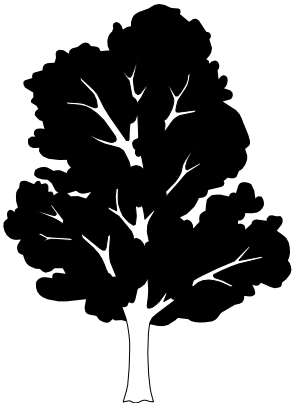
Shoemaker Village

(Formerly *The Curry Courier*)

Volume 13 - October 1997



A JEAN SOKOLOWSKI SPECIAL COMMENTARY INSIDE! *AS THE DAYS GROW SHORTER....*

A new twist in *The Knights of the Square Table*!

PLUS... New developments on Klaus's illness!

IMPORTANT SURVEY ENCLOSED!

Major changes this month! Details on Editor's Pages!

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Editor's Pages

Information you need to know

Well, subscribers, it's October already! Time to get ready for winter. This month's *Village* has all the information you need. There are also several major changes in this issue.

First, you may have noticed that the name of this magazine has changed from *The Curry Courier* to *Shoemaker Village*. This is because the magazine has grown in size. Also, one of our readers suggested the name change through the September 1997 survey. If you didn't send one in, you missed out! If you do not know already, *Shoemaker Village* is the proper name of the Butternut-Acorn development.

Second, we will strive to make the magazine even bigger for you to read. Our goal is 25 pages by the end of 1997 and maybe 30 by the end of the school year. We now have several writers on hand for both short stories and the Neighborhood News to make the magazine more enjoyable for you.

Third, we are now offering you a complimentary copy of the first six chapters of *The Knights of the Square Table*. This is for some of you who may not have received some of the earlier issues of the *Courier*. To receive this, send a request to the address on the Acknowledgements page (Page 4). If you didn't receive them, lost one of your earlier issues, or just want to read it, send for one - it's not something you can afford to miss!

Also, back issues of *The Curry Courier* are now available for you. These range from May 1997 to the current issue. If you would like to receive one, send a request to the address on the next page with $.50 for each issue (for publishing costs only). You will receive all orders within two weeks unless otherwise notified.

In this issue, we have enclosed another survey due to the poor results of the last one. Please, take a few minutes to fill one out. Only you, the readers, can make this magazine better by sending in a survey. Just send one back in the return envelope enclosed in the back. If you did not receive a return envelope, that is because you live close enough to the address on page 4 that you can hand deliver it.

Also, **stories are needed!** If you would like to submit one, send it with your survey in the return envelope. We need your help to reach our goal of 25 pages.

Sit back, relax, and enjoy *Shoemaker Village* this month. And be sure to make it better by sending in your surveys, and stories too. Have a great month!

Acknowledgements

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Coming in Next Issue

Volume 14 - November 1997

- Final results of house assessments PLUS commentaries, final notes, etc.
- A SHOCKING turn in *The Knights of the Square Table*
- Find out what happened to Henry in *Comedy Central*
- A special Thanksgiving story written specially for the *Village* by Christopher Sokolowski
- Find out all the news, sports, and more!

All in the next issue of *Shoemaker Village*!

Neighborhood News

October 1997

HOUSE ASSESSMENT RESULTS IN!

On Friday, September 12, 1997, Henry Sokolowski received an envelope in the mail. It read, "FINAL NOTICE." It was from the Montgomery County Board of Assessment.

"Let me open it," Jean Sokolowski said, trying to alleviate some stress for Henry, her husband. When she opened it, she got a shock. "Oh, my....." she started to say. Then she handed it to Henry. "I can't believe it!" he exclaimed. His house assessment was reduced below what it originally was!

Henry's long battle began in January, when he received a 1997 Reassessment Notice in the mail. He did not think much about it until March, when his new, overpriced house assessment came in the mail. In April, he went to talk to the Assessment corporation and got negative results. He later sent a letter, and his assessment was lowered somewhat, but not fully. He then turned to the county to lower his assessment, and was scheduled a hearing on August 6.

Henry, extremely pleased with his results, often preaches the good news to his children. "See what a little work can get you?" he said.

Jean is also pleased with the assessment. "I can't believe it!" she exclaimed during an interview. "At least all the time and effort paid off."

A final note - Ray Johnston, who had also appealed his house assessment, has scheduled an appeal on October 6. Results will be forthcoming in later issues.

GUGGERS ROBBED, NEIGHBORHOOD SHOCKED

Shoemaker Village has learned that the Guggers, who live on Shoemaker Road, were robbed one night in late August.

