Shoemaker

Village

Volume 28 - May 1999



The Knights of the Square Table continues: Find out what happens as the journey proceeds!

In Neighborhood News: More Vandalism Reported!



PLUS!

Shoemaker Village celebrates its second anniversary! Special included!

Expanded *Humor from the Village Square*!

New writers contribute articles!

Expanded *Discussion Forum* this month!

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Editor's Pages

Information you should know

Welcome to the 2nd Anniversary issue of *Shoemaker Village*!

To start off, we would like to thank all of our readers for supporting *Shoemaker Village* over the past two years. At the current time, the *Village* is enjoying its biggest prosperity yet, and we have only our readers to thank for that. Over the next year, we hope to maintain the current goals of around 40 pages to provide you with more content for a better magazine.

This month, we are featuring a look back at the past two years of the *Village*. This special report, which includes every cover of the *Village* since it became professional in May 1997, is located after the *Humor from the Village Square* section. Please take the time to read it and give us some feedback on its success.

As you most likely noticed last month, the *Village* was printed with regular paper covers instead of the heavy cardstock that we have been able to use since July 1998. The original supplies of paper were donated to the *Village* by Rita Wilkowski in that month. Last month, faced with a shortage of funding and a lack of written contributions, we were unable to purchase any more cardboard to print hard covers. Fortunately, earlier this month, two of our subscribers donated money to the *Village* fund. Mrs. Koons, a Global Studies teacher at UMHS and long-time subscriber, recently donated $10.00 to the welfare of the *Village*. In addition, Mr. Learn, another teacher at UMHS, also donated $5.00. The money received from them made it possible to buy badly needed supplies, most importantly a four-month supply of hard covers. Thank you to these benefactors, who made donations even though, as teachers, they did not have to pay to subscribe.

We are also proud to inform you that some of our readers came through and submitted written contributions, making this huge issue possible. Michael Curry, a former neighborhood resident who moved away in August 1995, contributed *The Day I Would Die*, featured in the Short Stories section this month. You may remember Michael from earlier stories such as *The Secret of Fdol*, one of the first stories published in the *Village* two years ago. Lori Blickley, Sophomore class president at UMHS, also contributed an article. Without the help of these contributors, we would not have been able to put together this month's issue. Their subscriptions have each been extended by three months as a reward for their contributions.

Though you may have missed out on our three-month contribution deal, you can still contribute! Currently, we are looking for articles on next month's *The Discussion Forum* topic: "Should the driving age be raised?". As usual, you will receive that issue of the *Village* free.

Continuing on with the thank yous, our subscription drive throughout the neighborhood convinced several neighbors to subscribe. Their names can be found in the "New Subscribers" section of the Acknowledgments page. We are almost at an all-time high in readership. Thank you to all of our subscribers.

Also, in case you have been unaware, the *Shoemaker Village* webpages have been reconstructed as of last month and currently are updated twice a week with the latest news. The Neighborhood News, as has been for the past few months, is posted online a week before publication. Be sure to check out our webpages at **http://come.to/ShoemakerVillage** to keep up to date on the latest *Village* news.

Also, just to inform our readers, since the summer is coming up, we will, sometime during the next month, be asking all subscribers on the UMHS portion of the subscription list for their addresses. These will be used to mail the July, August, and September issues of *Shoemaker Village* to teachers whom we will most likely not see in person during the summer. Due to the cost of mailing a magazine that weighs as much as the *Village* does, we may find it necessary to impose a minor fee (less than $2.00) for mailing. We are sorry for any inconvenience that this may cause, and we hope that you will continue your subscription during the summer!

And now on to the "picture of the month". Last month's picture was of Publisher Henry Sokolowski, taken when he was only a few years old. The photo was guessed correctly by Jean Muzyka, one of our longest-running subscribers. Thank you to all who participated in last month's contest.



Do you know who this was?

This month's picture relates to one of the articles in the Neighborhood News. As usual, we will add a free month onto your subscription if you can tell us who is in the picture. Good luck!

Thank you for continuing to support *Shoemaker Village* as it enters its third year! Enjoy this issue, and we'll see you in June!

A Note from the Assistant Editor

Matthew Care

There was an unstable time period in the recent issues that could have seen my termination from this, I consider, prestigious post. Yes, that's right--prestigious. I'm proud to be on the *Village* staff. It seems that many thought I hadn't been pulling my weight. I'd been under a lot of deadlines from school and I can't always write a story when I want to! I still can't write a story every time, but I intend to do the share that I think my position requires. As it is, Stephen does all of the assembling and printing. I can't help with that, but I'm going to contribute more. I love to brag, and so I will. Several of my stories are among the most highly acclaimed ever, and my story *The Storm*, published in July 1998, won the *1998 Best Article of the Year* award.

This issue promises to be a great one. Despite procrastination on my part, I wrote a very good piece for the discussion forum. Try to guess which one! You'll see why that's funny when you read it. I'd also like to thank this month's contributors. We hope they become even more active in the *Village* in the future. Count the days until the June issue is published. It looks to be another great issue. Some of the stories that I didn't have time to write this month are sure to be in it. Keep reading *Shoemaker Village*!

Acknowledgments

Shoemaker Village STAFF

Editor
Stephen Sokolowski

Assistant Editor
Matthew Care

Proofreader
Jean Sokolowski

Storywriters
Matthew Care
Steven Conway

Publication
Henry Sokolowski - Printing
Jean Sokolowski - Collation/Assembly
Stephen Sokolowski - Distribution

This month's article contributors

Stephen Sokolowski
Steven Conway
Michael Curry
Matthew Care
Lori Blickley

New subscribers this month

Miss Barbara Panzerella
Lori Blickley
The Cohen Family
The Sobolefski Family
The Spiecker Family

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The next issue of *Shoemaker Village* will be published on Friday, May 28, 1999.
All contributions for the next issue must be received by Tuesday, May 25, 1999.

Upcoming topics in **The Discussion Forum:**
June 1999: Is the current driver's license requirement of 16 too low?

Coming Next Issue

Volume 29 - June 1999

Read about all the summer neighborhood plans!
The Knights of the Square Table continues! You won't want to miss what happens next!
Lots of news, stories, articles, and more!

ALL IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF *SHOEMAKER VILLAGE*!

Puzzle Page

S	N	O	I	T	U	B	I	R	T	N	O	C	G	F
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Anniversary
Behavior
Championship
Church
Contributions
Cool
Council
Courier
Curry
Damage
Dog
Email
Forum
Hoops
Jeff
John
King
Klaus
Knights
Leveling
Parents
Quotes
Rain
Respect
Riverbend
Sale
Spanish
Special
Spring
Television
Vandalism
Village
Weather
Wedding
Wright
Yard
Years

Neighborhood News

May 1999

MORE VANDALISM REPORTED, NEIGHBORS FEARFUL

Over the past few months, a wave of vandalism has hit the neighborhood. Unfortunately, the vandals have struck yet again.



This pole and broken wires were all that was left of this light.

On Saturday, April 24, Henry Sokolowski discovered that two of his decorative lights for his brick walkway had been destroyed. In addition, a hose to remove water from his basement sump pump had been moved from the curbside drain, and election signs that had been placed in his front yard had been damaged.

This was the second time in two days that vandals had destroyed the lights. The first time, four lights of the twelve had been damaged. When they were replaced the next day, they were hit again the following night.

The police were called shortly after. During the conversation, the officer reportedly commented that minor vandalism could lead to major problems if left unpunished.

In addition, on Wednesday, April 28, just hours before the *Village* was submitted for publication, sticks were found littered on the Sokolowski's lawn in a pattern resembling obscenities. Again, it is unknown who is responsible for this act.

"Whoever is doing this had better stop," Henry said. "Every time they do it, the consequences will be worse when they are caught."

EXCESS RAINFALL CAUSES HEADACHES

Throughout the month of April, the area has been plagued with excessive precipitation, continuing the bout of strange weather that has been occurring over the past few months.

