Shoemaker Village

Volume 26 - March 1999



The Knights of the Square Table reaches the end of part I! Read the startling conclusion!

In Humor from the Village Square . . . Part 3 of *The Wit of Steven Wright*!

PLUS!

Writers voice their opinions on the Upper Moreland School District!

In Neighborhood News: Peacock Spotted in Area!

Laziness in The Discussion Forum!

New writers contribute short stories!



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Editor's Pages

Information you should know

Welcome to another issue of *Shoemaker Village*!

To start things off this month, we would like to announce that we will be holding another poll. By submitting the survey included with this month's issue, you can vote on the best article of 1998, as well as help us make *Shoemaker Village* better. Just fill out the form and drop it in our mailbox (the address on the next page), deliver it to one of the *Village* editors or go to our website at http://come.to/ShoemakerVillage and fill out our online survey instead. By filling out this important survey, you can help us make crucial decisions about what content to include in future issues of the *Village*, as well as voice your opinion on what article should be congratulated. **We ask that you submit your surveys by Monday, March 22, 1999 so that we can publish the results in April's issue.** The winners of the award will be announced in that issue and will receive a free six-month subscription to the *Village*.

You most likely noticed that this issue is a few days late. Unfortunately, on publication night, our proofreader took ill and was unable to finish until the next day. However, we were able to publish the *Village* on the next available publication date, March 2. Thank you in advance for your understanding.

In addition, the *Village* is enjoying yet another growth spurt. Thanks to many at UMHS, we now have over 80 regular subscribers! We would also like to thank Mrs. Kilpatrick, a teacher at UMHS who subscribed last month, for a donation she made to the *Village* a few weeks ago. Even though she, being a teacher, did not have to contribute to continue subscribing, she elected to do so for the welfare of the *Village*. We thank her and all of our subscribers for keeping this great magazine in publication!

In other news, our ideas for expanding the Neighborhood News section to include the entire area have had a slow start. We have not received any worthwhile news due to the lack of volunteers. Therefore, we are asking for a news correspondent who lives around the Willow Grove Area and attends UMHS to inform the Editors of recent happenings once each month. If you would like to be part of this great opportunity, contact us in one of the ways mentioned above. We'll be sure that you receive a complimentary subscription, as all contributors do, for the time you will be writing.

Many of our readers have inquired as to whom was featured on the Editor's Pages last month in the "mystery picture." The picture in question was of Proofreader Jean Sokolowski, taken in 1971 as a high school senior. The first correct guess was made by Mary Kay Lagreca, a returning subscriber, at the Sobolefskis' Super Bowl Party on January 31. Congratulations to Mrs. Lagreca, whose subscription has been extended for an extra month.

Unfortunately, as any periodical does from time to time, we made a few mistakes in last month's issue. As you may have noticed, the print on the last two pages was smaller than the rest of the magazine. We are sorry for any inconvenience this may have caused. In addition, in *The Knights of the Square Table*, several references were made

to the character Mike, when, in reality, Mike was not in the party. (The author had meant to write "Matt" instead.) If you were not able to read last month's edition of this novel, or did not understand it because of the errors that were made, go to our webpages at the address above to download a corrected copy.

As last month's *Humor from the Village Square* section received rave reviews, we have included part three of The Wit of Steven Wright in this month's issue. Because of its enormous popularity, we have decided to publish the entire joke article, which consists of 254 one-liners, about a quarter this month and a quarter next month. (Half the article was published in former issues.) If you missed this great comedy in previous issues, we have posted it online at our webpages so that you can download it for yourself.

For those of you who do not have Internet access, don't despair! If you would like a copy of any of the items mentioned above, including comedy, back issues, *The Knights of the Square Table*, or any article published in the *Village* previously, send us a letter and we'll be sure you receive it free.



Do you know who this is?

And now on to our "Picture of the Month". Since many people were interested in last month's picture, we have decided to publish another this month. Like last month, if you are the first to tell us the correct answer (one guess only per person), you will receive a free issue of the *Village*.

That's all for March. We hope that you will continue to support the *Village* as it ends its second year and moves into its third beginning in May. (We are planning to unveil a surprise section then, so stay tuned.) Thank you and enjoy this issue of *Shoemaker Village*!

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The next issue of *Shoemaker Village* will be published on Friday, March 26, 1999.
All contributions for the next issue must be received by Monday, March 22, 1999.

Upcoming topics in **The Discussion Forum:**
April 1999: What are your expectations for the upcoming baseball season?
May 1999: Does a child's upbringing affect their success in school and later in life?

Coming Next Issue

Volume 27 - April 1999

The Neighborhood News is expanding! Read it first as it grows to include the entire area, beginning next month!
Get the latest on the winter weather in the neighborhood as spring approaches!
The Knights of the Square Table continues! Don't miss the beginning of part II next month!
Find out our plans to celebrate the *Village*'s 3rd anniversary!
See the results of the 1998: Best Article of the Year Award! You won't want to miss the winners!
Lots of news, stories, articles, and more!

ALL IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF *SHOEMAKER VILLAGE*!

Puzzle Page

E	L	C	Y	C	I	B	R	U	C	B	Y	A	N	N
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Accident
Animals
Bicycle
Breaks
Broken
Chemistry
Comments
Computers
Contributors
Curb
Forum
Hoops
Humor
Laziness
Matt Care
Mystery
Peacock
Phones
Picture
Procrastination
School
Snow
Stories
Super Bowl
System
Trolls
Vacation
Webpages
Wright
Year Round

Neighborhood News

March 1999

ACCIDENT ALONG PIONEER ROAD

On Monday, February 8, as the Rorvik family was leaving their driveway at around 4:44 P.M., a major accident occurred in front of their house, snarling traffic and drawing onlookers to the scene.

Although the Rorviks were not believed to have been involved in the accident, three other cars were. Most of the neighborhood heard the horrible bang that shook the area when the accident occurred.

At 4:50, police cars arrived to survey the situation and to settle the dispute among the drivers. Though there was no apparent damage to one of the cars, a Cadillac that was involved had its hood bent up in much the same way as the accident that occurred on Christmas night.

Fire trucks raced to the scene about ten minutes later, but left shortly after, indicating that there were no serious injuries during the crash. Soon after, a tow truck arrived to tow away the disabled vehicles.

During the accident, traffic was snarled along Pioneer Road for over an hour. Many people coming home from a long day at work found themselves caught in the traffic jam.

We'll keep you updated on any further developments on this story in future issues.

OTHER NEWS TIDBITS

-UM Hoops President Ray Johnston and Treasurer Henry Sokolowski have reported to the *Village* that they will step down at the end of the current season. It is unknown who will occupy these positions at the start of the next year, though volunteers will most likely be recruited. Playoffs will take place for the league beginning after March 13.

-The annual Sobolefski Super Bowl party was held again this year on Sunday, January 31, 1999. Most of the neighborhood attended, including old neighbors such as the Rymar family. The highlight of the party, as usual, was the complicated betting system. According to Henry Sokolowski, who attended the party, George Rymar won a part of the pot. Other winners included the Slousky family, and UMMS teacher Ron Zeigler, who walked away with both the halftime and 3rd quarter winnings. Congratulations to all of the winners.

WINTER WEATHER UPDATE

February saw yet another month in the neighborhood with little snow.

The biggest storm of the month occurred earlier in the month, when little more than a dusting fell on the area. Other than that, most storms consisted of rain or nothing at all.