The Guggers themselves were away, but their 21-year old son was home asleep in his room. That night he shut the door to his bedroom before he went to sleep.

Around midnight, he was awakened by someone opening his bedroom door. He reached for a lacrosse stick that was standing next to his bed. When he found the burglar was not afraid of him, he pushed out a screen in the window, jumped from the second floor, and ran towards the O'Donnells' house.

Mr. O'Donnell returned to find that the burglar was gone. He had taken nothing ex-cept a watch and some prescription pads. By the time the authorities arrived, there was no trace of the burglar.

Skip Lynch of 2055 Acorn Place thought it was the same person when he saw someone by the storage shed in his yard later that night. After that, the burglar was not seen again.

BOWLING LEAGUE GAINS NEW MEMBERS

Jean Sokolowski, Treasurer of the Sweet Things Bowling League, has reported two new members over the past week.

Shelly Slousky and her mother, Pat Gemberling, have signed up to bowl in response to a flyer that was circulated throughout the neighborhood on Friday,

August 29, 1997.

Jean is pleased with the outcome, as it has been difficult recruiting new bowlers because so many women are holding full-time employment. "We're glad to have them with us," said Jean. "We only need four more peo-ple to have eight full teams."

In the Sweet Things League, there are currently 20 bowlers on eight teams. In the beginning, there were 17 bowlers; but the league president decided to keep the eight team format in hopes of attracting new members. If you would like more information about bowling on Thursday mornings at 9:30 A.M., please call Jean at (215) 674-5056.

COLD EPIDEMIC!

During the last few weeks of September, it seemed that everybody had some kind of illness.

Christopher Sokolowski, who attends Round Meadow Elementary School, reports that four students in his class of twenty-four were absent one day. Upper Moreland High School (UMHS) reports that over one hundred kids were absent.

Stephen Sokolowski, who recently fell ill with a cold, said recently, "This is very unusual. It's turning out to be like last Thanksgiving!" Stephen was referring to the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, 1996, when Upper Moreland Middle School had 193 kids absent and considered closing the school until after the Thanksgiving holiday.

Tony Hoffman, one of Stephen's neighbors, also fell victim to the outbreak. His father, Tim Hoffman, teaches Physics at UMHS. He reports that the number of absences is growing every day.

Hopefully, these colds and flus will settle down soon. We will have further reports in upcoming issues of *Shoemaker Village*.

PIONEER ROAD RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT BEGUN

Upper Moreland Township has announced that it will begin a costly project to repair Pioneer Road this Fall.

Included in the project are fixing potholes, repaving the road, installing curbs along the Hatboro side and the Rorvicks' property, grading the road to allow better drainage, and putting in a new sewer system.

The project began last month on August 29, 1997, when a huge tree that has been protruding out into the road in front of the Rorviks property for several years was cut down. This tree was responsible for several accidents, one of which involved a speeding car that collided with the tree and overturned.

The project will be continued in Spring 1998, to be completed in early Summer.

DIRE WINTER WEATHER FORECAST

The National Weather Service has made its annual prediction for our area - and it isn't lookng good.

The reason for the bad forecast is the El Nino phenomenon. This occurs when Pacific Ocean waters superheat, affecting climate throughout the globe. This year's is fore-casted to be the worst on record.

The last time the El Nino was this bad was in 1983, when 23 inches of snow was dumped on the Philadelphia area overnight.

"Only time will tell," says expert weather forecaster Henry Sokolowski.

OTHER NEWS TIDBITS

-Tim Hoffman, Jr. will be married to his fiancee, Meredith, on Saturday, October 11, 1997. His brother, Tony, will be his Best Man.

-Jean Sokolowski reports that her first few weeks as a catechist were fine. "I just feel so out of my element," she said. Stephen, her aide, disagrees, and said, "She did a great job! I am looking forward to working with her throughout the rest of the year."

-A For Sale sign has appeared in front of the Rymers' house. As you may recall, we pub-lished in May that the Rymers' new house was nearing completion.

Lost and Found

CHICKENS RETURN!

You thought that those pesky chickens were gone for good, didn't you? Think again. The chickens are back.

One Sunday in August, they returned to Bob and Pat Altimari's lawn. Everybody in the area was dismayed, having thought that they were rid of the chickens. Bob Altimari commented on the episode, saying, "I already called them (the Rorviks) and told them that their chickens were eating weed killer.....I give up!"

