into the night, throwing smores at his parents. Then, all of sudden, he runs off towards the adobe structures. We didn't pay him any mind, but ten minutes later we hear some crackling. As we look over, we notice that stupid kid kicking the city and beating it with a huge branch. That whole building came down.

Well, about ten miles down the river the next day, I got him back. My raft came up right next to his, and I sent it tipping over with my oar. They couldn't find that little pissant for two hours. He got stuck between to boulders in the river about a mile downstream. It was awesome. Made up for the whole trip.

So, yeah, I would recommend the Grand Canyon. It's beautiful. Just go in the winter when there aren't any families around and you won't have to deal with all the crap that I did.

The United States

SHARK PATROL

Always Alert.

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We Keep the Ocean Safe

For Sharks.

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Contact Your Local Recruiter.**



ASK MONTEZUMA **IT'S THE ANSWER MAN** **FROM TENOCHTITLAN**



Montezuma is a collector of Meno Corporation macaroni and cheese products and maintains an almost-complete collection in his home. He is missing only the #5 rotini style from the summer of 1956.

Dear Montezuma,

My aunt is 56 years old and dresses inappropriately for her age. She wears very short dresses and skirts, usually in a floral print. She also likes to bake, so we unfortunately get ample view of her procedural cop show-themed thongs. She is also at least 300 pounds. Do you think it's possible to find a way to make her change her personal style for everyone's personal comfort without hurting her feelings?

Tiger Tanaka
Kobe, Japan

TT, I would be incredibly interested to know your aunt's choice of thong. I am, in actuality, quite a fan of procedural policeman television shows. My favourite this season is Crime Haven Belgique which is all about the intricacies of tax investigators in Antwerp. Last week's show involved the assessment of a fee against a man who left his government ceiling repair assistance remuneration off of page four of form 35a. It was quite exciting.

Hi Montezuma,

Every fall I get depressed. It's not a deep depression. It's just sort of a general feeling of sadness that pervades my psyche when the temperatures and colors change. Which is better: the catamaran or the canoe?

Jason Vitali
Habberdasher, WI

Mr. Vitali, have you perhaps considered a super tanker or super carrier? Both have super in their name, so they must be better than any other type of ship. Of course, choosing between those two might present one with an incredible challenge. Never fear, though, for I believe I've solved the conundrum. You see, a carrier implies moving things around, whilst the tanker reminds one of tanks, which are mighty powerful.

Dear Montezuma,

I heard that tobacco is bad for you. Is this true?

Louis C. Camilleri
New York, NY

To me visiting Australia sounds terrifically bad for anyone. The sheer number of poisonous shellfish, insects, arachnids, snakes and other reptiles, and even mammals would turn anyone off to visiting such a continent. Australia is also rather out of the way, you see, so were you to become empoisoned by one of these creatures, you would be leagues and leagues away from medical treatment. Avoid Australia altogether.

Montezuma,

What's a Rorschach test?

Robert Pollard
Dayton, OH

Bobby, I cannot say with certainty. Once I received a "TB" test, but with surety I also cannot respond in its regard. Children supposedly take what is called an AP test, however these at least sound dirty and likely are, due to the fact that they involve children. The HIV test is quite popular, or so I hear. I am quite positive that has something to do with allergens. Tests are often administered to cars in states such as California, New York, and New Jersey for something called smog, though I am not sure how an object of mechanical manufacture could contract a disease. The only other test I know of is the DNA test, but I can only guess this has something to do with whether or not one is able to properly alphabetize files.

Dear Montezuma,

Do Japanese people have souls?

Seamus O'Bondy, Donegal, Ireland

O'Bondy, of course the Japanese have souls. They're much larger than European souls and the Japanese require an extra container within which to keep the overflow. This is why you always see them with various types of bags and electronic gadgets. This is most notable when observing the Japanese affinity for rice, rice noodles or rice wine.

Montezuma,

I came up with the word "sheesh." However, no one believes me. A lot of people claim it was present as early as 1940s era Donald Duck cartoons. I think they're full of crap. I invented it when I was six.

James Buckles
Wishington, AC

One thing I've noticed, James, is that often the earthworms will give us ideas they've heard elsewhere. This is probably the case with you. You were probably speaking to an earthworm when you were around five or six years old. The earthworm, in turn, had probably watched television recently and taken up this expression as its own. That's right, I said "its." Earthworms are hermaphrodites.

