Shoemaker Village

Volume 29 - June 1999



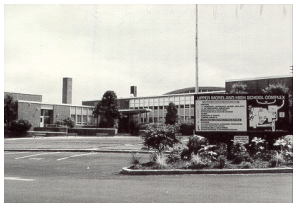
SPECIAL REPORT:



NEIGHBORHOOD VANDALS OUT OF CONTROL!







New Section this month: *The Bear Facts*!
New writer joins *Village* staff!

PLUS!

The Knights of the Square Table continues: The quest takes a startling turn!

The Discussion Forum features teenage driving!

News from the Curries included!



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Editor's Pages

Information you should know

Welcome to the June issue of *Shoemaker Village*!

To start off with good news, we have finally found somebody to be a correspondent on UMHS news, as many readers requested almost half a year ago! Lori Blickley, who last month contributed an article to *The Discussion Forum*, has agreed to join us as our fourth staff member and to contribute a monthly column of events at UMHS. Titled *The Bear Facts*, this section will discuss recent happenings around UMHS and the Upper Moreland School District, just as the Neighborhood News currently does for the neighborhood. Be sure to read it to be informed of what's going on in our schools!

Speaking of school, it is time for many to cry, share their regrets, and look forward to next year (yeah, right!). The school year will officially end on Monday, June 21. Since, as we have found out, publication is conveniently scheduled for Purple and Gold Day at UMHS, we will be visiting all the teachers on our list sometime during the day to sign them up for our summer subscription list. Due to the high cost of mailing, we have found it necessary to ask teachers and students with whom we will not be in contact to make a donation of $1.25 (with the exception of those teachers who made donations previously) to cover postage for the August and September issues of *Shoemaker Village*. Currently, we have plans to make these issues even bigger than last month's issue (40 pages), so you don't want to miss out on this offer. By the time you are reading this, you will have most likely already been asked; but, if you change your mind and wish to sign up for the summer subscription list, you can see Stephen Sokolowski on Wednesday, June 16, for last-minute signups. You can also contact one of our other editors sometime before the end of the year. Though we currently do not require teachers to make donations, the money will only be used to defray the cost of mailing. We hope that you continue to subscribe over the summer!

Speaking of the summer, we have modified next month's publication schedule to decrease mailing cost to our subscribers over the summer and to make delivery more convenient. **The July issue of *Shoemaker Village* will be published on Wednesday, June 16, 1999**. This is intended to be on the last full day of school at UMHS, in order to deliver on time so that there are only two summer issues. Contributions for the next issue must be received by **Sunday, June 13**. In August, to make up for the long break between issues, look forward to expanded coverage of news and extra content. As stated earlier, the August and September issues will be mailed to all subscribers on the UMHS portion of our subscription list, and we will resume regular publication in October.

To continue on with even more news, the *Shoemaker Village* webpages are still online, and we have received our greatest number of hits yet! Our first "totally Internet" subscriber, the Edwards family, has also signed up this month through E-Mail. Each month, the *Village* webpages are frequently updated with the latest news, comments, and

behind-the-scenes offerings that are not found in the paper edition of the *Village*. Be sure to check out our website at **http://come.to/ShoemakerVillage**. The pages are currently updated biweekly, so visit often.

Also, though now overshadowed by the joining of new staff, you have probably noticed the cover story, the vandalism spree that has occurred throughout the neighborhood. This is our fourth special report in *Village* history, and our longest, totaling almost two pages. We urge you to read it if you live in or have any interest in the neighborhood, so that you can be forewarned in case the vandalism continues. The article is featured on page 16.

In other news, we are currently seeking people who have ideas for topics in *The Discussion Forum*. Recently, we have run short on ideas for topics, so any help would be appreciated. Simply log on to the *Village* website and submit a comment form with your suggestion. If it is used, we'll give you a free month's subscription. Remember, if anybody would like to contribute an article to *The Discussion Forum*, a short story, or any other piece of writing, send it to us and you'll receive a free issue.

In *The Discussion Forum* next month, we will be opening the long-awaited and controversial topic, *Should there be year-round schooling?* for discussion. Since editor Stephen Sokolowski published an article originally produced for English class last year, we have received many requests to hear what other people think. Since the July issue will be distributed on the last day of the school year, it's a perfect time to share your opinions. We anticipate the largest *Discussion Forum* section yet. Don't miss out on the opportunity to share your opinion!

Michael Curry, who last month contributed *The Day I Would Die*, has again submitted *News From the Curries*, a popular section with neighborhood residents. For those who don't remember, the Curry Family lived at 2005 Acorn Place and moved away in August 1995. The last published installment of *News From the Curries* was included one year ago in the June 1998 issue. Enjoy the section and we hope that Michael or the other members of the family will continue to inform us of happenings in their neighborhood. In other news, Amanda Dilks, a sophomore at UMHS, submitted an article for The Discussion Forum about the Driving Age topic. Matthew Care, Assistant Editor of the *Village*, also deserves to be congraulated, for coming through with several articles. Together, Amanda and Matt were able to contribute six pages on the last day before publication, making this our second biggest issue ever. Thank you to all who contributed.