Jean Sokolowski, unlike Bob, does not want the chickens roaming around her yard. "Last time," she said, "those things ate off my little peppers!"

GOAT SPOTTED, NEIGHBORS ANGRY

Another member has been added to the Sokolowski family courtesy of the Rorviks. This time, it's their goat.

Henry Sokolowski was barbequing fish on his grill one Sunday afternoon when out of the compost pile appeared one of the Ror-viks' goats.

This is the third time the goat has been trespassing on Sokolowski property during the last month. The first time, in early September, caused Jean Sokolowski to drop the phone as she was talking to her mother. The second occurrence happened while Jean's mother, Jean, was visiting on a Wednesday, causing a very angry Henry to call the Rorviks to have the goat removed. Though the Rorviks did not comply, the goat eventually wandered back into its property several minutes later.

If the goat returns again, Henry plans to take action to prevent another incident.

LOST CAT CAUSES SCARE

On Sunday morning, September 14, 1997, a lost cat caused a scare on the Soko-lowski family porch.

Stephen Sokolowski, who was closing the family's screen door before going to chur-ch, saw the cat, and, thinking it was Max, the Rorviks' dog, screamed. He then ran into the family room of his house (adjacent to the kitchen) and found out it was a cat.

The incident ended abruptly when Christopher Sokolowski, Stephen's brother, walked into the family room, and hollered, "Mom, it's only a cat!" Then the cat just walked away. It is suspected that the cat belongs to the Reisers.

ABANDONED CARS PILE UP

One Thursday night, as the Sokolowski family returned home from work, they found an old station wagon abandoned in front of their property. After it became clear two days later that the owner wasn't returning, Henry Sokolowski called the police and it was removed the next day. Henry thought little about it.

The next day, another abandoned car was parked on the other side of the street, near the Hoffmans' house. It disappeared the next day. Finally, later that night, yet another car broke down in front of the Sokolowskis' property. This one was towed away by the owner.

As if that weren't enough, the next Wednesday a bike was abandoned by the Sokolowskis' tree near the sewer. This bike was left on the yard for three days. One day, it disappeared. Nobody knows whether the owner returned or it was stolen.

Going to the Dogz

NEW FINDINGS UNCOVERED- KLAUS'S SICKNESS DELIBERATE

In our *Curry Courier Special Report* last month, we discussed Klaus, the Hoffmans' dog, and his mysterious illness. Now some disturbing news has reached the *Village*.

"Klaus was poisoned," Mrs. Hoffman said. "The vet says he was poisoned."

This brings shock and disbelief to a neighborhood that was thought to close-knit and caring. Jean Sokolowski, who calls Klaus "My Dog" and thinks that the neighborhood is too nice to have something like this happen, said, "I can't believe it! I hope that the person who poisoned Klaus has a guilty conscience. Why didn't he or she confront the Hoffmans instead of the dog?"

Most everybody is sad for Klaus. Since then, he has recovered, leaving little trace of his illness. Klaus is now kept on the porch deck. When Jean went to feed him for the Hoffmans one day, Klaus was very wary. "It's sad," she said. "He doesn't know who to trust."

UPDATE ON NEIGHBORHOOD DOGS

We thought it was about time you were updated on the condition of the rest of our "friends".

-Aubrey, the Speickers' dog, has not been seen outside since last month's alledged "attack" on Stephen Sokolowski but is said to be doing well.

-Buster, the dog that is owned by the Barnes', was seen recently in good health, being walked by its master.

-Max, the Rorviks' dog, and Mrs. Rorvik stand by their fence while the three Rorvik brothers wait for the school bus.

-Madison, the Johnstons' cute little terrier, got into a barking match one morning at the bus stop with Max, the huge rotweiler that looks like a bear. Max finally stopped, but the feisty "killer dog" Madison, whom Max could swallow in one gulp, continued. "It really was a funny sight!" said witness Jean Sokolowski.

Comedy Central

HAZARDOUS WASTE CONTINUES TO PILE UP

If you thought that Henry's trouble was over, then you better not read this section. Otherwise, have fun.

Henry, after being chased towards Collegeville by wild animals, finally found refuge on top of a tollbooth on the Pennsylvania Turnpike. There he stayed for seven long hours, amid unfriendly faces and angry grunts.

Suddenly Christopher Sokolowski, the soon to be three-legged dog, appeared, bravely chasing away all the wild animals (and losing another of his legs in the process).

