Shoemaker Village

Volume 27 - April 1999

SHOEMAKER VILLAGE TO BE CANCELED UNLESS MORE CONTRIBUTIONS RECEIVED!

-See Editor's Pages for Details



The Knights of the Square Table continues with a bang! Don't miss the beginning of part II!

PLUS!

Part IV of *The Wit of Steven Wright* included!

Spring arrives after a huge winter storm cripples the area!

Results of the *1998: Best Article of the Year* Award inside!



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*The Editor's Pages have been expanded to three pages this month to include the results of last month's survey.

Editor's Pages

Information you should know

Welcome to all of our subscribers to another month of *Shoemaker Village*! We hope that you will enjoy this issue as much as issues in the past.

Unfortunately, as you have probably noticed, the size of each issue is dwindling due to lack of support by our readers. Since our all-time high in December 1998, the *Village* has been losing about five or six pages each month because we receive no contributions despite the numerous pleas and reminders that are sent out. **We are sorry to report that we will be forced to cancel *Shoemaker Village* unless more contributions are received for upcoming issues**. Though this may sound like a drastic step, no publication can continue without enough content to continue it.

Because of this need, we will be extending a special offer to anyone who contributes within the next month: in return, we will supply you with a three-month, FREE subscription to the *Village*! If you are already a subscriber, we will extend your subscription for an additional three months. We hope to be hearing from you soon with your writing.

Many readers do not understand what will be accepted as a contribution. In short: we will accept pieces on any topic (as long as it is not obscene). Most needed are short stories and editorials. We will also accept jokes, comic strips or artwork, news in the neighborhood (very much needed), and even stories or essays written for work or school. Of course, if you wish, you may indicate on your piece that you wish your writing to be published anonymously, and we will do so.

If you contribute, you will be receiving exposure to over 60 readers in the area. In addition, all comments on your writing will be forwarded to you if you want to improve your skills.

To contribute, please send your contributions to the address on the Acknowledgments page by the date shown for the publication of the next issue. If you have a computer and would be willing to type your writing, attach your contributions to an E-Mail letter, being sure to include your name in the message so we can credit you a free subscription. We sincerely hope that, for the benefit of all our subscribers, we are not forced to cancel the *Village* and will be able to continue. Unfortunately, we will not be able to do so unless we receive your contributions. Thank you for your time and consideration, and the editors hope that you will contribute something soon.

And now on to other news: the results of the voting on the survey that was sent out last month. They are listed on the next page. As you can see from them, Assistant Editor Matthew Care had another strong showing, taking home the *1998: Best Article of the Year* award. Coming in close second place for the award (by only one vote) was *1998: The Year in Review*, included in December's issue. Congratulations to Matthew for receiving this honor.

As you can see, most of the sections rated highly, with the exception of The Discussion Forum, which was slightly lower, most likely due to lack of contributions.

One part of the results to note was that nobody voted a three on the 1 to 5 scale for *The Knights of the Square Table*, and there were very few 2's and 4's, indicating that opinion on the novel is mixed. However, a resounding 91% believed that it should continue to be published in the *Village.* A surprise in the survey is that 48% of the readers who voted said that they would rather receive a large print copy in the future. Though we explored this option before and thought that support would be minimal, we will be working to publish large print copies soon. Thank you to all who sent in this informative survey.

Results of *Shoemaker Village* Survey (March 1999)

Section Ratings (averaged) on a scale of 1 to 5

Editor's Pages 4.0
Neighborhood News 3.7
Humor from the Village Square 4.4
The Discussion Forum 3.3
Short Stories 3.5
***The Knights of the Square Table* 3.9**

Yes/No Question Answers

Do you do the puzzles that are included in each issue? YES 87% NO 13%
Do you enjoy contests such as the "picture of the month"? YES 65% NO 35%
Would your family prefer a "large print" copy in the future? YES 48% NO 52%
Have you ever considered contributing? YES 76% NO 24%
Do you believe that the current price of one subscription is too high? YES 34% NO 66%
Should we continue to publish novels such as *The Knights of the Sq. Tbl.*? YES 91% NO 9%

Winner of the 1998: Best Article of the Year Award

***The Storm* (Matthew Care, July 1998)**

As most of you have probably noticed, the *Village* webpages have hit a snag over the past month as Assistant Editor and Webmaster Matthew Care has been swamped with projects for his English class. However, he hopes that the pages will be fixed by the time this issue is published or shortly thereafter. Recently, the webpages have been receiving about 2 hits a day from people using search engines. Because of this, we hope to expand the site, making it easier to use, and less prone to crashes. Please bear with us while we make these modifications, and we hope to E-Mail our mailing list as soon as this update is complete. If you wish to sign up for this list, visit our webpages at **http://come.to/ShoemakerVillage** or E-Mail us at **shoevill@aol.com**.

And now on to our usual feature, the **Picture of the Month**. Last month's photo was correctly guessed by long-time subscriber Genevieve Sokolowski. The picture was taken in 1991 of Assistant Editor Matthew Care when he was eight years old. Congratulations to Genevieve, who will have an extra month added to her subscription.



Do you know who the baby in this picture is?

This month's picture should pose more of a challenge for you, our readers, to guess. Though there are three people in the picture, the one that will net you the prize is the baby in the middle. The first to guess this month's picture, as usual, will receive a free month's subscription. Guesses can be submitted through personal contact, mail, E-Mail, or the *Village* webpages. Good luck!

That's all for this month. Thank you for continuing to subscribe to *Shoemaker Village*. Enjoy this issue, and we hope to be receiving your contributions soon!

Acknowledgments

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New subscribers this month

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TOTAL NUMBER OF CURRENT READERS: 63

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The next issue of *Shoemaker Village* will be published on Friday, April 30, 1999.
All contributions for the next issue must be received by Monday, April 26, 1999.

Upcoming topics in **The Discussion Forum:**
May 1999: Does a child's upbringing affect their success in school and later in life?

Coming Next Issue

Volume 28 - May 1999

Spring will be in full gear and we'll keep you updated on the latest neighborhood news, along with plans for the summer!
The Knights of the Square Table continues! The journey continues next month!
The *Village* celebrates its 2nd aniversary! Don't miss the special sections to be included!
Don't miss The Discussion Forum! It's sure to be interesting!
Lots of news, stories, articles, and more!

ALL IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF *SHOEMAKER VILLAGE*!