"This year has been a winter of near-misses," said one weather forecaster. "First the big storm that was supposed to track up the coast the second week of February, then the disturbance that turned into a nor'easter in Massachusetts; this winter has been a disaster."

Many residents are now hoping for spring to come fast so that the cold winter without snow will end. We'll finish out this section next month, as March has been traditionally the month of the most snowstorms around the Philadelphia area.

Lost and Found

MORE STRANGE SIGHTINGS

When the goat and chickens suddenly disappeared in late December, the neighbors thought that they had finally seen the end of strange animals roaming the neighborhood. To the surprise of many, the animals are back, and this time in a form you might not expect: a peacock.



You are not seeing things. This is a peacock.

The peacock was spotted in the Sokolowskis' yard shortly after 11:00 A.M. on Saturday, January 30, 1999. This was met by frantic yelling by resident Jean Sokolowski, who first spotted the peacock. Henry, her husband, ran out into their backyard to snap three pictures, the best of which you see here.

The peacock moved around the yard as Henry took pictures, and eventually, only five minutes later, it vanished around Pioneer Road. There have been no sightings since, but where the peacock came from and where it went remain a mystery.

Since it appears as if this section just might be needed for a while longer, we'll keep you posted on any further developments in this strange story.

Humor from the Village Square

REALLY STUPID PEOPLE

Police in Wichita, Kansas, arrested a 22-year-old man at an airport hotel after he tried to pass two (counterfeit) $16 bills.

A man in Johannesburg, South Africa, shot his 49-year-old friend in the face, seriously wounding him, while the two practiced shooting beers' cans off each other's head.

A company trying to continue its five-year perfect safety record showed its workers a film aimed at encouraging the use of safety goggles on the job. According to Industrial Machinery News, the film's depiction of gory industrial accidents was so graphic that twenty-five workers suffered minor injuries in their rush to leave the screening room. Thirteen others fainted, and one man required seven stitches after he cut his head falling off a chair while watching the film.

The Chico, California, City Council enacted a ban on nuclear weapons, setting a $500 fine for anyone detonating one within city limits.

A bus carrying five passengers was hit by a car in St. Louis, but by the time police arrived on the scene, fourteen pedestrians had boarded the bus and had begun to complain of whiplash injuries and back pain.

Swedish business consultant Uhf Af Trolls labored 13 years on a book about Swedish economic solutions. He took the 250-page manuscript to be copied, only to have it reduced to 50,000 strips of paper in seconds when a worker confused the copier with the shredder.

A convict broke out of jail in Washington, D.C., then a few days later accompanied his girlfriend to her trial for robbery. At lunch, he went out for a sandwich. She needed to see him, and thus had him paged. Police officers recognized his name and arrested him as he returned to the courthouse in a car he had stolen over the lunch hour.

Police in Radnor, Pennsylvania, interrogated a suspect by placing a metal colander on his head and connecting it with wires to a photocopy machine. The message "He's lying" was placed in the copier, and police pressed the copy button each time they thought the suspect wasn't telling the truth. Believing the "lie detector" was working, the suspect confessed.

When two service station attendants in Ionia, Michigan, refused to hand over the cash to an intoxicated robber, the man threatened to call the police. They still refused, so the robber called the police and was arrested.

A Los Angeles man who later said he was "tired of walking," stole a steamroller and led police on a 5 mph chase until an officer stepped aboard and brought the vehicle to a stop.

STOP THE PHONES!

Leola Starling of Ribrock, Tenn., had a serious telephone problem. But unlike most people she did something about it.

The brand-new $10 million Ribrock Plaza Motel opened nearby and was issued almost the same telephone number as Leola. From the moment the motel opened, Leola was besieged by calls not for her.

Since she had the same phone number for years, she felt that she had a case to persuade the motel management to change its number. Naturally, the management refused, claiming that it could not change its stationery.

The phone company was not helpful, either. A number was a number, and just because a customer was getting someone else's calls 24 hours a day didn't make it responsible. After her pleas fell on deaf ears, Leola decided to take matters into her own hands.

At nine o'clock the phone rang. Someone from Memphis was calling the motel and asked for a room for the following Tuesday. Leola said, "No problem. How many nights?"

A few hours later, Dallas checked in. A secretary wanted a suite with two bedrooms for a week. Emboldened, Leola said the Presidential Suite on the 10th floor was available for $600 a night. The secretary said that she would take it and asked if the hotel wanted a deposit. "No, that won't be necessary," Leola said. "We trust you."

The next day was a busy one for Leola. In the morning, she booked an electric appliance manufacturer's convention for Memorial Day weekend, a college prom and a reunion of the 82nd Airborne veterans from World War II.

She turned on her answering machine during lunchtime so that she could watch TV, but her biggest challenge came in the afternoon when a mother called to book the ballroom for her daughter's wedding in June.

Leola assured the woman that it would be no problem and asked if she would be providing the flowers or did she want the hotel to take care of it. The mother said that she would prefer the hotel to handle the floral arrangements. Then the question of valet parking came up. Once again Leola was helpful. "There's no charge for valet parking, but we always recommend that the client tips the drivers."

Within a few months, the Ribrock Plaza Motel was a disaster area. People kept showing up for weddings, bar mitzvahs, and Sweet Sixteen parties and were all told there were no such events.

Leola had her final revenge when she read in the local paper that the motel might go bankrupt. Her phone rang, and an executive from Marriott said, "We're prepared to offer you $200,000 for the motel."

Leola replied, "We'll take it, but only if you change the telephone number."

THE WIT OF STEVEN WRIGHT (3 of 4)

Last time I went to the movies I was thrown out for bringing my own food. My argument was that the concession stand prices are outrageous. Besides, I haven't had a barbeque in a long time.

One time I went to a drive-in in a taxi cab. The movie cost me $95.

I went to the cinema, and the prices for tickets were: Adults: $5.00, children: $2.50. So I said, "Give me two boys and a girl."

I went to a restaurant that serves "breakfast at any time." So I ordered French Toast during the Renaissance.

I went to this restaurant last night that was set up like a big buffet in the shape of an Ouija board. You'd think about what kind of food you wanted, and the table would move across the floor to it.

There's a pizza place near where I live that sells only slices. In the back you can see a guy tossing a triangle in the air.

I used to be a waiter, but I was fired for clearing tables. I was clearing them for a take

off. I had them all lined up outside. People thought it was an outdoor café. I said, “No, these are leaving at 3.” They were going to fire me anyway, because I told them I thought they should put the wrapper on the inside of the straw since that's the part you don't want to get dirty.

I went to a general store. They wouldn't let me buy anything specific.

I was in the supermarket the other day, and I met a lady in the aisle where they keep the generic brands. Her name was “woman”.

Years ago, I worked in a natural, organic health food store in Seattle, Washington. One day a man walked in and asked, “If I can melt dry ice, can I swim without getting wet?”... Two days later I was fired for eating cotton candy and drinking straight Bosco on the job.

I went to a 7-11 and asked for a 2x4 and a box of 3x5's. The clerk said, “ten-four.”

I was in the grocery store. I saw a sign that said “pet supplies.” So I did. Then I went outside and saw a sign that said “compact cars”...

I went down the street to the 24-hour grocery. When I got there, the guy was locking the front door. I said, “Hey, the sign says you're open 24 hours.” He said, “Yes, but not in a row.”

I love to go shopping. I love to freak out salespeople. They ask me if they can help me, and I say, “Have you got anything I'd like?” Then they ask me what size I need, and I say, “Extra medium.”

