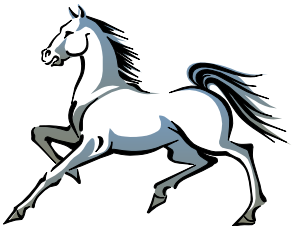
Shoemaker Village

Volume 17 - April 1998

TWO NEW SECTIONS THIS MONTH!

The Tomb of the Unknown World
The Discussion Forum



The travelers in *The Knights of the Square Table* encounter mortal danger!



Neighborhood News: Pioneer Road reconstruction begins!

PLUS!!!
Editor's Pages redesigned! New Crossword Puzzle included!
Goal of longer issues met! 29 pages this month!
Extra Short Stories this month!
Pioneer Road Construction Begins!

DETAILS INSIDE!

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Editor's Pages

Information you should know

It's April again, and spring is on the way for yet another year! The editors here at *Shoemaker Village* would like to give you something to do on a nice spring day, so take the magazine outdoors and read it while you sit in the sun!

We have almost reached our goal of 30 pages as announced in the October issue, two months ahead of schedule! This month, several new assistants have joined our staff to bring you the best possible magazine for your reading. Matthew Care, a frequent story contributor, has joined our staff under the title of Assistant Editor to write stories and aid in the printing of the *Village.* There are also several new full-time writers that have decided to help us write short stories and editorials.

This month, there are two new sections in *Shoemaker Village.* First, you will find the addition of *The Discussion Forum,* which has been included in the *Village* due to the great success of our articles with different points of view on certain topics. Every month, you will hear several views of a single topic in this section. You be the judge! In the month prior to a topic's publication, it will be printed on the Acknowledgments page. If you feel strongly about the topic, send us your view on the issue! Unless you specify otherwise, your name will not be included with your work, so feel free to let your real thoughts out! Next month's topic will be Extracurricular Activities in Schools: Is too much stress placed on them?

Another new section that has been added to the *Village* is another novel written by our new assistant editor, Matthew Care, called *The Tomb of the Unknown World.* This story describes the life of a present-day general in the war that may decide the fate of humankind. This is not a story to miss! Also, we are in the process of hiring another writer to continue *The Secret of Fdol,* which was published last year in the *Village* and was one of the most popular sections in the history of the *Village.* The original writer, Michael Curry, has ceased to submit new chapters of that story since last summer.

The *1997 Best Article of the Year Award* voting is still being held over the Internet until April 20. Be sure to cast your vote! If you cannot gain access to the Internet, please send us a request and we will mail you a paper voting packet at no additional charge. The winner of the award receives a free subscription to the *Village* and a cash prize.

At the request of a few readers, we have decided to publish a monthly crossword puzzle in the Editor's Pages. (You will find this month's puzzle below.) All the answers to the puzzle can be found in the *Village* this month. Answers for this month's puzzle can be found in the next issue of the *Village.* If you have a puzzle you would like to submit or have suggestions, please send them in, because it would be very much appreciated.

That's all for this month! Enjoy the *Village* and remember - your stories will only make it better!

Acknowledgments

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The next issue of *Shoemaker Village* will be published on or around April 23, 1998.
All contributions for the next issue must be received by April 20, 1998.

Next month's topic in The Discussion Forum will be *Extracurricular Activities in schools: Is too much stress placed on them?*

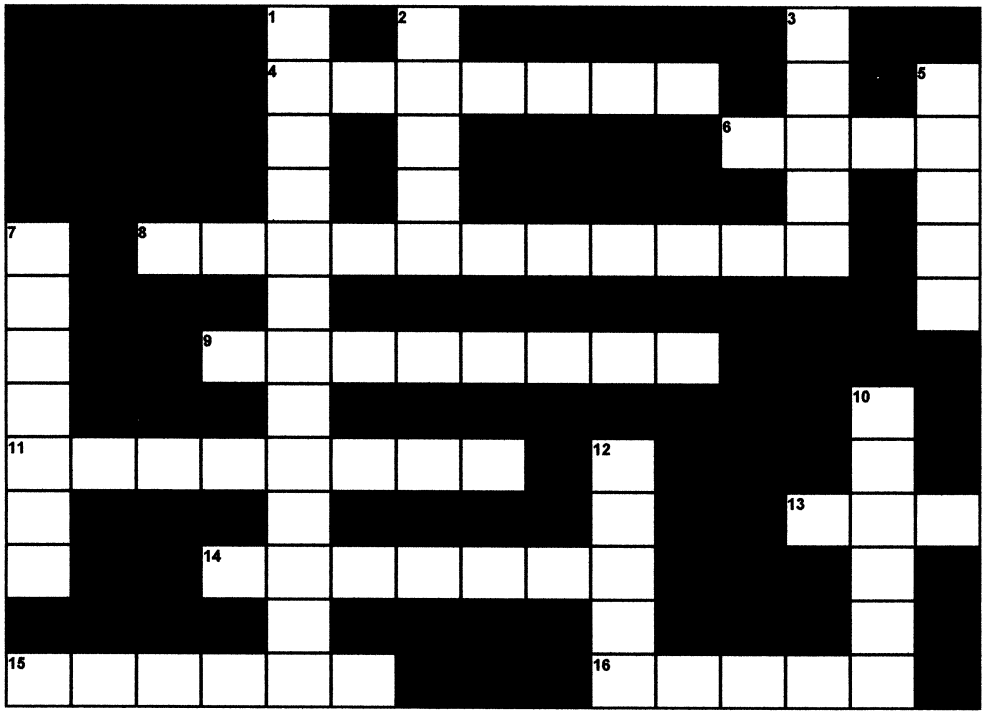
Coming Next Issue

Volume 18- May 1998

- This is *Shoemaker Village*'s one year issue of professional publishing! See the stories that made it great, including a reprint of the *1997 Best Article of the Year Award*-winning article!
- See the debate on Extracurricular Activities in The Discussion Forum! It's sure to be interesting!
- Find out the results of the *1997 Best Article of the Year Award!*
- *The Tomb of the Unknown World* will continue! Be sure you don't miss it!
- See if the group makes it out alive in *The Knights of the Square Table!*
- More great stories, news, comedy, and more!