Puzzle Page

L	M	O	S	S	O	L	B	G	O	L	F	G	G	K
P	A	P	V	P	A	N	S	Y	N	N	N	W	T	E
F	U	N	Y	W	R	N	E	I	Z	I	I	D	B	F
U	G	N	I	H	S	I	F	B	T	S	F	B	L	B
P	S	O	A	D	C	H	N	N	T	N	S	O	O	U
S	H	O	W	E	R	Y	I	G	E	E	W	N	O	R
B	B	S	P	A	L	A	R	K	A	E	L	I	M	R
T	U	E	D	L	P	C	C	R	R	R	Y	O	C	S
U	D	I	I	W	A	I	P	S	E	G	D	N	I	N
T	S	L	A	R	H	N	B	H	P	H	R	E	B	V
H	A	F	E	C	U	T	T	E	L	R	C	A	N	H
C	L	O	L	I	N	H	U	S	E	O	O	N	S	S
H	X	X	B	Z	F	P	L	E	U	S	X	U	A	S
A	W	Z	A	N	V	M	I	E	Q	H	B	K	T	R
X	I	K	L	C	Q	R	P	G	G	Z	S	E	C	E

Bees
Bloom
Blossom
Boat
Buds
Burrs
Bush
Cardinal
Cherry
Chicken
Clean Up
Field
Fishing
Flies
Flowers
Garden
Geese
Golf
Geese
Greens
Hyacinth
Lettuce
Lilac
Onion
Painting
Pansy
Phlox
Plants
Radish
Ranch
Robin
Roofing
Shower
Spring
Sprout
Tulip
Violet

Neighborhood News

April 1999

WINTER STORM BURIES AREA; SCHOOLS CLOSED

All throughout the week of March 8, forecasters predicted that a winter storm would hit the area that Sunday. Many residents, however, believed that this storm, like most others this winter, would narrowly miss them. Fortunately, they were wrong, and the snowstorm came as planned.

For the first time in months, forecasts were correct, and 5.5 inches of snow fell, making this storm the second biggest of this winter. The only bigger (and more damaging) storm that affected the neighborhood occurred on January 8, when almost 2 inches of sleet and freezing rain fell, springing leaks in the roofs of many houses.



Snow blanketed the area, closing schools the following day.

Upper Moreland Schools, along with many others in the area, were closed on Monday, March 15, primarily due to a power outage that happened in the early morning hours. However, power was restored to most of the area at approximately 6:50 that morning, before classes were even scheduled. Later in the day, many parents wondered why a 2-hour late arrival was not scheduled because temperatures in the lower 40s cleared the roads of snow. Indeed, Philadelphia county schools were opened without delay because of the less severe conditions in that area.

One aspect of the storm that disappointed many was the changeover to rain which occurred when warm air from the south surged in over the neighborhood around 1:00 on Monday morning. For the rest of the night, heavy rain pelted down, diminishing the snowfall totals which could have been well in excess of 8 inches had no rain fallen that night.



By March 17, only small traces of white remained on lawns.

The storm was not without its consequences, however. Around 10:00 on Sunday, March 14, two bright, blue-white flashes lit up the night sky as heavy snow fell in the neighborhood. Soon after, sirens of the Willow Grove Volunteer Fire Company were heard as fire trucks responded to what appeared to be power problems.

Unfortunately, the snow rapidly began to melt soon after, reducing it to slush that took days to completely disappear. The snowstorm was followed by a heat wave that lasted for two days, reviving the area from the dead of winter.

"I wanted the snow to fall before," said neighbor Henry Sokolowski when asked, "but now I'll be happy if the spring comes soon."

For the season, the area received slightly less than 12 inches of wintry precipitation. In an average winter, 22.6 inches falls, a number that can vary greatly from one year to the next. Therefore, 1999 is the third consecutive year that the neighborhood has had a less-than-average amount of snowfall.

We'll be sure to keep you updated in the event of any late-season storms as soon as they happen.

OTHER NEWS TIDBITS

-UM HOOPS will finish out its season on Saturday, March 27, with its annual Championship Day ceremonies. During the day, the two best teams from each age group will square off for the trophy. The results of the event will be published in next month's issue.

Humor from the Village Square

STUPID CRIMINALS

A motorist was unknowingly caught in an automated speed trap that measured his speed using radar and photographed his car. He later received in the mail a ticket for $40 and a photo of his car. Instead of payment, he sent the police department a photograph of $40. Several days later, he received a letter from the police that contained another picture . . . of handcuffs. The motorist promptly sent the money for the fine.

Drug Possession Defendant Christopher Jansen, on trial in March in Pontiac, Michigan, said he had been searched without a warrant. The prosecutor said the officer didn't need a warrant because a "bulge" in Christopher's jacket could have been a gun. Nonsense, said Christopher, who happened to be wearing the same jacket that day in court. He handed it over so the judge could see it. The judge discovered a packet of cocaine in the pocket and laughed so hard he required a five-minute recess to compose himself.

A pair of Michigan robbers entered a record shop nervously waving revolvers. The first one shouted, "Nobody move!" When his partner moved, the startled first bandit shot him.

A Charlotte, NC, man, having purchased a case of very rare, very expensive, cigars, insured them against fire, among other things.

Within a month, having smoked his entire stockpile of cigars and without having made even his first premium payment on the policy, the man filed a claim against the insurance company. In his claim, the man stated the cigars were lost "in a series of small fires."

The insurance company refused to pay, citing the obvious reason that the man had consumed the cigars in the normal fashion. The man sued . . . and won. In delivering the ruling, the judge, agreeing that the claim was frivolous, stated nevertheless that the man held a policy from the company in which it had warranted that the cigars were insurable and also guaranteed that it would insure against fire, without defining what it considered to be "unacceptable fire," and was obligated to pay the claim.

Rather than endure a lengthy and costly appeal process, the insurance company accepted the ruling and paid the man $15,000 for the rare cigars he lost in "the fires." After the man cashed the check, however, the company had him arrested on 24 counts of arson. With his own insurance claim and testimony from the previous case being used against him, the man was convicted of intentionally burning his insured property and sentenced to 24 months in jail and a $24,000 fine.

BILL AND HILLARY

Bill and Hillary are out driving in the country near Hillary's hometown. They are low on fuel, so Bill pulls into a gas station for a fill-up.

The attendant comes out and begins to pump gas into the 'first couple's' tank. As he is doing this, he looks into the passenger window. "Hey, Hillary. We used to date in high school, do you remember me?" he asks.

They chat for a few minutes, Bill pays and the 'first couple' leaves.