Henry ran for his life and reached Collegeville about 2 A.M., when the Limerick Nuclear Power Plant sirens went off. (Henry didn't know this, but the plant was about to explode because of a mutated chicken nesting on top of the cooling tower.)

Henry reached a giant anthill on Hidden Forest Drive just before the explosion, bringing Christopher safely with him.

Now back to Huntingdon Valley. Many people are dismayed that Henry, the hazardous waste manager for the area, is gone. Mr. Hoffman, as you may recall, who lives across the street from Henry, was left with Christopher's torn limbs and blood-stained grass. (The "King of Grass", alias for Scott Curry, would kill somebody if his grass were like that.) The neighborhood is also unhappy due to the unfit shape of the Rorviks' previously A-Bombed property.

Sources tell us that, after Limerick blew up, Henry was chased out of Collegeville by five giant ants. The explosion has sparked nationwide attention, and other EPA officials are expected to be on the scene soon.

Announcements

EPA ALERT FOR PORT RICHMOND AREA

Just to let you know, the EPA has recently issued an alert for the Port Richmond area due to the direction the mutated chickens were last spotted heading. People in the Port Richmond area are warned that the chicken threat is dangerous, and all residents are expected to evacuate the area and take refuge in Huntingdon Valley. For more information on the evacuation, call 674-5056 and ask for a represenative from Joint S+C Dinners, Inc.. The evacuation is scheduled for Thursday, October 2, 1997 at 5:30 p.m. Please stay tuned for more information.

Sports

EXCITING MONTH FOR NEIGHBORHOOD SPORTS

(Article contributed by Patrick Haggerty)

This month was filled with exciting sports action.

Congratulations to Tony Hoffman for making the Upper Moreland High School JV soccer team. Tony told me personally that the tryouts were impossible. "The work really paid off," he said.

Scott Slousky tried out for the Upper Moreland golf team. It was his first time playing. Unfortunately he didn't make the team, but it was a great learning experience.

Brett Cohen joined a roller hockey team. He plays every Sunday at Woodhaven Sports Center. He said, "It's a lot of fun."

Ryan Chud is going to try out for the Middle School tennis team. He has been outside every day, working hard at practicing.

The soccer season has just started up. Pat Haggerty's team, Our Lady of Good Counsel, played at Pileggi Park on Saturday, September 20, against Upper Moreland. OLGC won by a score of 3-1 in an exciting match. OLGC's soccer team is great this year. They are 2-0-2 this year because of their "future All American", Peter Rymar.

Danielle Lynch tried out for her Middle School Field Hockey Team. She said that she would make it. You're really confident, Danielle.

Anthony Lagreca's Middle School soccer team started recently. They are supposed to be a 500 team this season.

If anyone would like to play sports after school, the neighborhood plays every weekday at 4:30. The sport played will change periodically.

The Knights of the Square Table

Chapter 7

Mike was bored. It was an hour before midnight and nothing had happened. He didn't know why he had to sit watch all night. He looked down at Christopher, Katie, and Dave. He could be asleep right now.

Unnoticed by Mike, just a few feet away, five dark, shadowy figures were creeping about the underbrush around the grove that the party slept in. They soon stopped moving and watched. Soon, they saw the person on watch nod his head, and that was their cue. The five shadowy figures jumped the party.

Mike awoke with a start. Someone was grabbing his arms! He squirmed and screamed, but to no avail. The large figure put a hand over his mouth and carried him away.

The figures quietly stormed the party, waking and capturing them each, one by one. Then they took their supplies and were gone.

Mike was resting on the shoulder of a huge troll. He had been carried for over an hour now, and the troll's thick, burly legs didn't show any sign of stopping. When he could, he looked around, and he found Dave and Christopher on other trolls' shoulders. There was no sign of Katie. The trolls continued to walk for another hour and came to another clearing, this one larger than the one the party had camped in.

The trolls set them down roughly and went off to the other side of the clearing. One troll stood guard while the others fetched some rope. Dave, Mike, and Christopher the Imp were bound with the rope. Then the guard left to join the other trolls near a large campfire on the other side of the clearing.

They began to perform a strange ritual around the campfire, dancing, singing in unintelligible language, and jumping up and down. After about half an hour, they stopped, and seemed to sit down on the ground. Then the largest one (Mike presumed he was the leader) began to talk.

"Well, another band of traitors. Miglik warned them to follow his orders. Now they will pay!" The large troll made a deep laugh, and the others followed.

"What should we do with them?" one of the smaller ones asked.

"Roast 'em alive. They'll make meat enough to feed us for many a day," another said.