ALL IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF *SHOEMAKER VILLAGE!*

Crossword Puzzle: April 1998



Across

4. The road that is currently under construction in the neighborhood

6. The story, written by Michael Curry, that enjoyed incredible success in *The Curry Courier* when it was first published. (The secret of ____)

8. First name of person who deleted *the Village* files in January, postponing production

9. Topic this month in The Discussion Forum

11. Frequent story contributor to the *Village,* residing near the end of Butternut Drive

13. Anniversary month of *Shoemaker Village*

14. Main character in *The Tomb of the Unknown World*

15. _____ Central

16. Enemy in *The Knights of the Square Table*

Down

1. High school reported on in last month's special, *Editorials on High School Education* (two words)

2. Name of basketball league in Upper Moreland

3. Name of stone, in *The Knights of the Square Table,* that shines yellow and has magical powers

5. The Hoffmans' dog

7. Sequel to *The Biggest Adventure In History* (Second word of title)

10. In *The Knights of the Square Table,* the character who is the ice elemental and joined the party in the middle of the journey

12. Olympic athlete reported on this month in the short story, "The Olympics", written by Steven Conway

Neighborhood News

April 1998

RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT ON PIONEER ROAD BEGINS

In December, we reported that Pioneer Road, the outlet of the Butternut-Acorn neighborhood, was awarded a contract for its reconstruction this spring. Now the road work has begun.

Many sights like this one were seen throughout the area on Tuesday, March 24, as sewer work began on schedule on Pioneer Road. The week before, several trees marked by pink ribbons were cut down, allowing for the widening of the road on the west side of Pioneer Road.



Pioneer Road

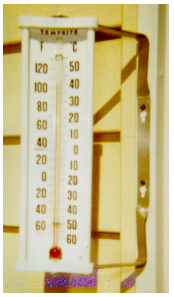
Many neighbors agree with the Township government in deciding that Pioneer Road needed immediate reconstruction. "This road has needed to be repaved many times in the past," said neighbor Jean Sokolowski. "But now it's past that point."

Included in the project, which is to be completed by early May, are installing new curbing on the far side, grading the road for better drainage, and completely repaving the road.

HEAT WAVE HITS AREA, FORECASTERS SUSPECT EL NIÑO AS CAUSE

On Friday, March 27, 1998, an extreme warm spell hit the area, causing residents of the Butternut-Acorn neighborhood to exchange their coats and sweaters for t-shirts and shorts.

That day, the temperature in the sun hit over 100 degrees, at 2:50pm, as shown in this picture. The recorded temperature was 86 degrees, breaking a record high for that day set in the early 1900s.



105°

The El Niño phenomenon, as with most of the major weather events of the past year, is also suspected in bringing this unusual weather. The phenomenon, which moderates the temperature during the time of its effects, combined with an especially strong storm system near the Florida coast, has skyrocketed the temperatures above the record mark.

The forecast for the upcoming summer is expected to be a hot one, also due to a phenomenon that is related to El Niño. The La Niña phenomenon occurs when temperatures in the Pacific ocean fall instead of rise, as in El Niño. The El Niño can trigger La Niña after it subsides, causing ocean waters to cool, resulting in the opposite effects of El Niño.

What does all this mean? This summer will be hotter than usual, most likely, and this winter promises to be one of the coldest. So enjoy the warm weather while it lasts - the worst may be yet to come, but don't despair - We may get some snow this winter!

BASKETBALL NEWS

Upper Moreland Hoops has had yet another successful season this year.

Championship games for the league were held on March 28. In the first game of the day, the Under 11 Girls Division Championship, the team of Laura Rymer and Melissa Johnston, two neighborhood players, lost an overtime thriller by only one point, almost defeating the first place team. (They were in fifth entering the playoffs.)

Many changes are in discussion for the league next year, including installing glass backboards at the gyms, possibly hiring paid referees, and purchasing gym time on Sundays at the Middle School to allow time for extra practices.

OTHER NEWS TIDBITS

-Christopher Sokolowski, who in January deleted the *Village* files, has recently been causing more problems with the *Village* production, including incessant complaints and destruction of *Village* property.

-The annual neighborhood golf outing will be held this year on a Saturday in late May. As neighbor Jean Sokolowski says, “It’s a time to see some “old” neighbors as well as meet new people in the hood. Spread the word!” For more information, call Hank Sokolowski at 674-5056.

Comedy Central

41 FUN THINGS TO DO IN YOUR LOCAL WAL-MART STORE

1. Take shopping carts for the express purpose of filling them and stranding them at strategic locations.

2. Ride those little electronic cars at the front of the store.

3. Set all the alarm clocks to go off at ten minute intervals throughout the day.

4. Contaminate the entire auto department by sampling all the spray air fresheners.

5. Challenge other customers to duels with tubes of gift wrap.

6. Leave cryptic messages on the typewriters.

7. Re-dress the mannequins as you see fit.

8. When there are people behind you, walk REALLY SLOW, especially in thin narrow aisles.

9. Walk up to an employee and tell him in an official tone, "I think we've got a Code 3 in Housewares," and see what happens.

10. Tune all the radios to a polka station; then turn them all off and turn the volumes to "10".

11. Play with the automatic doors.

12. Walk up to complete strangers and say, "Hi! I haven't seen you in so long!..." etc. See if they play along to avoid embarrassment.

13. Ride a display bicycle through the store; claim you're taking it for a "test drive."

14. Follow people through the aisles, always staying about five feet away. Continue to do this until they leave the department.

15. Play soccer with a group of friends, using the entire store as your playing field.

16. As the cashier runs your purchases over the scanner, look mesmerized and say, "Wow, Magic!"

17. Put M&M's on layaway.

18. Move "Caution: Wet Floor" signs to carpeted areas.

19. Set up a tent in the camping department; tell others you'll only invite them in if they bring pillows from Bed and Bath.

