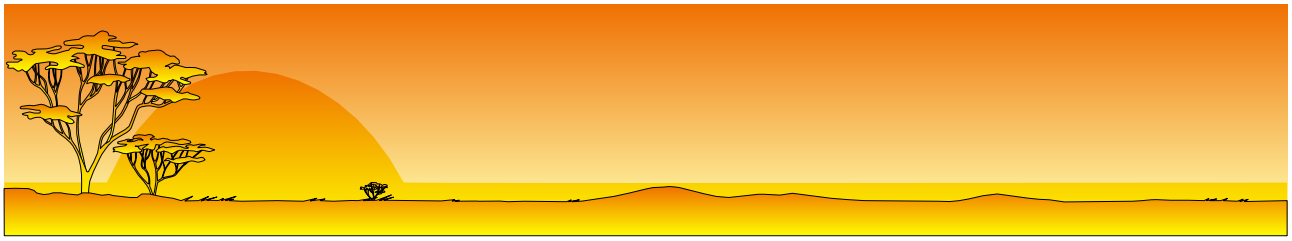
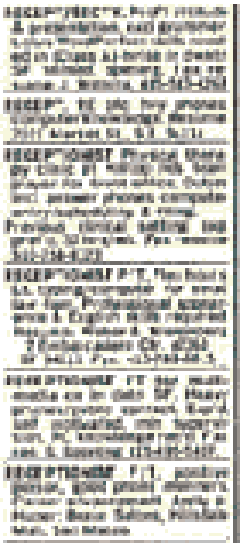
Shoemaker Village

Volume 14 - November 1997



The Knights of the Square Table takes a startling turn!



SPECIAL SECTION! Three Points of View on Stephen Sokolowski!

Extra long Short Stories section this month!
Last month's survey results included!
Important information enclosed!

DETAILS INSIDE!

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Editor's Pages

Information you should know

Hello, subscribers, and welcome to another edition of *Shoemaker Village*! It has been six months since this magazine was first published as the Fourth Edition *Curry Courier*. We now have about 40 subscribers, and the magazine is growing every day!

Also, as you may recall, a survey was published in last month's issue. The results are published below. We are in the process of extending the Short Stories section because many of our readers suggested that we publish more stories. Also because of the results of the survey, we have included another special section this month. We hope you enjoy it! As always, if you would like to make a comment or send in a much needed story, feel free to do so.

A few of our readers suggested that we put up a "web page" to E-mail stories to *Shoemaker Village*. We have taken their suggestion and are in the process of doing it. Hopefully, it will be "up and running" by the beginning of next year! Also, due to the Christmas holidays, there will be no January 1998 issue. We will have a bonus 30 page February issue to let you catch up on all the news.

WE ARE LOOKING FOR WRITERS FOR ANOTHER CHAPTER STORY AS SUGGESTED BY SOME OF OUR READERS! We also need stories and articles for any of the other sections. If you volunteer, you will be given a special section in which to write every month. Announcements can be sent in anytime to be published in the magazine.

That's all for now! Have a good month and we hope to hear from you in December!

Shoemaker Village (October 1997) Survey Results

MOST READ SECTION: EDITOR'S PAGES

LENGTHS OF SECTIONS:
Editor's Pages JUST RIGHT
Neighborhood News, etc. NOT LONG ENOUGH
The Knights of the Square Table JUST RIGHT
Short Stories JUST RIGHT

SHOULD WE USE BLACK AND WHITE PRINTING (IF NESSECARY) YES
SHOULD WE INCLUDE SPECIAL SECTIONS? YES
CONTINUE TO PUBLISH *THE KNIGHTS OF THE SQUARE TABLE*? YES

READER OVERALL RATING AVERAGE 4.4 / 5

Acknowledgements

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The next edition of *Shoemaker Village* will be published on Sunday, November 30, 1997.
All submissions for that issue MUST arrive before Sunday, November 23, 1997 in order to be published.

Coming Next Issue

Volume 15 - December 1997

* The Holiday season is finally here! Find out the 50 worst things you can possibly do on NewYear's Eve in *Comedy Central*!
* **1997 - The Neighborhood in Review** - a special insert reviewing all the hot news over the neighborhood during the past year!
* *The Knights of the Square Table* takes a shocking turn. This may change your view of Christopher forever!
* Christmas poems, stories, and articles!
* All the news, sports, and more!
* An entirely new section....we won't tell you here! It's not to miss!

ALL IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF *SHOEMAKER VILLAGE*!

Neighborhood News

November 1997

UNKNOWN PERSON SEARCHES NEIGHBORHOOD MAILBOXES

During the last week of October, a strange person in a black car has been looking in neighborhood mailboxes.

The searcher was spotted first on October 16, 1997, around noon, shortly after mail was delivered that day. During the next week, he opened mailboxes and checked their contents around the same time.

This confirms some peoples' suspicion that somebody has been stealing mail from the neighborhood. In the last two months, several magazines and things ordered from mail-order catalogs did not arrive at the Sokolowski household (corner house). Even an edition of *Shoemaker Village* that was being mailed to one of our subscribers was stolen! Several other neighbors report the same happenings.

