Shoemaker Village

Volume 15 - December 1997



Annual Holiday Bonus Issue!

1997: The Year in Review: A special section reviewing the news over the past year! Included in all subscriber issues!

The Knights of the Square Table continues!

Expanded Comedy Central inside!
Extra short stories this month!
DETAILS INSIDE!

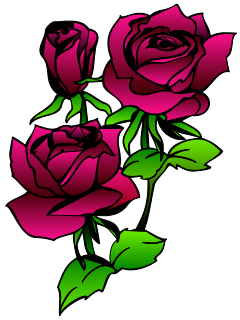


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Editor's Pages

Information you should know

For the holidays, we'll stick to tradition and begin with "Hello everybody out there in Curryland!" In your hands right now, you are holding one of our two yearly **subscriber bonus issues**, with expanded sections for your enjoyment. Everything you need to know about this great issue is on this page.

You probably noticed that this issue was late. This is due mainly to computer problems and also because of the immense size of this issue.

First, as you may recall, there will be no January issue due to the Christmas holidays. This also allows us to get ready for the big February bonus issue, which is the other of the two bonus issues and the biggest of the year with over **30 pages!** In response to our plea for stories last month, we have received a deluge of articles, comedies, and stories! In fact, there are so many that we cannot publish them all in this issue! Keep reading for more stories in February and, as always, if you wish, you can send in stories to be published in the next issue. Announcements, comments, and suggestions are also welcome! Also in this issue is a **HUGE** Comedy Central section, the biggest in the history of this entire magazine!

The Knights of the Square Table continues in this issue, and the excitement is growing. If, for some reason, you missed out on the first few chapters of this great novel, send a letter to the address on the next page to receive a free copy of all the chapters of *The Knights of the Square Table* that have been published in past issues. Back issues of *Shoemaker Village* as far back as May 1997 are also available upon request.

Last month, in the *Next Issue* section, we told you that there would be a new section this month. Unfortunately, we were not able to include this because the writer was unavailable. In February, the section will be unveiled for the first time in the bonus issue, so keep reading!

Also included in this issue is **1997: The Neighborhood In Review**. This special section reviews all of the hot news over the past year in the neighborhood. It was requested by a few of our readers , and we haven't let you down!

That's all for this month. Enjoy this edition of *Shoemaker Village*. Have a happy holiday and we hope to hear from you in February!

Acknowledgments

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Coming Next Issue

Volume 16 - February 1998

■ One of two *Shoemaker Village* bonus issues! The biggest one of the year! Over 30 pages of news, stories, comedy, and more!
■ *The Knights of the Square Table* approaches Yavin's castle - you won't want to miss next month!
■ Voting on *The 1997 Shoemaker Village* awards - the readers get to vote! Which story, article, or comedy will receive the top honors? Prizes for the winners, too!
■ That new section is coming! Be the first to read it!
■ Short Stories, Poems, and more!
■ Several new, full-time writers have joined our staff to give you more short stories and articles! Look for
their contributions in February!

ALL IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF *SHOEMAKER VILLAGE*!

Neighborhood News

December 1997

LEAVES WREAK HAVOC ON THE NEIGHBORHOOD

An over-abundance of leaves in the neighborhood over the past months from the shedding trees has caused many people to be pushed to the limit to control them.

Leaf collections were higher than ever this year, which is thought to be due to the long hot spell during the early summer. It was also the latest leaf fall ever, probably also due to the drought. The biggest leaf fall of the year did not occur until early December, much later than previous years.

"This is ridiculous," said Henry Sokolowski, a neighborhood home owner, watching more leaves swirling down from the trees as he futilely tried to clear his porch on Thanksgiving Day. "It's never been this bad before!"

Christopher Sokolowski, who usually loves to jump and play in the leaves, was disappointed this year when it rained every time he tried to rake them. "By the time they dried, it rained again," Christopher complained. "Darn it!" Many other neighborhood children felt the same way.

Hopefully, the leaves will "calm down" before it snows; or, like last year, everybody will be raking their yards in the Spring.

THANKSGIVING GOES WELL

Although this year, when many people were asked how their Thanksgivings were and they answered "boring," the neighborhood's Thanksgivings went well.

Many people in the neighborhood must have eaten Thanksgiving dinner at their own homes, because the streets were lined with cars.

Jean Sokolowski, who claims that Thanksgiving is her favorite holiday, said, "It was fine, but very quiet." She is referring to the absence of two family members who usually attend Thanksgiving dinner.

The Hoffman family also had dinner at their house and report that it went well.

WINTER REQUEST

When snow blankets the area, neighborhood children build their very own special snow creations on their lawns of white. The Sokolowski brothers are part of that fun frenzy, too. Since their corner property gets a lot of "kid traffic", Steve and Chris are asking all neighborhood children to be polite and have some respect for what they see in the Sokolowski's yard by not touching anything "snow colored" unless Steve and Chris are there. The Sokolowskis hope that everyone will stop and think about how it feels to have their hard work damaged. This request goes out to children who are Chris's age as well as those as old as Steve.

EARLY CHRISTMAS CONTINUES

Last month, we reported that Christmas lights and symbols were decorating the Strathmans' store in Southampton. More early Christmas traditions have been discovered in the area recently.

Silvestri, a Christmas tree seller that used to own a farm before the Marketplace was built, was already selling Christmas trees on Wednesday, December 3.

Also, many commercials around the Philadelphia area have been advertising Christmas merchandise since early November.

NEWS TIDBITS

A lot happened over the neighborhood during the past month, and here's the rest of it:

-The Rymer Family, an original *Shoemaker Village* homeowner, moved out of their house on November 20, 1997. You may recall that the house had been on sale since early June. It was sold to a family about whom not much is known yet.