20. Test the fishing rods and see what you can "catch" from the other aisles.

21. Ask other customers if they have any Grey Poupon.

22. Randomly throw things over into neighboring aisles.

23. Play with the calculators so that they all spell "hello" upside down.

24. When someone asks if you need help, begin

to cry and ask, "Why won't you people just leave me alone?"

25. Make up nonsense products and ask newly hired employees if there are any in stock, i.e., "Do you have any Shnerples here?"

26. Take up an entire aisle in Toys by setting up a full scale battlefield with G.I. Joes vs. the X-Men.

27. Take bets on the battle described above.

28. Nonchalantly "test" the brushes and combs in Cosmetics.

29. While handling guns in the hunting department, suddenly ask the clerk if he knows where the anti-depressants are. Act as spastic as possible.

30. Hold indoor shopping cart races.

31. Dart around suspiciously while humming the theme from "Mission: Impossible."

32. Attempt to fit into very large gym bags.

33. Attempt to fit others into very large gym bags.

34. Set up a "Valet Parking" sign in front of the store.

35. Leave Cheerios in Lawn and Garden, pillows in the pet food aisle, etc.

36. "Re-alphabetize" the CD's in Electronics.

37. When someone steps away from their cart to look at something, quickly make off with it without saying a word.

38. Relax in the patio furniture until you get kicked out.

39. When an announcement comes over the loudspeaker, assume the fetal position and scream, "No, no! It's those voices again!"

40. Pay off layaways fifty cents at a time.

41. Drag a lounge chair on display over to the magazines and relax. If the store has a food court, buy a soft drink; explain that you don't get out much, and ask if they can put a little umbrella in it.

BONUS Attempt all of the above in the same visit!

An Important Concept with an Infamous Reputation

In my opinion, homework is a good thing. Homework is usually used to reinforce what was learned in class. Only good can come from doing it. It's a total win-win situation. If you know what you're doing you will have no trouble completing the assignment. You can never get dumber, only smarter by doing it. Just as well, if you are unsure about certain material, doing the homework will isolate the things you need help on. This should be a learning experience. The key word is **help,** as in get some!

The infamous biology teacher of our school (Don't you just feel as if you know her?) has another way of doing things. At the beginning of a chapter, she assigns work which is to be completed during the course of the chapter: a chapter overview, a list of terms, and a set of questions to be answered. All of these are to be completed individually before the related lessons are taught. The idea is to knock on the door of every topic in the chapter, making our brains more supple. Then, when she kicks the door down and shoves all of the information at us, we are able to grasp it with somewhat of an educated foundation.

The fact is that, if you enjoy the subject, homework won't be anything to sneeze at. Last year, I loved math. I was good at it (although, I only now know that everything was being handed to us). And as such, I downright liked doing the assignments. It was a real feeling of accomplishment to say, "Yay, I did that... and you didn't...AND I got it all right."

But of course, all opinions are subject to change. Have you noticed the weather? It's beautiful outside! And the last thing you want to be doing on a beautiful day is homework. But I guess that that's true for anything; and if it needs to be done, quit complaining about it and just do it!

I think that the only real problem is the reputation of homework. The general disinterest of education in the youth today leads them to believe that it's not important to do homework. If for no other reason, then do it because...THE TEACHER SAID SO! Heaven forbid you might have to pull a late night in order to finish that project when it's due. I can remember several times when I had to stay up past midnight to finish

a report or do biology homework. I can also count on one hand the times when I realized that enough is enough. There comes a point when it makes more sense to just go to bed instead of studying all night. So, I am not completely without sympathy. But an effort should always be made.

Homework

I think that homework is an absolute waste of time. Let's just say that you do a math lesson in class on quadratic equations. This is a subject which we normally find easy but, due to the teacher and course level, becomes more advanced. Why do we have to do fifteen quadratic equations during class and then do twenty more that night? I do have to admit that homework helps me out a little bit because it does give me extra problems to do. In my Algebra II book, the answers to all the "Try This" problems and all the odd numbered problems in the lesson are in the back of the book. If I have to make sure I got a problem right, I just go to the back. A couple of my friends, who are also writing in this issue, were taught by a certain Biology teacher whom they called, at some particular times, a witch. When they told me how much homework they would have to do over a certain weekend, I couldn't believe it. I would say to them that there has to be a law stating how much homework you should get per night. I fully understand that high school students should get used to getting homework over the weekends. If I had the possibility to make a law on homework, I would say no more than ninety minutes during the week and two and a half hours on weekends. This one teacher (who shall remain anonymous) expected my friends to do the regular (ridiculous) amount of homework each and every night. One of my friends had to devote an entire Saturday to that witch's homework. About a week ago, that same person finally convinced me to take Level Two Biology instead of Level One with her. This may sound crazy to some of you, but some teenagers actually do have lives. At such a young age, these lives must be lived to the fullest. We should only need to do about two to two and a half hours of homework, so we can finish by two or three in the afternoon. Teenagers like to go to a friend's house, call them on the phone, or go to places as a group. If some people don't do that weekly, they will whine all week just because they had to stay home and do dumb homework.

Homework: Good and Bad

I agree with most people in saying that homework, for the most part, is a necessary part of education. Homework reinforces necessary learning and prevents students from forgetting information overnight. However, there are instances where assigning enormous amounts of homework does not help the student at all.

For the last term, I have been bombarded by homework from the Biology teacher at Upper Moreland High School. I have yet to see anybody who has learned from her mindless copying of terms and from when she screams and yells about this during class. It is plain stupid to make students waste their time on doing homework on things that they already know. Therefore, I believe that homework should be considered optional (for most students) and be done only if needed.

I will admit that homework is most of the time necessary, for students who do not pay attention in class, or just for people who need extra help and reinforcement. This does not mean that the students are dumb, just that they did not "get" the subject quite so easily. There are also students, for whatever reason, who refuse to learn in school. (I will never comprehend this.) These students must be forced to do homework or they will pay for it in the future.