As they drive, Bill is feeling very proud of himself and looks over at Hillary. "You used to date that guy? Just think what it would be like if you had married him," he says smugly.

Hillary looks at Bill and shrugs. Then she replies, "Well, I guess you'd be pumping gas and he would be the President."

UNIQUE DEFENSE

A lawyer defending a man accused of burglary tried this creative defense:

"My client merely inserted his arm into the window and removed a few trifling articles. His arm is not himself, and I fail to see how you can punish the whole individual for an offense committed by his limb."

"Well put," the judge replied. "Using your logic, I sentence the defendant's arm to one year's imprisonment. He can accompany it or not, as he chooses." The defendant smiled.

With his lawyer's assistance, he detached his artificial limb, laid it on the bench, and walked out of the courtroom.

THE WIT OF STEVEN WRIGHT (Part IV)

For a while I didn't have a car . . . I had a helicopter. No place to park it, so I just tied it to a lamp post and left it running.

I hooked up my accelerator pedal in my car to my brake lights. I hit the gas, people behind me stop, and I'm gone.

I replaced the headlights in my car with strobe lights, so it looks like I'm the only one moving.

I play the harmonica. The only way I can play is if I get my car going really fast and stick it out the window. I've been arrested three times for practicing.

I put a new engine in my car, but forgot to take the old one out. Now my car goes 500 miles per hour. The harmonica sounds amazing.

I watched the Indy 500, and I was thinking that, if they left earlier, they wouldn't have to go so fast.

I had to stop driving my car for a while. The tires got dizzy.

I want to start a car repair shop. I already have the air for the tires.

My neighbor has a circular driveway. He can't get out.

I used to work in a fire hydrant factory. You couldn't park anywhere near the place.

I have an answering machine in my car. It says, "I'm home now. But leave a message and I'll call when I'm out."

Is my car the only one in America where someone breaks in and turns up my radio every time I park?

I saw a sign: "Rest Area 25 Miles". That's pretty big. Some people must be really tired.

I bought this thing for my car. You put it on your car, it sends out this little noise, so when you drive through the woods, deer won't run in front of your car. I installed it backwards by accident. Now I'm driving down the street with a herd of deer chasing me. Those were the days.

I like to pick up hitchhikers. When they get in the car, I say, "Put on your seat belt. I want to try something. I saw it once in a cartoon, but I think I can do it."

I decided to leave and go to California, so I packed up my Salvador Dali print of two blindfolded dental hygienists trying to make a circle on an Etch-a-Sketch, and I headed for the highway and began hitching. Within three minutes I got picked up by one of those huge trailer trucks carrying 20 brand new cars. I climbed up the side of the cab and opened the door. The guy said, "I don't have much room up here. Why don't you get into one of the cars out back." So I did. And he was really into picking people up because he picked up 19 more. We all had our own cars. Then he went 90 miles per hour and we all got speeding tickets.

A cop stopped me for speeding. He said, "Why were you going so fast?" I said, "See this thing my foot is on? It's called an accelerator. When you push down on it, it sends more gas to the engine. The whole car just takes right off. And see this thing? This steers it."

I was going 70 miles an hour and got stopped by a cop who said, “Do you know the speed limit is 55 miles per hour?” “Yes, officer, but I wasn't going to be out that long...”

One time a cop pulled me over for running a stop sign. He said, “Didn't you see the stop sign?” I said, “Yeah, but I don't believe everything I read.”

I was driving down the street at 150 miles per hour with a friend of mine on cruise control. Both of us were in the back seat. The police pulled us over. They don't know who to arrest, nobody's driving. So, they arrested us both. I'm on the witness stand. You know the rest.

Here's a good thing to say to the police the next time they stop you. “License and registration, please.” “Hermits have no peer pressure.” “License and registration, please.” “Whenever I think about the past, it just brings back so many memories.” “License and registration, please.” “There's a fine line between fishing and standing on the shore looking like an idiot. Wouldn't you say, Officer?” “License and registration, please.” “What's another word for Thesaurus?” See the cop have a nervous breakdown: “I was just trying to give him a ticket.”

We were in Salino, Utah, when we were arrested for not going through a green light. We pleaded “maybe”. I asked the judge if he knew what time it is, he did, and I said, “No further questions.”

I went to court for a parking ticket. I pleaded insanity. I said, “Your honor, why would anyone in their right mind park in the passing lane?”

When I get real bored, I like to drive downtown and get a great parking spot, then sit in my car and count how many people ask me if I'm leaving.

Yesterday I parked my car in a tow-away zone... When I came back the entire area was missing.

I used to be an airline pilot. I got fired because I kept locking the keys in the plane. They caught me on an 80 foot stepladder with a coat hanger.

One night a jet flew a little bit too close to my house. I was walking from the living room to the kitchen, and the stewardess told me to sit down.

When I go, I'm flying Air Bizarre. It's a good airline. You buy a one-way round trip ticket. You leave any Monday, and they bring you back the previous Friday. That way you still have the weekend.

So I get off the plane and I forget to take off my seat-belt and I'm dragging the plane through the terminal... The wings are knocking people over...

I have a friend named Dennis. Both of his parents were midgets, but he isn't a midget. He's a midget-dwarf. He's two inches tall. He's the one who poses for trophies.

A friend of mine is into Voodoo Acupuncture. You don't have to go. You'll just be walking down the street, and... Ooooohhhhhh, that's much better...

I had a friend who was a clown. When he died, all his friends went to the funeral in one car.

I owed my friend George $25 for about three weeks. The whole time I had the money on me -- he didn't know it. I was walking through New York City, 2:30 in the morning and got held up. He said, “Gimme all your money.” I said, “Wait a minute.” I said, “George, here's the 25 dollars I owe you.” Then the thief took a thousand dollars out of his own money and he gave it to George. At gunpoint, he made me borrow a thousand dollars from George.

I'd like to sing you a song now about my old girlfriend. It's called, “They'll Find Her When the Leaves Blow Away 'Cause I'm Not Raking 'Til Spring.”

My girlfriend asked me how long I was going to be away on this tour. I said, “the whole time.”

My girlfriend does her nails with white-out. When she's asleep, I go over there and write misspelled words on them.

So I figured I'd leave the area, because I had no ties there anyway except for this girl I was seeing. We had conflicting attitudes: I really wasn't into meditating and she wasn't really into being alive. I told her I knew when I was going to die because my birth certificate has an expiration date.