Overall, the neighborhood received about an inch more rainfall than normal during the first half of April, and it isn't expected to end any time soon.

Many forecasters blame the La Niña phenomenon, which has been creating dramatic weather patterns across much of the United States and the entire world.

The phenomenon, which results when Pacific Ocean waters cool far below their average temperature, brought a warming trend, lessening the amount of snowfall that occurred over the wintertime. This year, a little over 12" of snow fell, compared to about 22.8" in an average winter. It is important to note that the average described above is developed only when all types of winters are taken into account, meaning that in a "neutral phase" winter, the weather could be much more severe.

Severe weather is also expected to continue into the spring. Some of the worst tornado outbreaks in history have historically occurred in years during the effects of La Niña.

To complicate matters, 9 hurricanes are predicted for this year, with 4 severe ones. In a normal season, there are only 6 hurricanes and 2 severe hurricanes.

Lots of rain is not unusual to the area, however. From May 1 to 12 of last year, it rained for 13 consecutive days, just missing the record of 14 that was set long before.

Another unusual pattern that occurred over the winter that finally broke on April 18 was that, for over 14 weeks, it had rained or been excessively cold and windy every Sunday.

Whatever the cause, we'll keep you updated on the strange weather in months to come.

UM HOOPS SEASON FINISHES, ORGANIZERS OPTIMISTIC FOR NEXT

YEAR

Upper Moreland Hoops finished out its season during its annual Championship Day on Saturday, March 27, with excitement down to the final buzzer.

During the first game of the day, the Under 11 Girls championship game, the black team won over red in an exciting match.

The Under 11 Boys game, later that day, was a resounding victory for yellow, trouncing the orange team, 32-21.

In the 12-14-year-old Girls game, McFatridge and Sons Welding (red), coached by neighbor and former league president Ray Johnston, won by six points in a down-to-the-wire match against Prudential Felte Real Estate (black). Congratulations go to neighbor Melissa Johnston and former neighbor Laura Rymer for being on the championship team.

The 12-13-year-old boys was quite possibly the best game of the day, with Fox Fuel (red) also winning over Havis-Shields (black) by a close margin of 54-48, the game being decided by key free throws in the final minute.

In the last game of the day, the 14-18 Boys league championship, the Wildcats crushed the Owls by a score of 77-44. Neighbor Tony Hoffman, on the Owls, scored 2 points. The game was characterized by complete silence, even though there were about 100 people in the gym.

During the next season, Hoops plans to shorten the game schedule from the current count of 18 to about 12-13 games per team, the extra gym time to be used for extra practices. As mentioned above, President Ray Johnston and Treasurer Henry Sokolowski have reported that they have resigned their positions, replaced by Bill Oetinger, former U-11 Boys coach, who will act as Treasurer, and Paul McCarthy, who will become President of the league.

Congratulations go out to all who participated in Hoops this year for another successful season.

ONLY 35 DAYS LEFT!

Yes, you read this headline correctly. It's that time of year again, and as of publication, there are currently only 35 days of school left in this strike-modified school year.

Recently, a notice was distributed to students reporting that the school year has now been extended to Monday, June 21, as a result of a snow day that was taken on March 15. Earlier in the year, four snow days had been planned, but two were lost to the strike, and three more to actual snow.

However, the notice did not state which schools the change will be affecting. Because these notices were distributed through elementary schools, they will definitely be affected by the extension. Unfortunately, it did not include whether the Upper Moreland Middle and High schools will be forced to attend school on the extra day.

Teachers also have had three workshop in-service days scheduled on the calender, currently planned for June 22-24, with checkout not scheduled until later that week.

OTHER NEWS TIDBITS

-The semi-annual neighborhood yard-sale will be held again this spring during the weekends of April 24-25 and May 1-2. Though the yard sale used to be a twice-a-year event, this status is now in question, since the sale was not held in the fall of last year.



This flyer was distributed to all neighborhood mailboxes.

-Upper Moreland Little League kicked off the start of its season during opening ceremonies in mid-April. Good luck to all participants.

-Congratulations to Genevieve and Henry Sokolowski, who recently celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary on April 23. Though there were minor problems, a fun time was had by all who attended the party. We sincerely hope that Genevieve and Henry will

have many more years together.



Genevieve and Henry Sokolowski

-Miss Barbara Panzerella, a Spanish teacher at UMHS, will be married on Saturday, May 1 to Mr. Jack Scharan, during a ceremony at Villanova University. *Felitaciones y buena suerte a la pareja nueva! Esperamos que tengan una vida contenta juntos.*

Going to the Dogz

UNKNOWN DOG ROAMING NEIGHBORHOOD, RESIDENTS WORRIED

On the morning of Saturday, April 10, an unknown Rottweiler wandered the neighborhood, surprising many neighbors.

The dog was first spotted around 8:30 a.m., while it chased Jake, belonging to Bob and Pat Altimari, up and down their neighbors' fence.

"At first, I thought it was Max," commented Henry Sokolowski, neighbor to the Altimaris. Jean Sokolowski, his wife, then attempted the usual method: yelling at Max to "Go home!" When the dog did not leave, and instead turned his thoughts to defecating on her property, Henry promptly called the Rorvik family.

He was in for a big surprise. "Max is right here," was the reply. "He can't have gotten away."

The Rorviks politely offered to come get the dog, even though they did not know who it belonged to. However, the dog disappeared shortly before they arrived.

"I was wondering why the dog wouldn't go home when I yelled," Jean said later. "Max usually trots home when you tell him to." The dog was also spotted once before, on a Wednesday evening. On that night, it also disappeared suddenly without warning.

Hopefully, this dog will finally be retrieved by its owner. We'll keep you updated on this dangerous situation as more develops.

OTHER DOG NEWS

-Klaus, the Hoffmans' dog, recently escaped one morning. "I went out to feed him, and he wasn't there," commented Mr. Hoffman on his way to school that morning. Fortunately, Klaus was spotted down the street and brought back without incident.

Humor from the Village Square

A REALLY BAD DAY

A guy is sitting in a bar, just looking at his drink. He stays like that for half-an-hour. Then, a big trouble-making truck driver steps next to him, takes the drink from the guy, and drinks it all down. The poor man starts crying.

The truck driver says: "Come on man, I was just joking. Here, I'll buy you another drink. I just can't see a man crying."

"No, it's not that. This day is the worst of my life."

"First, I fall asleep, and I go late to my office. My boss, outraged, fires me."

"When I left the building to go to my car, I found out it was stolen. The police, they say they can do nothing."

"I get a cab to return home, and when I leave the cab, I remember I left my wallet and credit cards there."

"I go home, and when I get there, I find my wife in bed with the gardener."

"I leave home, and come to this bar."

"And when I was thinking about putting an end to my life, you show up and drink my poison . . ."

MISDELIVERED E-MAIL

It's wise to remember how easily today's wonderful technology can be misused, sometimes unintentionally, with serious consequences.

Consider the case of the Illinois man who left the snow-filled streets of Chicago for a vacation in Florida. His wife was on a business trip and was planning to meet him there the next day. When he reached his hotel, he decided to send his wife a quick e-mail. Unable to find the scrap of paper on which he had written her e-mail address, he did his best to type it in from memory.

Unfortunately, he missed one letter, and his note was directed instead to an elderly preacher's wife, whose husband had passed away only the day before. When the grieving widow checked her e-mail, she took one look at the monitor, let out a piercing scream, and fell to the floor in a dead faint. At the sound of her cry, her family rushed into the room and saw this note on the screen:

Dearest Wife,

Just got checked in. Everything prepared for your arrival tomorrow.

P.S.: Dress light. It sure is hot down here.

PEOPLE NOT TO BE QUOTED

Whenever I watch TV and see those poor starving kids all over the world, I can't help but cry. I mean, I'd love to be skinny like that but not with all those flies and death and stuff.
-- Mariah Carey

Researchers have discovered that chocolate produces some of the same reactions in the brain as marijuana. The researchers also discovered other similarities between the two, but can't remember what they are.
--Matt Lauer on NBC's Today show, August 22

I haven't committed a crime. What I did was fail to comply with the law.
--David Dinkins, New York City Mayor, answering accusations that he failed to pay his taxes.