Homework should not be required for students who have proven their excellence in past subjects. High School students, (for the most part, as there are always exceptions to every rule) are in my belief, able to realize how much they need to study and do optional work to learn. Intelligent students, such as the ones in the Biology teacher's class, should be allowed to do homework only when needed. I also believe that if this policy were instituted, brighter students would do most of the optional homework anyway. Most people do educational things out of class. (If anyone thinks that this magazine is not educational to an extent, shoot them. What would your teachers rather have you do? Write a magazine or play Nintendo?)

I applaud my English teacher who has discovered this already and learned from it. He frequently

assigns grammar sheets, **but only until his students have learned the topic** that he was teaching at the time. When we sufficiently know the grammar, such as the functions of nouns or the tenses of verbs, he moves on without assigning additional sheets that only bore his students because they already know the topic.

That brings us to the irony of homework - if students payed attention in class more often, homework would not be necessary because they would already know the subject matter from class, and additional reinforcement would not be necessary. A solution to this problem would be to rid Level 1 classes of homework because most of the students have already proven themselves good listeners and note-takers. (I say most of the students because sometimes there are students who are sometimes placed in those high-level classes who do not meet the suggested guidelines for an "excellent" student and are, for some reason, placed there anyway.)

There is no moral to this story, nor is there a clear answer. I would be happy if something would be done about certain teachers like the Biology teacher, who dumps hours of homework on her students each night. Then I wouldn't mind if I had homework. But people are stubborn, and so are policies and teachers.

The Tomb of the Unknown World

Chapter 1

The sun came up over a dead world. The only trace of life was that which danced over the gleaming and now crystal clear water. Lying alone on his uncomfortable bunk, Captain John Barret allowed his mind to wander away from the present. Soon enough he would land and be reminded all too well of the reality and genocide which was occurring daily. It didn't seem like that long ago that he was at home with his family enjoying life on the sunny coast of California. It was the information age and the media had become obsolete. One could find out anything over the Internet at the speed of light. People never turned their computers off anymore. He remembered when he had first heard the horrible news.

Washington D.C. had been bombed. He knew what that meant. Among other things it meant that he would be going back to work soon. He was commanding officer in the special forces of the army. The government had been monitoring the activities of a misguided and heavily armored cult in the Middle East. In the history of the United States, very few times had war ever actually been declared. Likewise, there was no cause to interfere with the affairs of another country.

Ten years ago, Russia broke up into separate nations just as the U.S.S.R. did in the 80's. When they finally made a hostile move by invading the Republic of Moscow and stealing chemical and nuclear weapons from the national armory, it was clear that the time to interfere had come.

Since the turn of the century, the United Nations had been losing power. Even with the strength of powerful nations behind it and the United States' recent proclamation to no longer negotiate with terrorists, things had never been the same since the split up.

When the military discovered their motive, we determined that we were dealing with a misguided group of steadfast communists. And before the U.N. had time to decide upon what action should be taken, the group had been permanently dissolved when a group somehow infiltrated the building and set off a bomb killing all of the diplomats.

How could anyone in the world have such a blatant disregard for human life and order? The name of the ringleader, Cregon Iscoch, and that of Hitler, were now used interchangeably.

With all of our technology, we couldn't do anything. If it had been thirty years ago and we were dealing with China or the former Iraq, we could have locked on a warhead big enough to level the country. But we weren't dealing with an entire army that we could just bomb. Instead we had been put in the position of dealing with radical terrorists at the point in time when the United States had just specifically stated that we would not negotiate with their kind. But millions of innocent lives were in the balance. If we interfere we may risk hurting a populace of women and children. If we don't, they may be killed anyway. And when they bombed Washington it was like a bad dream. The human race and the pride of a nation are a lot alike. We think that we're so secure, and even that technology will save us. But technology improves and when the sun comes up, we're still just as vain as we were the day before.

It seemed utterly amazing that with all of our technology they had managed to level the capital of the most powerful nation in the world. If we were going to stand a chance we were going to have to rethink our defense systems.

He remembered the way things had been the last time he was in a war. It had been years since the Gulf War and still more since Vietnam. That had been a scuffle compared to what we were facing now. In 2003 Sadam Hussein had gone to far and was captured and locked up causing the collapse of the Middle Eastern savagery and creating peace for the time. It seemed rather trite for him to lie there feeling sorry for himself playing the part of the forlorn soldier forged in battle. He was a good commander and the time had come for him to command again.

Once you're killed a person you never really get over it. Unfortunately, it gets a little easier every time until you have no sense of decency left and you're more machine than man.

The Knights of the Square Table

Chapter 12

They settled down for the night in a small clearing to the left of the rapidly diminishing trail. They placed the stone in the middle of the ring that the five bodies made as they slept.

Mike awoke in the middle of the night with a start. There were eerie, low chanting noises coming from somewhere in the woods. He quickly crawled over to Dave. "Dave!" he whispered.

"What...." he mumbled. He sat up quickly when he heard the chanting coming from an unknown source. "What is that?" he asked.

By now, everybody in the clearing was awakened by the commotion that Dave had caused when he awoke.

"Do you know what that noise is, Christopher?" Dave asked quietly, as if to not let his words reach any ears that might be listening to them at that moment.

"No," Christopher responded. The chanting continued, the same few eerie notes over and over again, the same volume, the same length, unchanging.

"It seems to be coming all through the forest," Mike commented. He listened closely but could not determine from where the sound came.

"This might have something to do with Yavin or his servants. After all, this forest was transformed into an evil place by them," Christopher added.

It was getting toward early morning, so the sky was beginning to get lighter in the east. Suddenly, the chanting stopped as the first rays of light broke out over the horizon above the trees.

"Is it my imagination," Mike asked, "or did the strange chanting just stop?"

"No," Dave said. "It just stopped. Probably because the sun came up."

"If it stopped because of that," Katie commented, "it's probably one of Yavin's doings."

"Well, it's stopped for now," Christopher said, "so let's not worry about it any more. I'm not tired anymore. Are any of you?"

Nobody responded, so Christopher assumed that that meant no, and said, "We'd better be moving on. It would be best to get out of the forest as soon as we can."