I went to the hardware store and bought some used paint. It was in the shape of a house. I also bought some batteries, but they weren't included. So I had to buy them again.

I saw a small bottle of cologne and asked if it was for sale. The salesperson said, “It's free with purchase.” I asked her if anyone bought anything today.

There was a power outage at a department store yesterday. Twenty people were trapped on the escalators.

I bought my brother some gift-wrap for Christmas. I took it to the Gift Wrap Department and told them to wrap it, but in a different print so he would know when to stop unwrapping.

Friday, I was in a bookstore and I started talking to a French-looking girl. She was a bilingual illiterate -- she couldn't read in two different languages.

For my birthday I got a humidifier and a de-humidifier... I put them in the same room and let them fight it out. Then I filled my humidifier with wax, and now my room is all shiny.

Ever notice how irons have a setting for *permanent* press? I don't get it...

I have a microwave fireplace in my house... The other night I laid down in front of the fire for the evening in two minutes.

I have the oldest typewriter in the world. It types in pencil.

I couldn't find the remote control to the remote control.

I invented the cordless extension cord.

I plugged my phone in where the blender used to be. I called someone. They went “Aaaaahhhh...”
Today I dialed a wrong number... The other person said, “Hello?” And I said, “Hello, could I speak to Joey?”... They said, “Uh... I don't think so... he's only 2 months old.” I said, “I'll wait.”

I got up one morning and couldn't find my socks, so I called Information. She said, “Hello, Information.” I said, “I can't find my socks.” She said, “They're behind the couch.” And they were!

Last week I bought a new phone. I took it out of the box, hooked it up to the wall... pressed redial. The phone had a nervous breakdown.

I got an answering machine for my phone. Now when I'm not home and somebody calls me up, they hear a recording of a busy signal. I like to leave messages before the beep.

I bought a self-teaching record to learn Spanish. I turned it on and went to sleep; the record got stuck. The next day I could only stutter in Spanish.

I was going to tape some records onto a cassette, but I got the wires backward. I erased all of the records. When I returned them to my friend, he said, “Hey, these records are all blank.”

I got tired of calling the movies to listen to what is playing so I bought the album.

I went down to the store and bought some blank cassette tapes. When I got home I put one in my cassette deck and turned it up full blast. I was walking around my house when I heard a knock on my door. It was my neighbor complaining about the noise... He's a mime.

I was reading the dictionary. I thought it was a poem about everything.

My grandfather invented Cliff's Notes. It all started back in 1912... Well, to make a long story short ...

I'm writing a book. I've got the page numbers done, so now I just have to fill in the rest.

I'm writing an unauthorized autobiography.

I just got out of the hospital. I was in a speed reading accident. I hit a book mark and flew across the room.

I installed a skylight in my apartment.... The people who live above me are furious!

All of the people in my building are insane. The guy above me designs synthetic hairballs for ceramic cats. The lady across the hall tried to rob a department store...with a pricing gun. She said, “Give me all of the money in the vault or I'm marking down everything in the store.”

In my house there's this light switch that doesn't do anything. Every so often I would flick it on and off just to check. Yesterday, I got a call from a woman in Germany. She said, “Cut it out.”

Doing a little work around the house. I put fake brick wallpaper over a real brick wall, just so I'd be the only one who knew. People come over and I'm gonna say, “Go ahead, touch it... It feels real.”

In my house, on the ceilings, I have paintings of the rooms above... So I never have to go upstairs.

One time the power went out in my house and I had to use the flash on my camera to see my way around. I made a sandwich and took fifty pictures of my face. The neighbors thought there was lightning in my house.

I have a decaffeinated coffee table. You'd never know it to look at it.

All the plants in my house are dead -- I shot them last night. I was torturing them by watering them with ice cubes.

My neighbors don't like it when I talk to my plants... I use a megaphone.

Winny and I lived in a house that ran on static electricity... If you wanted to run the blender, you had to rub balloons on your head. If you wanted to cook, you had to pull off a sweater real quick.

I've never seen electricity, so I don't pay for it. I write right on the bill, “I'm sorry, I haven't seen it all month.”

My house is made out of balsa wood, so when I want to scare the neighborhood kids I lift it over my head and tell them to get out of my yard or I'll throw it at them.

I bought a house, on a one-way dead-end road. I don't know how I got there.

The other night I came home late and tried to unlock my house with my car keys. I started the house up. So, I drove it around for a while. I was speeding, and a cop pulled me over. He asked where I lived. I said, “right here, officer”. Later, I parked it on the freeway, got out, and yelled at all the cars, “Get out of my driveway!”

My house is on the median strip of a highway. You don't really notice, except I have to leave the driveway doing 60 MPH.

Laziness

Is the world becoming lazier? Yes; yes it is, but through no fault of its own. The world as a singular being is losing its will to perpetuate itself. Individuals don't have to work as hard because of technology. I think people have developed a "if I don't do it, someone else will" mentality. This means people don't try as hard to better themselves or the rest of the world. Break it down. On the pyramid of survival you can get by with food and shelter. Minor things like clothes help, too. You can barely get through life without much effort at all. If that's enough for you and you can do it without ruining other people's lives, then fine.

But I need something more than that. It's my belief that a mind is a terrible thing to waste. Of the many views on "why we are here," I maintain that it is to learn. This means that your mind should never be in the off position. If you're going to do a job, do it right. And if you screw up, then learn why so you don't do it again. This all sounds very enlightened but I'm no exception, what with being human and all. I take full advantage of technology as so many do in the simple little program called Spell Check. I've always been a terrible speller and I've given up on learning.

Another form of laziness that I take advantage of is procrastination. After billions of e-mails and reminding me personally, the editor finally got me to write this piece...on the night it was due. This is usually the case. And it applies for school, too. It gets me in trouble often.

It seems I've gotten off the subject a little but these are really examples. The world is becoming lazier because these things apply on a larger scale. When I see people failing in school because they don't try, it gets me very annoyed. You can't always take the lazy way out. That's another point. Laziness is the outward appearance of irresponsibility. If you sign up for a class, then be prepared to do the work. If you get a credit card, then be prepared to pay it off. If you have sex, then be prepared to take care of a baby.

"I'll do it tomorrow," or "Someone else will do it for me," or "I just don't feel like it" doesn't

cut it in some situations. Do your part for the common good and don't be a lazy bum when it counts.

Laziness - Something Too Many People are Doing

I believe that laziness is something that too many people in this country are doing. So many people want to lie around and watch television, instead of doing something useful with their lives. If people want to hang out with their friends, they will always make time for their friends. People will not make time for important things like homework and studying for tests.

I will be the first to admit that I kind of fit in to that category of being lazy - sometimes. I know I have to get up off my butt and do homework or household chores, but I choose to sit back and watch the time pass away. Some of my classmates are even lazier than I am. I will go into homeroom every morning and I will see the same kids doing homework that they should have done last night. These people drive around late at night at high speeds through friends' neighborhoods and completely forget about homework. Then when they get bad grades on tests and at the end of the marking period, they have no idea why.

I will give you a classic example. On Valentine's Day, I had to do an overview for Biology and some research for Music class. If we didn't have school on Presidents' Day, I wouldn't be complaining. I really did not want to do that work. All I wanted to do was to sit down on the sofa and watch television. However, I knew that it had to get done sooner or later.

In conclusion, I think that too many kids AND grownups are lazy these days. There are many things to do in the world. Why can't people go out and do them? If people were a lot more active, nobody would be bored and lazy anymore.