Smoking kills. If you're killed, you've lost a very important part of your life.
--Brooke Shields, anti-smoking ad audition

I have never had major knee surgery on any other part of my body.
–Winston Bennett, University of Kentucky basketball forward

Outside of the killings, Washington has one of the lowest crime rates in the country.
--Mayor Marion Barry, Washington, D.C.

Beginning in February 1976, your assistance benefits will be discontinued...
Reason: It has been reported to our office that you expired on January 1,1976.
--Letter from the Illinois Department of Public Aid

The Holocaust was an obscene period in our nation's history . . . this century's history . . . We all lived in this century. I didn't live in this century.
--Dan Quayle, then Indiana senator and Republican vice-presidential candidate during a news conference in which he was asked his opinion of the Holocaust

The streets are safe in Philadelphia. It's only the people who make them unsafe.
--Frank Rizzo, ex-police chief and mayor of Philadelphia

Rotarians, be patriotic! Learn to shoot yourself.
--Chicago Rotary Club journal, “Gyrator”

I've always thought that underpopulated countries in Africa are vastly underpolluted.
--Lawrence Summers, chief economist of the World Bank, explaining why we should export toxic wastes to Third World countries

After finding no qualified candidates for the position of principal, the school board is extremely pleased to announce the appointment of David Steele to the post.
--Philip Streifer, Superintendent of Schools,

Barrington Island

The doctors X-rayed my head and found nothing.
--Dizzy Dean explaining how he felt after being hit on the head by a ball in the 1934 World Series

THE WIT OF STEVEN WRIGHT (part 5)

One night I came home very late. It was the next night.

I own the erasers for all the miniature golf pencils.

After they make styrofoam, what do they ship it in?

I was arrested for selling illegal-sized paper.

The ice cream truck in my neighborhood plays "Helter, Skelter."

I broke my arm trying to fold a bed. It wasn't the kind that folds.

I lost a button hole today. Where am I gonna find another one?

I made wine out of raisins so I wouldn't have to wait for it to age.

I saw a man with a wooden leg, and a real foot.

I saw a subliminal advertising executive, but only for a second.

A wino asked me for change . . . I gave him my shirt.

I took a baby shower.

I used to be a bartender at the Betty Ford Clinic.

I washed mud off of mud.

How young can you die of old age?

If you saw a heat wave, would you wave back?

If you were going to shoot a mime, would you use a silencer?

I used to be a narrator for bad mimes.

On the other hand . . . You have different fingers.

I can levitate birds. No one cares.

If all the nations in the world are in debt, where did all the money go?

If the pen is mightier than the sword, in a duel I'll let you have the pen!

What do batteries run on?

Are there any questions?

I was cleaning out my closet and I found a swim suit that I had made out of sponges. I remember one time when I wore it. When I got out of the swimming pool, nobody could go swimming until I came back.

I bought one of those little glass ball things with the snow in it. You know, you turn it upside down, then you turn it back and it starts to snow. I bought one, except this has a snow plow that does it in rows.

I busted a mirror and got seven years bad luck, but my lawyer thinks he can get me five.

I like candy canes; they're my favorite candy. But I only like the white part.

My grandma says she has eyes in the back of her head . . . I hope it's not hereditary.

Why is it, "A penny for your thoughts," but, "You have to put your two cents in?" Somebody's making a penny.

My dental hygienist is cute. Every time I visit, I eat a whole package of Oreo cookies while

waiting in the lobby. Sometimes she has to cancel the rest of the afternoon's appointments.

The other day when I was walking through the woods, I saw a rabbit standing in front of a candle making shadows of people on a tree.

I had a dream that all the victims of The Pill came back . . . Boy, were they mad!

The Stones, I love the Stones. I watch them whenever I can. Fred, Barney...

I like to fill my tub up with water, then turn the shower on and act like I'm in a submarine that's been hit.

It doesn't matter what temperature the room is, it's always room temperature.

I have two very rare photographs. One is a picture of Houdini locking his keys in his car. The other is a rare photograph of Norman Rockwell beating up a child.

I went to the eye doctor and found out I needed glasses for reading. So, I got some flip-up contact lenses.

Winny would spend all of his time practicing limbo. He got pretty good. He could go under a rug.

I accidentally shot my father-in-law while deer hunting. It was an honest mistake. I came out of the tent in the morning and thought I saw a deer in an orange vest making coffee.

I filled out an application that said, “In Case of Emergency, Notify”. I wrote “Doctor” . . . What's my mother going to do?

I just received my degree in Calcium Anthropology . . . the study of milkmen.

I can't wait to be arrested and go all the way to the witness stand. “Do you swear to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth so help you, God?” “Yes, you're ugly. Should I keep going or are you going to ask me questions?”

Today I was arrested for scalping low numbers at the deli. I sold a #3 for 28 bucks.

I stayed up all night playing poker with Tarot cards. I got a full house and four people died.

I was walking down the street and saw a sign on a post. It said: “Lost -- $50. If found, just keep it.”

I bought a cheap piece of land . . . It was on someone else's property.

The brain is a wonderful organ; it starts working the moment you get up in the morning and doesn't stop until you get to work.

The sun got confused about daylight savings time. It rose twice. Everything had two shadows.

Some people think George is weird because he has sideburns behind his ears. I think George is weird because he has false teeth. With braces on them. George is a radio announcer, and when he walks under a bridge . . . You can't hear him talk.

When I was crossing the border into Canada, they asked if I had any firearms with me. I said, “Well, what do you need?”

I saw a sign at a gas station. It said “Help Wanted.” There was another sign below it that said “Self Service.” So I hired myself. Then I made myself the boss. I gave myself a raise. I paid myself. Then I quit.

Last week the candle factory burned down. Everyone just stood around and sang Happy Birthday.

In Vegas, I got into a long argument with the man at the roulette wheel over what I considered to be an odd number.

Do you think that when they asked George Washington for ID that he just whipped out a quarter?

I want to get a tattoo of myself on my entire body, only 2" taller.

I'm kinda tired. I was up all night trying to round off infinity. Then I got bored and went out and painted passing lines on curved roads.

I was watching the Superbowl with my 92 year-old grandfather. The team scored a touchdown. They showed the instant replay. He thought they scored another one. I was gonna tell him, but I figured the game he was watching was better.

When I turned two I was really anxious, because I'd doubled my age in a year. I thought, if this keeps up, by the time I'm six I'll be ninety.

Sponges grow in the ocean. That just kills me. I wonder how much deeper the ocean would be if that didn't happen.

I planted some bird seed. A bird came up. Now I don't know what to feed it.

I made a chocolate cake with white chocolate. Then I took it to a potluck. I stood in line for some cake. They said, "Do you want white cake or chocolate cake?" I said, "Yes".

I saw a vegetarian wearing a furry coat. So I looked closer. It was made of grass.

My aunt gave me a walkie-talkie for my birthday. She says if I'm good, she'll give me the other one next year.

I had amnesia once or twice.

I bought a million lottery tickets. I won a dollar.
I rented a lottery ticket. I won a million dollars. But I had to give it back.

I got a chain letter by FAX. It's very simple. You just FAX a dollar bill to everybody on the list.

The sky is falling. The sun is rising.

The sky is falling . . . No, I'm tipping over backwards.

The sky already fell. Now what?

The sun never sets on the British Empire. But it rises every morning. The sky must get awfully crowded.

I forgot and left the lighthouse on all night. Next day the sun wouldn't rise.

If you take an oriental and turn him around so he faces west, does he become disoriented?

I brought a mirror to Lovers' Lane. I told everybody I'm Narcissus.

I got a calculator and now I can't add without it. I got a spell checker and I can't write without it anymore. I got a blowdryer and now my hair won't dry on its own.