I can remember the first time I had to go to sleep. Mom said, “Steven, time to go to sleep.” I said, “But I don't know how.” She said, “It's real easy. Just go down to the end of tired and hang a left.” So I went down to the end of tired, and just out of curiosity I hung a right. My mother was there, and she said “I thought I told you to go to sleep.”

I hate it when my foot falls asleep during the day because that means it's going to be up all night.

My girlfriend's so intense. She woke me up the other night and asked, “If you could tell exactly when and how you were going to die, would you want to know?” “Heck no,” I said, “Why?” “Doesn't matter, just go back to sleep...”

When I woke up this morning, my girlfriend asked me, “Did you sleep well?” I said, “No, I made a few mistakes.”

I was trying to daydream, but my mind kept wandering.

One night I walked home very late and fell asleep in somebody's satellite dish. My dreams showed up on TVs all over the world.

I once was once arrested for walking in someone else's sleep.

It's a good apartment because they allow pets. I have a Shetland pony named Nikkie. Last summer Nikkie was involved in a bizarre electrolysis accident. All her hair was removed except for her tail. Now I rent her out to Hare Krishna family picnics.

My roommate got a pet elephant. Then it got lost. It's in the apartment somewhere.

Curiosity killed the cat, but for a while I was a suspect.

If toast always lands butter-side down, and cats always land on their feet, what happen if you strap toast on the back of a cat and drop it?

I bought a dog the other day... I named him Stay. It's fun to call him... “Come here, Stay! Come here, Stay!” He went insane. Now he just ignores me and keeps typing. He's an East German Shepherd. Very disciplined.

I put contact lenses in my dog's eyes. They had little pictures of cats on them. Then I took one out and he ran around in circles.

The other day, I was walking my dog around my building... on the ledge. Some people are afraid of heights. Not me, I'm afraid of widths.

I spilled spot remover on my dog. He's gone now.

I don't like dogs . . . I keep getting mustard on my catching glove.

Last year I went fishing with Salvador Dali. He was using a dotted line. He caught every other fish.

There's a fine line between fishing and standing on the shore looking like an idiot.

If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the precipitate.

(Referring to a glass of water:) I mixed this myself. Two parts H, one part O. I don't trust

anybody!

They say we're 98% water. We're that close to drowning... (Picks up his glass of water from the stool...) I like to live on the edge...

I bought some powdered water, but I don't know what to add to it.

I was born by Caesarean section... But not so you'd notice. It's just that when I leave a house, I go out through the window.

Baseball '99

As we start the 1999 baseball season, a few expectations have already been made before the first pitch. Can Mark McGwire hit 70 home runs again? Will the New York Yankees repeat as world champions with new star pitcher Roger Clemens? It looks to be a very interesting 1999 Major League Baseball season.

I guess the only right place to start would be with the local team - the Philadelphia Phillies. Last year they made a huge improvement with many last inning comebacks and the stellar playing of Rico Brogna at 1st base and Scott Rolen at 3rd base. For most of the year, the Phillies were a contender for the National League wild-card position. Unfortunately, they made a huge drop near the end of the season and were pushed out of the running. With the addition of starting pitcher Chad Ogea and closer Jeff Brantley, along with the Phillies draft pick Pat Burrell, the Phillies have a good shot to be the wild-card team for the National League.

The defending world champion New York Yankees have an excellent chance of repeating. I don't see a team in all of baseball that could come close to them. They have an all-around good team. With Tino Martinez at 1st base, Derek Jeter at shortstop, Paul O'Neill in Right Field, and star pitcher Roger Clemens, the New York Yankees can't be beat. Star manager Joe Torre has to be very happy that he has an excellent bunch of players under him. If a team does defeat them this year, it will have to be a team with an excellent player at every position.

Of course, everybody is talking about Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa and their chase for homerun supremacy. I must say that I had a lot of fun watching Mark and Sammy hit homerun after homerun. I was right in front of my television when Mark hit homerun number 62. It was a little ironic that Mark McGwire's record-breaking homerun was the shortest homerun he hit out of the 70. Mark has biceps that are the size of me. I don't think it was fair for pitchers to walk him almost everytime he was up to bat. It just shows that pitchers are afraid of him - they really shouldn't be. A

pitcher might strike him out, but they are just to chicken to try it. It will be very interesting to see if Mark McGwire can break his own record in '99.

Overall, the 1999 baseball season looks to be very interesting. The two-man race between Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa is going to be the highlight of the year. Somebody down the road will probably break the seventy homerun plateau that Mark McGwire set last year. It is possible that the Phillies will be the National League Wild Card participant. All these ideas and more will be unveiled starting in April 1999. Play Ball!

A Very Uninformed Article about Baseball

Last September, as the home run chase between Mark McGuire and Sammy Sosa was drawing to a close, Assistant Editor Matthew Care suggested that we include a topic in the Discussion Forum to allow people to express their opinions on the subject. However, since then, a lot has changed. The *Village* has been going through a difficult time gaining writing contributions. As you can see, there are only two pieces included in the Forum this month, Matthew himself not even wanting to write. And since I'm not an expert on baseball as Steven Conway is, I can't even begin to make predictions on what will happen this year.

However, there wasn't a person in America during the last two months of last year's baseball season that did not know that the race for the homerun record was going on. Many fans followed it feverishly, wondering exactly when it would be that the record-breaking home run would be hit. It is ironic that McGuire's 61st home run was the shortest of them all, because it made a spectacle out of the game. That night, some of my mom's long-time friends had been over the house while they talked about the beginning of religious education the next Wednesday. The minute the homerun was hit, they happened to be closing the door as they were leaving when my dad called them back in to see the replays of the feat. For hours, all that was talked about on the news was that homerun, played over and over. Tributes to famous baseball players were shown. Even high-ranking politicians acknowledged the record breakers, as shown in President Clinton's State of the Union address in January.

For years, that day will be remembered in baseball history. But as the season fades, many people begin to ask another question: *will the record be broken again?* I believe that the answer to this question is a yes, it's only a matter of time. When the record was first set, nobody believed that it would *ever* be broken. All types of records are being demolished every day. This is because people always want a challenge and will try to better themselves no matter what happens to stand in the way. This is the opposite of laziness, the only thing that keeps everybody from just sitting down and giving

up when things get too hard. (Unfortunately, there are still those that are lazy, but that's another story also.)

These are just my feelings on these subjects. If you want a hardcore baseball discussion, flip back to Mr. Conway's story. But it took a lot of trying for those men to get where they are today, and they deserve to be congratulated.