-Christmas vacation for the schoolchildren will be the longest it has been in seven years. The length of eleven days was equalled only last year, when Christmas fell on a Wednesday. Another coincidence is that Hanukkah starts on December 24, the latest in a long time.

-The neighbor responsible for the "Christmas Light Fantasia" on Pioneer Road has finished assembling his display. As you may recall, this family has had the largest Christmas display in the area for over ten years.

-The Christmas Eve Luminaria (candles in white bags) will not be organized by the Altimaris this year. Volunteers are sought to handle this beautiful tradition.

Lost and Found

CHICKEN INVASION CONTINUES, NO END IN SIGHT

The Rorviks' chickens are back at it again, this time with a more serious threat.

It is feared that the chickens may interfere with the Christmas displays throughout the neighborhood.

Although the Rorviks have been notified of the chicken problem several times during the past few months, they continue to ignore the issue and still allow their chickens to roam the neighborhood.

Henry Sokolowski, a resident of the Butternut-Acorn development, hopes that the chickens electrocute themselves in the huge Christmas display on Pioneer Road. "That'll teach them [the Rorviks]," he said recently.

The chickens, who, when they first showed up in the Spring, were very timid, have now advanced as far from their home as the Slouskys' house. One chicken was even spotted crossing the street around the ditch area!

Also, in Thanksgiving tradition, a turkey appeared in the middle of Pioneer Road in November, halting several cars for almost five minutes while it crossed the road. *Shoemaker Village* subscriber Rita Wilkowski, a witness of this event, jokingly said, "We should have run the thing over and eaten it for Thanksgiving dinner!"

TASTYKAKES FOUND ALONG PIONEER ROAD

For some unknown reason, Tastykakes have been appearing by the bundle near the bus stop corner on the Sokolowskis' property during the past few weeks.

The treats, which were first discovered by Christopher Sokolowski on December 7, are suspected to be from a Tastykake truck that drives through the area every morning.

Christopher stumbled upon the cakes while decorating the trees in the front of his house that Sunday night. He subsequently rushed to his house -bundles of cakes, preserved by the cold, in his hands- to notify his family. "This was a RARE find," he said. He later calculated that he had found $32.00 worth of Tastykakes.

It is also rumored that the Tastykakes were found jettisoned from a truck along Pioneer Road near the industrial development. Scott Slousky and a friend, Nick Marco, were said to have placed the Tastykakes there, for themselves, to eat in the morning. We'll give you an update in February about this important story.

Comedy Central

HENRY MAKES A MISTAKE, SCIENTISTS FEAR END OF THE WORLD

At last glance, Henry, our famous Environmental Engineer, is reported to have

been chased back towards the neighborhood, devastated by an atomic bomb, by a goat mutated by nuclear waste.

Upon arriving at the plot where his house once stood, Henry grabbed a large rake and single-handedly chased the goat out of the area. (After the incident, Henry refused to go to the hospital for the nine broken bones he received.)

After a long rest (two minutes), Henry decided that, if he decorated what was left of the neighborhood with Christmas lights, he would both win back the neighbors' favor and at least cover up his mistake.

Henry went to the Sears Hardware down the street from his former house and purchased $100,000 worth of Christmas lights. With some help from his family (actually a lot), he was able to get the lights up by the middle of February. Being so late, Henry decided to test the lights and leave them up until next Christmas.

When Henry plugged in all the lights to an outlet in his backyard, several things happened. Limerick Nuclear Power Plant shut down because of the power drain, causing the Curry family and Christopher, the three-legged dog, to be buried in nuclear waste. (More on this later.)

Suddenly there was an enormously bright flash from the Christmas lights. Then they all went out. Henry had caused an Electro-Magnetic pulse, which shut down electricity worldwide, including the computer that this magazine is being pub−
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--END OF TRANSMISSION--

WHY DID THE CHICKEN CROSS THE ROAD?

Pat Buchanan:
To steal a job from a decent, hard-working American.

Bill Gates:
I have just released the new Chicken 2000, which will both cross roads AND balance your checkbook, though when it divides 3 by 2 it gets 1.4999999999.

Ronald Reagan:
I don't recall.

The Bible:
And God came down from the heavens, and He said unto the chicken, "Thou shalt cross the road." And the chicken crossed the road, and there was much rejoicing.

L.A. Police Department:
Give me ten minutes with the chicken and I'll find out.

Richard M. Nixon:
The chicken did not cross the road. I repeat, the chicken did not cross the road.

Saddam Hussein:
This was an unprovoked act of rebellion and we were quite justified in dropping 50 tons of nerve gas on it.

Dr. Seuss:
Did the chicken cross the road?
Did he cross it with a toad?
Yes! The chicken crossed the road,
but why it crossed it, I've not been told!

Martin Luther King, Jr.:
I envision a world where all chickens will be free to cross roads without having their motives called into question.

Joseph Stalin:
I don't care. Catch it. I need its eggs to make my omelette.

John Locke:
Because he was exercising his natural right to liberty.

Darwin:
Chickens, over great periods of time, have been naturally selected in such a way that they are now genetically dispositioned to cross roads.

Oliver Stone:
The question is not "Why did the chicken cross

the road?" but is rather "Who was crossing the road at the same time whom we overlooked in our haste to observe the chicken crossing?"

Jerry Seinfeld:
Why does anyone cross a road? I mean, why doesn't anyone ever think to ask, "What the heck was this chicken doing walking around all over the place anyway?"

The Pope:
That is only for God to know.

Immanuel Kant:
The chicken, being an autonomous being, chose to cross the road of his own free will.

Grandpa:
In my day, we didn't ask why the chicken crossed the road. Someone told us that the chicken had crossed the road, and that was good enough for us.

George Orwell:
Because the government had fooled him into thinking that he was crossing the road of his own free will, when he was really only serving their interests.

Colonel Sanders:
I missed one?