Dear Montezuma,

My fiancé has just told me that he is bisexual. He said that he has never told anyone else and has hidden it from me until now. I cried all night. I have many self-esteem problems. He also said that if he were in my shoes, he would end the relationship. However, he is glad that I haven't. He promises me he will be true. What should I do?

Viviane Travin
Ramstein Air Base, Germany

Why are you such a cry baby? Some men simply enjoy the sound of four testicles slapping against each other.

Dear Montezuma,

My favorite site is down and I can't get to it. Am I a lame "noob."

Jordan Roush
Little Moravia, EL

Roushie, I am extremely happy to have received a poetry question. Some words that rhyme with noob include tube, cube, rube, and lube.

Montezuma,

Do you think the word "amazing" is overused in today's society? What about awesome?

William Safire
New York, NY

Willie, my dear, I think the word is comestible. It is truly fun to say. Try it with me: comestible. Doesn't it just roll off of your tongue? It does, and in a fashion rather reminiscent of the reverse action implied by its meaning.

Dear Montezuma,

Now that the brassiere is over 100 years old, I have a question: is it possible to organize my record collection by the number of people who helped to create the album? How would I go about this?

Frenchie
Thompson, GA

Dearest Frenchie, I am a bit confused by your question. Are you the town archivist for Thompson, or hold a similar position with a local company? If the latter, is that company a photography studio? If the former, what is Thompson doing with a collection of photographic albums? Were they purloined from residents through some sort of property tax seizure? I am finding your situation quite curious.



Montezuma's Helpful Hints for the Home

This Month: Removal of Sundry Stains from Carpeting

Seeing that the physiological basis of human existence rests upon the pillar of liquid-state water, it thus follows that the nutritional ingestion process calls for water-based foodstuffs. Sauces, soups, and beverages are literally contaminated water. Broth, the simplest example, is essentially brackish water containing leaves and dirt. Those recipes requiring bay leaves are akin to puddle water, which is a mélange of dried leaves and detritus. Other impurities may include coffee grounds, tumeric, or shallots.

The keystone of stain avoidance is preventing the first step of stain creation: the attractive force between masses known colloquially as gravity. When one loses control of a vessel such as a colander or bowl, the Earth's mass draws the container towards itself. The scientists call this falling. Carpeting is made of woven fiber, which absorbs the water content of food. Following evaporation, these contaminants remain as a scabrous stain. As anyone can see, stain prevention is simple. Either eliminate gravity or maintain strict control over objects at all times to prevent falling. Preferably through use of a harness or grasping automaton.

My Life Was Saved by Rock & Roll

by C. Coleridge Stone



When I was fifteen-years-old, I traded the last of my *Warhammer 40K* miniatures for a copy of the Smashing Pumpkins' *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness*. A handful of dusty and neglected Ork and Spacemarine models were a small price to pay for one of the most significant albums of my time. Yes, I had been a geek, but I gave it all away for the joy and depression found in what the shadowy marketers of music called alternative rock.

It takes an exceptional person to be able to say the words "rock and roll" seriously, with reverence. During my teenage years, I was one of those people, though none of us added "and roll." I just wanted music that rocked. I've met fans of every genre under the sun, but only rock seems to function as a religion, eliciting awed, sometimes whispered tones of exaltation. For fans of hip-hop, country, or pop, music appears to be merely soundtrack. Something to listen to.

For rock fans, music is something else: the Library of Alexandria full of secret knowledge to absorb and study; The Pharos lighthouse showing us the way; the Pyramids that stand forever as the greatest of human achievements. This was rock. It made sense at the time.

My walls were a shrine; a 350 square foot collage of posters, pictures and postcards representing music's pantheon. Hours were spent reading liner notes, searching for hidden clues or mysterious messages, analyzing lyrics, compiling information for study and enlightenment. Like the Crusaders of old, I bore upon my chest the T-shirts declaring my true cause and allegiance.

Conversations with friends were Socratic dialogs on bands, singers, engineers, albums, lyrics, songs, liner notes and videos. My provincial town was too small for good acts, and so concerts became pilgrimages; journeys whose reward was a few hours of basking in the glory of bands. Moshing was a rite. The obligatory T-shirt showed those back in the sticks you had made the journey, that you had marched around the sacred black stone on the hajj of rock. Truly, everlasting glory and honor were ours, at least for several years.

We needed that as teenagers. It was not rebellion. It was not a hobby. It was the pivot around which lives turned. What else was there? We were forced into school and it certainly wasn't interesting. Sports were divisive and competitive; only the physically gifted succeeded. Rock was all inclusive, all ages. Anyone could join and share in the glory if they were devoted.