More About Laziness

Last month, I contributed an article on laziness to the *Village* as part of its Discussion Forum topic. However, after writing the article and having it published, I discovered that there are many more examples of laziness in our everyday lives that would be worth bringing to your attention.

Have you ever noticed how almost *everybody* is late when going to places? Go to any church and watch the people walk in ten or fifteen minutes late. Attend a concert at one of the Upper Moreland Schools and attendees arrive as the orchestra is playing its first song. Even in school, all you have to do is look at an absentee list and look at the list of LU (Unexcused latenesses) names to see that there is a problem. What I find most interesting is how students, not caring about the time, delay in the halls before homeroom is scheduled to start, and as the bell begins to chime, run like mad for the doors of the rooms. But many teachers ignore this for some reason or another, further amplifying the problem.

This Monday, I walked into trigonometry class expecting that this course would be like any other class of the year. However, about halfway through the class, as the teacher announced a surprise homework check, I was almost "embarassed" to find that over *half the class* had not completed their homework! One of the reasons that some claimed was that an English report had been assigned and was due that day. When asked, these students were hesitant to respond that, not only had they had the entire weekend to do both assignments, but that the project had been assigned the *previous week*! Because they procrastinated, they found no time to finish the math homework. But by far the worst part of this experience was that some people had not even begun the homework, even when the teacher had given *30 minutes* of class time on Friday morning to start it early. If that isn't laziness, I don't know what is!

Another example: physical education at UMHS. It probably isn't just the Upper Moreland High School that has students that are lazy, but the stress placed on sports and gym is probably higher

than most schools. As many have remembered from previous articles, I was held off the honor roll two times last year because of my low gym grades. Fortunately, the teacher I currently have does a good job of being fair and grading on how hard you try, not how well you do on the fitness tests. But as in all things, there are some people who just choose to slack off. For example, some people get thrown out of the class because they just won't participate. There is a clear difference between not trying and not being good at gym, and most of the people who are on the fine line are not trying. Those who try their hardest should be congratulated.

The other examples of laziness are countless. My mom complains that when she is driving, and people are too lazy to scrape the snow off the roofs of their cars, the snow slides off the cars and on to her windshield, an example of laziness that could turn fatal. Another petty example is how people throw cigarette butts on the ground instead of walking a few extra feet to throw them away.

The reason that *I* am most bugged by laziness, however, is because my family is always late. I always try to make it a point to be on time to things, most likely because my mom always seems to run behind schedule. I hate it most when people show up a few minutes late. But these things are easy to change; just get prepared to leave for the place you are going to a few minutes earlier. But unfortunately, people are lazy and want to sleep in a few minutes extra.

Driving at 16: Is it Right?

By Stephen Sokolowski

Over the past few months, there has been much controversy over what should be done about irresponsible driving by young adults. Some people say that extra driving training should be enforced before teens are allowed to take to the road. Others believe that it is night driving that is increasing the problems among this age group. Still others hold the opinion that the age that youths are allowed to get their permits should be raised to 18. Whatever is to be done, most people agree: something has to be done to stop this silent epidemic.

Currently, there is a bill that was proposed in the state of Pennsylvania that would raise the driving age to 18. Needless to say, there are many arguments for and against this cause, but I believe that the pros for imposing this change drastically outnumber the cons in this issue.

First, statistics show that the accident rate per certain number of cars peaks at around age 17. Many lives that were involved in these accidents could be saved if the required age for being able to operate a vehicle were changed. In addition, some novice drivers practice irresponsible habits, placing others at risk as well. By changing the age-old rules that are currently in effect, all citizens can be ensured a safe trip on the road once and for all.

Sometime, a few weeks ago, my driver's ed teacher mentioned an important point (which later inspired me to write this): How many students in the 16-17 year-old range actually *need* to drive and own a car? A lot of people like to drive once in a while, but does anybody in this age group require driving as a skill that they *must* use everyday? Excluding driving to and from school (take the bus), going to the mall (walk), meeting your friends at the movies (have your parents drop you off), among other things, it is hard to name one circumstance where it is absolutely necessary that a teenager who is 16 drive a car.

As a result of the expenses incurred in driving and upkeeping a vehicle, many students find it necessary to work after school. If a student spends three or four hours working after school, along with

additional commuting time, it most likely takes a serious investment to own a car. Unfortunately, this leaves no time for schoolwork and extracurricular activities, which are overly emphasized in today's world and, therefore, extremely important for the future.

Many drivers who drive at 16 years of age are simply inexperienced. After being forced to watch numerous videos of shows such as *Primetime: Live* and *48 Hours* in Driver's Ed class (which, by the way, is required for all UMHS students, for those of you who don't know), I now see the point. These videos show young adult drivers running red lights, taking their eyes off the road, causing accidents, blasting through stop signs, and more: all the more evidence that drivers at that age are too inexperienced. ***Forty-eight percent*** *of 16-year-old drivers are involved in accidents each year!* However, if the age to learn to drive were raised by 2 years from 16 to 18 as is proposed, the roads would be much safer.

In conclusion, it is very important that we raise the driving age immediately to protect the roads from reckless and inexperienced drivers. Not only would it eliminate many of the problems youths today face, it will make our life much safer while driving.

Teachers and Students

By Matthew Care

Many kids today miss the importance of school. "I had kind of a rough morning, so I'm going home after lunch." This is not acceptable. School isn't fun. People who think so are crazy. But school is important and it's required. Another popular opinion is that, if you don't like a teacher, you misbehave and slack off in that class. This is only hurting the student. I guarantee that some teachers could care less if you pass or fail. The truly good teachers do care and will help a student who isn't accomplishing everything they are capable of. It's self-destructive to cheat yourself of the best education you can get. That's just something to think about.

There is a major problem with the respect students show for their teachers. To be published next month is an article by Stephen Sokolowski. It is his opinion that teachers directly affect the behavior and achievements of the students that they teach. For example, if a teacher is boring, the class will be boring and therefore a dreaded part of one's day. If a teacher is exciting and connects with the students, then the class will be exciting and enjoyable. I think that teachers are not a cause of how one views a class, but rather an effect. I have an uncommon love for math. I've never had a math class I didn't enjoy. However, several times in my school career, I've been in a math class headed by a teacher who all of my classmates resoundingly expressed to be boring. I've never had a math teacher whom I didn't like. Coincidence? It can't be. I think it's just a case of differing mentalities. Steve is also living proof that one can dislike a class and still do well in it. I've never had this fortune. Every time I've been in a class that I really couldn't stand, I never achieved as much as the people who enjoyed it. A student is digging their own grave when they close their mind to the possibility of liking a subject. When they do that, class takes longer, the material gets harder, the teacher *seems* to pick on them, and they feel like the stupidest person in there.