Laziness: A Major Problem

Laziness is a big problem in today's society and causes many of the problems that we face. If people weren't lazy, we would be enjoying a more peaceful and less worrisome life.

Obviously, the most annoying part of laziness is procrastination. One *Village* editor always procrastinates until the last minute, sometimes postponing publication because of it. (He even admits it in his article!) He states in the article that it causes him trouble in school, and I wholeheartedly agree. One person whom I cannot name has never done a long-term assignment more than a few days before it is due. As a result, his parents think lowly of his teacher, but in reality, you can find out by checking his assignment book that his teacher assigned the projects that he procrastinated on a few weeks ago, giving him very little homework if he had worked a little on the project each night. There are very few people who exist who I can see that have learned the lesson that I have: you are going to have to do it anyway, so get it done now! It is funny to watch and laugh inside when you see students stressed out about a paper the day before it was due, when you already have it or most of it done and can just sit back and relax. Teachers reading this article can relate to that when they experience students rushing in late to class with papers in their hands, and then they still ask *if they can organize and staple their report*! This is just one of the ways the world would be better without laziness.

Laziness shows itself each month when the editors of the *Village* (myself included) have to badger people to give us feedback. This month, we have included a survey, as you probably have already noticed. I will say it again: please take the time to fill out this survey! Not only will it take just a minute, but you will be providing invaluable feedback to the editors. It would be exaggeration if I said we received one comment per month on how the *Village* is doing. Since we get so little feedback, we are forced to use what we have, leading to dissatisfaction among those readers that do not share their views. But instead of telling us, they stay secretive, saying that they will hurt somebody's feelings. This is one of the biggest misconceptions with our magazine. **YOU WILL NOT BE**

HURTING SOMEBODY'S FEELINGS BY SUBMITTING NEGATIVE COMMENTS! Even if you filled out an entire survey with 1's and 2's for ratings, we would still accept it and try to improve what you pointed out. I sincerely doubt, however, that we will receive even ten surveys back out of the 83 we sent out.

My dad recently had an incident with an insurance company that he complained about for several days. Reportedly, he sent a form three times by fax machine to the company and they asked him again to send it. This is a perfect example of laziness. If the woman that called had simply checked the company records, the incident (and the bad mood that he was in for hours afterward) could have been easily avoided. My dad says that this is due to incompetence, not laziness, but I believe that it is a combination of both.

Now that you have heard the points mentioned above, you can clearly see that the world would be a much better place without people being lazy. Remember, the only way that things can start getting better is with you. Try submitting a comment form to start, and you will see how much more rewarding it is to not procrastinate and eventually forget.

The Computer System in UMSD

I was originally going to include this in my essay about Laziness, but upon seeing the length of it, elected to write another story. Though we agreed last month that UMHS distribution was becoming too wide and that "tough teachers" would be the last school-related topic we would feature, this really isn't a topic in *The Discussion Forum*. The problems described below, however, are most likely a direct result of laziness.

One day, a teacher from UMHS complained about many things, among them the school computer system. To put it mildly, it needs great improvement. For example, a teacher I had during the last semester had been in the same room the year before. Last year, sparkling new, fast, and reliable computers lined the walls, on a computer system that worked, and there were no problems. However, during the summer, these computers were replaced with old, dirty, and slow dinosaurs from some other storage place in the building.

When we arrived for the first class, the computers were supposed to have been up and working. Unfortunately, they were not. In fact, despite the two-week long strike, the computers were not even in the cabinets: they were piled on top of them. For the first marking period of the semester, the computers were inoperative and the class was forced to go to the library to use computers to write essays. Sometime about six weeks after the beginning of school, the computers were fixed; but there were no printers in the room. It took another four weeks until the printers were functional (the middle of December, halfway through the semester!). But just days later, the printers broke and they have not been repaired yet to my knowledge. Although this teacher made numerous calls to the technology department, her pleas were ignored.

Another of the teachers also complained about the computers in the school. This teacher has a multitude of devices in the room, among them about 12 computers that were purchased by the district last year. Because of the large classes this teacher is forced to instruct, the computers available are not

enough. Fortunately for these classes, there are computers located across the hall from the room in a science PREP area. Incidentally, one small problem-- these computers do not have the necessary software installed for this particular class and have been that way since the beginning of the year. Because of this misfortune, the students have to find time on their own to do computer work that was supposed to have been performed in class.

Other computers in the school are not any better. The library, for instance, underwent renovations during the summer, among them replacing the computer system with a new operating system, Windows 95. Anyone who has ever used this version of Windows knows that it crashes more than any of the older versions. Matthew Care, the current Assistant Editor of the *Village*, reported in an article that he wrote for the school newspaper (which has mysteriously and quietly disappeared all of a sudden) that the computer system was limited by the security procedures that are in effect. Last year, the school did not impose any security measures, and there were no major problems to my knowledge. So why increase security for this year? All that the security programs do is limit access to valuable programs that could be used to expand a student's knowledge. The library computers, are, in addition, always in use by classes. Although this is not bad in itself, there is another room full of 30 computers that is always locked to students, most likely because the aides believe that someone will attempt to subvert the network.

And the final blow: the Chemistry department. For the past three years, computers were supposed to be distributed to the different science departments of the school (Physics in 1997, Chemistry in 1998, and Biology in 1999). The Chemistry department did not receive its computers until near the end of the first semester! Even then, the necessary equipment such as temperature and pH probes were not there for use with the systems. According to one second semester student, his class had not even used the computers yet because of the lack of these materials.

As you can clearly see, the Upper Moreland School District severely needs to reform its technology department. The amount of time that these people are taking to install and fix the computer

equipment in UMHS is limiting the students' abilities to learn and creating conflicts with other classes waiting to use computers. I sincerely hope that the district does something about the state of the computers in the schools to remedy the situation as soon as possible.

Discipline: A Shortcoming in Today's World

As you most likely already know, most older citizens alive today have a negative opinion of children, especially young adults. This is understandable, for a majority of reasons. For a lot of people, their contact with people this age extends only as far as the television set. Anybody with a sixth-grade education knows that the media is only out to make money and that they will feature only the bad news. Therefore, anybody who only watches TV or reads the newspapers will get a bad impression.

That impression is not entirely wrong. Although most young adults do not go out and vandalize property, and harm people and run away from home, there are a small percentage of those who do. The underlying cause is that discipline today is too lax, both at home and in school.

For example, at UMHS, acts of this nature go on all the time. Recently, in the gym locker room, two mischievous students decided that running full speed into a bank of lockers and slamming their foot into one would cause no problems. On the contrary, they caused extensive damage when the lockers collapsed and debris flew. Fortunately, they were caught for the offense mentioned above, but "goofing off" occurs all the time in the school. The Assistant Editor of the *Village* even had to ask someone to remove the lock from his locker one time when he locked the key inside (with his clothes!). Obviously, he was a bit surprised when some 12th graders returned with a large metal grate and smashed it into the lock, destroying it and part of the locker it was attached to. Fortunately, he was not blamed for their behavior because the locker that he had been using had not been formally assigned to him. One day last year, somebody was stupid enough to kick over a large marble divider that separated two stalls in a lavatory. Since it was bolted to the ground with two large metal bolts, it apparently took some immense strength to kick the barrier over. It fell, smashing a toilet, scattering pieces of marble throughout the place, eliminating the other flimsy walls of the stalls, inundating the bathroom, and completely destroying the area. If the school had just been more strict in monitoring the

bathrooms that students are not supposed to enter during classes, they could have saved several hundred dollars as the suspect was never apprehended.