Albert Einstein:
Whether the chicken crossed the road or the road crossed the chicken depends upon your frame of reference.

Pyrrho the Skeptic:
What road?

The Sphinx:
You tell me.

Emily Dickenson:
Because it could not stop for death.

Ralph Waldo Emerson:
It didn't cross the road; it transcended it.

Ernest Hemingway:
To die. In the rain.

O.J.:
It didn't. I was playing golf with it at the time.

THE TOP 20 WORST WAYS YOU CAN SPEND NEW YEAR'S EVE

(Article contributed by Matthew Care)

20. Ushering in the new year, passed out on a bar floor in a puddle of god knows what

19. Doing homework

18. Having a bad case of diarrhea

17. Spending it in the burns ward of the emergency room because you thought you knew how to set up the fireworks

16. Taking down Christmas decorations

15. Putting up Halloween decorations

14. Getting trampled in Times Square

13. Babysitting

12. Cleaning your oven

11. Trying to log on AOL

10. Going through old newspapers

9. Listening to the ball drop on the radio

8. Spending it in a maximum security prison for trying to blow up the ball last New Years

7. Writing viruses to blow up the computers that control the international clock

6. Flying to California so you can see New Years twice. That's what I call jet lag!

5. Counting down the time to the new year... and your execution

4. Listening to your relatives playing Scrabble and arguing about whether or not “frigidaire” is a word.

3. Sitting through a black out

2. Sleeping

1. Watching FOX!

WEIRD BUMPER STICKERS SIGHTED

These bumper stickers have been sighted throughout the world as reported by one of our columnists.

I love cats. They taste just like chicken.

Laugh alone and the world thinks you’re an idiot.

Jack Kevorkian for White House physician.

I want to die in my sleep like my grandfather... not screaming and yelling like the passengers in his car.

If we aren’t supposed to eat animals, then why are they made of meat?

Forget about World Peace....Visualize using your turn signal!

He who laughs last thinks slowest.

Very funny, Scotty. Now beam down my clothes.

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Ever stop to think, and forget to start again?
We are Microsoft. You will be assimilated.
Resistance is futile.

Auntie Em: Hate you, Hate Kansas, Taking the dog. -Dorothy

All generalizations are false.

Change is inevitable, except from a vending machine.

Out of my mind. Back in five minutes.

Time is what keeps everything from happening at once.

Born free.....Taxed to death.

Cover me. I’m changing lanes.

As long as there are tests, there will be prayer in public schools.

The more people I meet, the more I like my dog.

Sometimes I wake up grumpy. Other times I let her sleep.

Work is for people who don’t know how to fish.

Montana --- at least our cows are sane!

I didn’t fight my way to the top of the food chain to be a vegetarian.

It’s as BAD as you think, and they ARE out to get you.

If you don’t like the news, go out and make some.

I brake for no apparent reason.

When you do a good deed, get a receipt, in case Heaven is like the IRS.

Sorry, I don’t date outside my species.

I may be fat, but you’re ugly - I can lose weight!

No Radio - Already Stolen

I took an IQ test and the results were negative.

When there’s a will, I want to be in it!

Okay, who stopped the payment on my reality check?

Few women admit their age. Few men act it.

I don't suffer from insanity. I enjoy every minute of it!

Hard work has a future payoff. Laziness pays off now!

Tell me to 'stuff it' - I'm a taxidermist!

IRS: We've got what it takes to take what you've got!

Time is the best teacher. Unfortunately, it kills all its students!

It's lonely at the top, but you eat better.

According to my calculations, the problem doesn't exist.

Pride is what we have. Vanity is what others have.

A bartender is just a pharmacist with a limited inventory.

How can I miss you if you won't go away?

Warning: Dates in calendar are closer than they appear.

Give me ambiguity or give me something else.

We have enough youth. How about a fountain of SMART?

Make it idiot proof and someone will find a better idiot.

Always remember you're unique, just like everyone else.

Consciousness: that annoying time between naps.

Be nice to your kids. They'll choose your nursing home.

Why is 'abbreviation' such a long word?

Diplomacy is the art of saying "Nice Doggie" until you can find a rock.

I like you, but I wouldn't want to see you working with subatomic particles.

I is a college student.

Lead me not into temptation. I can find it myself.

I'm out of bed and dressed. What more do you want?

1997: The Year In Review

Here are some of the top news stories over the past year as voted by our staff.

KLAUS'S ILLNESS

Klaus, the Hoffmans' dog, was poisoned in early August.

The poisoning was suspected to have been performed by someone who was annoyed by Klaus, who innocently howled late into the night while the Hoffmans were on vacation in Disney World on August 6 - 13.

This led to several trips to the veterinarian during the following weeks and much worry on the part of the Hoffmans. Klaus recovered by September, though, and is still in fine shape.

HOUSE ASSESSMENT APPEALS

Many people in the neighborhood were angered when their new house assessments arrived in the mail in early March.

Many people appealed their assessments

through a long and complicated process. Henry Sokolowski described the way he appealed his house assessment.

"First, I had to go through the informal process, meeting with CLT, the assessment corporation, but the conditions were very unproductive. I later wrote a letter and had no greater success."

"Finally, in August, I appealed my house assessment to the county through the formal process."

"Boy, I'm surely glad I don't have to go through that again!" he exclaimed at the end of the conversation.

It is rumored that the Montgomery County Board of Assessment, who assessed houses in the area, has withheld $900,000 in funds from CLT, the corporation who performed the assessments. Maybe they weren't happy with CLT's performance either!

MISSING MAIL LEADS TO SUSPICIONS OF THEFT

During the latter part of the year, mail has been missing from neighborhood mailboxes.

Although many people suspected that someone had been tampering with the mail long before any sightings, this suspicion was heightened in late October when someone in a car drove up to and looked into neighborhood mailboxes.