The rest of the day was uneventful, and everybody again took turns carrying the strange red stone. By the end of the day, everybody welcomed a spot to the right of the trail that actually had some open air above it for a thirty foot radius.

In the middle of the night, the party was awoken again by the same strange chanting that they had heard the night before. Christopher told everyone to ignore it, but nonetheless, nobody slept much that night.

The next day, it seemed to get darker and drearier as they traveled further into the forest. Everybody grew weary as the great weight of the stone seemed to increase ten fold.

Around noon (although in the midst of the forest it was too dark to tell), they came upon a stream that had black, shiny water in it.

"This seems suspicious," Christopher said.

"What should we do?" Katie asked as they drew closer to the water.

"I don't think that we should touch it, let alone drink it," Christopher said.

"Then how are we going to get across?" Dave asked.

"Maybe a little further upstream it gets narrower," Mike offered.

"That sounds like a good idea," Chapin responded. The stream traveled toward what seemed to be south, so they turned the opposite direction and began to travel upstream.

This took them off the trail, a resource that they realized was valuable only after it was gone. It was

slow going because they had to constantly slow down to climb over another log or bush, or to go around a protruding tree.

It had been at least two hours when they realized that it was useless to continue upstream because they would be into the wastes of the north before they found where the stream originated.

"Let's cross," Dave said during a break they had taken for a few moments when they came to a small grove of trees.

"I don't know," Christopher said. "It might be dangerous. We don't know what effect the strange water might have on us."

"I'd rather take the risk than stay here in this dreary place," Mike complained, rather effectively.

"I agree. Let's take our chances," Katie said impatiently.

"OK," Christopher responded hesitantly. "But one of us should go first, so that the rest of us will be unaffected if he or she gets hurt."

"I volunteer," Mike said, stepping off the rock that he had been trying to balance himself on for the last few minutes.

"Just stick your hand in first," Christopher warned.

Mike edged closer to the stream. He was about to put his hand in the water when he noticed a pinpoint of light behind him. The Hadar stone was shining brightly in Katie's hands.

"What could this mean?" Mike turned around and asked Christopher, who was walking around the stone and examining it closely.

"Evil is probably lurking nearby. The stone is reacting to it. Maybe in the stream," Christopher responded.

"Should we still try to cross?" Katie asked.

"I think Katie should go first, because she has the Hadar Stone. It might have some protecting nature that will keep her from harm in the water," Chapin said.

"I hope so," Katie said uneasily as she walked toward the strange lake. When she arrived at the edge, she hesitated for a moment and then continued onward.

Nothing appeared to happen when she touched the water, and she waded across the weak current with no problem. When she reached the other side, everyone was shocked. She wasn't even wet!

"OK, now what about us?" Chapin asked. "The last time we tried to carry the stone, we got shocked."

"Someone should put their hand into the water to see that it's not going to hurt us," Christopher said, and then everyone turned to Mike.

"OK, OK, I'm going," Mike complained and started to move toward the lake. As he was reaching down, he noticed yet another bright flash of light - this time not from the Hadar stone across the lake, but from behind them, in Dave's pocket.

"OK," Mike said. "Now what's that light?"

Dave took the strange red stone out of his pocket to examine it. It was also shining brightly, this time red instead of the bright yellow glare of the Hadar stone. "There's something special about this stone," he observed.

"Maybe this stone can help us, too," Chapin suggested.

"It's worth a try," Dave said, handing the stone to Mike. Mike immediately felt the weight of the stone on him. He took a slow step forward into the water.

"OOOOOOOOOOOUCH!" Mike screamed, drawing his foot back in one quick motion.

"What happened?" Chapin cried fearfully as she rushed, along with the rest of the party, toward Mike, who was clutching his leg as if it were on fire.

Christopher pulled up Mike's pantleg and took a look at the wound. It appeared to be a burn that had been caused by the strange water on his foot. "This is bad," Christopher said, "but not life-threatening." Katie looked on from across the stream.

As Dave was trying to help carry Mike away from the water's edge, his foot accidentally hit a rock

and he fell backward into the strange lake.

"Oh no!" Christopher screamed, practically dropping Mike and rushing to Dave.

Strangely there was no cry from Dave. Instead, as Christopher came toward him, he said, "What happened? Why aren't I burning?"

"This is getting stranger by the minute," Katie said from across the river. She paced back and forth, trying to think of an explanation for this turn of events.

"Maybe the stone Mike was carrying had something to do with his burns," Dave commented.

"It's worth a guess," Chapin said. "Wait a minute. Give me the stone." Christopher took the stone from Mike's half-burned pocket and handed it to Chapin, who proceeded to slowly lower the stone closer to the river. At first, it showed no change; but when she was within a foot of the water, the stone began to shine, first dimly, then brightly enough to light the undersides of the trees around them a reddish color. When the stone was a few inches above the water, Chapin stood up again.

"I think we have our answer now," she said to everybody.

"OK, so we can cross safely, but how do we get the strange stone across?" Mike said, grabbing his leg as another wave of pain swept through him.

"We can throw it," Dave suggested.

"Too risky," Chapin responded. "What if we miss or don't throw the stone far enough? Then it gets washed away, and with it, one of our hopes of defeating Yavin."

"That may be our only choice," Dave sighed.

"Can you think of any alternatives?" Mike said. He attempted to stand up but failed and fell down on his good leg. Christopher went over to help him up. There was no response to Mike's question.

"Who has the best aim?" Christopher asked. Nobody moved for the next minute.

"I'll try," Mike said. He had pitched for years at his old house before he moved as a result of their last adventure.

"Help him up," Christopher said. Chapin went over and helped Mike stand up so that his back was up against a tree and supported enough to stand.

"Here goes," Mike said, doing the best windup he could. The stone soared through the air as if shot out of a rocket. It reached its peak at about the middle of the river. There was great suspense hanging over the group as it made its downward flight toward the opposite shore. Just in time, Katie reached out over the water and caught the stone, saving it from falling into the river no more than a foot from shore.

"Yes!" Mike said. "Good catch!"