"No!" one shouted, "Let us keep them as our slaves!" There was more than one affectionate groan.

"Better yet!" another yelled, "torture them!" There was a chorus of loud cheers.

While the trolls argued over what to do with their captives, Dave, Mike, and Christopher were secretly planning their escape.

"Now. What did the trolls ask you to do?" Christopher said.

Mike told him, as best he could, about how he had escaped from Harrogen castle, and how the trolls had offered him a deal, up to the point when they met Christopher.

"You should never make a deal with trolls," Christopher said. "They are the scum of the planet."

Just then, Dave heard a voice in his ear. "Dave. Roll over."

"Mike!" Dave whispered. "Did you hear something?"

"No. What?" Mike replied.

Just then, an invisible hand gripped Dave's arm and rolled him over. "What are you?"

"Who do you think?" the voice said. "It's Katie."

"How?" Dave asked in wonder. Then he remembered - the stone!

"Wait!" Katie said, and then, gripping both of Dave's arms, he disappeared! She dragged him out of the clearing, and then came back for the others. But as she was pulling Mike away, the worst happened.

"Hey!" the troll leader roared, "Where are the prisoners?"

"Yeah. Jakir was supposed to take care of them!" a smaller one answered.

"You told me to come over here-"

"ENOUGH!" the leader roared. "FIND THEM!"

All of the trolls began to search the clearing. As one was examining near the edge, he met a solid, invisible wall. "Over here!" he yelled. The other trolls came running to his side.

That was just enough time. Katie had finished untying Christopher's bonds. They ran to where Dave and Mike were waiting. By this time, the trolls were hot on their heels, so Katie took off the stone and put it in her pocket so it would be easier to run.

"It's the prisoners!" one troll screamed. "GET THEM! Kill them if you have to!"

The persuit was slow, but the trolls had the adventage of their strong bodies to push the underbrush out of the way, and eventually the party's lead was narrowed to less then ten feet.

"Do something!" Mike hollered.

As he ran, Christopher began to wave his arms again. Suddenly, a large tree that they had just passed exploded in a brilliant flash, as if struck by lightning. Sparks flew. There were several horrific screams, and two of the trolls fell over with a loud thud, burning alive. The other three took little notice of this, and kept up their pursuit of the party. Although they had fallen behind because of the exploding tree, the distance was closing fast.

"Cool!" Mike exclaimed. "But there are other trolls chasing us, too."

"I'm....too....exhausted," Christopher gasped.

"Hurry!" Dave said. Suddenly, the party reached a dense area of the forest. "It's too dark! I can't see!" he yelled.

Katie took the Hadar stone out of her pocket. She concentrated on the stone, and it shone a pure white light. This made the going much easier and may have saved the party from imminent defeat. But the trolls didn't give up. They were still gaining.

Then the worst thing that could not possibly happen did. Dave tripped over a tree root. He was sprawled on the ground, entangled in the tree root. The trolls would overtake them in seconds.

"CHRISTOPHER! DO SOMETHING!" Dave screamed. The trolls were only a few feet away now.

Katie wished with all her heart and some more that the trolls would stop chasing them. Then something strange happened. The stone began to shine blindingly bright. Suddenly, there was a flash that was so bright that it was seen as far as the town of Oman, over ten miles away. The trolls stopped, frozen in their pursuit.

"Hurry!" Christopher said. "They are momentarily stunned. RUN!"

Everybody helped untangle the root from Dave's foot and then they ran. Christopher led them for over a mile. By the time they stopped, everybody was out of breath, especially Mike,

who had not slept that night.

"Nice job, Christopher!" Dave said.

"That wasn't my doing," Christopher said.

"What? Then what happened?" Mike asked.

"I...wished that the trolls would stop chasing us," Katie said slowly, "and the stone glowed brighter, and then...they stopped."

"Wow!" Dave said. Everybody else was speechless.

After a moment, Christopher said, "I didn't know the stone was that powerful. I just thought it could make the user invisible. We better not mention this stone to anybody. It will benefit us greatly, after what has just happened." Everybody was silent.

"Now," Christopher continued, "let's talk about more pressing matters, shall we? What of our supplies? And our horses? We cannot journey to Jasper without them. There is little or nothing to hunt in these hills."

"What should we do?" Dave asked.

"Well, we have two choices - go back to Oman, where we could be lucky -that's if there's no trolls there- or continue on and hope we find food."

Everybody was silent, debating their choice.

"I think we should vote," Katie said, "I vouch for going on."