Later that month, checks and bank statements were lying around the mailbox that belonged to the Sokolowskis and had come in the mail that day. This was the confirming evidence that someone had been tampering with neighborhood mailboxes.

Since then, there have been no more reports of any suspicious activity.

CHICKEN THREAT

Einar Rorvik's chickens have long been in the *Lost and Found*, wreaking havoc on the neighborhood and everyone's minds.

The chickens first appeared in early July, when Jean Sokolowski planted her pepper plants. The chickens came into her garden and ate the buds off her plants. Then they turned toward the Altimari house.

Bob and Pat Altimari have long been putting weed killer and fertilizer on their lawn. The chickens continue to come back, even after five months of feasting on weed killer.

Although the Rorviks have received several angry phone calls from Bob Altimari (concerned about the welfare of the chickens eating his weed killer) and Jean Sokolowski (about her peppers), they have still not complied. The chickens disappeared around late August for a few weeks, so it is thought that the Rorviks penned up their chickens for that time.

Will the chickens ever return? Only time will tell. But on the chicken front, 1998 sure looks as if it's going to be an interesting year!

RORVIKS' GOAT INVADES

Just like the chickens, the Rorviks' goat has been on the loose for the past few months.

The goat was first sighted in early September when Jean Sokolowski was talking to her mother on the phone. When she saw the goat in the back of her yard, she dropped the phone and went to investigate.

Later that day, Henry Sokolowski, Jean's husband, placed a call to the Rorviks concerning their goat and received a less-than-friendly response, although young Einar Rorvik showed up a moment later to remove the goat.

The goat reappeared several times after that and has not been contained as of yet. It seems that 1998 will also be an interesting year for goat activity!

BOWLING NEWS

Over the year, we have watched the Sweet Things League at Thunderbird Lanes shrink and expand, but it's still up and strong!

The League began in September with 18 members, six less than the required eight teams.

Jean Sokolowski, Treasurer, managed to recruit two new members and the league roster was up to 20. Peg Reiser has volunteered her Thursday mornings as a sub. She maintains the highest average in the league.

WEIRD WEATHER

The weather this year has been crazy, leading to extra work and unexpected crises.

Spring brought heavy rains to the Philadelphia area, causing an excess of water. As Henry Sokolowski said, "I'm tired of emptying the pool cover!"

June began a three-month drought. People scrambled to water their lawns and to keep their plants alive. "The King of Grass" (a.k.a. Scott Curry) was in distress during that period, having no help from his wife, Susan, who refused to touch a sprinkler. Henry Sokolowski gave up on his grass, concentrating on his landscaping instead. Of course, the rains have returned, causing seven consecutive weekends of boredom and misery because it rained every Saturday and remained cloudy with drizzle every Sunday. Christopher Sokolowski commented on the weird weather and complained, "There's nothing to do!"

What does the winter hold in store for the neighborhood? Most weather forecasters predict that this will be the worst winter ever, because of the increasing intensity of the El Nino phenomenon. On the other hand, several major snowstorms have "missed" the area already, each of which could have closed schools and halted businesses. This year is still awaiting its first snow, later than usual. (Last year, the first - and biggest - snowfall of the season dumped 8 inches of snow over the area on November 27, 1996.)

Only time will tell what the weather will be like during the next year. However, expert weather forecaster Henry Sokolowski tells us, "It will be full of surprises!"

DOG NEWS DURING THE YEAR

-Aubrey, the Spieckers' dog, had a relatively quiet year, except in June when she attacked Stephen Sokolowski. Aubrey also occasionally howled at the moon or Klaus throughout the year.

-Max, the Rorviks' dog, showed up several times at the Sokolowskis' porch during the past year. Typically, these sightings caused no harm, because when neighbor Jean Sokolowski yelled, "GO HOME!", Max did and caused no further problems.

-Madison, the Johnstons' dog, also had an uneventful year. Jean Sokolowski, a neighbor, reported seeing Madison frequently throughout the school year at the Round Meadow bus stop in the mornings.

-Klaus, the Hoffmans' dog, was the star of the neighborhood dogs this year, from howling to his illness (see page 11). He was involved in many activities, and he always seems to have something new up his fur.

-Buster, the Barnes's dog, was very "inactive" during the year and not much was heard about him.

The Knights of the Square Table

Chapter 10

“Oh no!” Dave moaned. “Not again!

“What do you want?” Katie croaked.

“Where is your Imp friend?” one of the trolls demanded harshly.

“Why?” Mike asked.

“That doesn't matter,” the troll sneered. “Tell us where he is. Or else.”

“Or else what?” Mike said. “You'll kill us?” You'll never find out that way!”

“No,” the troll said. “Better yet. Haglik, get them!” Another troll grabbed Katie and Dave's necks with each of his hands. “I'll have them killed if you don't cooperate.”

“Okay,” Mike said, deciding it was better to cooperate than have Dave and Katie dead. “What do you want?”

“Where is the Imp? And we'll take that sword while we're at it!” The leader pointed to the Falchion, which was lying on the ground next to - the stone! It shone brightly in the moonlight. Mike suddenly had a crazy idea that even he himself doubted would work.

Mike continued to talk, buying some time, as he edged closer to the stone.

“I don't know where Christopher is. He disappeared.” he said.

The leader of the trolls pondered this for a moment and then said in a harsh voice, “He's lying!” The other troll gripped tighter on Dave and Katie's necks. A look of desperation filled their faces.

“Look. I'm telling you the truth. Why don't you just take the sword and leave us alone,” Mike said as he continued to move toward the stone. It was only about three feet away now.

“Okay,” the leader said and then hesitated. “I'll take the sword... and kill you all!” He gave a low-pitched laugh and then advanced toward the sword.