One time, somebody opened a bank statement addressed to the Sokolowskis and threw checks and papers around the street. Luckily Tony Hoffman, the Sokolowskis' neighbor, was bike-riding around the neighborhood at the time it happened.

"I saw a guy looking in your mailbox. Later, I saw the checks around the street and picked them up and put them back [in the mailbox]," said Tony one day. It is unknown if this incident is related to the strange car that has been spotted around the neighborhood recently.

Jean Sokolowski, who lives in the neighborhood, disagrees with the recent suspicions and said, "The man was probably just checking all the mailboxes to see if weekly advertisements were being distributed."

Either way, the person was breaking a federal law. "I lost five dollars to this person when he stole ...things that were being mailed...," said Stephen Sokolowski, Jean's son. "I hope that he is apprehended soon."

HAUNTED HOUSE SCARES MANY

On Friday, October 10, 1997, the first ever successful neighborhood haunted house was held in the woods behind the neighborhood.

Ever since the neighborhood was built, residents have been striving to create the perfect haunted house. In 1994, the Curry family prepared to put on a haunted house in their garage, but the plan failed when they ran out of time. The next year, several haunted houses were held, but none were successful.

Throughout the week preceding the haunted house, decorations were designed and constructed and plans were made. It all came together that Friday night. Although the haunted house attracted only ten visitors, as director Patrick Haggerty said, "They were scared out of their wits!" The highlight of the night was Michael Angely, who pretended to be a man hanged from a tree. As the victims approached, he fell from the tree into a puddle of blood. This received screams and yells almost every time.

RORVIKS GO INTO PUMPKIN-SELLING BUSINESS

Yet another development involving the Rorviks! This time, they're selling pumpkins.

On October 17, 1997, the Rorviks posted a sign outside their yard that read "PUMPKINS ON SALE! HAPPY HALLOWEEN!" The next day, Einar Rorvik was selling pumpkins immediately after he arrived home from school.

There is some debate over the origin of the pumpkins that the Rorviks are selling. Some believe that the Rorviks grew the pumpkins themselves. Others believe that the Rorviks bought the pumpkins in bulk to sell them at a profit. This explanation is unlikely, though, because the pumpkins are comparably priced at other farm stands around the area. The Rorviks have been selling pumpkins every weekday since.

WEDDING GOES WELL

As you may recall from last month's issue, Tim Hoffman was to be married to his bride, Meredith, on Saturday, October 11, 1997.

The Hoffman family and several others report that the wedding went off without a hitch. The dinner reception was held at Spring Mill Manor. Henry Sokolowski reports, "It was a very nice wedding. I wish the bride and groom the best of luck in their new marriage."

Ironically Mr. Hoffman's son, Tony, fell asleep during the reception. When asked about the incident, Tony reports, "I was so tired...I had just played a soccer game before that. Then we rushed off to the wedding." (Last month, we incorrectly reported that Tony was the Best Man of the wedding. We apologize profusely for any inconvenience that this may have caused.)

Tim and Meredith spent their honeymoon in Hilton Head, South Carolina.

OTHER NEWS TIDBITS

There isn't much news to report this month, but here's some of what we were able to find:

-The Mongomery County Board of Assessments is rumored to have witheld $900,000 in fees from CLT, the assessment corporation that has over-assessed many houses in the area over the past year. Henry Sokolowski, a victim of an inflated house assessment, believes that this is due to the poor job that CLT performed.

-The warm weather over the past few weeks has wreaked havoc on everyone's minds and plants. Jean Sokolowski, an advocate of summer weather, comments, "I love it! Even my plants survived until late October to produce many more vegetables than years before!"

-Halloween was enjoyed by all in the neighborhood. Tony Hoffman, a neighbor, set a trick-or-treating record this year with 108 pieces of candy. Tony's neighbor, Christopher Sokolowski, came in a close second with around 70.

-Christmas has arrived three months early to Strathman's in Southampton, as they are selling illuminated wrought iron reindeer and Christmas trees in front of their store. They will most likely sell many because of the overwhelming volume of traffic that passes by during church activities. Jean Sokolowski, a resident of the development, has her eye on a Nativity scene. However, she is reluctant to make a purchase as she not only fears that it may be stolen but that it will be overshadowed by the huge Christmas display across Pioneer Road.

Lost and Found

CHICKENS INVADE AREA AGAIN!

You would think that after six months and numerous calls, the Rorviks would be finally rounding up their chickens. Not so.

Although the chickens disappeared last month, they have returned, with two more, to bring the grand total to eight.

The chickens have again centered their attack on Robert Altimari's house, devouring weed killer and trash that blows into his yard. Robert himself is very annoyed and is looking forward to chicken soup on a cold winter day.

LOST AND FOUND TIDBITS

-Einar Rorvik, whose chickens wreak havoc on the neighborhoood, has owned a rooster for some time that crows in the morning with the sunrise. However, Jean Sokolowski, a neighbor, feels that the fowl alarm clock would be put to much better use as a chicken dinner for her family.