Get a bunch of those 3-D glasses and wear them at the same time. Use enough to get it up to a good, say, 10 or 12-D.

I heard that in relativity theory, space and time are the same thing. Einstein discovered this when he kept showing up three miles late for his meetings.

I called a blind date to set up a meeting at a restaurant. I said, "I'll be the one in the leather jacket." She said, "I'll be the one drinking sake." Turned out it was one of those biker-sushi places. We never met.

I wrote my own communications software in LISP. I got a phone bill for a thousand dollars. My computer keeps calling itself.

I called a blind date to set up a meeting at a restaurant. I said, "I'll be the one driving the Mercedes and wearing a Rolex." I never found her, but when I got home my place was robbed.

Our First Two Years

A *Shoemaker Village* Special Report

by Stephen Sokolowski

Introduction

The following is a reflection of *Village* history during the past two years. Since *Shoemaker Village* was started in May 1997, it has reached over 100 different people. What is shown below is a recount of what happened during each month of our history, with a picture of every cover that was published. The yellow line behind the pictures represents the number of pages that were in that issue of the *Village*, while the green line behind them represents the number of readers at any given point. (See the numbers on the left side of the graph.) If you are interested in reading any of the past issues featured in this report, visit our website at the address on the Acknowledgments page, as most issues are available online.

Parents' Effects Affect Children

Parents play a HUGE role in every child's life. The way children are raised can affect the way they "turn out." By "turning out" I mean the way they behave, carry themselves, etc.. I think that if parents don't set a good example for their children, those kids can easily "turn out" on the wrong track. Of course, this is just my opinion.



Take my family for example. Both my parents shaped me into the person that I am. Without the other parent, I can honestly say I would be extremely different. They each have had a major effect on me which has helped me grow as a person.

I love my mother. I love her to death. If something were to happen to her, I would be devastated. She has guided me so much in life. For example, she is very religious. This affects me since I am now a devout member of my church--one who truly loves the Lord. And, I believe that affects everything. If my mother had never brought me to church, I may never have been "walking with the Lord." Also, she has

affected me in many other ways besides faith. She sets a good example for me. I can respect her decisions. But, this is only the way I feel she has affected me in daily life.

With school life, I think things are different. Some kids' parents are very intelligent. They may have gone through college. Neither of my parents did. This is not necessarily a disadvantage, but it isn't an advantage either. Other students have their parents to help them out with their homework if needed. My parents wouldn't know where to begin. (They don't even know how to turn on our home computer!) My mom will try to help me; however, when it comes to math she has no clue.

This leaves me out in the dust to “fend for myself.” I hate it! Other kids in my trigonometry class, for example, had their parents to help them if they got stuck. But, not me! I know, I know, there are many

other students in the same boat as me. I feel bad for them, too. I hate it.

Now, my dad. Let's just say he is an interesting character. His moral values and standards are totally opposite from my mom's. My parents aren't really that compatible. By observing his behavior, I

realize I don't want to “turn out” like him.. That is basically his effect on me. He isn't a good role model. My mom knows this, too. It is hard to respect him.

I am very thankful I have such a great mother. If I didn't, my dad's behavior may have affected me in a negative way. I think that when kids have two “wack-a-do” parents as their only role-models, they

follow in their “wack-a-do”footsteps. By my observations in school, the rougher kids come from tougher families. Families where drugs, alcohol, etc., were found in their parent's background. Maybe I am too quick to voice my opinion. Well, this is the way I feel on the matter.

Kids are Influenced by Their Parents

(The opinions of this article do not necessarily reflect those of *Village* staff.)

I believe that children and how they act are influenced by what the parents do. If a child lives in the same house with the same parents for many years, they are going to see how their parents act in different situations and they will pick up on that. Once they see how their parents act, they will act like that in front of their peers. Some parents couldn't care about what their children do, so they will not care about schoolwork and all other things that are important. If the parents want what is best for the child and will do anything to help them in a time of need, then the children will pick up on that and help classmates with homework and other ideas. I think early in life when a parent tells a child to do something, obviously, they will do it. I believe that all of a child's opinions early in life are made by the parents. When a child gets to know more about the world, he or she starts to make his or her own opinions and the original parental opinions are thrown out. I know that was the way with me. My dad kept saying over and over again, "This is the right thing to do." When I was younger, that was the quote that I lived by. My dad could say the same thing today, and I would just ignore it. I have to keep in my mind that I am old enough to make my own decisions.

Deadbeat Dads, And The Fat Sons They Leave Behind[1]

A Critical Essay About The Role Parents Play In Their Children's Lives

Anyone and everyone is qualified to write about this topic. If you were born, then you have parents. Maybe you've never met them, but even then, in a small way, they've influenced you. I didn't want to write about this at first, but now I'm glad I did.

My family is of the nuclear variety--father, mother, son, and daughter. My parents are old. Sorry, I can't sugar-coat things. (It's just not me.) I never noticed before a year ago perhaps. They've been very good parents. My sister before me (five years older than I) is proof of their skill. But time has caught up very recently. Now that I'm a teenager, and vibrant as I ever was, my parents are slowing down just a little. It's forced me to be more independent. They can't watch me 24 hours a day, and the fact is, sometimes I'm awake that long! They regretfully admit that they can't be as big a part of my life as they wish. Of course, being a teenager and, therefore, wanting personal time and space, I say they contribute just enough to keep me going in the right direction and that they shouldn't try any harder. I do respect my parents, and I love them for doing all of their parental things. I do want to go in the right direction. I'm not a rebel. I'm so incredibly straight-edge that a life in the church would be too scandalous for me! Okay, that's an exaggeration. What some people call living, I call excessive self-destruction. I'm just not that type of kid. There is a part of me, though, that can't wait for college. Whatever I do now, I have to report to my parents. They're **very** astute. I know that, as I hard as I try, I can't hide anything forever. It's one of the reasons I respect them. But I imagine that once I get away from them, I'll take in the full college experience. I'm toiling over the thought of getting a tattoo--A BIG MEAN ONE ON MY ARM! The problem is that I want to go into a field of business/finance, and that profession is not yet liberal enough to accept such a thing. One could easily decide not to hire me based solely on it. But the fact remains, I'm a good kid, and I've got my parents to thank for it. I've actually thought a lot about this since I've become a teenager. It's a

[1]This piece has nothing to do with the subject of the title. I never once mention it as an example. ...But I'll bet it sure as heck got your attention when you were looking at the Table Of Contents. Keep reading. It's very good.

very interesting situation.

As I said, my sister is five years older than I am. We moved here from Baltimore eight and a half years ago. My sister would have been almost twelve, and I little more than six, still very impressionable. We were both raised with strict moral and social standards. So, I wonder sometimes, **what happened?** I dare think that the town one grows up in has *that much* of an effect on a person! What is perplexing me so, you may ask. Well, my sister turned out just fine. That is to say, well within the guidelines of behavior that my parents set for us. Although I say she is (especially when I want to annoy her), she's not perfect, but the differences between us are striking. I reiterate, she's no princess! However, in those places where I can be somewhat "rough around the edges," she seems quite rounded off. Unlike most siblings, we've always gotten along, for the most part. My sister is quite admirable. I looked to her for a role model . . . then I realized, hey, I don't want to be like her! It's totally different. I'm a guy, and most of all, I'm me, not someone else. I'm a callous person, I don't care to show emotion, I find vulgarity amusing, I sometimes feel a primal urge to settle things with my fists even though I know better, and I prefer the repetition, and especially solitude of Accounting, to group work. I'm not anti-social, but I don't like making small talk with jack*** strangers, or people that I do know for that matter. This is who I am. Do you notice that I just used a foul word?[2] That's who I am too. I'm very blunt. I can't hide my true feelings toward people. (It's a problem that I'm learning to deal with.) These things don't make me weird, or a bad person, necessarily. They just define me. I'm telling you all this because parents CAN AND DO influence a child and help determine their personalities. I've seen this direct connection. My sister was, you might say, sheltered. My parents didn't put us in a bubble, but as we grew, we did so viewing the world in different ways. College has had a big impact on my sister as I believe it will on me. I figure, if there's anything one hasn't experienced in their youth, campus living quickly presents it, waits for one to form a theory about it,

[2]I felt it necessary publish that word. While I don't expect that it will corrupt anyone, I must disclaim it on behalf of *Shoemaker Village*. I, Matthew Care (yeah, like you didn't know who it was), take full responsibility for all mind-pollution, government downfall, and any other negative acts resulting directly from my use of the word "jack***." Thank you and enjoy.

and then quickly shatters that theory at the next possible occasion. There must have been other factors in my personality development. My theory: TV. I wasn't deprived of television as much as my sister was growing up. I have absolutely no doubt that television influences people, and children are the most susceptible. I'm a teenager now, and I'm a TV junkie. *The Simpsons* is my favorite show. The editor, Stephen (whose upbringing was, I believe, somewhat sheltered, and who now comports himself in a very strict, decent manner), thinks that this show is trash and that it has a negative influence on people. But we're not here to debate that.