It is also possible to dislike a teacher (as a result of disliking the class, as aforementioned) and still respect them. Example; I'm taking a certain class now which I know I'm skilled enough to

handle. My grades definitely show this. But the teacher still seemed as though they were trying to repress my potential. It was literally a power struggle. On one occasion I was able to express my feelings for this teacher. "**I don't like you**," I said flatly. I got the exact response that I expected, deserved, and hoped for. "That's ok, you don't have to." If I hadn't already known it, it became quite clear to me then that I respected this man as a person and for his abilities as a teacher. It may have felt like he was working against me sometimes, but teachers don't come into their profession lightly. It takes training to get whatever fancy piece of paper they need to teach. I'll admit some teachers really don't try that hard to help their students succeed, but most...the good ones...do. The teachers that I hold in the highest regard are the ones who (yes, I'm aware of how queer this sounds) teach stuff that isn't in the state-approved, politically correct textbooks.

In summary, teachers don't cause students to do well or poorly in school. Students affect themselves with the attitudes they assume regarding a particular class. After examining your views, if it clear that you really don't like a teacher, you'd still better not take it out on them. Unless you've failed a grade 20 times, the teacher is probably your elder, and an accomplished one at that. It takes guts to teach kids, on the off chance that you might make a difference in the world. For that reason, if no other, they deserve our respect.

The Knights of the Square Table

Part II, Chapter 1

"What's the latest report?" came a voice that seemed to be very distant. Lights swirled, and everything was blurry.

Dave struggled to remember who or where he was. Why was he lying here? Where was he? As hard as he tried, Dave could remember nothing.

"There's no change in their positions," another voice replied. "Trolls are still out and about. Two more of our travelers were killed yesterday."

"Uhhh..." Dave managed to squeak, and suddenly, the room fell silent.

"Hurry!" one voice said. "Go get the others!"

"Are you alright?" the other asked urgently, getting closer. All Dave was able to do was groan. "What . . . ?" he managed to mumble.

"Everything's ok now," the voice said. Dave opened his eyes, but he was unable to make out what was going on because everything was blurry.

"What happened?" Dave gasped and lay back down after he struggled to get up. His vision was now beginning to clear, and he noticed no superficial injuries to himself. So why was he lying here?

Suddenly the door burst open and a woman entered. "Dave?" she asked. "Are you alright?"

"I think so. Why am I lying here?"

"It's a long story. What do you remember last?"

Dave searched his brain for any memories of why he could be where he was, and finally remembered. "I was falling, off of a tall building. And then I blacked out. The next thing I remember is being here."

"Things are worse than I thought," the woman attempted to whisper to the other man in the room, but Dave overheard and asked, "Why? What happened?"

"Dave," the woman said, "it might be hard to accept, but it's been twenty-five years since that incident."

"What?" Dave asked, uncomprehending.

"I'm Katie, your friend. I've grown up over those years, but look at you. You haven't aged a minute since you fell asleep."

An old man, standing proud and tall, pushed the door open and entered the room. Katie moved aside so he could see Dave.

"I'm Christopher. Do you remember me?"

"Yes, yes I do," Dave said in a tone of understanding, and then hesitated. Seeming to regain some lost energy, he sat up. "What made me stay out for twenty-five years?"

"It was Yavin's doing," said another voice. Another woman entered the room. Though her hair was grey and her appearance deteriorating, Dave could sense some power coming from her.

"I'm Chapin," she said. "You can see that the years have been hard on us." She motioned to a middle-aged man standing behind her.

"Hi, 'big' brother," he said.

"Mike!" Dave exclaimed in surprise.

"Let's allow you to recover for now. We'll tell you all that's happened tomorrow," Katie suggested. With a nod, they all filed out of the room. The light was growing dim and Dave took this opportunity to get some shut eye, though he had a hard time falling asleep.

Finally, near dawn, Dave awoke and, being unable to sleep, decided to get up and explore. Just as he was leaving the cabin, however, he met Katie, coming back in, looking as if she had been up all night. Dave then realized that she had because the group was looking out for him.

"Good morning," Katie said cheerfully, giving no hint in her voice of how tired she was.

Without any warning, the door suddenly slammed open, and somebody said with an urgent voice, "Hurry! There's another raid going on down the river!"

"Come with me," Katie said, motioning to the door. Dave obediently followed.

When they were outside the small cabin, Katie ran for a tower on the far side of what appeared to be a small village. Dave could make out no more than 20 houses. The lone tower stood out in the middle, with fences with sharp spikes surrounding the area. Inside the fences, but past the houses, were several fields that were currently overflowing with some kind of strange vegetable.

Dave followed Katie to the tower. On the side was a wooden ladder, which went up at least thirty feet. Katie began climbing it as if she did it every day, but Dave became queasy just looking up.

"Come on," Katie commanded urgently. Finally, she came back down to help Dave get up the first few rungs of the ladder. She followed close behind, but Dave seemed to be recovering quickly from his infirmity.

As they rose above the town, what was happening became clear. To the south flowed a great river, at least a quarter mile across. In a village downstream, they could make out horses and knights scurrying around.

"Yep," Katie said, motioning. "It's definitely another raid."

"Why are they doing that?" Dave asked.

"A lot has happened in twenty-five years," Katie said. "Come. You have a lot to catch up on. There's nothing we can do about the trolls. They're almost a part of everyday life now." She started back down the ladder and Dave followed. When they reached the bottom, a few villagers had gathered, asking Katie what was going on. After replying to the best of her ability, she grabbed Dave and pulled him back into the cabin that they had been in before.

Christopher, Mike, and Chapin had gathered there also. After closing the door so that prying eyes could not see, Katie began to speak.

"Where should I start?" she asked, not really expecting an answer. But Dave answered anyway. "What happened after I blacked out?"

"Oh yes," Katie continued. "We were knocked off the fortress and into the Hidden Forest River, and carried down the river into the forest. Fortunately, the strange water that flowed through the forest somehow kept us afloat; otherwise we would surely have drowned.

"When we woke up the next day, we weren't sure where we were, just somewhere in the middle of the dark forest. We couldn't wake you up at that time, so we decided to wait a while longer. However, things didn't go as we had planned. The dreariness of the forest got to us after a while and we decided to move on. We built a small cart out of scrap wood and supplies we found and pulled you over the level ground next to the stream.