-The Rorviks' goat was sighted on the Sokolowskis' back porch at 8A.M. on Sunday, November 2, 1997. Henry Sokolowski quickly called the Rorviks and awoke a sleepy Einar Rorvik, Jr. to come and retrieve his goat.

Going to the Dogz

NEWS ON KLAUS

Klaus, the Hoffmans' Siberian Husky, has completely recovered, leaving little trace of his illness last month. Jean Sokolowski, who calls Klaus “My Dog” and feeds him when the Hoffmans are away, is glad to see that Klaus is back to his old self again.

Comedy Central

HENRY'S TROUBLES CONTINUE

Henry, who we last reported to be stranded in Collegeville, has managed to escape and take refuge where? That's right- this time in the Bridesburg section of Philadelphia. Henry has asked his father, Henry, to protect him from the giant chickens in the area.

Within the hour, seven hundred chickens began to raid the quiet urban neighborhood. The firemen on the scene began to fight back until a flood of chicken urine swept half of Bridesburg away. Henry, who happened to have been on the second floor of his father's house at the time, survived the yellow flood and went outside with several tranquilizer darts that had been given to him by the now incapacitated firemen.

After several missed shots (and several misses involving giant chicken feet), Henry hit a chicken in the stomach. It fell.

Meanwhile, the Curry family, who had just recovered from the numerous radiation warnings at Limerick Nuclear Power plant, was halfway in their journey to revenge Henry's former chicken activities when an earthquake occurred. At the same time, flood waters swept them into Bridesburg where they saw Henry trying futilely to slay the giant chickens.

Suddenly, an enormous goat kicked over the house in which Henry was hiding and took him captive. At last sighting, Henry was seen headed back towards his neighborhood in the hands of the kidnapping goat.

Stephen.....The Terrible?

By Jean Sokolowski

Stephen is just your average teenager--sometimes you want to give him a hug and other times you just want to wring his neck! He can be so demanding and pushy. He can bother his brother until you just want to scream. He can leave a bedroom and a bathroom so messy that if the Department of Licenses and Inspections ever visited, they would condemn the areas as unfit for human habitation. Everything is a burden--homework, practicing, sweeping a rug, emptying a dishwasher. If he would only learn when to give up in an argument, when to keep his mouth closed, he would not get himself into so much trouble.

On the other hand, he brings home personalized, unusually shaped scraps of wood for his brother from his wood shop class at school. He helps his brother take a shower. He rakes leaves in the yard without being asked. He helps cut the lawn. He loves to garden and is primarily responsible for the huge crop of vegetables we harvested this year because of his dedication to keeping the plants watered and fertilized. Since his mother has started working again, he has assumed the position of Chief Chef and has rustled up some mighty tasty dinners on the days that she works. He is a huge help as an aide to his mother at CCD every week. I guess we're all a little bit of good and bad. Nobody's perfect. It would probably even be a little boring if Steve were always agreeable. However, it would certainly add a few extra years to one's lifespan!

Stephen, The Terrible

By Christopher Sokolowski

Steve is sometimes a pain in my life. He always makes a big deal about little things. But when he does that, I just plug my ears when he screams. Even when I accidentally call him something like an "idiot", he always gets very angry and he always yells something like "I'm not talking to you!" or "You can't watch me play Nintendo for the rest of the day!" He is always using the computer, too.

Usually, Steve always wants me to get involved in everything. He just can't do anything by himself. He needs me to do it.

We always fight over typing things for our mother. But usually Steve gets to do it because he knows more about the computer. When I even touch a piece of his candy, he starts yelling and screaming. And he always pushes me away from it, almost making me fall to the ground. He always stays around his mother and persuades her to write stories for *Shoemaker Village*. Usually when other people than mom ask him favors, he doesn't do them, so I have to do them. When we do things together, he always tries to do most of it. But always when it comes to electricity, he lets me do it. He even forces me to hook up the computer, too.

With the Nintendo, he always says that he bought half of this, and it's partially his, so he takes it away from me. But, I always trust him to do things that I can't do. As an example of playing Nintendo, I usually like him to get past levels in games that I can't beat.

I kind of like Steve, but I kind of hate him, too.

There's Only One

By Henry Sokolowski

Yes, that's right. There's only one Stephen Sokolowski. Born 5 pounds, 1 ounce on July 6, 1983 at Rolling Hill Hospital, one month premature, Steve sure doesn't look that way today 14 years later. He's taller than his mother with big feet (size 9) and long arms.

He's very creative and uses the computer with the greatest of ease. He's intelligent and good looking. He's a lot like his father in many ways except in being neat and clean. Maybe that's just a teenager trait because everything except his school stuff seems to us to be out of place and disorganized. In fact, being a regulator by occupation and dealing with hazardous waste problems every day, it has occurred to me to declare his room, at times, a Hazardous Waste Site and list it on the National Priorities List for Superfund Cleanup.