My Spanish teacher is taking a step in the right direction. She gives only one warning for an entire marking period and then begins to assign detentions. Foul language is used around the school often, but obnoxious students speaking wrongly in this teacher's class are punished immediately. In the "Code of Student Conduct" that is distributed during the second week of school, there are many rules against language like this, but many teachers just turn their heads. Why are these rules in the handbook if they are not enforced? One of the mysteries of laws in the country today is that there are over **2 million** laws in effect around the United States. I doubt that there are any police officers that can remember all of those, just as in the school, where some teachers just don't care.

As you can see, discipline is a major problem with today's society and needs to be more rigorously exercised in the future. In May, I'll continue this piece with how parents play a part in their children's lives.

Year-Round Schooling: A Better Alternative For Students

by Stephen Sokolowski

There are many school-related issues that I have considered writing about. One of these issues that is more important to students is how year-round schooling should be instituted in America's schools. By holding school year-round, students would not forget material they had learned the previous year when it is time for school to begin the new year. In addition, students attending school year-round would receive better grades because they would be more ready to learn when they had breaks during the year. Finally, parents of students who go to school year-round would not have to worry about child care during the summer months. These reasons are just part of the evidence that school should be held year-round instead of having a break during the summer.

One reason that year-round schooling would be better is that students would not forget subject matter during the summer that they had learned previously. The current, primitive system of education was developed back in the late 1700's, and school was held only in the winter because children were needed to work on farms in the summer. Although this is no longer necessary (less than 2% of the population now farms), in the current system teachers must waste valuable time during the beginning of the year reviewing concepts that students may have forgotten over the summer. If policy was changed so that school was held year-round, this review time would not be necessary and educators could move on to new lessons. Therefore, students would learn more in the year, even if it were not extended, and score better on tests and assignments as well. This would eventually lead to a strengthening of the entire school system as a direct result of year-round schooling.

Another important argument for school being instituted year-round is that students would receive more breaks during the year. If the vacation that is currently held during the summer were distributed throughout the year, this time would equal about one week of break each month. Many students are exhausted after weeks of school, and these breaks would serve to rejuvenate them so that they would be able to concentrate during their classes. Because they would be less tired, pupils should

be able to pay attention to what is taught more easily. In addition, since various sports and extracurricular activities often interrupt the school day (for many students), these break weeks would allow these activities to take place without academically penalizing those students that are involved in them. The weeks off during the year would be helpful to students, teachers, and administrators alike.

One of the many problems that parents have during the summer months is providing care for their children. With so many families today having both parents working, the long summer can cause problems finding adequate day care facilities or a babysitter. Also, safety concerns are raised because of the many recent problems with these types of care centers. Therefore, by eliminating the long summer vacation and spreading it throughout the year, the number of problems would be lessened. Related to this topic is how some older students, becoming bored over the long summer vacation, begin to get in trouble with the law. Parents would not have to worry about their older sons and daughters during shorter, intermittent breaks, because the time would be welcomed instead of being boring. This is just part of the argument for changing our school system to include year-round schooling.

As you can see, the evidence for instituting school during the summer months is overwhelming. During the summer, students forget valuable concepts and ideas that they learned the previous year. Students do not receive any much-needed breaks during the term of schooling. Finally, parents must secure arrangements for care for their children during the time when they have no classes. By holding school year-round, these issues and many others will be solved. Hopefully, in the future, students and teachers will work to put an end to this old form of education and change the school system for the better.

Urban Expansion: Are the suburbs disappearing?

By Matthew Care

The conflict between the city and the suburbs is growing rapidly in today's overcrowded and fast-paced world. The city limits keep getting pushed back and the difference in lifestyles is becoming less recognizable. After the expansionism in America, when Manifest Destiny was the driving force for expanding the frontier, people started making lives on the new land. When people got to the other side of the continent and said, “Oh, I guess that’s it,” populations started to rise. Cities are nothing. Where there is water, or trade, or encampments, there has always formed, a city. For a very long time it was more desirable to live in the country. At some point, but I don’t know an exact date, it became more desirable to live in the city where the action was. A war began, a war between the city and extreme country, such as farmers. Forged out of this was a compromise, the suburbs. But the city is a beast and its insatiable hunger for more space pushes back the city limits.

The suburbs are becoming more populated. Twenty years ago there probably weren’t half as many traffic lights in Willow Grove as there are now. And it looks different, too. I moved here nine-plus years ago. Things have changed. It doesn’t look *very* much different but it feels different to me. It honestly varies from day to day. On a bright summer day, people mow their lawns and the sports-obsessed kids across the street from me play baseball in their big backyard. The houses don’t look the same and not every family is nuclear, containing exactly 2.3 children and a dog, but it is a portrait of side-street America. It’s hard to believe that just down the street from me is a guy I used to be friends with but now spends all his time high, drunk stupid, or sleeping. It doesn’t stop there. The point is, the problems you hear about on the news don’t stop when the houses get further apart. A funny thing happens down in the middle of Willow Grove when you cross the train tracks heading toward the city. There are two streets there, Church and Cherry, with a church in between them. Those two streets are like something out of the twilight zone. It’s more like city than burbs. You can barely fit a car between the houses and there is a well-defined caste system. I wouldn’t call them gangs, but the kids seem to

move in packs.

The city limits are marked by a very gray line. One morning, I'd swear a roaming bum asked me for change! It happened not three blocks from my house! That is one of the things that inspired me to write this. The other is that I've noticed a DRASTIC increase in the number of patrolling police in the neighborhood. I used to only see a cop car once a week on Sunday when a guy moved the DO NOT ENTER sign by my house. Now I can't go a day without seeing one on patrol. One Saturday, while I was running errands, I saw what looked like a police *convention* at the bottom of my street. It freaked me out.

It won't get any better from here. People keep bringing other people into the world through that irritating little tradition of procreation. Populations are rising. Housing is required. The number of cars on the road is mind boggling. Roads are actually being widened so more traffic can fit on them. Malls, mini-malls, fast food joints, banks, car sellers; they keep popping up. Houses get smaller, sidewalks get narrower… You could wake up one morning and be in a war zone with seven car alarms going off. Some popular science fiction books and movies tell us that in the future there will be only cities; that the planet is itself a large global city which is completely industrialized. It will take some great minds to prevent this from happening. And it must be prevented. We need undeveloped areas. It is psychologically necessary to feel like we always have more space while physically not consuming it.

The Time I Whacked My Head on a Curb

by Michael Hoepfl

I still remember that night; it was December 21. It was unusually warm for a December evening, with temperatures in the 60's. There was a cool breeze, and they had just replaced the bulb in the streetlight outside my house. It was unusually quiet, with only an occasional car passing on the busy street outside my house.

My plans for the evening were set in my mind, and I looked forward to completing them. My Uncle Jim was visiting his sister (who, incidentally, is my aunt) and I was going to visit them. Since they live only a short distance away (over a large hill), I decided to ride my bicycle to my Aunt's house. I was to go after dinner.