"After two exhausting weeks, we reached the southern end of the forest and waited for news from the knights, but it never came. Now we know that all those men succumbed to Yavin's power at the fortress." She paused for a moment. Soon, she was able to continue.

"The Battle of the North, as it is now called, lasted many days, but in the end the trolls beat the knights and eventually ransacked the defenseless city. They then turned their attention on us and came at us from the north and west. We had no choice but to flee over the plains to the east, taking you with us.

"But the trolls eventually won out. Winter was coming on and they almost attacked us, but some brave warriors who happened to be traveling north toward the now-ruined town helped us to safety. We rode a raft down a river we discovered that wasn't on the map, and eventually came here, where we settled down."

"Where exactly is here?" Dave asked Katie.

"We're east of Seatown, off of Christopher's map," Mike replied.

"Then why have all of you grown up while I'm still young?"

"We don't know exactly why," Mike responded. "It's probably some secret spell. These past years have been hard on us. We gave up the idea of getting home. At first, since we were so far south,

we didn't feel the effects of Yavin's victories to the north. But now there is nowhere you can go without fearing Yavin and his servants."

"Ba'tah. . .?" Dave asked questioningly.

"We don't know what Yavin meant," Chapin said.

"But we have recently received word of some very troubling events," Christopher said, and paused to see if Dave were listening.

"There has been an abnormal number of calks, trolls, and even normal men that serve Yavin coming out of the southern Blackstone mountains. We think that Yavin has some plans to begin an invasion to take over the world. We don't know why he's waited so long, but it might be because of this Ba'tah."

"What would he have to do with Yavin beginning to invade?" Dave inquired.

"He might be coming to Yavin's palace," Christopher almost whispered. "If he is able to join forces with Yavin, they could become invincible!"

"But!" he interrupted before Dave could react. "It would take time to organize such an invasion. With the winter coming on in a few months, it's not likely to happen this year."

"When is it now?" Dave asked.

"September 15. The same day that the battle took place exactly 25 years ago."

"Guess this means we have to go on another adventure," Dave said, then paused. "Tell me something, Mike. Do you still really want to go home?"

"I haven't forgotten about going home, if that's what you mean," Mike replied. "But I am going on this mission for the good of all the people of *this* world, not so that we can get home."

"Enough talk," Katie said, cutting them short. Let Dave get some rest for a while. We'll leave in a few days. Let's start getting our things together."

After exchanging a few goodbyes, everybody left Dave in the hut by himself.

"It'll be hard leaving here," Chapin said to Mike and Katie. "Both of you have been here for at least half your life."

"Yeah, don't remind me," Katie said. "I've come to think of this place more as home than where I came from."

"We'll need to find somebody else to run the town while we're gone," Christopher said somberly. "The villagers have come to think of us as their leaders."

"I hope that Dave recovers," Mike said.

"Let's hope," Chapin replied. They now passed the tower and went on toward the farms near the outskirts of the small town. Though no more than 100 people now lived here, it offered safety from trolls and roaming calks. The party had come to think of it as home, growing very close to many of the villagers.

An elderly man was in the distance. The fields that he was working on overflowed with vegetables that were now familiar to them after having eaten them for twenty-five years.

"How are you doing today, Matt?" Katie asked as they approached.

"Want some?" Matt joked, holding up both his hands filled with the strange food.

"No thanks," Katie replied. "We need to talk."

"Oh," Matt said, seeing the grave look on her face. He put down the tools he was carrying and waited for the news that he almost already knew was bad.

"You're going away, aren't you?" he asked. "Dave must have awoken."

"He has," Katie said. "And we are."

There was a pause. A breeze rustled through the trees which were beginning to show some color. Finally, Matt spoke. "I always knew that this day would come. And this morning, I had a strange feeling, with it being exactly 25 years to the day."

"We're going to leave sometime in the next few days," Christopher said.

"I'm too old and weak to go with you," Matt said. "I wish you luck."

"Don't say that," Katie said, trying to console the man. "We'll be back before you know it."

"I hope so," Matt said. "The knights of the army said that years ago, and they never came back. Think of all the lives that were shattered by that event," he continued in increasingly bitter tones. He soon calmed down. "If you don't win this battle, who knows what will happen to the world for future generations."

"It's already getting dark," Mike reminded them. Indeed, the sun was now red in the western sky and setting quickly. "There's still a few days left for us to stay here. We'll talk more tomorrow."

After exchanging goodbyes, the group of four set out to their separate huts in the village. As Mike walked home, the guard was just beginning to ascend to the watch tower, a sign that reminded them of the times in which they lived.

A loud noise awakened Dave. Suddenly, he started out of bed, feeling as if a snake were crawling over him. Looking in horror, he realized that it actually was a snake. It slithered over his right leg, moving up his body. He was afraid to call out to Mike, currently sleeping on the other side of the room, unaware that Dave could be dead in a matter of seconds.

Suddenly, there was an enormous crash. Before Dave could realize what had happened, he saw the snake lying next to him on the bed, chopped in half. Green slime oozed from its lifeless body. On the other side of the room in the dim light was Christopher.

"Another slaw," he muttered. "These things have been all over the area recently."

"Slaw?" Dave asked, still visibly shaken.

"That's what we call 'em. Katie thinks that they work for Yavin, gathering information surreptitiously and delivering it to him. It probably had no intention of killing you."

"Then why did you scare me like that?" Dave asked.

"It was probably already too late. Slaws have some kind of telepathic abilities. The minute they see something, the rest of them know. Now they know that you're awake, and Yavin will know shortly. He obviously won't be too happy."

"What's going on?" Chapin yelled and burst into the room, slamming the door back into the wall with a loud bang. Katie followed a short distance behind her.

"It's another slaw," Christopher replied. By this time, Mike was awake and went over to Dave to examine it.

"Yes, another slaw," he said. "It's a red one, too."

"Red?" Dave asked, puzzled.

"The red ones have the ability to inject poison into their victims."

"Maybe it wasn't a reconnaissance mission," Katie said.

"I've never seen a slaw do any harm to anybody. And why Dave? They couldn't have known he was awake only a day after," Chapin added.

"Things are getting graver by the minute," Christopher added solemnly. "With the winter coming on, we'd better get moving soon so that we aren't held up."

"Let's make a point to leave the day after tomorrow," Chapin said.

"We have to," Mike added. "You're going to come with us, Dave, aren't you?"