Rock stars weren't superheroes, gods or idols then as before or now. We believed in them because they were ordinary people of greatness. They wore our clothes on stage, yes they did. No matter how geeky, or uncoordinated, or unpopular, you were part of a family. Music gave us what religion gave to others. It gave us meaning, identity and a way of life.

A decade has passed and luckily I've forged something of an identity, a meaning, and way life apart from my favorite albums. The sad truth is there isn't any secret message in the liner notes. There certainly aren't any hidden meaning to lyrics like *Mickey Mouse has grown up a cow; the wrong side of the quicksand and dark flashlight destiny; Graceful swans of never topple to the earth, and you can make it last forever; doll steak, test meat; or feeling like a hand in rusted shame*. Nor do I have any solid concept of what exactly a "seether" is, except perhaps that it is a she, she is medium sized, and she seethes.

Those of us who spent our teen years marching to the beat of a drum kit weren't any better than our fellow teens who couldn't spend hours debating the production skills of Butch Vig versus those of Steve Albini. We just needed to fill those tumultuous years between fourteen and twenty and, well, there wasn't any thing else around. School, church, philatelics, tropical fish; none of those gave us that sense of hope, rapture and barely-controlled violence that rock provided. Now, sadly, we all have jobs, our favorite bands have broken up, and the Alternative Nation has been annexed; its territory divided amongst emo, progressive rock, and indie. No, I can no longer seriously say the words "rock and roll" with reverence or awe, but I can say that it was fun while it lasted. Spin the silver circle, spin spin.

SEVEN CURES FOR PROCRASTINATION

TO TRY SOMEDAY

AN EDITORIAL BY FAITH DABROOKE



If you've decided to make significant use of your time by attempting to read this article, I'm certain that you are eager to be led toward a straightforward, painless solution to your procrastination dilemma. This assumption, however, leads me to believe that your impatience has prevented you from following through with any previous step-by-step solution. Therefore, do not stop reading, for this article has so far put you on the verge of overcoming your addiction to delaying progress. You are now partially on your way to abolishing the procrastination which has held you firmly in bondage.

Your friends and family are probably fed up with your excuses and justifications and are most likely frustrated by your apparent lack of mental capacity. Perhaps they wonder why they've been forced to take a part in the drama that is your self-perpetuating failure. Indeed, you've come to regard yourself as a failure and

are depressed by the misassumption that life is beyond your control.

Always remember, work begun is half done, and now I shall unquestionably be in jam for ripping off Mary Poppins. If you read the previous sentence, then you have just progressed half-way towards finding the solution to your unwillingness to lead a life of productive activity.

First of all, before you continue reading, you must confront your denial. Put aside your pitiful excuses and say out loud "I have a problem." Retreat from blaming external sources, such as alcoholism or a lack of electricity. Did that work? Good. Soon, you will learn how to demolish the problem that complicates your life and causes stress and anxiety, leading inevitably, to sickness and death. But do not despair, for you are on your way to resolving what is universally deemed the most anxiety-provoking situation since the beginning of time.

Statistics show that individuals do not like stress, specifically work-related stress. How often have you been depressed by thoughts such as "there's always tomorrow" directly followed by "there's never any time!" These thoughts lead to feelings of dread and indifference towards accomplishing anything meaningful. In turn, you will procrastinate and drown yourself in more dismay. The cycle of anxiety and procrastination is infinite and was unstoppable, at least until the creation of this article.

Therefore, my advice to you is as follows: never procrastinate! For if you do, you may end up composing solutions to procrastination and will never arrive at any solution because you've simply run out of time.

By reading this article, you have struck procrastination to the ground as soon as it has reared its ugly head. Congratulations! You have now conquered your inconvenient behavioral pattern. So don't despair, you have just succeeded in your pursuit by completing this insightful composition and by not allowing your impatience to provoke you into destroying this article in a fit of anger. Huzzah!