What does the future hold for a bright, good-looking young man like Steve? Well, my guess is that he'll end up being a writer for a major newspaper and maybe even the editor some day. While nothing is certain, I'll bet that he doesn't end up in a career that requires neatness. Somehow I believe that he won't end up being president of a janitorial service or on the committee for township beautification.

Comments

By Stephen Sokolowski

This article is to clear up any misconceptions about the real life of Stephen Sokolowski. Although much of the information in the previous three stories is accurate, some is false, too.

First, there is no mess in Stephen's room. This has been a stereotype since his birth. It was cleaned up long ago. It is also incorrectly stated that Stephen hates doing homework. Homework is not a problem. In fact, sometimes, he even enjoys homework (depending on the subject). Maybe if all of the other family members would stop constantly yelling at him, their image of him and his personality itself would change.

In his story, Christopher is basically rambling on with half-truths. Christopher claims that Stephen never talks to him or plays Nintendo with him. This is because Christopher calls Stephen names all of the time and performs stupid actions that get him in trouble. Although he accuses Stephen of using the computer all the time, in reality, Stephen only uses the computer ten days of the month to write this magazine. Christopher never asks to use the computer, anyway, so what is his point?

Although Henry seems to think that Stephen is big, in reality, he is not. In school, Stephen is one of the shortest in his class!

In addition, Stephen is not a teenager. When people refer to a teenager, they mean people who are about age 16-21, and do all the usual things that the stereotypical “teenager” does. When you think of a teenager, do you think of a small, 14-year-old boy who looks like he's two years younger than he is? I think not.

As you can see, there are many probems with these accounts of Stephen's life.

The Knights of the Square Table

Chapter 9

By mid-afternoon, they cleared the forest and left the road. As the party climbed a hill in front of them, a view for miles opened up. All they could see were hills to the west, from where they had come, and wide plains to the east. They continued their trek until they came to a strange marking on the ground that consisted of several concentric circles with a dragon emblem in the middle. There was strange writing on the perimeter of the outermost circle that none of the party could understand.

"This could be the doing of the trolls," Mike said, worried.

"I don't think so," Christopher said. "From what I've seen from trolls terrorizing innocent villagers, I don't think they would go to such lengths as to construct this. But-" A look of fear came over Christopher's face.

"But what?" Katie asked.

"This could be the mark of Yavin himself."

Everybody gasped. "What should we do?" Dave asked.

"Yavin wants us dead, no doubt," Mike said quietly. "I hope he doesn't get his way."

"Stop worrying," Christopher said. "This mark is old. You can tell that by the smeared edges. If we arrived here even an hour from now, the rain could have washed it away or it would have been too dark to see."

"When was it made?" Katie asked. "It hasn't rained for five days now."

"I'm not sure. There's no way to tell. But one thing is for sure. Yavin himself did not make this mark. One of his servants did."

"That's good to know." Mike sighed with relief.

"Either way, I think we should get out of here. I wouldn't want anybody to return and find us," Dave said.

"I agree. Let's go a little farther before dark," Christopher answered.

They continued for another hour. They cleared the hills and were walking in the middle of a plain. They came to a stream and crossed it, after a lot of complaining from Mike, who didn't want to wet his clothes, and Dave, who was afraid of what was in it. On the other side of the stream, they rested for the day.

The next morning, Christopher suggested that they turn closer to the road, so that they would meet the Northern Branch, which led towards Yavin's kingdom. Just as Christopher predicted, everybody was relieved to see the faint outlines of a large town in the distance around late morning. Five minutes before noon, they could see the town clearly.

"Yes! We're finally here!" Mike yelled and began to run the final half-mile or so.

"Wait," said Dave. "What's that?" Mike stopped.

Everybody looked closer to find that two shadowy figures in the distance were having a sword fight. Indeed, the whole town was a mass of moving, fighting figures.

"Hide yourselves!" Christopher said. Everybody dropped to the ground for the cover of the tall grass.

"What happened?" Katie asked, too frightened by the tone of Christopher's voice to get up and peek.

"It looks like a battle," he said.

"A battle?" Dave yelled in surprise. "Between whom?"

"To find out, we must get closer. Follow me, and don't get up." Christopher began to crawl fast. Eventually he crouched and ran about half the distance to the town. It was hard going; but about fifteen minutes later, they were only two hundred feet from the town.

"Look. It's that same symbol!" Katie exclaimed. She was right. The same emblem they had seen

the day before was on the helmet of a knight, who was now in the middle of a battle with another one. The party watched from their hiding spot for a while. They saw the knight with the strange emblem kill the other and then go looking for another conquest..

"If they are Yavin's servants, we're losing!" whispered Dave. "We had better do something."

"Katie!" Christopher whispered. "Put on the stone and go investigate."

No sooner had he said this than Katie disappeared. She returned three or four minutes later with horrible news. "They are Yavin's servants," she gasped. "I overheard one of the unadorned ones say, 'Down with Yavin.' And it looks like they're losing."

"Well, there's nothing we can do," said Mike and started edging away from the battle.

"Oh yes there is!" Christopher exclaimed. "We join the battle."

"What?!" Mike screamed. "Are you out of your mind?"