"Of course I am!" Dave said. "I wouldn't want to leave my friends in all the danger you're going to face."

"Then it's settled. We'll leave in two days." With that, Christopher got up and proceeded to leave. Katie and Chapin followed. Mike continued to chat for a few minutes with Dave.

The next two days went by quickly for the adventurers. Dave took the opportunity to get to know some of the villagers. Christopher, Katie, and the others said many sad farewells during these days, as they had become the protectors of the village. The five inhabitants of the village who had been trained to fight were faced with the daunting task of keeping the village safe while the Elementals were gone. Many doubted that they would survive.

When the day came to leave, a cold rain was falling. Though weather conditions were bad, they decided to leave anyway because Yavin halted for nothing. Finally the time came. They left the

village around noon and set off at a brisk pace. This time, they rode horses that the villagers had provided them with.

From where they were, they decided to travel in the general direction of northwest, hoping that they would soon find a noticeable landmark that was on Christopher's map. However, as the day progressed, this seemed less and less likely anytime soon. Trudging through the mud, they tired quickly and stopped to rest shortly before sunset.

The seemingly endless plains dragged on before them for the next three days as they traveled in the direction of what they hoped would be Yavin's castle.

Finally, they stopped to rest in a small grove of sparse trees. The midday sun shone through the tops of the trees, casting weird shadows from the leaves which were beginning to change colors.

"Where *are* we going?" Mike asked.

"I think we're lost," Dave suggested and pulled a vegetable out of his supply bag to have for lunch. "We need a map. Isn't there anything that the powers of the Elementals could do about our predicament?"

"No," Christopher replied bluntly. "We know Yavin's castle is in this direction, and we set out, but now I don't think that this is such a great idea."

"So what can we do?"

"It might be possible to use the stones to levitate one of us in the air, but only for a short distance, and only for a short time, so it wouldn't be useful."

"Did anybody ever find out what happened to the red stone that we had?" Dave asked.

Chapin paused. "No. It was lost after we fell into the river. None of us knows what became of it."

"Quiet," Dave whispered. "Footsteps."

Indeed, footsteps were approaching from the north. When they got closer, it was apparent that the pounding of hooves was among them.

"Another army?" Mike asked.

"Can't be," Christopher retorted. "Even formidable armies don't travel out in the open for long, especially between towns." He paused and listened for a moment. "It might be trolls."

Looking between the few trees that surrounded them, Katie spotted the figures of horses coming toward them.

"I've never seen that mark before," Katie commented.

"They're not trolls," Mike confirmed, "but are they loyal to Yavin or the rebels?"

"We can't risk exposing ourselves to them," Chapin warned.

"Let's just stay here and wait for them to pass," Dave said. The pounding continued, but the knights, about a hundred of them, passed without incident. Finally, the rest of the group decided that it would be a good time to get going again, and they proceeded, forgetting about the strange army shortly after.

It wasn't long, however, before they heard the pounding of hooves again and yet more troops rushed southward. This time, there was no cover, and they weren't so lucky.

"Who goes there?" The leader yelled as he called his army to a halt.

"We're just travelers. We're not invloved in your conflict," Christopher answered.

"We're not so sure," came the reply. The soldier dismounted and approached them. Christopher and Katie stood tall in the front while Dave, the youngest of the bunch, hid behind them.

"You!" he exclaimed, pointing to Dave. "What are you hiding?"

"I'm not hiding anything," Dave replied shakily. There was a pause, and the soldier continued.

"Search him!" he ordered some of his subordinates. They also dismounted and approached where the group was standing.

After surveying Dave for a few minutes, the leader gasped and looked at Christopher with an angry expression.

"Not hiding anything?" he replied angrily. He held up the sword that Dave was carrying.

"I can explain," he responded urgently.

"Explain what? You're working for the enemy!"

"We don't even know who the enemy is!" retorted Dave, trying his best to defend himself.

"Who is the enemy?" Christopher asked.

The leader paused, and then paced around, hollering. "This is an outrage," he cried. "It's just a trick so that they can destroy us with their hidden forces or something. But not this time. We're not being taken in by any tricks this time. Yavin is..." He trailed off, leaving dead silence, even in the midst of his knights.

"Is Yavin your enemy?" Christopher asked.

"Well, well, yes," the leader replied, him now being afraid that the tables had turned against him.

"Then we're actually on your side," Mike said.

"What?"

"We're going to defeat Yavin," Chapin added.

"Ha ha ha!" the leader replied. Laughs came from the knights in the background. The others who had been standing behind the leader gawked and cackled.

Christopher nodded his head at Katie and she returned the expression. Suddenly, he began to chant in low tones along with Katie and Chapin. Suddenly, clouds appeared above them, and a lightning bolt shot out of the sky and struck the leader. A blue pyramid formed around him. Just as suddenly, the clouds departed, but the leader remained trapped inside the mysterious object, unable to move much in any direction.

"Let me out, you fiends! Take them captive!" he screamed, furious at his prediciment. Nobody listened to his orders, however, because all the knights were now hilarious, joking and laughing, paying no attention to what was being said.

"Do you believe us now?" Christopher asked calmly as the leader pounded at the walls of his prison.

"Yes! Of course! Let me out!" This was followed by more roars of laughter. Christopher raised his hand and the strange object vanished as suddenly as it had appeared.

The leader now stood up and brushed off the dirt off that had splattered on him during the struggle. When he was finished, he turned to the knights, who were just settling down after the hysterical event.

"Where are you going?" Chapin asked as if nothing had happened.

When the leader was still hesitant to answer, Christopher raised his hand again. The leader of the knights, knowing very well what was going to happen, suddenly blurted out, "OK, we're going to Riverbend, a town about a week's travel from here to the east. An army is assembling there to combat Yavin."

"How many others are going to be there?" Christopher demanded.

"I don't know. There was a call to all the armies of the East to gather together at Riverbend. I don't know any more. Please, don't hurt me!"

"He doesn't know any more," Chapin said, nodding. Christopher lowered his hand, and the leader relaxed.

"This may be a great oppurtunity for us to learn Yavin's latest plans," Katie suggested.

"I agree. But we'll have to proceed with caution. If everybody knows about this meeting, there's sure to be spies and other servants of Yavin about," Christopher added.

"I'm sure that the people there will know who we are," Mike said.

"Good. Let's follow the army. We have nothing to lose, since we're lost anyway." The verdict was unanimous.

Soon, the pounding of hooves recommenced and this time the five were right behind them. But what they did not know was the trouble that would befall them in just a few days.