Everybody did a quick victory celebration and then decided to attempt to cross the river. The sun was just now beginning to set, casting eerie shadows around the area.

Dave went first. Chapin and Christopher followed behind, carrying Mike, who couldn't walk across the river because of his injured leg. The current was swift but the party was able to cross the river safely. They decided that it was getting too dark to continue, so they stopped and rested for the night.

Around the middle of the night, Christopher was awoken first by the same strange voices that they had heard for the past two nights. Since there wasn't really anything that he could do about it, he just fell back to sleep like he normally would if awakened at his house or an inn during his many travels.

"What's that?" Mike asked immediately upon awakening in the morning. The noises, like the night before, were drawing to a close as the sun rose. Suddenly the sky became noticeably lighter, and the chanting ceased as suddenly as Mike had noticed it.

Inside the forest, everything was still. It looked as if it were going to be a hot day, about 85 degrees, which was almost a record for that far north. Everybody was up a few minutes later. The party's food supply was beginning to run low again, so they set out as quickly as possible to get out of the forest.

Nothing of consequence happened that day until sunset, when they were settling down for their third weary night in the forest. Christopher was telling a rather lame joke about one of his travels.

Dave said, interrupting Christopher, "I'm tired. Let's go to bed now."

"I agree," Katie said. She yawned.

"Okay," said Christopher. "I think I'll lay down, too."

Everyone lay down and quickly fell asleep. They slept soundly until the middle of the night when the strange chanting began for yet another time.

"That chanting's driving me crazy!" Mike said loudly when he was awakened by the noise.

"Let's find out where it's coming from," Dave suggested.

"Maybe it's some secret power of the forest," Mike said fearfully.

"Whatever it is, it seems to be coming from all around us, but it's stronger from that way," Chapin said. She pointed toward the north. Trees there were thick, but now she realized that they were camping at the junction between the main road and what remained of a small path that traveled north. Trees grew around it thickly, and it was pitch dark, not even allowing the light of the moon to shine into the tunnel. (In places, they could see the tops of the trees bathed in moonlight.)

"Should we go that way?" she asked, pointing toward the partially hidden path.

Everybody hesitated for a moment. "It would be senseless if we all went and left our supplies here to the mercy of the forest creatures," Christopher said. "I think it would be best if two of us stayed here to guard the supplies. Then we can meet back here at dawn."

"That sounds good," Dave said. "Who wants to go?" Everybody was hesitant to volunteer. Dave finally said, "OK, I'll go." Katie volunteered next and Chapin followed. Everybody said their goodbyes and the three were on their way.

The first part of the journey was slow going, because the path was worn out in places. As they continued on, it got easier and easier, as the path widened and the trees seemed to lessen. About halfway there, they noticed that the strange stone, which Chapin had been carrying, was now glowing bright red, as if there were some presence nearby.

"This is very strange," Katie remarked for the fifth time.

"I agree," Chapin also responded methodically. It was getting to be a habit that occurred every ten minutes.

After stopping for a break halfway, they finally reached the end of the trail. In front of them stood an enormous stone building, taller than the trees. The trees seemed to not grow within twenty feet of the building. It was a little after midnight, so even though it was pitch black, the building was illuminated by an unknown source.

"What is this?" Katie asked, puzzled. She walked closer, into the sourceless light. The building was so big that if they had tried to walk around it, it would have taken them at least five minutes. The trees seemed to close in around the far half of the building, and that side seemed darker than even the forest itself. The bright light stood in great contrast to the evil, dark feeling that was felt when looking toward the far end.

Chapin followed Katie. Dave followed Chapin. They approached the building from a trail that led to a twenty-foot-high doorway. It was closed by wooden doors that had rotted away in spots with the years, a few large enough for them to crawl through.

As they approached the doors, the red stone began to shine even more brightly. It also appeared that the building was deteriorating from years of not being used. They crawled through a small opening in the right door and were inside.

The place reeked of rotting wood and stagnant air that might not have been breathed for centuries. "It stinks!" was Dave's first reaction as he entered the great room. It was light inside, also coming from an unknown source. The chamber they were in was huge, about twenty feet high and rectangular, stretching to their sides a few hundred feet and in front of them farther than the eye could see. The ceiling was of an ornate fashion, domed, rising ever so slightly as far as they could see.

"This is enormous," Dave exclaimed. Then his tone of voice turned serious as he muttered, "Wonder what this could have been used for..."

"Let's see if there's anything else here," Chapin said. She began walking forward and then stopped.

"The chanting..," she said. "It has stopped."

"It has!" Katie exclaimed. Everybody pondered this for a moment and then began to walk forward. About two or three minutes later, they seemed to be nearing the center of the building. Eventually they came to the point where the dome peaked directly above them.

"Look ahead!" Dave whispered. "It seems to get darker!" He was right. About fifty feet in front of them, the light got dimmer and dimmer until it came to complete blackness at the end of their vision. Dave's whisper echoed throughout the hall as if ghosts were warning them about some danger that lay ahead.

"Should we go on," Katie asked Chapin hesitantly. She thought about this for a moment.

"Do you have the stone?" she asked.

"Yes," Katie said, holding out the strange red stone that shone brightly.

"No. Not that stone," Chapin responded. "The Hadar stone."

"Oh, I have that one too," Katie replied. She pulled out the yellow stone, which was also shining brightly. The yellow stone seemed to penetrate the darkness for more than a few feet ahead of them, a quality that the red stone did not possess.

"Let's go on," Katie said. Chapin nodded, and they continued on, the Hadar stone illuminating the chamber immediately in front of them.

As they advanced in the darkness of the chamber, the Hadar stone, for just a moment, seemed to flicker, but then returned to its regular intensity.

"I have a bad feeling about this..," Dave said uneasily as they progressed into the darkness. A feeling of apprehension engulfed them as they approached the rear wall.

It was completely dark at that end. Suddenly, they saw a statue through the dim light that the Hadar stone gave out.

The statue was of a strange creature that looked like a troll, except gigantic in size and fatter in width. The gruesome thing was grasping a torch, holding it high above their heads. The statue was almost as high as the dome, now sloping toward the back wall.