"Me too," Dave agreed.

"Well, at least we can survive for a while without food, but if we get caught by trolls again..." Mike said.

"Well, well," Christopher said, "It looks like my vote doesn't count, so let's get farther away from the trolls before we rest. But hurry - it is already getting light." He was right. It was getting grey in the east.

The party hurried towards the growing dawn. After the sun rose, everybody found a clearing with a stream nearby, and they lied down to sleep. A watch was assigned, and soon everybody was sound asleep.

The Knights of the Square Table

Chapter 8

Christopher the Imp was the first up, around midday. He washed up in the creek, and returned to find Dave and Katie awake, trying to wake Mike. Everybody got a drink, and then they were off.

Everybody was hungry, and they searched for food as best they could, but it was to no avail. The party began to despair. They stopped around a small stream around midafternoon to drink, and pressed on as best they could. It began to cloud up, giving the party relief from the heat, but not from their stomachs. Just before dusk, they sat down to rest on the top of a hill.

The view was spectacular, and Christopher said that on a clear day, you could see as far as the town of Oman, which was over twenty miles away now. The clouds were thickening, and Christopher warned that it might rain soon.

"I'm so hungry, I'm gonna starve!" Dave complained.

"Shut up, Dave! You don't hear me complaining. The human body can survive up to five days without food," Mike said.

"Hey, hey! Calm down. The lack of food is getting to all of us," said Christopher.

"Look!" Mike said, pointing to the south-west. "Smoke!"

"Where?" Christopher said. Mike pointed it out to him. A big puff of smoke was rising out of the distance. Because of the cloudy weather, and the oncoming sunset, its source could not be seen. "This is ill news. That is towards Oman. Most likely the trolls burned the town down."

"Why would they do that?" Dave asked.

"Because they think we're there," Christopher said, "or just because they wanted to. Trolls are evil. They follow only Yavin or their own mnds."

"Let's stop talking and get some food." Dave commented nonchalantly, but in reality was very hungry.

Everybody got up and started again on their long trek east. Around dusk, they reached a stream. They settled down to sleep, being to weak to walk any more, when it started to rain.

"Oh, no!" Dave complained. "We're not gonna make it. We'll all die tonight."

"Wait!" said Christopher. "Rain is the best time to fish, because the fish are stirred up. Let me try to catch one. Help me with that tree." He pointed towards a sapling that stood right next to the riverbank. With a little help from Dave, they tore several branches off the sapling, and bound them together to make a fishing pole.

"What should we use for bait?" Dave asked.

In response to this question, Christopher began to dig a hole in the ground. After about a minute, he found what he was looking for- a big, fat worm. He attached the worm to the end of the fishing pole, and because he had no line, he held it vertically, so that the end of the pole with the worm would be submerged.

Five minutes later, after not catching anything, Christopher said, "The water's not deep enough here. We must go farther downstream." It was decided that Mike and Katie would stay at their current location, so that the whole party would not have to go too close to the road, where the trolls could see them.

Dave and Christopher ventured about a mile downstream when they came about a deep

area of the stream, where the pouring rain and the dusk made it impossible to see the bottom.

Thirty minutes later, the rod began to jiggle in Christopher's hands. He lifted the pole out of the water and found a small fish that was unknown to Dave or Christopher nibbling at the worm. He quickly pulled it ashore until it stopped moving and packed up to get ready to return to Mike and Katie.

It was dark by the time they were returning. Dave and Christopher traveled for over an hour. By the time they returned, Mike and Katie were starving, but they also had some news.

"There was a large bird overhead," Katie said, "It looked like it was searching for something. We ducked down under the trees just in time before it flew overhead."

"That was a calk," said Christopher. "It was probably heading towards Oman, which we must now presume to be destroyed. But we cannot rule out the possibility that it was looking for us."

"Enough," Mike said. "Where's dinner?"

Everybody looked in dismay at the small fish that Christopher produced from his pocket. "At least it's something," he said.

"How do we cook it?" Dave asked.

Christopher replied, "We don't. Even if it weren't raining, we could not build a fire because of the calk that you just spotted. We'll have to eat it raw."

Christopher cut the fish into four equal pieces, and everybody tried to force down their meager offering of a few bites of the horrible tasting fish. When they were done, Christopher said, "Let us sleep, for we must be off before daylight. It is dangerous to stay in one place too long with all of these evil creatures searching for us."