At that time, several things happened. Mike reached the stone and picked it up. Nothing happened! The lead troll got to the sword and leant to pick it up. Suddenly, there was a bright flash. The troll leader fell over backwards, dead. At this, Dave punched the troll who was holding him captive in the stomach, making him fall over and release his grip on Katie. Katie ran to the Hadar stone while Dave ran for the sword.

In the middle of all the commotion, the other eight trolls began to run to attack the three. Then, the Hadar stone shone brightly in Katie's hand, and the three disappeared.

“What's going on?” one of the trolls roared.

“FIND THEM!” another yelled. The trolls began to search the area. While this was happening, Dave, Mike, and Katie were frantically trying to avoid the burly bodies of the searching trolls. Finally, a hole opened up in front of them, and they ran. But it was too late.

Two trolls had been hiding in the bushes throughout the commotion, and they now jumped out, effectively ending all hope of escape for the group. Three more trolls closed in behind them and captured them for good.

The trolls bound them hand and foot and tied their hands to each others' so they couldn't escape alone. Katie realized that this was the perfect opportunity to use the Hadar stone to escape. But how would she reach into her pocket? As she pondered this, the trolls continued to talk about their capture.

“So, those fools killed the boss! And five others near Oman! They will pay when Miglik sees them!” one of the trolls said. (This and all the following troll dialogues during this incident were spoken in Jaklik, the language of the trolls, but they are translated here for ease of understanding.)

The rest of the trolls roared. Although the group on the side struggled to escape, they could not and decided that it would be easier to get some sleep for whatever happened next.

As the three drifted off, the trolls stayed up late into the night to ponder the fate of the victims.

Eventually they, too, succumbed to slumber, dreaming sweet thoughts of their rewards for their captives.

Awaking in the middle of the night, the trolls decided to move before dawn. They unloaded the supplies from their horse and put the group on the horse to move on. The party had no idea of where they were going or how they would escape.

The trolls continued toward what seemed to be the north for the rest of the night. When the first rays of dawn appeared in the eastern sky, they found a spot under a few trees where the trolls, who, unknown to the party, were very sensitive to light could rest for the day. They left Dave, Mike, and Katie in the middle of a clearing. As the sun grew hotter on this late June day, they wondered if they would be able to survive the scorching sun. Somehow they managed; but by sunset, they were terribly thirsty and impatient from lying in one position all day. Hunger was the least of their problems.

That night, the trolls continued in the same direction, keeping two or three guards on the group at all times and never untying their bonds. By daybreak, Dave estimated that they must have traveled well over twenty miles.

This pattern continued for another three days. On the third day, it was approaching dawn when they came to what looked like a small river. A little to their west was a small fort that looked as if trolls had constructed it. The trolls continued toward it. When they reached the door, the troll who was now acting as the leader made some strange clicking noises and was admitted by another troll who was almost twice his size.

"So, are these the prisoners that I've heard so much about?" the doortroll asked.

"Caught 'em outside Jasper. Wouldn't tell us where their friend was. We were gonna kill 'em until I got word from the boss." The other answered.

"The boss is on his way now. He should be here in a few days. Come inside. We'll take care of the prisoners until he arrives."

The doortroll stepped aside and allowed the other trolls to enter, the last one leading the horse that Dave, Mike, and Katie were riding.

While the other trolls went off to a dining hall to the right, the doortroll ordered the group off of the horse and led them to their left down a flight of stairs. They walked through a long passage cut out of stone, then followed the troll down two more flights of stairs to a dismal, cold, and dank dungeon. He led them to the last cell and opened the door. He threw the prisoners in and slammed the door shut, then went back the way he had come, leaving Dave, Mike, and Katie in the dark.

Two days had passed, and nobody had returned. None of the group had been able to loosen their bonds. They were almost dehydrated. Dave guessed that they had been forgotten and were going to be left to starve. Suddenly they heard a noise above them. It was the guard! He opened the door to their cell and roughly pushed them back upstairs to the dining hall.

"Ah!" one troll at the far side of the room said. "I see you've brought the prisoners. Give them water!"

They were ungagged. Dave, Mike, and Katie felt a surge of new energy after drinking the water. It still wasn't enough, but it gave them enough strength to sit up. Next, they were each given a piece of strange meat, which tasted awful, but helped to ease their hunger.

Next, they were placed on a long bench, still bound with the old ropes. Then the troll dressed in what appeared to be royal garments began to speak.

"Now, tell us where your friends are," he commanded.

"Well, last time-" Mike began.

"We'll never tell!" Dave said firmly. "We'd rather die!"

"That won't do at all," the troll said. "Then we'll never find out! But I'll be happy to offer you a handsome reward..."

A guard coming from what Dave presumed to be the entrance to the kitchen rolled a wooden cart

filled with all kinds of food toward the party.

"Do you think we'll fall for that?" Dave said angrily. "I said we would rather die than tell you what happened."

"Well, then." the troll said. "You will. Bring out my sword!"

Katie wished that the troll leader would be dead. Suddenly, there was a bright flash. The leader tripped in the bright light - and fell on his sword! He uttered a gasp, then fell over, wounded. Several other trolls rushed to his side.

While this was going on, a dark shadow loomed over the doorway. There was a giant standing there! There was a loud scream from one of the trolls, and all grew quiet.

"LET THEM GO!" the giant commanded. The trolls looked back and forth between their fallen master and the giant.

Suddenly there was a loud rumble and the ground began to shake. "I said: LET THEM GO!" the giant roared.

The trolls began to back away from the giant, bringing their captives with them. Suddenly the giant leapt forward and killed the troll who was pulling Mike's, Dave's, and Katie's bench with him. The rest of the trolls gave no protest and relinquished their captives.

The giant took Mike, Dave, and Katie out of the troll fort and walked for about a mile. He sat down and began to shrink. As everybody watched in amazement, the giant morphed into the girl whom they had met on the plains a week ago.