"No. I'm not. With this sword," Christopher replied, pointing to the Falchion at his side, "and the stone, we can defeat quite a few soldiers. Besides, if Yavin's soldiers win, we might as well be dead."

Although Mike protested ("You're crazy! You're going to kill yourselves!"), they ran towards the battle field. The noise of the battle grew louder as they approached. When they reached the gates, they noticed that the battle had moved into the village square.

Christopher screamed a battle cry and ran in to join the fray. Several enemy soldiers were scared and fled out of his way. He swung the Falchion this way and that, downing two in less than a minute. Dave and Katie watched the battle from the gates. It still seemed, though, that the enemy was winning.

"We have to do something!" Dave said.

"What?" Mike, who had now crawled up to the gates, said. "Go inside and get killed?"

"Shut up, Mike!" Dave said.

"Why? I haven't said anything?" Mike replied angrily.

Suddenly, there was a loud BANG and lightning leapt out of the cloudless sky, striking an enemy soldier on the head. He fell at Christopher's feet. Christopher had quite a collection of fallen soldiers around him now. Mike counted five. The enemy still greatly outnumbered the village defense, and Christopher was pushed into a corner by several soldiers.

"He's going to die!" Mike screamed in terror. "I told you so!"

Just then, Katie concentrated on the sword as hard as she could. She didn't know why she did this when she looked back at their adventure years later. Suddenly, the Falchion which Christopher was swinging around began to glow brighter and brighter, until the enemy soldiers that surrounded him ran in terror. When the light reached its peak, Christopher held the sword high. The enemy soldiers cowered at the light and ran screaming through the gates.

"WOW!" Mike said. "The true power of the sword!"

Christopher lowered his sword. Everybody was speechless. After about a minute, Christopher returned to his companions at the gate, who were now rejoicing wildly. They were joined by the rest of the soldiers, who jumped and cheered.

After the initial victory was over, there was much work to do. With the help of the doctors, the wounded were healed, and with the help of Christopher, the dead were buried. Among the dead were fourteen of their finest soldiers. The enemy bodies were uncounted.

By the time this was done, it was already getting dark. The village leader decided that the festival should go on, to celebrate their victory. Presently, Christopher was standing near a large bonfire in the middle of the square. Dave, Mike, and Katie were on the side of the square with a few of the townsfolk.

"Okay. Now we have some time to think," Mike said. "Why are we doing this? We could be killed. That battle proves it."

"I know. Christopher doesn't seem like somebody from our time. There's something different about him," Dave added.

"Yeah," Katie agreed. "Like that time he killed that animal. People in our time aren't skilled hunters. And how did he know so much about the sword? He couldn't have learned that much from that

prisoner. And where is this prisoner? He never told us."

"And there's this issue about how-" Mike began but was interrupted by a loud bang on the other side of the square. A knight called out that the feast was ready. The three friends ran to the table because they were extremely hungry but were dismayed at what they found.

"What IS this?" Mike said in dismay.

"That would be stewed hare," said one of the knights that overheard his remark.

"Eeeeew!" Mike whispered. "They ate rabbits?!"

Nobody paid much attention to that comment, because they were busy trying to find something that was more "normal" to their liking. In the end, all they found was a little bit of corn, which they ate out of a glazed clay bowl. They returned to the other side of the square to continue their conversation.

"So, Mike. Go on," Katie urged.

"Well, there's this issue about how Christopher got possession of the sword. Obviously, a sword so powerful, with Yavin looking for it, wasn't just lying around. It must have required some doing to get it. I think that this Deneb from whom he received the sword is not whom she seems."

"This all adds up to...." NONSENSE!" Katie exclaimed. "Sorcerers, magical swords, trolls, and...." Katie glanced towards Christopher, who was now talking to one of the villagers. "Imps!"

"And then...," Dave continued, "how will defeating Yavin help us get home? I thought that these things didn't exist! Maybe this is just some kind of dream, and we will....wake up."

"I doubt it's some kind of dream. It's too long, and too real," Katie replied.

"Do you mean that we could be in a coma, and our dreams are somehow linked?" Dave asked.

"I doubt it. Tony died, remember? That would have severed the link," Mike continued, "and also, it's very unlikely. Let's stop talking about this and look for something else to do."

The group traversed the square to talk to a few people. When they arrived, one of the villagers said:

"So. You folk look different. Where are you from?"

Katie replied, "We're traders from Harrogen."

"Harrogen, eh?" the man said. "There're some pretty queer things going on down there now."

"Queer?" Mike asked. "Such as what?"

"Well, I heard that there were these people who escaped from prison. Completely fooled the guards. Found one of 'em dead, starved, in their cell."

"Oh," Mike pretended. "Where'd you learn this from?"

"There's this girl, came through here two days ago. She told us all about goings on down there. She said that Oman was completely destroyed!"

"How?" Katie asked.

"Nobody knows. It wasn't those dratted trolls, no. Someone found five of 'em dead in the woods before the fire, and there weren't any more within miles. It was probably one of the servants of the Shadow Land."

"Shadow Land? You mean Yavin?" Mike shouted, puzzled.