FIFTY WAYS FOR AN AMERICAN TO HAVE FUN IN LONDON

1. Pick up a random public phone; answer it and announce "London Calling."
2. Attempt to impress British girls by explaining that if not for the U.S. they would be speaking German.
3. Attempt to impress British historians by explaining that if not for William I they would all be speaking a sort of modified Welsh.
4. Purchase tweed.
5. Go to William Bligh's house and put a Pitcarin Island flag on the door.
6. Point out your fanny pack to the locals.
7. Ask the cab driver to take you to see the Eiffel Tower.
8. Put Christmas decorations on the statue of Cromwell.
9. Collect prostitute calling cards. Trade them with your friends for a complete set.
10. On the road, look over at who's sitting in the passenger seat of the car. Children or dogs can be especially disconcerting.
11. Head over to 11 Downing Street and say hello to the Chancellor of the Exchequer.
12. Giggle like a school girl when things cost "pee."
13. Sneeze on the Magna Carta.
14. Don't even bother trying to make the Beefeaters laugh.
Just punch them in the nose and run away.
15. Go to Westminster Abbey and dance on Isaac Newton's grave.
16. Point out that the sculptor of Nelson's Column forgot about the other arm.
17. Get some of those famous Fish & Chips.
Discard after three bites because British food sucks.
18. Ask random people why "Big Ben" isn't digital yet.
19. Smoke marijuana while strolling down High Street.
20. Order a pint of bitter. Send it back complaining that it's too bitter.
21. Sew a picture of yourself into the Bayeux Tapestry.
Make it so that you're riding Haley's Comet.
22. Dress up in a sheet and scare people at the Tower.
23. Go to Buckingham Palace and protest the impressments of American sailors.
24. Ask people if they know Danger Mouse.
25. Insist that the proper way to pronounce it is Thaymes, not Tems.
26. Show Britons pictures of your television for which you didn't have to get a license.
27. Call for a vote of no confidence on your waitress.
28. When you see a Londoner down on his luck, sit down and remind him of how thoroughly they kicked William Wallace's ass.
29. Talk about how they just let Americans through customs with their guns.
30. Enjoy some Smarties, but say they're not as good as M&Ms out of patriotism.
31. Mention how much worse your terrorist attack was than theirs.
32. Wonder aloud if the band Queen was named after Queen Elizabeth II.
33. Ask why they can't get a decent domain name, like .com or .america.
34. Congratulate Londoners on their performance in the Falkland Islands.
35. Go to Euston Station and sing Catatonia's "Londinium" loudly and annoyingly.
36. Respond with a Vicky Pollard impression to every query.
37. Complain about the beer being too cold.
38. Taunt them on their performance in the French and Indian War.
39. Declare peace in our time.
40. Organize a protest against the execution of Thomas Moore.
41. Point out how different Kew Gardens, London is from Kew Gardens, Queens.
Then make fun of them for ripping off the names for Chelsea and Soho.
42. Complain about so many nearby highways being named after the Messier catalog designations of globular clusters and galaxies.
43. Act really impressed when looking at the London Stone.
44. Laugh at barristers and their silly wigs.
45. Sarcasm is absent from British culture. Use this to your advantage.
46. Stock up on Euros so you can enjoy London's famous gambling dens and corner craps games.
47. Ask a bobby if he keeps his lunch under his big helmet.
48. Set up your very own official turnpike in London City.
49. Wear a hoodie to obscure your face from London's plethora of surveillance cameras. Claim to be a monk when questioned by police.
50. Find an old-fashioned call box. Get in and then tell people your Tardis isn't working.



CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

WANTED

Spelunking helmet for medium sized dog. Trevor Malady, 718 Box Street, Pavilion, NH.

FOR SALE

The thing to make all your theories work. Whatever it is, I've got it. Need an Earth-sized object in the outer solar system? I'm your man. Aliens in pre-Columbian America? In stock. The remains of big foot? First glass case on the left. Jimmy's Theoretical Keystones, Katharinetowne, WD.

WANTED

Female Michael Ansara impersonator. Must be able to impersonate Mr. Ansara as Cochise from *Broken Arrow*, Kang from *Star Trek* "TOS" and Mohammed from *The Message* (bikini only). \$25/hour. Free punch included. Cookies if available. Alexandra Politchenko, PSU Hall #5, Pylon, PL.

FOR RENT

Toe nails. Several shapes, sizes and colors. 50 cents per day per nail or \$75 per year (in advance). Louisa May Alcott, 314-998-1616.

FOR SALE

Large box of punctuation. Includes commas, apostrophes and several semi-colons. No periods. •2.00. Minnie Ghent, Box 421, Grossover CEDEX 7, France.

FREE

Two lovable kittens, one black and white the other tabby. Both short haired and around seven weeks old. Free to a good home. Some assembly required. Jasper Yeats, Talladega, AL.

FOR SALE

One spoon, convex style digging or eating implement. \$.02. Jasper, Box 45.