I have a friend whose parents are somewhat tyrannical. They make their children look like inconveniences. It's not a democratic home. I believe this has affected my friend profoundly. If you met him, the first word that would come to your mind would be "obnoxious." His wit is unsurpassed by anyone I've met. He has a tremendous talent for finding people's faults and exploiting them by means of childish insults. He can verbally abuse someone to tears, and he doesn't care for opinions that aren't his own. I'm no psychologist, but it resembles what I know about overcompensation. He's dominated by his parents, so he in turn craves mental power over others.

With all these examples, I think it's quite clear that parents play a major part in their children's lives. Even as I pull away from my parents, they dictate countless aspects of my life. I'm not an adult yet. I'd like to take this opportunity to give the greatest advice one can give on the subject of raising kids. You've heard specialists say it. You've heard celebrities say it on TV. Now I tell you, the key to remaining influential in a child's life is eating. That is, sitting down together and eating a meal. As far back as I can remember, I've never spent more than a dozen nights in a row in a bed that wasn't my own. Subsequently, you can figure that I do a lot of eating at home. My family has always made it a point to sit down together for supper. I think it's a great idea. AND NO, IT DOESN'T COUNT IF THE TV IS ON! Communication is the key aspect. My sister lives away from home now, but my parents and I still eat together at least four or five days a week. I may be slowly drifting away from SOME of their influence, but I never want them to be in the dark about my behavior. I don't care if

they don’t condone it or not! I’m not asking for validation; I’m too stubborn to listen anyway. I just want to keep the lines of communication open. That’s important to everyone, and it makes my parents feel that they’ve done a good job of raising me, which they most definitely have . . . despite TV, over which they have little control. Oh, one more thing. Our relationship also improved drastically when I grew up, not just mentally, but physically. The tension drained away from conversation. There is no wrong thing to say when you can beat up your parents. NOT THAT I’D EVER DO SUCH A THING!

The Effect of Parents on their Children's Development

I have been so disgusted with certain people that it finally compelled me to write this article, and what better Discussion Forum topic to write it for than this one: Do parents influence their children's behavior? I believe that the answer is a resounding yes.

Right now, I am typing on a school computer. Two rows down from me are two mean-looking youths who are acting tough to each other, ignoring the ruckus that they are causing. To my left is a mousepad that has the words "F*** you" inscribed on it. Furthermore, the librarians recently posted notices on top of the monitors attesting to a new shutdown procedure for the school computer network. The one on my computer is one of three remaining that I can immediately see. The others have been torn off by irresponsible students. As if that isn't enough, when I go to the bathroom after I finish writing this article, I will have to look at the curses that are scribbled over the tiles.

To add to this, I used to sit with my friend at lunch. Now, however, two uncaring people have virtually taken over the table. The most disturbing part of this is that one of them even wrote a story for the *Village* a few months ago. At the time, I had only known this person for one day, so I had no idea of his real personality. If you log on and look at his profile (I'll spare you the screen name) on AOL, you'll find a sick song that contains references to sexual content and foul language in every line. About a month ago, I decided that I had had enough and chose to sit at a different table for the lunch period. A few days later, however, on the premise that my friend would tell him to treat me nicely, I sat at the table one Tuesday and found to my surprise that he used 17 obscenities during that time. Fortunately for him, there were no teachers near. And the reason? Most likely, he watches the wrong TV shows. Throughout the lunch period, he repeated quotes from various TV shows, some of them vulgar. Judging from what I hear about his parents, I can see that that is where he has inherited his annoying traits.

Last Thursday, my family and I went to the Burger King in Willow Grove for dinner because

my dad had taken off for the day. After we had ordered and were waiting in line for the workers to get our food together, two 12-13 year-old youths entered the store and started an argument over who had forgotten their money. After a minute, the decibel level had increased so that the entire store could hear. That would have been bad enough, but they cursed at least six or seven times during the incident. Finally, they threw the door open and stormed out, banging the fence to the play area. This is another example of uncaring parents.

By far, one of the worst examples that a parent can set for their children is laziness or procrastination. It is funny sometimes to watch people who, the day before a project is due, scramble to find enough information to complete it on time. One person I know (he knows who he is) always waits until the last second (no, I am not exaggerating) to submit his stories. Last month, he promised five pages worth of stories, but put off his storywriting until 8:30 on Wednesday night. I had happened to be at a basketball game, and when I arrived home, I found that, even though it was past 10:30, he had still only written one page. He submitted the story ten minutes later, amidst angry protests to postpone publication. This is one of the reasons that the due date for stories has now been changed to the Tuesday before publication.

In addition, parents influence their kids with their health habits. For example, one of the most unhealthy habits and easiest ways to kill yourself is by smoking. If a parent smokes, it is proven that their children are almost twice as likely as other children to smoke. If the parents don't care about their children, they find them running off to get strange body piercings and doing drugs. In recent issues, the Assistant Editor mentioned one former friend who now spends all his time at home getting high and skipping school. Obviously, his parents don't care at all if he is hurting himself and breaking the law. I also hold firm that, while drug education in school may help deter students from ruining their lives, if their parents don't support that belief, the student will do drugs anyway, regardless of the consequences.

I have always been taught to respect others by my parents. By imposing a strict discipline code

as I was maturing, I have learned to fear the consequences. One person I know, who is able to drive, recently was involved in an automobile accident and totaled his car. According to one person, his most important concern is his lack of a ride. My upbringing suggests in this instance that I would be afraid for at least a month of what my parents would do to me as punishment and would care very little about transportation for the time being. By far the most important thing that parents can give their children is discipline. The major problem today among some young adults and even little kids is lack of respect. Lack of respect for their parents, lack of respect for teachers, and even lack of respect for the law, land many in trouble. I was horrified yesterday (by publication it will have been about three weeks ago) by a few students' actions during Spanish class. Throughout the entire class period most of the class had been inattentive and talkative. When, with ten minutes to go in the class, the teacher canceled a "cultural experience" (another word for party) that she had planned, the class went ballistic. My friend and I, not having had any part in the mischief that was going on before, sat back and watched as one student attempted to argue to reinstate the party. During this argument, he began by saying, "You're a younger teacher, and I think that you should be able to relate to us..." This is lack of respect, plain and simple. This teacher told me after class that some students even pointed at her with looks that conveyed the phrase "I hate you!" This all starts in the parents of the student. If they show respect to other people, their children will learn to show respect. If they, however, such as a few people who my mom deals with in her customer service position, don't show basic respect, their kids will not show respect at all when they grow older.

This isn't a new problem, either. A prime example is the corner of my house. For years, kids have been destroying my parents' property. Most recently, they have been ripping flowers off the trees near the corner. Before that, they would destroy igloos and snowmen when it used to snow during the winter. Several lights on our walkway were recently vandalized. It didn't end there. When they were fixed, somebody knocked them over again three more times! Worst of all, some of their parents stand there and watch, while doing nothing about it. This is, again, a lack of respect for the property of

others. Do you think that the students involved in the Columbine school shootings had any respect for anyone else? After the massacre, there was not one mention of the gunmen's parents, implying that they didn't care at all what had happened.