Finally, dinner drew to a close. I was ready to go! After a fierce argument, my parents made me wear a jacket. I just grabbed the first one I saw in the closet, a decision that would later affect my life. I set out on my way, and soon I was at the top of the hill. In fact, I was there faster than I had any right to be with my Toys-R'-Us bike. After a few seconds of rest, I was on my way down the other side of the hill. I was going incredibly fast. The familiar scenery was whipping by me like I was on a roller coaster. So you can imagine my hesitance to slow down when I saw a car heading toward me. I attempted to transfer to the sidewalk via a handicapped ramp at the corner, and what happened next will be burnt into my memory. The curb there was about two inches high, and when I hit it at terminal velocity, I went out of control. I flew over the handlebars, losing consciousness. I hit my head on a curb, and when I regained consciousness my mother's friend was shaking me. I felt pain in my elbows, and I knew that I scraped them. It was then that I remembered which jacket I was wearing. It was my father's leather jacket. If I hadn't been wearing the jacket, who knows what might have happened to me? The ambulance arrived soon, and I was put into a neck brace. I was still in a state of confusion, and I saw the faces of my relatives looking down at me. The top of an ambulance is not very interesting, as I found out. The feeling of idiocy was worse than the pain in my head at that moment,

but don't worry. The physical pain was a WHOLE lot worse later. The paramedic said to me, 'You''re the first one to ride in our new ambulance." That made me feel REALLY great.

When I got into the hospital, I changed into a hospital gown. I felt really sick, and the small kidney-shaped pan wasn't going to cut it. The nurse brought me a larger pan and not a minute too soon. I'm going to spare you the details of what obviously came after that. The doctor told me that nausea was a normal thing after a concussion. That was when I found out what really happened. The doctor told me that I was going to have a CAT scan, and I did. I fell asleep during it.

The whole process took two hours, and by the time I got home I was exhausted. However, sleep came in bursts. In between the customary half-hour wake up call and the corners of ice cubes jabbing the large lump on my head, there wasn't much room for slumber.

The next day, I stayed home from school. I rested and watched TV. Most of the pain had subsided overnight, which was good. However, there is one thing that will serve as a constant reminder of what happened to me for a long time. I still have the lump on my head where I struck the curb so many weeks ago.

The Knights of the Square Table

Chapter 15, section 2

The hall in front of Chapin and Katie lead to a door on the far end. Fortunately for them, it opened without a hitch. Stretching ahead of them was another hall, this time with no doors on the sides. At the end, a stairwell led down into darkness.

Katie and Chapin, having no other choice, descended into the darkness. After a short debate about whether it would be safe to use the Hadar Stone inside the troll fort, Katie finally won out and they decided to light the stone. Katie held it in front of her to reveal a dank, musty room that seemed to have no purpose. There were two doors at the end. Continuing through the left one, they discovered that it dead-ended into another storeroom, this one not as large or as recently used as the room above them. They turned around and entered the right door.

The rooms seemed to stretch endlessly ahead of them. It seemed as if hours passed as they climbed down stairs and marched through corridors. When they had walked down at least three flights of stairs, they came to a heavy metal door that had no windows. It took all their might to try to open it. Giving up using their own strength, it was decided that it would be better to use the Hadar Stone to open the door.

Doing so, the door, like the one before, flew off the hinges and into the darkness with a loud bang echoing a second later. Katie and Chapin were not worried that the calamitous sound would be heard by any of the trolls above, as they were so far below ground and hadn't seen a troll since they had entered the complex.

The room they appeared to be in was the dungeon. There was no light save for that of a few torches that decorated the walls. They cast an eerie, flickering, dimness over the room. There were six cells in the area, on both sides of the central passage. Another metal door was on the other side from where they stood. Katie and Chapin entered cautiously, but soon it was apparent that there was nobody in sight.

Hoping earlier to find Mike here, Katie and Chapin were disappointed. After a thorough search, they turned their attention to the door in front of them. Like the last one, it wouldn't budge. Katie and Chapin took a seat on the ground and rested for a few minutes, deciding what to do next. Finally it was concluded that they would continue through the passage in front of them, using the Hadar Stone to gain entry.

Unfortunately, the plan didn't work as they had hoped. The Hadar Stone didn't seem powerful enough to force open the mass of metal, and Chapin found it necessary to assist with the water stone. A bright light shone down the path they had traveled, as the door flew back against its hinges. Inspecting the next room, which appeared to serve no better purpose than as an extension of the dungeon, they saw a hunched figure in one of the cells.

"Who is it?" it whimpered. "Please, give me some food," it cried pathetically.

"Mike?" Katie yelled in joy.

"Katie? Is that you? Why are you here?" Mike asked, practically screaming.

"It's me, Chapin," Chapin chimed in.

"What have they done to you?" Katie asked, looking at Mike through the thick bars of the cell. His face was bruised, and his feet swollen. Mike's entire figure was severely emaciated.

"They haven't fed me in days," Mike replied, almost nonchalantly as he got up, trying to hide his pain. "I thought I would die here."

"Well," Chapin comforted, "we're here now."

"How do you suppose I could get out of here?" Mike asked, now seemingly rejuvenated by seeing his two colleagues.

"Let's try using the stones again," Katie suggested to Chapin as she held out the Hadar Stone.

It was now shining dimly, unlike when they had entered the fort. Summoning her power, she tried as hard as she could to move the cell door, but failed.

"It looks as if the Stone doesn't have any energy left," she remarked. Chapin took her stone out of her clothing and tried the same thing. There was no effect, and an awkward moment of silence followed.

"We have to try to find a key or something," Chapin advised. After searching for ten minutes in both rooms of the jail cells, they were almost out of hope. Suddenly, there was a loud rumble and shouts erupted from a distant place.

"Intruders have been spotted! Search the fortress immediately!" came the harsh voice of a troll. Trumpets blared, and feet pounded to warn the rest of the fort.

"Uh oh! Do you think it's us? Or is it Dave and the others?" Chapin asked hurriedly.

"Hurry," Katie yelled. "We have to get out of here or hide!"

"Where?"

"Hurry! Go in the jail cell over there! Close the gate!"

Chapin and Katie rushed into the empty cell and closed the gate, taking care not to lock it by leaving it open slightly. In the corner of the cell where they were located, the light was dim enough that they were sure not to be noticed by any passing trolls or other creatures. Soon after, they heard troll footfalls making loud noises above them.

Suddenly, there was a loud crack, and trolls came running into the dungeon. From where they were crouching, Katie and Chapin could see Mike and the trolls clearly in the bright light.

"Get the prisoner!" one of the trolls commanded.

"Right away, boss," another replied submissively. Reaching into the pocket of his strange clothing, the troll produced a rather large, unusually-shaped key. Using it, he opened the door to Mike's cell.

"Get out here!" the troll ordered gruffly, and Mike responded slowly and weakly. He struggled to get up but fell. Katie and Chapin watched helplessly.

"Come on, prisoner!" one of the trolls hollered. "We ain't got all day! Intruders've been spotted!" He finally went over to pick Mike up.

"Take him to the torture chamber!" the other troll ordered and promptly left, leaving the first to take care of Mike. Although he was weak, Mike put up a good fight, screaming and kicking as the troll attempted to drag him from the cell. Finally picking Mike up, the troll rushed out.

Katie and Chapin came to the front of their cell and opened the door. The bars clanked together, but the trolls were nowhere in sight, though some faint yelling could still be heard far away. They hurried out of the cell and through the ruined entrances.

Rushing up the stairs, they could hear the shouting becoming fainter and fainter as the trolls made their way to the top of the fortress. After a few minutes of running as fast as they could, Katie and Chapin came to a stop at the location where the party had split up. Again, there was no sign of trolls in the area.

Just when they were beginning to catch their breath, Katie and Chapin heard yells and shouts coming from all around. A few trolls rushed down the stairs around them, taking no notice, and continued back down toward the dungeon. Safe for now, they dashed up the stairs.