"Sssssssh!" the man whispered. "Those words shouldn't be overheard at a gathering like this! Who knows who could be listening? Trolls, Calks, or even....." The man cringed. "One of the three elements. That girl said that they were abroad."

"What are they?" Mike asked in surprise.

"Fire, Earth, and Ice. Three very powerful wizards from the ancient times. Not long ago, Yavin bribed them to work for him. Now, they are his immortal servants."

"So you mean that Yavin is unbeatable?" Mike cried in dismay. "Why did we do this, then?" he whispered.

"I did not say unbeatable," the man said. There are two ways to destroy the elements."

"What?" Mike asked.

"The first way is to get Yavin to do the job himself, which is impossible because he would kill you before you even got out a word. But there is another way. They can kill each other."

Everybody gasped and then tried to look as if they were engaged in a normal conversation at the festival.

"Fire can melt ice, ice can freeze earth, and earth can douse flames. If they were on our side, Yavin would lose much of his power."

The man paused. "Boy, are you nosey!" he said. "Why do you want to know all of this? Don't you all know this already? I mean, any Harrogen citizen should know."

Mike stuttered, "Well, we were....traveling. We'd better go. It's pretty late." Without another word, Mike, Dave, and Katie marched across the courtyard.

By then, it was getting to be late, and the group decided to stay at Jasper for the night. After the group (except Christopher, who was wide awake) went to bed, the festival continued past midnight.

The next morning, Dave, Mike, and Katie were literally the first people up in the town because of the festival the night before. It wasn't until an hour before noon that the town began to stir. Christopher was awake with the rest and went outside to join the group.

"From what I heard," he said as he approached, "we are in danger here. We should leave at once."

Dave, Mike, and Katie exchanged glances.

"What's wrong?" Christopher asked. "Did I say something?"

"Oh, nothing," Mike replied.

"OK, then we'll leave in an hour."

Everybody decided to go along with Christopher for the time being. They packed their bags and were having a pleasant conversation near the gates when Christopher returned.

"It's time to go," he said.

"Where are we going?" Mike asked.

"There is a road north of this town that should lead us towards Yavin's castle. There are little towns along the road, as far as I can tell."

Without anymore conversation, the group set out northward along the road. Everyone figured that the road was safe because Yavin's servants had lost at the battle yesterday.

The day was uneventful, and the party was traveling over level ground. When they had covered more than twenty miles, Dave finally collapsed to the ground, exhausted. Since the group had come to a narrow valley on the east side of the road, they settled down for the night under its shelter.

Sometime during the night, Mike was awakened by a sound like the galloping of hoofs on the road. As he watched, a shadowy figure stopped, dismounted, and looked around as if searching for something.

It was several minutes later when the figure finally began to move away. Mike sat up, glad that the mysterious figure was gone. In doing so, he accidentally kicked a branch out into the center of the road! Mike held his breath. The figure turned around and picked up the stick. Looking around, Mike saw that it was the girl that had rescued them from the cell back in Harrogen!

The girl then galloped slowly away, leaving Mike with a sense of curiosity and fear. Nobody else in the party had even batted an eyelash during the strange incident.

The next morning was hot and humid. There was an eerie stillness in the air. Everybody awoke as if nothing had happened. Christopher cooked some meat that they had traded in Jasper for a few of their unnecessary items. It was their first real meal in the wilderness for a long time. Then the party continued northward.

The oppressive heat grew until it was almost unbearable around midday. That was when Mike spotted the girl again in the distance behind them. The sky seemed to be clouding up, and a deep fog was moving in towards them from behind. Mike said nothing about what he saw.

Around midafternoon, the sky became noticably darker and it started to rain. The party was in the middle of an open field when the thunder started.

It was like nothing they had heard before, and the lightning was almost unbelievable. "This can't be natural!" Katie screamed over the noise.

Just then, Mike saw the girl - a shadow against the fog - racing across the plain towards them.

Nobody else seemed to take notice of this. As she loomed closer, Mike saw that she was much bigger than she looked. In fact, she was morphing in front of his very eyes! Now she looked like a giant, although not completely human.

The rest of the group still did not notice her, although she was standing in front of their very eyes. Suddenly, she thrust a stick into the ground. Lightning leapt from the sky and struck the stick, causing a deafening noise. Katie screamed. Christopher jumped. Dave ran. Chaos arose when everybody tried to gather their supplies and run for shelter.

Suddenly the rain and lightning stopped. The air fell dead. The stick was incinerated no less than ten yards away. Then the giant woman began to change. Mike could not describe it, but after it was done, she looked less....transparent. Dave, Katie, and Christopher now saw her and shrank away in fear.

"You did very well....for a novice," she said in a calm voice. "Who are you?" Dave asked, frightened. "What do you want?"

In response to this question, the giant began to change again, this time back to her girl form.

"That girl?!" Dave exclamied shakily, puzzled.

"Exactly," she said. "But things may not always be as they seem." Suddenly, the girl picked up another of the sparse sticks and thrust it into the ground. Everybody began to run. But there was only a low rumble of thunder.