As another article states above, religion is an important part of respect. I, like the author of the above article, have been brought up by very religious parents. Last year, I volunteered to be a teacher's assistant for my mom, who wanted to teach a PREP (Parish Religious Education Program) class. During the first day of class, the parents were invited to the classroom and what would happen during the year was explained. It was immediately apparent where the children had developed their personalities–their parents. While some parents were nice and attended church every Sunday, some sent their children to class even though they go to church twice a year, at Christmas and Easter. This is why it is important that kids be brought up with good morals, and what better way to instill them than by going to church?

Now that the total has reached 4 pages, I realize that I have written a little too much. It would be nice if it were a perfect world and everybody had respect for each other. That way, there would be no crime. But since it isn't a perfect world, only parents can teach their children what's right and wrong. When a child is two years old, he or she doesn't know anything different than what their parents tell them. The right parenting is needed to keep children from going astray.

Why Foreign-Language Classes Should Be Leveled

It is imperative that the Upper Moreland School District institute leveling in foreign-language classes at UMHS. By leveling language classes, students will be able to work together with others of the same ability. In addition, this will reduce behavioral incidents by certain individuals that affect the entire group during classes. Finally, those who are able to do more than what is expected will be able to exercise their skills. This will make foreign language easier to learn for everyone at their own speed of learning.

It is important the students be able to work together with peers of the same ability as their own. I am currently taking Spanish II at UMHS. Since I am privileged to have the class right before lunch, when three other classes are also being held at the same time, a lot of group work is done between the classes. However, I find that, many times, I am placed in a group (the groups are picked with lots) with students who might require some extra help learning the material. When I am placed in a group like this, sometimes it takes three times as long to complete the project while the other students have to look up words in the glossary that I have committed to memory. It also causes friction between group members when it comes time to hand in the project, and I must check it to see if everything is correct. It would benefit the entire group if students with the same ability level were placed in different classes so that those who require a little extra instruction can receive the help they need. This would also not hold back classmates who have already learned the material.

In addition, leveling foreign-language classes would reduce problems with behavior. It is an accepted fact that those students who get lower grades also tend to misbehave more often than others. For example, while sitting in class last Monday, a girl who sits behind me who is frequently absent was present. When asked by the teacher why she did not do her work, she mumbled under her breath, “I don’t care; I’m going to F*** fail anyway.” Fortunately for her, the teacher did not hear her, because that would have most likely resulted in a detention. In addition, one student had to be removed from

the class for talking while a test was being administered. But though these incidents may seem bad, the most annoying problem is how some students insist on talking constantly even while something new is being taught. This frequently results in the teacher stopping to yell at them, and this disrupts the class further. By leveling foreign language classes, these kinds of problems could be lessened, and not affect those who do not break the rules.

Most importantly, by dividing classes into different levels, those who are able to perform beyond what is expected of them in the current classes will be able to do so. As one example, I received a 99% grade during the first marking period of grading, and currently have well over a 100% average during this grading period (this is due to extra credit). Most times, when twenty minutes is allotted to complete a worksheet, I often finish it in ten. A friend, who also sits next to me, also finishes work more quickly than the rest of the class. Another, important example is that, for the entire marking period, I have **never** received a grade below 112% on a quiz. Much of the class, however, receives grades in the 75-85% range, requires more time to complete worksheets, and does not score above 100% on quizzes. Therefore, it would help both types of students if they were separated where they would be challenged, not hindered.

As you can see, it is very important that administrators realize the benefits that can be attained if foreign language classes at UMHS are leveled. After putting up with classes that are too easy for months, I, along with others, are ready for a change. Students who need extra help will also be benefitted, because they will receive the assistance they need, without those who find it easy answering all the questions. Something must be done about this soon in order to enhance all students' knowledge to the best of their abilities.

The Day I Would Die

By Michael Curry

While I sit there ready, ready to be executed in the electric chair, I wonder why I did it, why I killed the old king. It was a cool dark night when I heard a knock on the door. I was in shock of it because all my friends had died and I wondered who it could be. I gently opened the door slightly, so slightly in case it could have been a thief or a swindler. I peered out through the slight crack in the door. I saw a bold and powerful soldier in a metal suit with a bronze shield. With a deep voice, the soldier said, "The king would like to see you right now." I answered, "For what reason?" He said, "For personal reasons. Will you accept the invitation?" I nodded, staring at his black eyes.

When I arrived, I was greeted by the king who was wearing a bright red robe with a diamond necklace. While I was looking around in the king's palace, he told me to follow him into this room. The room was old and grimy with cobwebs on the entrance of the room. He told me to sit down, while he lit a candle and placed it on the middle of the table. The room was pitch black except for the faint light which the candle provided. The king started talking when he kept tapping his finger on the table. Tap, tap, tap. He was wearing a gold ring which made the sound even more disturbing than it could be. I couldn't keep my eyes off his fingers. The sound it was making was a clinking sound. Clink, clink, clink. My head started to pound. The pounding was so intense, it felt as if my head was going to burst. Why wouldn't he just stop! Then suddenly, it became pitch black. The candle was burnt all out to the wick, but still the tapping continued. Then, my head starting to pound even harder than before. I couldn't take it anymore. The only way I could see him was by listening to the tapping noise he made. I pulled out my dagger from my boot (which I kept there for protection) and speared him in the neck. The pounding went away. It was gone. I chuckled at the thought. I tore the cloak off of the king and lit it on fire with an extra match I had in my pocket. I disposed the blood-stained carpet and I put the body in the ceiling vents. I heard a banging on the door. Someone was saying, "Open up in there." I opened it. It was the soldiers. They asked, "Where is the king?" I said I didn't know. They

said they were going to look for him but I grinned at the thought. As they looked for the king, I felt woozy and my head started to pound. It went pound, pound, pound until the pressure was so intense, my head was going to explode. I couldn't take it anymore. I let out a loud groan and then I confessed it. I confessed how I tried to cover it up, the death of the king and everything. Now I sit in this chair with despair, ready to die. I wonder, did I kill him because of the tapping of the ring or the sound of the clink. I am not sure why I killed the king.

The Knights of the Square Table

Chapter 2

The next day was the first day of autumn, and it felt like that to the adventurers. It was raining again, and the chill in the air didn't go away for the entire day. There was a thick fog that impeded their view of the plains ahead, and so the army had to proceed slowly so that there were no surprise attacks by Yavin or his followers.

The weather, however, cleared shortly after that, and it was uneventful traveling to Riverbend. When they reached the city four days later, they were in for a surprise. It appeared that the entire world was encamped there.

The city itself, as they could see from a hill about a mile away, was large. A tall wall with sentries on top guarded the city. Two large doors that were presumably closed at night for protection were open on the near side. People traveled in and out.

The entire area was littered with makeshift tents. Horses roamed about. There were several fires blazing to take the chill out of the evening air. The land immediately surrounding the city appeared to be partially divided into sectors of different armies, and many of the knights were wearing bright colors that were visible from high above. However, since all the armies were allied in planning to defeat Yavin, there were no stark divisions, and the colors mingled together at places.

Making their way down the hill, they entered the crowd of knights and it took at least a half hour to pass through them. The leader of the group they had just met a few short days ago had taken those under his command up ahead to the city while Dave, Katie, Christopher, Mike, and Chapin had stopped to look.

Finally, they reached the gates of Riverbend as darkness was setting in. A knight, presumably protecting the city, was standing guard, and motioned for them to pass. Inside the gates, there was an overpass on which a few more knights were stationed. Christopher approached them and inquired as to whom he should notify that they were here.

"The council will adjourn in five days," came the reply. "Does the king know you personally?"

"No," Christopher replied. "But we may have information that is relevant to the action that will be decided upon."