When Katie and Chapin came to the room where Christopher, Dave, and Matt had been staring in wonder at the altar, they hesitated for a moment. A bench was in the side doorway. The massive door, which looked indestructible, had a wide gash that had been made by the trolls to allow access. It was then that Katie realized the power that the trolls and the dark forces commanded.

Continuing on to the large auditorium, Katie and Chapin avoided trolls that were running around by hugging the walls and staying low. The place was swarming with trolls, and it looked as if something were going on inside.

"We have found the intruders!" a lone voice uttered from within. It appeared that the trolls had again settled down to listen to their leader's remarks.

"Who are these villains who would think they could beat us?" one angry voice asked, louder than the first.

"Here they are. See for yourself!" the first motioned. Looking in, Katie saw Dave, Christopher, and Matt emerge from the back of the large stone auditorium. Their hands and feet were shackled, and it took them a while just to walk the short distance from the edge of the stage to the troll's position. Other trolls with spears prodded them on from behind. When they reached the stone podium, they stopped while the crowd looked them over. Snickers broke out.

"Let's put an end to this!" Katie said, her voice almost reaching the point where it could be heard.

"No!" Chapin whispered sharply, holding the squirming Katie back. "They'll just capture us, too!"

Finally Katie settled down. The trolls continued. "These three thought that they could break in to destroy the entire fortress!"

"Destroy the fortress?" Katie whispered. "We're not trying to destroy the fortress!"

"They probably told them that so the trolls wouldn't find out they were related to Mike," Chapin replied, and motioned for Katie to look in.

"At this very minute, our forces are readying themselves to assault the town to the east and destroy it for good! And these three will be the first to die!" Applause broke out, and Katie and Chapin drew back.

"Forget about this," Chapin said. "There's no way we can rescue them now. Let's go look for Mike. They said he was going to be brought to the torture chamber."

"Where is that?" Katie asked.

Suddenly, a troll rushed out the doors of the auditorium, slamming the heavy wooden portals back against the wall with a loud bang. Katie and Chapin were not noticed as it raced at top speed in the direction that they had come.

"Let's follow him," Chapin suggested. "He looks as if he's on an urgent mission!"

Katie took off toward the troll who was now turning down a corridor to their left, about a hundred feet from their current position. Chapin quickly followed. Their footsteps were practically silent compared to the troll's pounding feet. It rushed down a flight of steps in front of them, but the steps were so huge that Katie and Chapin had to jump down each one. By the time that they reached the bottom, the troll had vanished.

"Great," Katie sarcastically remarked. "The troll is gone and we're going to need a lot of help to get out of here." She was right. Looking back at the stairs, Chapin realized that it would take someone with superhuman strength to pull themselves up each of the fifteen or so stairs that they had just came down. Of course, a troll could mount the steps without a second thought because of their long legs.

"Let's keep going," Chapin said grudgingly and began to walk toward a door on the far side of the large hall they were now in. It had, fortunately, been left open by the troll, and they moved inward with the greatest of ease. Another, normal, stairway led downward. A large door dominated the opposite wall.

Deciding to go down the stairs, Katie and Chapin saw what they had most feared. It was the torture chamber, a dank, disgusting excuse for a room. A few trolls were there, with Mike in the center of the room, tied to a stone table. All sorts of vile-looking implements were around it, obviously for use on innocent victims.

Crouching near the top of the short stairwell that hugged the wall, the two anxiously surveyed what was happening. It appeared that the trolls were torturing Mike.

"Wait until our Master gets here!" one of the trolls roared. The others laughed.

"Master?" Chapin questioned Katie. Her voice took on a tone of panic. "They could mean...Yavin!"

"We have to get Mike out of here before he comes!" Katie replied. "We have to get Dave and

the others, too!"

"Once we free Mike, all the trolls will be looking for us," Chapin pointed out.

"We'll have to take that chance, right?"

"Not necessarily." Chapin stopped as the trolls suddenly became quiet. When it was clear that they were just waiting, she continued in a lower tone. "Let's use the stones and cast a spell on them."

"Are you sure? It'll drain the stones' powers, and someone might be able to sense that we're here."

"Do you have any better ideas?" Chapin asked.

"Let's do it," Katie responded. On the count of three, they jumped from the fifth stair and landed hard.

"Freeze!" one of the trolls barked at them. Mike turned to look, but could not quite make out who they were. Suddenly, one of the trolls lunged for Katie, knocking the Hadar Stone out of her hand. It bounced off the back of the troll, incapacitating him. The other two trolls rushed at Chapin, but there was a blue flash and they stopped. One was suspended in mid-air while the other was in the process of grabbing, only a few inches from Chapin. Her blue stone slowly diminished in intensity.

"What happened?" Katie instinctively asked, although she already knew the answer. Chapin didn't bother to reply; instead, she moved toward the table where Mike was bound.

"Did they torture you?" she asked, inspecting Mike's bindings.

"No. They said they were waiting for their master to arrive or something."

"We have to get out of here!" Katie said desperately.

"How? Where's the key?" Mike asked.

"Oh no! We can't free him!" Katie said.

"I'm going to try the stone on the shackles," Chapin said. Mike squirmed, but he couldn't move an inch. Chapin held up the blue stone, but no light was emanating from it. Even when she concentrated as hard as she could, there was no effect.

"The stone will need to regain its power," she said. "Katie, try the Hadar Stone!"

"We may need it for later," she pointed out, but there were already rustling footsteps in a nearby corridor. Holding the stone up, Katie wished as hard as she could that Mike would be free, and the shackles burst off of him, flying up and hitting the ceiling with a loud bang. Mike got up and rushed with Katie and Chapin to the stairwell.

Not wanting to have to deal with the huge, troll-sized stairs to their right, the three elected to take the left path, down the large, troll-size corridor. It dead-ended at a stairway, which they took upward. To their surprise, they emerged in the carpeted hallway overlooking the auditorium. Rushing to the same door they had been at before, Katie motioned Mike to be quiet and look in.

Dave, Christopher, and Matt were still in front of the crowd, although they were now covered with red stains. At first, Mike though that it was blood; however, upon further inspection, he realized that it was only the juice of some fruit with which the crowd had been taunting the three. The red juice was splattered around the entire left side of the stone stage, proving that they had been throwing the fruit at their captives. The lead troll was still speaking.

"We are placing our destiny in you, the army of Yavin!" the speaker said. There was a roar. Soon, the crowd grew quiet, and the speaker continued.

"Now, go and march forth, and bring Yavin's power so that all the world can see!" The trolls got up after some applause and went to ready themselves for battle. Just as the three were about to be discovered by exiting trolls, another troll walked on stage and approached the speaker.

"Halt!" he yelled at the top of his lungs. Those leaving turned to look toward the stage.

"There has apparently been another intrusion into our fortress!" he said. There were several angry snarls from the audience.

"I am ordering a complete search," the other said. "We will not leave until we find these idiots who think they can infiltrate us. We will give them what they deserve!"

The trolls began to pour out the doors. It wasn't long before Katie, Chapin, and Mike, who

were far from any cover, were spotted hiding behind the doors. There was a shout, and though they tried desperately to get away, several strong trolls grabbed them, slung them over their backs, and walked back through the doors against the traffic of trolls that separated when they saw the captives.

"Here they are! They were listening to our every word!" the one who was carrying Katie said.

"They cannot be allowed to live after they have heard our plans," another suggested.