"This is weird," Katie commented apprehensively.

"Something bad's going to happen. There's something evil here!" Dave said.

"Let's get out of here!" Chapin screamed. Everybody began to run back the way they had come. Suddenly, there was an eerie cackle.

"What is that?" Dave asked, his fear now approaching hysteria. They ran as fast as they could across the vast chamber. They had traversed a quarter of the room when they stopped.

It was still pitch black in front of them. Suddenly, there was a loud bang. The Hadar Stone flickered and went out.

Dave screamed. Katie jumped. They felt for each other's hands and ran as fast as they could. The strange cackle was heard again.

"What's going on?" Dave screamed. "What is this?" Suddenly, they stopped short. A bright light exploded in front of them. They realized that it was the doors, now fully restored, along with the rest of the chamber, as if it had been built yesterday. They slammed shut with a loud, echoing BANG.

The strange chanting began again, increasing in volume all around them. They were at the heart of the chamber, the heart of the forest, the heart of the chanting, the heart of evil. The chanting became deafening. The lights went out, leaving the party in pitch darkness. The red stone in front of them shone the brightest they had seen since they had acquired it.

They ran as far as they could and collapsed in exhaustion, unable to reach the entrance, even if they could, because of the now-locked doors. There was a great presence in the chamber, as the red stone began to shine so brightly that nobody dared look at it. The chanting rose to an incredible volume. Suddenly, it became clearer, and the frightening truth of what was being chanted became apparent.

"Come, Yavin, Come!"

Protecting the Environment: Whose Job Is It Anyway?

(An "Earth Day" Reflection)
by Henry Sokolowski

Well, that's easy. It's everybody's job. You, me, your neighbor, my neighbor, everybody.

Since the first Earth Day in 1970 until today, we have made great strides to clean up our air, water and soil. Yet, 28 years later, there is still more to do and the job gets tougher as our society gets more complex and interdependent. Yet if we are going to leave our children a legacy of clean air, water and soil, we must teach them by example the proper way to live in an environmentally friendly way. Therefore, protecting the environment is clearly everybody's job.

As we celebrate this 28th year since the first Earth Day, here's a few tips to keep in mind as we go through our everyday lives:

Properly maintain your car.

Be energy efficient - turn thermostats down, use energy efficient light bulbs.

Use mass transit or carpool to work.

Keep air conditioners and refrigerators in good running order (CFCs in them can leak out and damage the ozone layer).

Check your house for radon and other pollutants.

Discourage smoking indoors.

Reduce use of pesticides.

Get a professional to assess the risk associated with lead-based paint.

Ensure proper ventilation in your home.

Avoid dumping wastes into the water.

Limit use of pesticides.

Recycle the waste oil from your car.

Plant and landscape your yard (to minimize rainwater runoff and soil erosion).

Divert rain from paved surfaces onto grasses.

Properly dispose of litter and animal wastes.

Dispose of solvents, paints, and pesticides according to their labels.

Compost yard and food wastes.

Recycle bottles, cans and paper products.

Buy recycled products.

Buy products with less packaging.

Pick up all litter.

Dispose of household hazardous wastes in the proper manner.

Use nonhazardous substitutes for household cleaning.

Remember, it's our world and even the smallest thing that we do today will have a significant impact tomorrow.

HAPPY EARTH DAY!

The Olympics

by Steven Conway

Do you like quick Olympic events where two hundredths of a second could mean the difference between a silver medal and a gold medal? If so, speed skating is the event for you! In the XVIII Winter Olympics in Nagano, Japan, participants from seventy-two countries from around the world competed in this event. The distances were 500 meters for men and women to 3,000 meters for women and 5,000 meters for men. Obviously, the race can't begin until the skaters are protected. One of the best speed skaters in the two weeks in Nagano for the United States of America was Christine Witty.

When Christine Witty first wanted to skate, she received a pair of "hand me downs" from her two older brothers. She was angry because, during the winter when every girl had brand new skates, she wore a pair of enormous, repulsive, ugly skates. However, this did not stop her from skating. She persisted in her skating career because she knew she had it in her to reach her goal. In 1996, Witty won the World Cup title in the 1,000 meters, reassuring some Americans who were a little skeptical that there were no talented American speed skaters. She proved everybody wrong! Christine Witty can and will probably be compared to Bonnie Blair, a very accomplished speed skater. Blair captured the 500 and the 1,000 meters in the previous two Olympic games. As a matter of fact, Bonnie Blair, along with Christine Witty's parents and two of her brothers, watched Witty go for the gold during her speed skating runs. Witty took the bronze in the 1500 meters on Monday, the sixteenth of February. She also captured the silver in the 1000 meters on Thursday, the nineteenth of February. After she won the bronze medal in the 1500, she said the bronze would give her confidence for the 1,000.

As you can see, Christine Witty took the speed skating world by storm in Nagano. After she posted her time for her respective run, I'm sure that someone came along doing it quicker by a couple hundredths of a second. That's the chance you take by participating in an Olympic event. Maybe Christine didn't win the

gold, but she sure represented America with pride! I hope that in the 2002 Olympics in Salt Lake City, Utah, she will win the **GOLD** medal for America!

Another Memorable Experience

by Matthew Care

It was the day of my cousin's wedding. It had been quite a trip to the small church in Annapolis. And nothing beats a long trip in a hot car better than a wedding. The service was not very long but it was still boring. (I have reason to believe that the only wedding I won't sleep through will be my own.) The next day was my birthday and so far, it wasn't my most exciting one.

At the reception, things started to pick up. The reception was being held at a hotel/restaurant and there was some time to just talk while the large "party room" was being prepared. All of the adults formed small groups and started to chatter. Most of what was being said was pointless dribble, as far as I was concerned. I busied myself with the cheese platter that was provided while we waited.

Then I ran into my aunt as I was hoping I would. She owns a cabin in New Hampshire. It's made almost entirely of logs. It's quite beautiful and rustic. It's not really meant to be used year-round; but during the summer, when she is in the country, she makes use of it and lets some of the family come to visit. I had been able to go the year before and I was hoping to go again this summer.