"Come back here!" she yelled, sternly. She picked up yet another stick and threw it at the earth. A loud rumble followed, and the ground began to shake - an earthquake! Everybody ran back, and the earthquake subsided. The girl seemed unaffected by the earthquake, contrary to the fear and wonder that Mike, Dave, Katie, and Christopher were experiencing.

"I am Chapin, elemental of Earth," the girl said.

"What?!" Dave exclaimed, surprised.

"I control all nature at the tips of my fingers. I am one of the three elements."

"What do you want from us?" Katie asked.

"I believe you know....., Kahman," she said, looking at Christopher.

"What?!" Christopher exclaimed in disbelief. "It can't be!"

As everybody watched, Chapin morphed into yet another form. This time, she looked like....a witch.

"Deneb?" Dave asked.

"Precisely," Chapin responded.

"I must help," Christopher said. Suddenly, there was a flash, and Christopher turned into another giant, this one looking like a giant ice sculpture.

"Now," Chapin said, "I think we have some business to attend to."

There was a flash of light, and they both disappeared.

"What was that?" Dave asked.

"I don't know," answered Katie, "but our suspicions were right. Christopher wasn't who he seemed."

"But that leaves us with lots of questions. And there aren't any answers!" Mike continued.

"What do we do now?" Katie asked.

Everyone was silent for a few moments.

"We must continue the quest," said Dave.

"What?!" Mike screamed. "Are you out of your mind?"

"No. Look." Dave pointed to the ground a few feet away. A glittering object laid there. As the threesome approached, they saw it was the sword - the Falchion! There were also several papers scattered about the area. Upon closer inspection, they proved to be the maps by which Christopher had guided them through the first part of their journey.

"I'm not picking it up!" Mike said, pointing at the sword and backing away. "Remember last time?" Dave remembered last time when Mike was shocked by the great handle of the sword as Christopher demonstrated its power.

“I will, then,” Dave said. Mike and Katie gasped. “I think that I'll be able to, now that Christopher went....off.”

As Mike and Katie braced themselves for Dave's demise, Dave leaned down to pick up the sword. Suddenly, he grasped the handle. The Falchion began to glow. The Hadar stone in Katie's hands began to shine brightly. Suddenly, there was a bright flash, and Dave was able to pick up the sword with little resistance.

Mike and Katie were stunned. Dave said, “Come on! I'm fine!”

It had been two hours since the frightful incident, and there was still no sign of Christopher. Everyone had decided to continue northward until they came to a place they could rest. Unfortunately they saw nothing and had to camp out under the stars for yet another night.

In the morning, they came to a small town that was called Haber. (They didn't know it at the time). It was very small; in fact, so small that there wasn't much to do but grab something to eat. They left about noon and continued northward. It got dark, and the group was beginning to despair. There was little food and hardly any water. (The citizens of Haber did not want to give any of their precious food away, either.)

They were making camp when they felt a sudden stillness in the air. “It's too quiet. Something's wrong,” Katie said.

“If you don't want to be killed, put your hands up!” a voice said out of the darkness. Out of a narrow valley to their right came ten enormous trolls.

The Flood

By Christopher Sokolowski

Once upon a time there was a town named Stevtev. It had only fourteen houses in it and you could only fit a wagon on a road. There was another town down in a valley named Kosnov. Since the people of Stevtev didn't know there was a flood coming, they just acted normally. The next day, it started to rain very hard. Stevtev got 14 inches of rain in 14 hours. The rain flooded all of Stevtev's 14 houses, and all 14 people ran out of their houses and ran to Kosnov. They told the people that lived in Kosnov that a flood was going to come in 3 hours 54 minutes and 23 seconds. They had to build a wall! The rumble of the water made trees roll down the hill. The people used the trees to build the wall. Finally the water hit and the wall held. But how were they going to get out?

The Plant

By Christopher Sokolowski

One day at school, at my desk, I was working on a story called “The Magic Plant”. Then BOOM! A rock came through the ceiling and through the hole came a shooting star. The shooting star came in the plant and the rock messed me up on my story. I couldn't erase the mess up because I didn't have any eraser. So I just trashed the paper that I was working on. The next day, the whole room was a plant. I noticed that the plant ate my desk and all the other desks as food for itself. Soon it took up the whole school. By the next day, it took up the whole world. After two days, it took up almost the entire universe! Then an astronaut found a pair of scissors in space and cut the plant. The plant died. The earth had dead plant leaves all over it. How would everyone clean up this mess?

Benjamin Lloyd, Environmental Engineer

By Stephen Sokolowski

Have you ever heard of an engineer who has almost nothing to do with math, never built a bridge, or probably never seen the blueprints for one? This describes the work of Benjamin Lloyd, an Environmental Engineer.

Benjamin's job is to supervise people who clean up air pollution in the United States. He does not have that unusual of a background. Benjamin attended Northeast High School in Philadelphia from 1965 to 1969. After graduating from high school, he continued on to Drexel University, where he spent six years (from 1969 to 1975) and eventually earned a master's degree in Civil Engineering. Benjamin is also a registered Professional Engineer in the state of Pennsylvania. He attained this license by passing two eight-hour exams. Throughout his school life, Benjamin has said that his favorite subjects were math, science, engineering, and related subjects that helped his career.