The girl proceeded to untie them. Katie said, "Who are you?"

"As if you do not know," the girl responded and finished untying Dave.

"Why are you doing this?" Katie asked.

"Like all creatures of this planet, (except trolls and Yavin's servants), we hate Yavin."

"We?" Mike asked.

As they watched, they saw Christopher the Imp, their long-lost companion, in the distance, walking toward them in normal form. When he arrived, greetings were exchanged, and everybody sat down to talk.

"We have failed," Christopher said, despondently.

"What do you mean?" Dave asked. "And why did you leave us in the middle of that field? We almost were killed!"

"First," Christopher said, "let's eat." He pulled out a bag with weird-looking vegetables and fruits in it. He distributed them throughout the group. When everyone was finished, Christopher began to speak.

"I think it's time I told you the truth," Christopher said. "I am from your time. I was in my backyard playing football when I got dizzy and passed out. I awoke in Yavin's castle, and, not knowing who he really was or what his intentions were, I told him where I was from. He decided to let me go, thinking that I would never be a problem to him."

"When I arrived at Harrogen, I learned of you and your friends. I also was told who Yavin actually was. I began to suspect him as responsible for your plight, but I said nothing to anyone because I would have been thrown in jail, too."

"When Chapin met me in the middle of that field, I did not know who she was either; but I felt an uncontrollable urge to follow her. Then she turned me into a giant and ordered me to follow. It turns out that I have been transformed into the elemental of ice, as she tells me."

"The other elemental of ice was destroyed in a rebellion against Yavin," Chapin said. "He gave me his powers and told me to select someone else. I did. I also began to look for the lost elemental of fire, who had not been seen for a long while."

"While I was gone," Christopher said, "Chapin told me that you would be fine; and she gave me all the powers that I needed. She also searched during the night for the other elemental but failed. Then, when we were walking through a northern town in troll form, we heard of your capture and came to

rescue you--just in time."

"Wow!" Katie exclaimed in awe. "But what about Christopher's story about Deneb the Witch and the sword?"

"That story was true," Chapin responded, "but I was Deneb and gave the sword to Christopher in order to keep it safe. He is not the rightful sword-bearer. One of you is."

Dave, Mike, and Katie gasped. "Which one?" Mike asked.

"You have already found out."

Dave looked up in surprise. "Why?" he said.

"I don't know. Yavin might have had something to do with it."

"Why would Yavin make a sword that could be the only weapon that could defeat him?" Mike asked.

"It was probably intended for his purposes," Dave said.

"Exactly the same as my theory," Christopher said. "Someone stole the sword from Yavin and then lost it."

"Enough speculation for today," Chapin responded. "We must be moving on before nightfall. There's still a long way until we reach the road."

The group set off, and there was no more conversation until it began to get dark. The journey was hard because the ground was hilly, and it was slow going.

At nightfall, nothing of consequence occurred, and the group went to sleep to prepare for the long journey ahead. Everyone fell asleep quickly and was well rested when the early sunrise came.

The next day, the group traveled over flat plains and had no trouble. Christopher said that the next day, they could reach the road and resume their previous trek. Everybody was tired after the day's journey and went to sleep before sunset.

The next day they caught sight of the road around noon, and the group stopped on the side for a rest.

"Do you know where we are?" Dave asked.

"I know that we're on the road. But <u>where</u> on the road we are, I have no clue," Christopher said.

"More problems," Mike complained. "I'm starting to wonder if we'll ever complete this journey!"

"Let's just eat and stop worrying about what <u>might</u> happen in the future," Chapin said firmly. After this statement, there was no more conversation. The party traveled north along the road for the rest of the day and all of the next, seeing no towns and having no idea of their location.

The next day they came to a river. Christopher pointed out that this could be an important landmark and began to look at his map. Meanwhile, the rest of the group sat down on the bank of the river to eat the last of the food that Chapin had stolen from the troll fort. Then Christopher spoke.

"We are farther north than I thought," he said. "This river is the Maltese. There is only one point where the road that we are on crosses the river."

"And what?" Katie asked.

Christopher showed the group the map. "That means that we are much closer than we expected. But this is also troubling."

"Why?" Dave asked.

"This is much farther south than any troll stronghold that I've seen. That must mean that Yavin's power is growing. And--he might be setting up these forts farther south to deter us."

"But--do these trolls all have to answer to Yavin?" Dave asked. "The trolls we met in Harrogen seemed like they wanted nothing to do with him."

"It's possible," Chapin said. "But there are only a few groups of such Yavin-enemy trolls. That far south, where Yavin's power is weak, it could be true."

"But what does this all matter?" Mike asked. "All trolls hate humans, so why do we care if they're on Yavin's side or not?"

"Because," Christopher said, "they might all hate us somewhat, but the ones that aren't on Yavin's side hate him and his trolls more. There is a possibility that, if enough trolls become enemies of Yavin, there could be a rebellion, weakening much of his troll power."

"You mean, recruit trolls to defeat Yavin? They would kill us for an easy meal!" Mike said.

"You're right, Mike," Chapin responded. "But if the trolls were left alone, it might happen."

"But it's unlikely,' Christopher said. "Have any of you ever given a thought as to what we are going to do when we reach Yavin's castle? Five lowly humans don't stand a chance."

"One with the sword might," Katie said, uncertainly.

"Yes, the sword is powerful. But it can only kill one foe at a time. It is said that there are millions of Yavin's servants in that castle. What if they all charged at us at once? Then we would be killed, the sword and stone would be lost, and the world would be under Yavin's control. We need to gather an army and storm Yavin's castle. Even if we lose, maybe one of us could sneak into the castle and destroy Yavin. If Yavin perishes, then all the creatures under his control would be set free."

"Where would we be able to gather an army?" Dave asked. "Every town we've been in, people have been terrified of Yavin. It would be impossible to gather an army of the strength needed to take down Yavin."