"What town are you from?" the knight asked. He was holding a piece of parchment. However, the writing on it was illegible to Mike, Dave, and Katie. Christopher and Chapin looked as if they could understand it perfectly.

"We're not from any town," Christopher said. Katie looked at Christopher in surprise but didn't say anything.

"You must live in a town," the knight replied.

"We don't. We live off the land near Harrogen."

"Then why would you be coming here?"

"I already told you that we have some important information," Christopher reiterated, his voice rising.

"We'll let the king see about this," the knight replied, showing no signs of buckling under pressure. "He will escort you there," he said, pointing to a fellow knight. The knight had drawn his sword in case trouble began. He started leading them forward, through the center of the town, and toward the palace on the far side. Christopher wondered why such an enormous palace had been constructed when the rest of the common people virtually lived in shacks.

They entered through the huge main doors and proceeded through a long hall. It was dark inside. By now, it was almost completely black outside the palace, and the flickering of the candles that lined the sides of the hall cast an eerie glow on the travelers.

Soon they reached the throne room, which was also graciously adorned. The king sat in the

middle, with what appeared to be the queen to his left and a knight who was decorated with badges and awards to his right. As the five of them entered with the knight escort, the king stood up from his chair and looked them over.

"This is King John," the knight said, motioning toward the throne. "Regard him with respect."

"What business do you have here?" the king asked in a menacing tone.

"We have come to attend the conference," Christopher replied, equally as determined.

"Then why have you been brought here?" King John asked curiously, expecting an answer from the knight even though he asked Christopher directly.

"They say they want to attend the conference, but they are from no town," the knight replied. "These are thieves or Yavin's servants that wish to undermine our power."

"It does seem a little suspicious," the king replied. "But hardly cause for concern. We'll just ask them the question that everybody that isn't loyal to Yavin should be able to answer." Christopher and Katie exchanged glances.

"You," he pointed to Dave. "Who is that man?" He motioned toward another knight on the other side of the room.

Christopher looked on, being unable to help. A look of horror came over Katie's face after she realized that Dave would be unable to answer the question.

"I know," Katie offered.

The king held out his hand, motioning to stop her. "Let the boy answer the question. It would be a shame if he couldn't."

"Well," Dave stuttered.

"Yes?" the king asked, expecting an answer.

There was an extremely awkward silence. Everybody waited for Dave to answer the question, and almost everybody in the room knew that he couldn't.

Finally, the knight to the right of them addressed the king. "Let the woman answer it. After all, he's only a boy and probably isn't worried about such things."

"Fine," the king agreed. "Answer the question."

"He's the leader of the rebel forces that are seeking to undermine Yavin's power," Katie said.

"What is his name?" the king asked.

"Nobody knows. He has never revealed it," Katie replied. The tension in the room suddenly vanished as the king smiled.

"You may leave now," he said. Mike turned around and found that several well-armed knights had entered the throne room in case of trouble, and that the king was addressing them. They left, leaving the king, queen, and the knight on his right side alone with the party.

King John looked the companions over. After a few minutes, he spoke. "I didn't expect you to be on our side. The way he hesitated . . . but never mind. What is the information you bring to the conference?"

Chapin replied this time. "We can tell you where Yavin's troll camps are located. We also have been able to assess the most probable moves of the calks."

"Very well. It will add to our expertise," the queen said, speaking for the first time since they had entered.

"Then all is settled," the king said. "I will reserve a place of honor at the conference for all of you. We will assemble on the first of October in the main hall of the castle."

"Thank you," Mike replied in politeness and then followed the others out. No sooner had they exited the palace than Christopher burst out.

"You sure have a lot to learn," he said as they walked across the town. As they had left, a knight had said they would be accommodated in one of the town's guest houses, the only one that was currently open.

When they reached the house about ten minutes later, they entered to discover that it had not been used in some time. Dirt was everywhere. There was one bed on the upper floor, and the mattress

was beginning to rot away in spots where bugs had infested to it.

However, it had not been five minutes since they entered when a knight came with a small army of cleaners and builders. Before two hours had passed, even though it was pitch dark outside, the house was almost as good as new. Since it was well after midnight before they were left alone, the group decided to get some rest.

The next few days were relatively uneventful compared to their earlier adventures. The marketplace, which was where shopkeepers had built booths in the town square, was bustling with activity. At the end of the second day of their stay, the king graciously allowed them to ascend to the top of the palace's tower. Looking down, they could see that the area in which armies encamped had now extended to over a mile radius from the castle. In the distance, however, they spotted calks that were watching vigilantly but did not dare get close lest the armies destroy them.

During the third day, Christopher made a trip to the marketplace to acquire some goods that would be useful in future journeys. He returned with several water bottles, some warm garments for the upcoming winter months, and some other trinkets to pass the time.

Finally, the first of October arrived. The group awoke early at around 5 a.m., even before the sun rose. The conference was scheduled to start at noon and last as long as it took to determine what to do.

During the morning hours, many of the leaders of the armies could be seen coming and going from outside the enormous doors. With a few exceptions, as was the case with Christopher, Katie, Mike, Dave, and Chapin, there was only to be one delegate from each army, which in most cases was its leader.

By an hour before noon, the delegates were pouring through the gates to take their seats at the conference. As the party made their way to the palace hall, they came upon a long line. A knight was asking each attendee their name and affiliation. After this, they were admitted to take a seat in the hall. When the knight at the door spotted their group, they were allowed to pass through without any trouble.

The hall was huge. There were at least fifty stone tables inside, with room to seat ten at each. On the far side from the entrance, there were two tables raised above the others on a dais. Doors to the kitchen were behind it and on the lower level.

The knight directed them to sit on the upper level with the honored guests. Already, before it was 11:30, most of the hall was full, and it was getting more crowded by the minute. The noise level was also increasing, even to the point where the king, who was now seated at the head table, had to call to lessen it. At noon, the hall was completely packed. A few stragglers who had arrived late came inside to join them. It was windy and cool outside, and the king ordered the doors closed to keep any of Yavin's servants out of the building. However, there was no way to be sure that there were no spies in the room already.

"The council will come to order," King John said, pounding his fist on the table. It rattled, and the few pieces of parchment, writing utensils, and assorted other gadgets that were on it shook.

"As you all know, the oppression of Yavin has been gathering for over thirty years now. This council has been called to put an end to his tyranny."

"Most of us just stood by, powerless to do anything by ourselves," the king continued. "And for a while, we were powerless. For many, Yavin seemed too far away to be of any concern of theirs, and as a result, your armies dwindled in numbers.

"But now, we have that chance. We can give Yavin what he deserves and be rid of our fear that has been ever-so-present over that time.

"We as of now have no idea what course of action we will take," the king added, now taking on a less dramatic tone. "Therefore, we have agreed that the best thing to do will be for each table to come up with as many ideas as possible. Cooperate with each other and consult with other tables. If each of us can individually gain some ideas, then we will all be better off later when we choose the best one.

"My servants will serve you food. Good luck. We will discuss these ideas later today."

The room became noisy again. There was the ruffling of parchments and writing tools, the clamor of the wooden chairs as they scraped against the ground, and the footsteps of those who were unfortunate enough to arrive late, attempting to find a seat.

The table where Christopher and the others were sitting was big enough to seat sixteen people. Their group sat on one side of the table, to the left of King John. To the right of him was the queen, who was again quiet, and the decorated knight they had seen before in the throne room. A person who looked like a miniature troll resided next to him, and three distinguished knights sat to his right. On the edges, another creature that they had never seen the likes of before was seated, opposite from someone who appeared to be an astronomer. There were three empty seats on the other side of the table. More knights were seated, interspersed in the spaces on that side.

"Shall we begin?" King John boomed and quickly lowered his voice, remembering that he wasn't addressing the entire room anymore.

"Why don't we start by hearing the information that our friends have to tell us?" the knight to the queen's right started.

"Pardon me," Mike said, curious. "I don't believe you have told us your name."