Benjamin has also had some ordinary jobs during his school years. He was a graduate assistant, a civil engineer trainee, and even a shoe salesman!

Benjamin began his climb up the ladder of success with a job as an environmental engineer at CH2M-Hill, a major environmental consultant, in 1974. He received that position through a recommendation from a college teacher. For five years after that, he worked in an office dealing with water pollution cleanup. He was soon promoted to cleanup of air pollution in 1979 and held that position until 1987. In 1987, he got a job as Human Resources Manager for CH2M-Hill but left less than two years later because it was out of his field.

Currently, Benjamin Lloyd's full title is Environmental Engineer Program Manager. He still works for CH2M-Hill and has been in his current job since 1989. His main duty is to oversee those people who deal with air quality issues. There are several levels of people below him, with the area's top manager above him. He is in charge of the budget for his department and frequently travels to foreign countries in

Europe and Asia as technical advisor on air quality.

Now, let's go through a normal workday in the life of Benjamin Lloyd. Ben wakes up early, at 5:30 a.m.. He arrives at work at around 7:45 and begins to check his voice and electronic mail. He answers messages, returns phone calls, and so on. One day, after he returned from a week long vacation, he had over 150 messages to check. That took him almost the entire day! Soon after, he usually reviews inspection reports from the project managers below him. He checks for quality in the job and whether the reports are written well or not. Sometimes, he will meet with people personally to give assignments, to check out what is happening, or to solve problems. He says that the most important things to look out for is to be considerate of others and to listen carefully. Also, he will sometimes conduct meetings for the public, listening to their concerns and questions. He is always sure to be responsive, accurate, and honest.

Benjamin's workplace looks just like a normal office. It is on the 30th floor. He has a large table in his room for meetings, a desk with a new computer on it, in- and out-boxes, and so on. He is almost always on his own, since the top manager is stationed elsewhere and often has other work to do.

Benjamin is happy with his job. He especially likes dealing with people and solving problems. He does not like how much he has to travel sometimes (neither does his family); and his ten-hour workday, with an additional hour-and-a-half round-trip commute by train, can get tiresome.

Benjamin is married to Martha and has four children--Mark, 16, Jennifer, 11, Ryan, 6, and David, 6 months. His favorite leisure activities are playing softball, watching movies, serving as a church volunteer, and surfing the internet.

In ten years, Benjamin hopes to be holding the position of Vice President for Engineering for CH2M-Hill. He believes that his job will expand substantially, because “environmental concerns will always be a priority.” If you are considering going into this field, Benjamin recommends that you study hard, go to college, be fluent in English and be sure that you like public speaking.

The Big Change

By Patrick Haggerty

One day, after school, I was walking home from the bus stop. I got as far as the Hoffmans' house when I saw Steve shooting hoops. I started talking to him about Goldeneye, the new Nintendo 64 game. Chris, Steve's brother, overheard us talking. Chris was the best at Goldeneye. He then shouted, “Let's play The Game!” (Which was Goldeneye.) We got downstairs and decided to call Tony. We heard the door knock. Mrs. S yelled, “Hey guys, it's Tony!” “Yes!” we screamed.

Our first level was the facility with proximity mines. I was about to go into the bathroom when BOOM!!! Explosions were everywhere! “QUADRUPLE KILL!” yelled Chris. “Wow!” said Steve. Then on the screen, it said, “You will have a reward. You will actually be playing the game!” “Hahaha!” laughed Pat. “Very funny.”

All of a sudden, we started fading into the T.V.. I looked around. It looked like I was in some heat duct. We all heard a voice that said, “You will be playing for all the candy in the world. The loser will have to live with Tony. We will be playing two kills.” I was Bond. Steve was Boris, Chris was a scientist, and Tony was a girl named Natalya. We all were worried. “Wow! I found a rocket launcher!” yelled Tony. He saw Bond below him. He fired. BOOM! Bond managed to escape. Chris was in a secret room. Steve and I were looking for someone while Tony was out in La La Land. BOOM! A rocket launcher hit Steve and me. We all were killed except Chris. Not for long! Chris had been killed by Tony with his bare hands! Steve was walking toward the bathroom. “Wow! A rocket launcher!” he said. He opened the doors to the bathroom. Everyone was in there firing. I'll end this right now,” said Steve. He fired. BOOM! We were all killed except for Steve. Steve won.

“Steve, you have won all the candy in the world,” a voice said. “I'll break out from all this candy,” said Steve. Pat came in second place so Steve gave the candy to Pat. Now, we had to see who came in last. It was Chris. He started to cry. “I don't want to live with Tony,” he cried. He packed up his stuff and left. We heard a knock on the door. It was Tony again. He stole the candy and went home. Tony and

Chris locked themselves in the basement. We never heard from them again. I heard they weigh 2,020 pounds each.