"Maybe we can figure out a way at the next town," Christopher said. "This map says that there is a town called Jasper about two days' journey from here. We can stop there, take a rest, and discuss how to defeat Yavin."

Everybody agreed and continued on for the rest of the day. That night there were no further problems, because they had found a stream with plenty of fish to satisfy their appetite. It began to rain that night, to the disappointment of everybody. The trek continued for the next three days, but there was still no sign of the town. The group began to despair.

Finally, late on the fourth day after their discovery of the river, they saw a town in the distance. Everybody began to run toward it. As they neared the city gate, they stopped short. The town had been destroyed.

Smoke drifted from a building that was smoldering as if it had just been set on fire. Pieces of wood and other debris lay in the streets. The entire town was deserted.

"Something BAD must have happened here!" Mike said, as he brushed aside some rubble and walked forward.

"Another troll raid?" Katie asked.

"Possibly...let's look around," Chapin said, continuing onward toward what used to be the town square.

At this point they split up and went to examine the ruins to see if they could find any clues about what had happened. A few mintues later, Mike came running out of one of the buildings that was still standing near the town square.

"Quick!" he screamed. "Look!"

Everybody came running toward him. They entered the house and looked around while Mike pointed to the wall, which had a peculiar burn mark on it.

"Is it....Yavin?" Dave asked in awe.

"Fortunately it doesn't look like it," Christopher responded. "This mark is different than the one we saw in that field back near Jasper. I wonder, then, who could have put it here, and why."

Sudddenly they heard a sound from the back of the cottage. Dave rushed toward the sound. There was an old, frail-looking man who was badly injured lying on the ground underneath what looked like the remains of the chimney.

"Help him !" Dave screamed.

Christopher ran to Dave. Seeing the man, he motioned for the rest of the group to come. Together they managed to pull him out of the ruined cottage and into the town square.

"He has been burned," Christopher said.

"What should we do?" Mike asked, panic-stricken.

Dave felt for his pulse but found none. "He's dead," he said.

"Hurry, Christopher! The magic might still work with two of the elementals!" Chapin cried.

"What are you talking about?" Dave asked as Christopher and Chapin appproached the dead man.

"The elementals have the power to restore life, if the victim has only been dead for a short time," Chapin said hurriedly.

"What?" Mike asked, surprised. Katie stood in awe several feet away from the scene.

"I'll expain later," Chapin said. Then she and Christopher stood on opposite sides of the body and began to chant words that neither Dave, Mike, nor Katie could understand. This continued for several minutes.

Suddenly the chanting stopped abruptly when the man began to cough. Everybody rushed to his side to help him up. Mike ran back to the ruined cottage and managed to find a feather pillow that was still intact. He gave it to Christopher to place under the man's head.

The man slowly regained consciousness and began to mutter strange words that were beyond their understanding. This continued for another hour, which seemed to pass endlessly. During that time, after a quick debate, it was decided that it would be best to stay the night. Preparations were made to stay in one of the few remaining houses in the town. Chapin went to a nearby stream that they had passed and managed to catch a few fish, which they quickly roasted over a fire.

"I think I'm finally beginning to get used to eating in the wild," Mike said.

"Yuck!" Dave said. He spit out a piece of fish. "I still enjoy home cooking!" Katie and Mike laughed. Chapin and Christopher were across the square attending to the injured man.

"Well, now that this town's destroyed, what should we do? We have nowhere to get suppplies. There's nobody to help us fight Yavin," Katie said.

"But maybe this man will give us some information about what to do next. He was probably injured by Yavin's servants when they trashed the town," Dave said.

"I wonder if those trolls had anything to do with Yavin?" Mike said. "They probably captured us to get the sword or the stone."

The three were silent for a while as they watched Christopher and Chapin eating next to the man, consoling him and attending to his wounds. After they finished eating, they motioned to Mike, Dave, and Katie to come toward them.

"Go and bring this man some water from the river," Christopher said, and Dave ran off toward the outskirts of the town.

While he was gone, the rest of the group talked among themselves for a few moments. Suddenly Dave came running back with a look of panic on his face.

"Trolls!" he gasped. "They're everywhere!"

"What?!" Christopher exclaimed. "Where? How many?"

"At least twenty. They're about a mile away on the top of the big hill near the road. And-" Dave paused. "They're headed toward us!" This last message came as a shock to everyone.

"Quick," Chapin said. "Everyone inside the big house!" She pointed to the only remaining house near the town square that had not been leveled. Everybody ran toward it.

The moment they got inside, they began to hear murmurs in the distance along with the noise of marching feet. Everybody held their breath. They could hear trolls talking in the distance in a language they couldn't understand.

The noises became louder and louder. Suddenly they all stopped. One voice stood out from them all. A troll was banging on the door. "I think it's in here!" it said.

Song of Life

By Susan Curry

When you were born and in my arms,

I sang to you of stars and dreams.

When you were two and in the mud,

I sang to you of frogs and streams.

When you were seven and climbing trees,

I sang to you of avoiding strangers.

When you were ten and skipping stones,

I sang to you of knowing danger.

When you were thirteen and kissing girls,

I sang to you of respect of life.

When you were sixteen and “having fun”,

I sang to you of unforeseen strife.

I have done what I could and now it's your turn.

Take these songs and use what you've learned.

Go out into the world with your head held high,

Spread your wings and fly, my precious, fly.

The Final Ripoff

By Matthew Care

My name is Josh Scotts. I live in Salem, Oregon with my sister Michelle. This weekend we went to stay with our grandpa. He has a house near the woods in Washington.

It started off when we arrived at grandpa's in the late afternoon. We were going to stay the night because our parents were going to a funeral in Seattle. We ate dinner and started to watch T.V. when grandpa told us to gather around the fireplace.