"Very well," the leader on the podium replied. "Do away with them in the torture chamber immediately. The rest of you: prepare for battle!" There was a cheer, and the three were carried back toward the torture chamber from which Mike had just been rescued.

The trolls had not advanced five feet when, suddenly, there was a loud explosion that rocked the building. The trolls that were carrying them lost their balance while the rumbling continued for several seconds.

"What was that?" one troll asked.

"There aren't earthquakes here!" another screamed.

"Attention!" came a voice from far away, but it was close enough for all the occupants of the hall to hear clearly. "Rebel soldiers are attacking the fortress! Take defensive positions immediately!"

There were shouts of anger and surprise among the trolls, as they sprinted along the hallway to their various posts. A few seconds later, the hallway was vacant. Nobody had paid any attention to the former captives, who were now on the floor.

"Hurry!" Chapin said, regaining her senses first. "Let's see if the others are alright before the trolls return!" They ran back the way that the trolls had carried them. The auditorium was also deserted, except for Dave, Christopher, and Matt, who were in exactly the same place they were two minutes ago, dirty but alive.

After greetings were exchanged, another loud bang shook the fortress.

"What should we do?" Katie cried.

"Up the ladder, quick!" Christopher directed. He jumped high enough to reach the third rung and climbed upward. The others followed, but more slowly. When they reached the top of the fortress, they discovered that the lightning and thunder had stopped, but the clouds remained. There was another bang that made them fall over. Dave, the first to his feet, ran over to the edge of the roof to look below.

He was greeted by an astonishing sight. The soldiers that the six of them had thought to be two weeks away were surrounding the fortress. Several knights on horse back charged the drawbridge while they watched, but unfortunately were washed away. One troll leaped onto a knight only to be cut back. The battle raged around them.

Dave stepped back. A catapult built out of huge logs hurled a boulder at the side of the fortress. Stones crumpled, but it held. The entire fortress shook, throwing Katie and Chapin down and leaving the rest of them shaky. Getting back to the edge, Dave looked over to see that the knights from the town were approaching rapidly. Several perched in the nearby sparse trees and shot arrows off into the blue. Swords clanked as trolls exited the fort via the drawbridge and entered the battle. Several trolls manned wooden cannons on perches just below them.

"What should we do now?" Mike asked Christopher and Matt, who were watching the battle.

"You're the expert, Matt," Christopher said. "You should know what to do."

"We obviously can't leave," Matt replied. "It might be possible--wait, that's it! If we get back the way we came--through the shipping area--we could leave undetected. We'd just have to get back down the fortress first."

"Not an easy task," Chapin estimated. "There are trolls *everywhere*! We'd be spotted before we even got back down into the fortress."

"Can we use the stones?" Katie asked with a tone of desperation.

"They're all drained," Chapin replied. "What about yours?" There was a big bang. Another rock had exploded, and a wall that had been built in front of the drawbridge to stop attackers fell, exposing the trolls on the lowered drawbridge to enemy fire. Quickly, they rushed inside, but not

before several knights came hurrying after them. One troll raised the drawbridge to keep the remaining knights from entering.

"Ours are drained, too," Christopher replied. "We had to use their power when we were trying to open the doors on the way up."

"I noticed," Katie said, with ill-timed levity. "Can anybody think of any other ways to get out of here?" There was silence for a few seconds, and then Dave said, "What about the red stone? We haven't tried to use it yet."

"Too risky. It's evil, remember?" Christopher replied. "There must be some other way!" There was another crash.

"Whether we like it or not, we're going to have to run for it," Mike correctly predicted. The trolls and knights were deadlocked at the moment, neither side showing a clear lead. It was only a matter of time before the battle favored one side or the other, and if the trolls secured a clear advantage, it could spell trouble for them.

"We might as well run now before the wounded begin to be brought in," Matt suggested. "There'll be less chance we'll be discovered, and if one troll sees us, it can't possibly capture us all."

"Let's go then," Chapin added. "Quickly, before anyone notices!"

Christopher took one last look over the side of the fortress. It appeared that the knights were attempting to construct a battering ram out of logs that were floating down the stream. There were, fortunately, no trolls in that area, though they poured out of the gates and now appeared to outnumber the knights. He rushed back from the edge and took off for the stairwell. The rest of the group followed, but not before being hindered by a boulder that again shook the fortress.

Picking themselves up, they rushed down the ladder as fast as they could. Christopher was the first to reach the bottom and see the bad news.

"Stop!" came a voice from across the auditorium. The place was swarming with at least a hundred trolls. They began to advance toward the party, who scrambled back up as fast as they could. Reaching the top, they rushed to the center of the fortress but were trapped.

"Freeze!" the troll said, pulling himself off the ladder and readying a knife. The others followed. Dave put his hand on the sword. There was silence as the other trolls reached the roof.

When all the trolls had removed themselves from the ladder, they parted, as if some great leader was coming forth. The battle raged on around them, and the sky seemed to take on the same menacing quality that they had seen the day before. Thunder began to rumble, and mysterious red clouds blanketed the area.

"So!" a voice said. It struck terror into the group's hearts. The trolls bowed down as a dark figure approached. Lightning lit up the sky and thunder continued to boom. "It appears that the time has come!"

"Yavin!" Chapin gasped.

"You have guessed correctly," the voice said. The shadow that was in front of them seemed to dissolve, and a huge, mean-looking man was in its place. "The time has come for you to meet your doom." A loud, deep laugh emanated from within Yavin's huge figure.

"Why?" Christopher managed to gasp.

"You imbeciles are the only threat to my achieving my righteous place at the right hand of Ba'tah."

"Ba'tah? Who are you talking about?" Mike asked, still stunned by Yavin's presence. The battle seemed to escalate around them.

"I have been seeking for years for the place I deserve, at the hand of Ba'tah, our absolute Master!"

"Master?" Katie exclaimed. "I had no idea..."

"Enough with all this talk!" Yavin exclaimed, his voice taking on an evil tone. "It has come the time for you all to perish!"

Yavin began to chant in low tones. Suddenly, Dave heard a whisper in his ear. "Use the

sword!" Christopher murmured. "It's our only chance!"

Dave edged his hand closer to the sword as Yavin continued to chant words in a strange language. The storm above continued to intensify. He waited until the right moment, and then he made his move.

Dave lunged forward, closing the few feet between him and Yavin's back, plunging the sword in with a sickening crack.

There was a crash of lightning, and Dave drew back, frightened at what he had just done.

Suddenly, Yavin turned around, with the sword blade protruding from his stomach. He made a motion as if he was about to fall, and then a change occurred.

"You idiots think you can defeat ME with this weak sword!" he roared. In an instant, the man who had once been Yavin disappeared, and the shadow that they had sensed before stood in its place.

The chanting that they had heard before became even louder until it was deafening. "Run!" Christopher screamed above the noise. "Get away from here! Anywhere!"

Dave began to feel sleepy. "Ha ha ha!" Yavin cackled. "I won't have to be dealing with you for a long time!" Lightning flashed, and Yavin stopped his chant. "Remember the tablet: '*Thou whose heart is pierced by Yavin's power shall not awaken ere a quarter century's turn.'* Ha ha ha!"

It was too late to run. A bolt of lightning rushed down from the sky right in the middle of the party, throwing Dave and the others over the parapet. Above them, lightning continued to flash as thunder roared in the red clouds. The battle around them raged as if nothing had happened.

But all that didn't matter to them. They hit the water in the stream hard as Yavin's voice continued to sweep across the area. The last thing they remembered was the water surging around them. And then there was darkness.

END OF PART I