FOR FREE

Giant chicken wire and plaster of paris Buddha statue I made three years ago. It's pretty darn big. Drooping a bit near Gautama's buttocks. We'd like some more sun now, so it's free to anyone who can come get it out of my backyard. Parking for cranes available. Call Joseph Mascis at 202-414-3113.

WANTED

A solution providing orgasms for paramecia. Write to the International Paramecia Operating Group for Orgasms, The Hague, The Netherlands with your proposal.

FOR RENT

Buttery cashew brittle! \$2/day. Mrs. Fanny Bukowski, Apartment 3, Roanoke, VA.

FOR SALE

A mellotron. My son said he had always wanted to play the mellotron, but when it arrived it turned out he had meant the wash tub. \$3500. Like new. James Thomas Carbunkle IV, West Nickel Lane, Burlington, VT, Sinonipponesia.

FREE

Do you love thinking? Do you often have ideas about God, the place of man in the universe, or the ethics of pudding production? Then you might be a philosophiliac! Come on down for a free examination to find out if you're a lover of thinking. Remington Philosophiliac Institute, 2401 I-35 Frontage Rd., Oklahoma City, OK 73160

WANTED

Participants needed for a medical study of users of social networking web sites and gullibility. Visit N 33° 39' 39" W 95° 33' 19".

POSITION AVAILABLE

Tire iron, jack and spare tire needed to sit in my car trunk in case of emergency. No pay or time off provided. Sally Macgregor, Attenborough, Scotland. Ring top bell.

FOR LEASE

Seventeen story barn in Financial District. Zoning regulations forbid use by livestock. Spacious haylofts and two elevators for grain. Red in color with "See Rock City" painted on roof. Turing Realty, New York, NY.

WANTED

Series of seven bibs featuring paintings by Titian. I have seven children who need bibs and I'm just delighted by the idea of them making a mess of Titian's paintings because I hate Titian. Ragard Moore, 748-282-2811, ext. 283. Mention this ad to sell me the bibs.

FOR SALE

Fungus-shaped thermite charges, 30 per box. Realistic spore dispersing action included. Great for fooling and then destroying fungus. Only \$65! Rory Macklebik 93 Worcester St., Poughkeepsie, NY 12197

WANTED

A normal German to be my friend. By normal I don't mean the average German who enjoys necrophiliac movies and does odd things with spandex. I mean a normal German as in an American who can speak with a pretty good Bavarian accent. Call Lucy Spangles at 707-823-7554.

FOR SALE

Impounded lorry full of soiled restaurant clothing. Free 36 ml tube of Veruca Salt vulcanising fluid included. Tony Blair, 10 Downing Street, London SW1.

WANTED

Axes and Alleys

was

Conceived, Written and Produced

by

Scott Birdseye

and

Jeremy Rosen

with additional material by

Irene Baras



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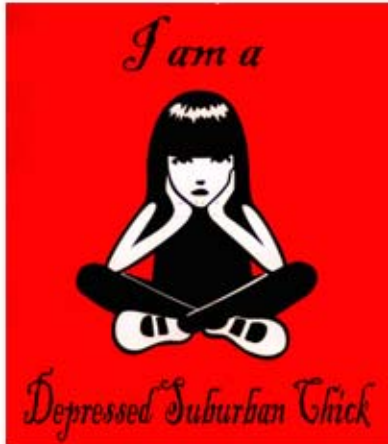
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Just print these out on adhesive paper and then stick them on objects.

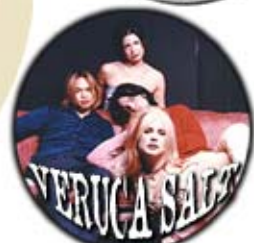
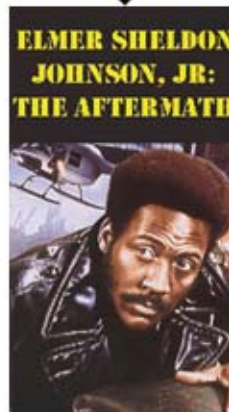
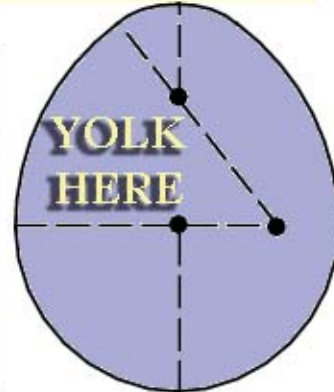


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