"Oh yes," came the reply. "I'm sorry. I am Jeff, the king's advisor in military affairs. Long ago, when I was still young, I participated in a battle against Yavin and his powers, and the king asked me to help him. It's been over twenty years now."

"I'm sorry for asking. I should have known . . .."

"There's no problem," Jeff replied.

"Now tell us more about what you know," the king prodded.

Christopher took out the map that he had possessed for the past thirty years. To Dave, it seemed that it had not aged.

"Using this map," Christopher began, holding the map out in front of him so that the entire table could see, "I was able to record where the troll positions were located the last time I was about, before Dave awoke."

"Before Dave awoke?" one knight inquired.

"Uh oh," Mike mumbled under his breath.

"Tell us," the king ordered.

"Dave had some spell put on him by Yavin over twenty-five years ago," Christopher recalled. "We took care of him all that time while we lived in a village...." He trailed off.

"So you're not from the forest," the queen said in a state of shock. King John and Jeff looked around in disbelief. After they had recovered, the king spoke:

"I thought that something was strange," he revealed. "But I didn't say anything because you had promised information. So I had a few guards watch your house for any suspicious activity. But there was none, and my worries disappeared, or so I thought."

"Why did you deceive my husband like that?" the queen demanded in a strong tone.

"We had no intentions of any harm," Christopher replied, trying to stay calm. "We just didn't know if it would be wise to reveal where we truly lived."

"And where would that be?" the king asked them.

"In a village a few days march from here." There was silence for a split second as everybody tried to collect their thoughts at this revelation. The drone in the rest of the hall continued behind them, as if nobody had noticed what had just happened at their table.

"It doesn't matter," one of the strange creatures sitting at the side of the table commented. "Let's continue and stop wasting time."

"Very well," the king agreed. "Continue. What were you saying about Dave?"

"It definitely wasn't something natural," Christopher reiterated. "He wouldn't stay asleep for that long if it was a natural occurrence. And besides, throughout that period, there were calks and slaws constantly checking on him. We found quite a few of the creatures crawling about."

"This is grave, indeed," the king commented. "What were you doing to get this curse cast upon yourselves?"

Christopher then explained what had happened to them during the summer of twenty-five years ago. It took over two hours by the time that he had explained the entire story in detail. It took another half-hour for questioning by King John and the knights on the other side of the table, who seemed to be particularly interested in what had happened.

"A story that I would find unbelievable," King John said after it was finished, "if it weren't for our living proof over here." He pointing to Dave.

It was now about three in the afternoon, and King John, upon learning this from one of his servants, called a ten-minute recess for the entire hall. Many of the knights took the opportunity to go outside during the short reprieve, while some others, engrossed in their work, declined the chance, and continued to ponder.

When the break was over, King John called the room back to order and addressed Chapin with his next question. "So, tell us about those maps you have."

"This," Christopher said after reaching into his traveling bag, "is a map I acquired a long time ago, and, as I was trying to say before, I have marked the troll positions on it."

"Let me see that," Jeff asked politely, and Christopher passed the map over. In black, uneven marks, Christopher had drawn a symbol indicating the town of Riverbend approximately halfway between Gangton and Seatown on the road. There were three large red X's on the map: one just south of the compass rose that was located to the right of the map, one encampment south of the dark forest, and one at the location where they had almost met their doom twenty-five years ago.

"How large are these camps?" King John asked after Jeff handed them the map.

"They have all been growing. There are at least twenty thousand at the far southern one. They may be planning an invasion."

"And the others?" Jeff asked.

"Still large, but it's been long enough that earlier estimates I made will have to suffice," Christopher replied.

"This is dire news," the queen said upon seeing the map. She handed it across the table for the others to see.

"I think our first order of business should be to dispatch these trolls," said one knight on the far side. "Then we can worry about attacking Yavin's fortress."

"I think that's a good idea," the king said, and then handed the map to another table with a few explanations. The knights at that table passed it among themselves while conversation continued.

"How will it be possible for us to combat an army that huge?" one asked.

"It isn't," the king said. "My forces have only one thousand men, another five hundred in reserve. Together, it may be possible. What are their armaments?"

"They were heavily equipped," Chapin replied. "Spears, swords, and the usual weapons, but they also had several large battering rams that could be used to attack. They built their camp on a hill, so it will be harder for us to attack them if we choose."

"This sounds like bad odds," said one of the creatures sitting at the sides of the table. "It would take at least twice as many men if we even wanted to stand a chance in a battle like that. We'd lose many men in the process."

"Then a frontal assault on the camp is out of the question," Mike said.

"However," Jeff suggested, "it may be possible to lure them somehow into attacking us. We can pick them off as they leave their camp."

"That is also possible," King John said. "But if they got through, they would be able to use their weapons to destroy this town or one of the other towns along the coast."

"They wouldn't do that anyway," Dave said. Everybody fell silent as he spoke for the first time. "All the armies are camped outside. It would be an easy task for the trolls to sneak up at night and pick off a few guards each night. But they haven't. Why?"

"They must have some bigger plan," Katie suggested.

"Exactly. But what?"

"Look to the west," the king suggested. "Maybe to Jasper, or even Harrogen..."

"I was just wondering," Dave said. "But what side is Harrogen loyal to? When we were there, they threw us in jail and we almost died of starvation."

"That is a good question," Jeff agreed. "That would explain the lack of contact there has been over the past few months."

"I think that this is as good of a time as any to question Harrogen's loyalty," one knight said. "Since they refused to send a delegate to this conference and we haven't heard from them in over a year, we can't assume that they will provide us with help. They may even turn against us."

"I've heard that the king there has been voicing some strange ideas lately," another knight added. "The people don't know what to do, and, frankly, I think that Yavin has bribed him to join his side."

"So now," King John said, "we're facing evil from all sides. Harrogen to the west, the troll camp to the east, and Yavin's castle to the north."

"It's getting late already," Jeff said. It was well past six o'clock, and the light was beginning to fade. "Let's get some rest and we'll continue tomorrow morning."

"Agreed," the king said, and he pounded his fist on the table. The nearer tables began to quiet themselves, and eventually the ones on the other side of the room fell silent. The king announced that the council would adjourn tomorrow an hour after sunrise, and the knights began to leave.

After bidding farewell to the king and the other guests at the table, Katie, Mike, Dave, Chapin, and Christopher headed for their assigned rooms.

The next day, the weather was bright and sunny. It was about half past seven when all the knights were again seen entering the town, heading for the hall.

The party was greeted by knights and ambassadors from other lands as they entered the hall. It was more crowded than yesterday. As they took their place at the head table, the king began to pound for order. The hum in the hall died down until water could be heard dripping from a bucket in the kitchen behind them. Finally, King John spoke.

"You've had almost five hours to prepare your ideas. Let's hear some of them now. Who wants to start?"

At first, nobody stood up. Finally, one knight from a table near the entrance to the hall stood, and everybody turned to look at him.

"The knights of Amon have worked out a plan," he stated. The king motioned for him to continue.

"Using the map that Christopher gave us, we have determined that the troll camps in the north pose little threat to southern towns. It would take several days for the trolls to reach here, time which we could use to prepare our defenses."

"But if this does happen, we propose that watchmen be sent to survey the plains and the area near the Dark Forest in order to detect such an attack before it happens."

There was a murmur of agreement. Some knights looked up as if they wished that they had thought of the plan by themselves.

"That is a good idea," King John said, and even managed to crack a smile. "Let's take a vote among nations, as proposed before the council began. All who approve of this plan, please raise your hand." Almost all of the hands in the room went up.

"All opposed?" There were scattered hands, amounting to no more than twenty knights.

"Then we will set up watchmen posts," the king said. "How many men do you feel that we'll need?"

"A few hundred," the knight replied.

"Very well. I will appoint you in charge of gathering enough men to prevent such an attack."

The room began to grow noisy again, but the king held his hand up for silence.

Just as the room began to quiet down again, the doors burst open and a knight rushed in. "Trolls!" he gasped. "Thousands of them! They're marching toward the city!"