"You kids watch too much T.V.. You know, I'm going to tell you a story about the days of chivalry, wizards, and knights in shining armor."

We laid down on the floor and stared up at him wondering what he would say next. We both knew how good grandpa's stories were. The fireplace illuminated the room. This is the story in his own words:

Long ago there was King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. Camelot had burned to the ground in a battle with the Evil knights. King Arthur was in total despair when suddenly one day God appeared in the sky before him.

"KING ARTHUR, YOUR PURPOSE ON EARTH IS TO SEEK AND POSSESS THE HOLY GRAIL."

"We move," said King Arthur boldly.

As soon as he started off, his horse tripped over an odd looking bronze tablet that said:

eltsac pmaws eht ni si liarg eht

He put in his pouch and rode on.

He led his men into the forest and there was a seemingly small river but it was too deep to wade through. When they reached the bridge it was guarded by a small army of knights. Arthur demanded

"Good knights, let us pass."

" We shall never let you through, trespassers," the knights replied. King Arthur repeated the

demand, but the knights refused. King Arthur was getting agitated.

" I am Arthur, King of the Britons and you will let us pass or would you rather fight."

"Very well, we are prepared to face you," one of the knights replied.

It was a bloody battle for the Evil knights until a wizard appeared and summoned an org to destroy Arthur's army. The evil army retreated and the org went on a rampage. Arthur's army fled and swarmed over the bridge and into the woods; but when the org followed, the bridge gave way and fell into the river.

After a while in the forest Arthur nobly said, "We must seek refuge for the night."

They found an abandoned castle on a hill. Forcing down the drawbridge, they walked into the eerie castle. While Arthur was inspecting the bronze tablet, he found that it was written in some sort of mirror code. He found a mirror and it read,

The Holy Grail is in The Swamp Castle.

Just then he heard groans and other inhuman sounds. King Arthur saw his men running from hellish ghosts!

"Flee, men," the king bellowed. They ran from the castle as fast as they could. Out of fear they burned the castle to the ground so that no one else would have to encounter the sights they saw.

They rode on and on for days until they found another castle. It was built in the middle of a swamp, and the ground was so soft the castle might as well have sunken. It had to be entered through a cave. Our heros dismounted and went inside. They thought they were safe until they heard a moan so sickening they almost vomited. Just then they saw it - a huge dragon. Everywhere they ran it followed, and when it was about to catch them it disappeared. They moved on, wondering what cosmic forces had spared them.

When they went in the castle, they saw the grail. They had it but just then the castle started to sink.

"It's booby trapped. Run for it," King Arthur commanded the knights.

Arthur had the grail in his hand and they made a run for it. When they got out they found one

knight missing as well as Arthur's enchanted sword "Excalibur" which had been bestowed upon him by the lady of the lake. But he had the grail and his quest was complete.

“Well, that's the story,” grandpa said. We were almost falling asleep. We all went into our rooms. Grandpa opened his closet and pulled out an artifact no one had seen for almost a thousand years. It was "Excalibur", still in perfect condition. Then he said quietly, "Darned thing. Hope it'll be around another thousand years and I hope Arthur didn't miss it."

Any similarities between this story and the Monty Python copyright are purely coincidental.. or are they?

Good Morning, Steve!

A fourth point of view on Stephen Sokolowski by MarySue Hoffman

Each morning at 6:50 a.m., the Hoffman-mobile prepares its trek to Upper Moreland High School. Mr. Hoffman faithfully starts the car to warm the engine and the inside for his companions. He heads back inside for his last gulp of tea and to hurry Mrs. Hoffman, who in turn, tries, usually unsuccessfully, to hurry Tony. As she yells one last time and heads out the door, she looks across Butternut Drive for Steve.

About that time each morning, she sees Steve approaching, legs flying in the chilly morning air as he runs to the van. Her usual "Good Morning, Steve," is answered by a smile and a "Hi." Tony finally arrives and joins Steve in the van. Monday mornings, everyone is tired and the ride is often quiet. Someone decided that school should start later, say at 8 a.m., at least on Mondays. As the week wears on, the rides get livelier. School activities are discussed.

As they turn onto Bear Blvd., the boys have to answer the daily litany of "Do you have everything you need? Anybody need lunch money?" and other such "mother" questions. But one thing is always for sure. As they leave the van and Mrs. Hoffman offers her "Have a good day," Steve always responds with a smile and a thank you. His answer puts a smile on her face, even at 7 a.m. on a Monday morning.

Moral of this story: Steve may be a messy teenager and a tormenting brother. But at 7 a.m. every school day, he has a welcome smile and a friendly thought. Now, I ask you, can Stephen Sokolowski really be all that bad?! Aw, come on!

The Case of the Missing Pennsylvania Books

By Christopher Sokolowski

One day, Miss Michaels walked into her classroom. She arrived early to check if there were twenty-seven copies of each textbook. When she went to count the Pennsylvania books, she noticed that most of them were gone. Something near the bookcase caught her attention. It was a shiny purple button. She put it in one of her desk drawers.

That afternoon, Miss Michaels found a black strand of hair where the Pennsylvania books should have been. She had found another clue! She put it in her desk drawer with the button.

The next day, Miss Michaels saw that all of the chalkboard erasers were missing. She also found a small piece of purple material. She wanted to investigate further, but she decided to wait until after a faculty meeting with Mr. Quill.

When Miss Michaels walked into Mr. Quill's office, she noticed a pile of Pennsylvania books on his desk. She also saw a ripped purple jacket with a missing button. When Mr. Quill returned, Miss Michaels told him that she was missing Pennsylvania books and erasers in her classroom. Mr. Quill admitted that he had taken the books and the erasers for Mrs. Lombardi's class. He apologized to Miss Michaels and returned everything, saying that he should never have taken them without asking.