Everyody lied down and fell asleep immediately, except Mike. He wasn't that tired, even though he had slept less than six hours that morning. Anyway, he was to hungry to sleep.

Mike observed the quiet in the hills. It is too quiet, he thought. Once or twice, he saw another calk flying to the south, along what he presumed to be the road.

It was still dark when Dave awoke, but he could feel the morning in the air. The rain had stopped, but it was still opressively humid. He found Mike sitting on a tree stump a few feet away.

"I couldn't sleep," said Mike.

"Me neither. I woke up a few hours ago, and couldn't fall back to sleep."

"It's the fear of being chased," Mike commented.

"That too. But I can't sleep because my stomach pains me greatly." He made a gurgling noise and rubbed his stomach. Mike and Dave laughed.

"Hey! What's going on, you guys?" Katie yelled. She had awoken to the sound of Mike and Dave's voices. Presently, she stood up and walked over to where Mike and Dave were sitting. Christopher remained sound asleep.

"Why did we decide to go along with him?" Dave whispered. "There must have been some other way to get back home."

"I don't think so. Look what happened in Oman, where we would be if we had not met Christopher," Katie commented.

"I think this is for the better," Mike said. "But I wish it weren't so dangerous...." His voice trailed off.

Just then, Christopher awoke, and went off to the river to wash. By the time he returned, the first grey lights of the impending dawn were in the east. The party decided not to try to fish

in the stream, because it was unlikely that they would find anything. Also, there was the threat of the persuing trolls, who could reappear at any minute.

As they walked off to the east, they broke out of the small forest they had passed through. Hills streched before them to the horizon. The sun rose, casting a golden light on them. From their vantage point, the road was just to the south, less than a mile, although they could not see whether there was any activity on it.

For the rest of the day, the party pressed on. The sky cleared and around dusk, there wasn't a cloud in the sky. Their hunger grew for the rest of the day. The scene hadn't changed all day. Up and down hills, with no end in sight. Around sunset, they stopped in a wide valley for cover and protection during the night.

As they were settling down to sleep, a large animal stood just outside the camp.

"That could be the food we need," Christopher whispered to his companions. "Be quiet." He crept closer to the animal, which was unknown to either Mike, Dave, or Katie. Suddenly, he leapt. The animal made a terrifying shriek, and began to run. Christopher ran in persuit, and eventually caught up to the animal. By this time, he was so far into the distance that Mike, Dave, and Katie couldn't see what happened next. Christopher later told them that he jumped the animal, and hit it on the head with a branch he ripped off from one of the sparse trees.

Christopher motioned to Dave, and he came and helped drag the animal back to camp. It was as big as a horse! By the time they returned, they were exausted.

"YES!" Mike shouted excitedly, and rejoiced as best he could with his remaining strength. Katie fowwloed suit.

"Wait!" Christopher said. "It's not dead yet. It could still run away. We must build a fire while it is still unconscious."

"With what wood? There isn't a tree for miles!" Mike said, sarcastically.

"Not true," Christopher replied. "Look." He led Mike around the hill, about a hundred feet, and showed Mike the tree he had ripped the branch from. For the next ten mintues, everybody helped lug branches back to their camp. Soon they had a roaring fire going. Everybody ate heartily, although the meat was very tough and tasteless. It was dark when they finished eating, so they decided to sleep.

The next three days of the journey were inconsequential. The same scenery scrolled by, and Dave invised a way to carry the leftover meat with some branches. There was plenty to eat, and plenty to drink.

On the sixth day, everybody began to get anxious as they approached the town of Jasper. The hills were getting less severe now, but a thick forest loomed closer as it approached mid-morning.

Everybody agreed that the only way to tranverse the forest was to use the road, no matter what the dangers of trolls and Yavin's servants, so they made their way south, as well as east, and met the road shortly before entering the trees. Around midday, they stopped in a small grove to eat. There still wsn't a cloud in the sky, which meant no water for several miles, and the food supply was running thin.

"We should reach Jasper around this time tomorrow," said Christopher. "That is fortunate, for tomorrow is midsummer's eve."

"I thought that was celebrated only in legends," Mike said.

"This feels just like a legend to me," Katie said.

"Anyway," Christopher interrupted, taking a bite of the meat, "there are festivities and

parties, and that will be a chance to catch up on some news."

"What should we do from there?" Dave asked.

"I don't know," said Christopher, "but it might be advisible to learn the news first. For all we know, the trolls could have destroyed the town by now."

"Let's hope not," Mike said, lost in thought. In reality, he wasn't far from the truth.