It was going to be quite a bit of trouble to get up there. After some careful scheming and a couple of stiff drinks for mom and dad, my parents had agreed on a plan.

By the following afternoon, I was home again. I had only hours to pack. Fortunately I didn't have to pack too much. I was too excited to eat. So I sat back, caught the first half of the late news, and then got into the car. This was the first stage of the best birthday present I ever got.

At 12:35, I took the *Night Owl* out of 30th St. Station, and was on my way to...actually I wasn't sure exactly where.

I found my uncle on the train. He had boarded the train down in Maryland and now we were both embarking on the long trip. There were no real seats available, so I spent the first 4 hours crammed in a booth

in the dining car.

Some time next morning we got off at a small station in the middle of nowhere. We were picked up by my aunt who had started the long drive the morning before. And in another half-day, we were finally there.

The cabin is on a lake across from a campground. All of the property in the area is private. The cabin isn't really on an island, but it might as well be. All of the land behind the property is owned by a logging company. And while it is possible to drive in illegally, it requires a 4x4. There is no running water or electricity. There is a motorboat but no motor. The most modern things we have are a propane tank and an outhouse. But that is what makes it so great. I've never been the outdoors type. I hated scout camp and I never had any other nature experiences. But I cannot begin to convey the feeling of freedom I get when I look out over the lake and see nothing but water and hear nothing but nature all around. Some people take vacations to get away from everything. But, no matter what I do or where I go, my mind is never free. I always feel like there's something I should be doing. For me, it's a fact of life and I'll get over it. But, when I'm drifting alone in a canoe at sunset, watching the loons on the lake and the Bald Eagles soaring, I get a feeling of inner peace. If freedom were something tangible, then I was floating in it!

For the next week, I went to bed and awoke with the sun. I spent my time swimming, rowing, fishing, or doing nothing at all. The best part, though, was that I wasn't one of the kids. In our family, "you ain't grown up, until you're married." I tried to keep the little ones out of trouble. They're a couple of little brats and they love attention, good or bad. I don't know how anyone can put up with them. But, when they went to bed, I stayed up with my aunt and uncle, playing cards.

Time stood still until the day we had to leave. We prearranged for a motorboat to pick us up and take us back over to the other side. Leaving was the only bad part of the stay. It just gets better every year. And I hope above all else that I get to go back.

Achilles

by Matthew Care

Achilles was the son of Peleus and Thetis, the sea nymph. His mother wanted to make him invulnerable. There are two myths as to how she did this. The first is that she put him to sleep in the fire and fed him ambrosia. The second, more well known, and more logical, myth is that she dipped him in the River Styx, but the water did not touch his heel by which she was holding him, and thus the heel was vulnerable. He was fated either to die gloriously in the Trojan War or to stay at home and live a life without honor.

The Trojan War was started by the abduction of Helen, wife of Menelaus, king of Greece. In response to this outrage, the king drafted an army and went to war with Troy. Achilles may very well have gone to fight, but his mother, fearing for him, sent him to the court of Lycomedes and dressed him like a woman, so that he would not have to go to war. But being an important member of the army, he was missed. Odysseus tricked him into blowing his cover, then took him to the encampment.

In battle, Achilles was second only to Odysseus as a warrior and was a better one still than Hector, the greatest Trojan warrior. For 9 years, both sides were equally victorious, as the gods often played favorites. And what one god could do, another could do better. Throughout the entire war, heavenly influence was a major factor.

Agamemnon, brother of Menelaus, stole the daughter of the priest of Apollo. This angered Apollo, alienating him from the Greeks, and causing him to rain down arrows of fire which caused disease, killing many Greek soldiers. The army was unable to defend itself against both disease and the Trojan soldiers. To appease Apollo, Agamemnon was forced to return the priest's daughter. But, he then stole a maiden of Achilles. Achilles became depressed and his mother told him to run away from the war. She then pulled some strings with the gods, and got both armies to charge into battle, hoping that the result, no matter the winner, would be peace.

Instead, the armies decided that the fairest way to end the conflict would be to let Menelaus face Paris in combat. Aphrodite, appointing herself as Paris's guardian angel, saved him as he was about to be killed. She carried him off to recover but no one could find him. With his disappearance, Menelaus was declared the winner and peace was underway.

But Athena was a strong supporter of Greece and she would not settle for anything less than Troy being burned to the ground. She used her godly charm to make a Trojan soldier take a shot at Menelaus. This was another outrage, and they went right back to war!

In a desperate time for Greece, the army needed a good leader. They needed Achilles! But he was still elsewhere dwelling on his injustice. Although Achilles would not fight, he gave his armor to his best friend, Patroclus, so that he might rally the troops. But, Patroclus was killed in combat by Hector, and Hector refused to give back the body for a funeral. This was the greatest injustice Achilles could have done to him. It might have led to suicide, but instead, his mother gave him new armor, which was crafted by a god.

Achilles, filled with a new vigor for war, led the army, pushing the front back to the Trojan walls. He found Hector and killed him in combat. Then, he tied the desecrated body to his chariot, and dragged it around the city.

Having acquired the body of Patroclus, Achilles made him a proper funeral pyre. And, with Hector's death, he knew that his was fated to come soon. Achilles faced death as all Greek warriors did. He once said, "...I will accept death when it comes." After Priam, the king of Troy, begged Achilles, he was finally given the abused body of his son.

Achilles did die soon after that. Apollo had given up on Hector before he was even killed, but he had plenty of other things to be angry about. From the wall of the city, Paris shot an arrow, guided by Apollo, which hit Achilles in the only vulnerable place on his body, his heel! The expression, "Achilles' Heel," is still used to imply someone's fatal flaw.

Achilles' body was easily recovered and given a proper funeral. His remains were put in the same urn

as those of his very dear friend, Patroclus.

Achilles has been ranked as one of the greatest Greek heros and the myth of *The Iliad* is one of the most interesting that I have ever encountered.