Halloween

By Christopher Sokolowski

On Halloween night,
I was in a fright,
for all I was to see

I went up to a house
and rang the doorbell
and guess what?
I heard a yell!

Then came a ghost
from behind a post
and gave me candy.

Then I was not
frightened because I
brightened to learn
that everything was fake.

So then I wasn't in fright
on halloween night anymore.

The Toucan

By Christopher Sokolowski

This story is about the toucan. I chose the toucan because I liked this animal and I wanted to find out more information about it. Did you know that the toucan has a colorful beak? Did you know that there are forty kinds of toucans?

A toucan's bill can be black, blue, brown, green, white, red, yellow, or a combination of colors. Toiucans probably use their bill to attract their mates. Its bright color makes it easy to find.

Passion fruit is one of the toucan's favorite foods. They also eat seeds and berries. The toucan lives in the tropical rain forests of Central and South America. They build their nests in a hollow tree.

As the Days Grow Shorter...

(A Commentary on Autumn)
By Jean Sokolowski

Whoa! What happened to the weather? One day I was wearing shorts and the next day I had on sweat pants. I really enjoy the warm weather. I love opening my doors and windows to the sights and sounds outside. The cooler temperature is fine, though. It has its good points, too. Yeah, right! I see the dogs lazing in the grass, enjoying the scant warm sunlight. Sure they are. The only reason that they're outside is because they're shedding and their owners don't want all that hair all over the house. The bees are moving slower now and I don't have to worry about being stung. Great! Of course that also means that the bees will be showing up in the house soon, struggling lethargically to escape the cold. The first frost will kill them off but not soon enough for me. The geese are soaring high overhead, searching for a more hospitable climate. (Who said that animals are dumb?) However, they always manage to decrease their altitude over my house to "dive bomb dump" on my driveway and swimming pool. The towering oak trees across Pioneer Road are beginning to change color, adding to the majesty that typifies autumn. Soon I will have the privilege of raking some 20 bags of those same majestically colored leaves, assuring my chiropractor and his family of their long-awaited trip to Disney World. I just love getting into a freezing cold car in the morning. I just love those few little Halloweeners who sweetly inquire: "Don't you have anything different?" I really look forward to cleaning up those large hickory tree nuts lying all over my back yard or chewed into hundreds of teeny tiny pieces by squirrels picnicking on my back porch.

No wonder bears hibernate until spring!

Are Geese Smarter Than People?

Excerpts from a speech by Henry Sokolowski

With all the turmoil in today's world, and stories like the war in Bosnia, the Marv Albert sex scandal, the IRS harassment of taxpayers...and the list goes on..., have you ever wondered what the world would be like if people were honest and helped one another? Contrast that to what you see on a lazy Autumn day, sipping your iced tea, when you look up at the sky, and see a flock of geese flying in a V-formation. I'm no geese expert, but it sure looked to me that they know how to work with one another. So I looked into it.

Much to my surprise, I found that there's a lot we can learn from these supposedly dumb animals. Here's some things that I discovered.

First, I found that as each bird flaps its wings, it creates an uplift for the bird that's following. By flapping in a V-formation, the whole flock adds 71% greater flying range than by flying alone. I thought to myself: If we as people could share a common direction and a sense of teamwork, how much quicker and easier it would be if we traveled on the strength of one another.

The second interesting fact I learned was that, when a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of flying alone and quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the bird immediately in front. Wouldn't it be great if we had as much sense as these geese and joined together in helping one another as well as accepting the help of others?

Thirdly, when the lead goose gets tired, it simply rotates back into the formation, and another goose flies at the point position. It seems to me that in order to be successful, we need to take turns doing the hard tasks and sharing responsibility.

A fourth fact that I found is that geese flying in formation honk from behind to encourage

those in front to keep up their speed. Is there a lesson here for us? I think so, if we could only learn that our honking should be encouragement and not something less than helpful.

Fifth, these smart geese even help one another. I learned that when a goose gets sick, wounded, or shot down, two geese drop out of formation and follow their fellow member down to provide help and protection. They stay with that fellow member until it is able to fly again or dies. Then they launch out on their own with another smaller formation as they try to catch up with the flock. If we had as much sense as these geese, we would stick with each other in difficult times as well as good times.

The lesson I guess is, while there's a lot we can do by ourselves, we can do even more with a partner by cooperating with one another.

So the next time you look up at the sky and see geese flying in a V-formation, think of this: "Before we dare to soar like eagles, we must learn to fly like geese."