As all good things come to an end, we are sorry to report that we have printed all 250 of *The Wit of Steven Wright* jokes. Therefore, the 6-part section has finally come to an end. If you liked this section: don't despair! We have secured another collection of Steven Wright jokes that we will be publishing over the summer, so keep reading!

Now on to the "Picture of the Month." Last month's picture was guessed correctly by Rita Wilkowski, long-time subscriber and supporter of the *Village*. The photograph in question, taken in 1936, was of Henry A. Sokolowski, who celebrated his 50th wedding anniversary last month. Thank you to all who guessed, and Rita has had

an extra month added on to her subscription.

Unfortunately, for this month, we were unable to secure a picture for our contest. After asking numerous people, it was decided that it would be impossible to publish a picture in this month's issue. If you have any pictures you feel are suitable for the "Picture of the Month", send them to us. We'll add a free month to your subscription if it's used. Yes, unlike other magazines, we'll be able to return it. By the way, for those of you who requested it, we have published our pictures on the Acknowledgments page this month.

That's all for this month. We hope to be hearing from you before our final issue of the school year next month. Enjoy this issue and we'll see you in three weeks!

Acknowledgments

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New subscribers this month

There are no new subscribers this month.

TOTAL NUMBER OF CURRENT READERS: 65

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The next issue of *Shoemaker Village* will be published on Wednesday, June 16, 1999.
All contributions for the next issue must be received by Sunday, June 13, 1999.

Upcoming topics in **The Discussion Forum:**
July 1999: Should year-round education be instituted in our schools?

Puzzle Page

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

Accident
Activities
Bear Facts
Board
Break
Calendar
Candidate
Contributions
Curries
Damage
Definitions
Discussion
Driving
Election
Events
Exam
Fathers
Gold
Klaus
Knights
Max
Pipes
Police
Primary
School
Sewer
Summer
Teachers
UMHS
Vandalism
Weekend

Neighborhood News

June 1999

MAJOR ACCIDENT ALONG PIONEER ROAD, NEIGHBORS CONCERNED

On the morning of Saturday, May 15, peace in the neighborhood was shattered by squealing tires as a major accident happened along Pioneer Road.

The accident occurred around 6:30 a.m., when a motorist in a white car lost control near the Rorviks' property.

The car then jumped the curb, scraped the telephone pole in the picture, tore up the grass on the property next to the pole, careened off the curb, and slammed to a stop in the Hoffmans' driveway, leaving a large, muddy skid mark that remained a few days afterward. The driver of the wreck was apparently unhurt and walked away from the scene, although he seemed somewhat dazed.



The broken telephone wire and the wide swath of dirt show the aftermath of the accident.



The swath of destruction continued across the street and into the Hoffmans' driveway.

As the car bounced off the telephone pole, it also knocked off a wire, which was a telephone wire that ran under the street. Fortunately, the wire only served the Sokolowski house across the street from the pole. This "makeshift" setup dates back to the days while this house was the "sample house", and phone service was "temporarily" routed from the already established houses across the street before the rest of the Shoemaker Village development was constructed in the early 1980's. However, for some unknown reason, their phone service was not combined with the rest of the development's underground wiring; and now the Sokolowskis' phones are at the mercy of whatever may affect that wire. After the car accident, however, service was quickly reinstated later that morning by a Bell Atlantic crew.

The accident leaves many residents worried now about the probability of future accidents occurring. When the Pioneer Road Reconstruction Project was completed in December of last year, it was expected that the road would now be safer for both residents and motorists. This has now been proven not to be the case.

Ironically, during the fall of last year, several petitioners lobbied to have the speed limit reduced from its current value of 35 miles per hour to 25. The township board of directors refused the proposal, stating that with the amount of traffic the road receives, a speed limit of 25 would be insufficient. They did agree, however, to provide more police enforcement, though as of yet, this has not happened.

We'll keep you updated on any further developments.

SCHOOL CALENDAR RELEASED FOR NEXT YEAR

On April 27, 1999, the Upper Moreland School Board approved the 1999-2000 School District Calendar, and things are looking good for both teachers and students.

The calendar was distributed to all students in the Elementary schools; however, for some unknown reason, it was not distributed to the others schools. Featuring only 177 days at the last count, the 1999-2000 school year will

be the shortest ever. The year will begin on Wednesday, September 8, 1999. Incredibly, the school year will conclude on Wednesday, June 14, 2000, the earliest in recent memory!

To make matters even better, three early dismissal days have been scheduled for *all schools,* in addition to the six normal elementary school early dismissal days. Unbelievably, certain days, such as February 18, 2000, have been assigned as District Holidays for no apparent purpose.

The extra days will be used to train teachers using the techology in the building. Departing from prior tradition, Graduation will also be held only one day before the closing of school, different from recent years.

The full calendar has been duplicated below.

DRY WEATHER TAKES HOLD



July 1999 - June 2000

School District of Upper Moreland Township

July 1999
2 District Holiday
5 District Holiday

August 1999
3 Committee Meetings
10 Committee Meetings
17 Agenda Conference
24 Board Meeting

September 1999
1 Flex Day for Teachers
6 District Holiday
7 In-service (All Schools)
7 Committee Meetings
8 First Student Day
14 Committee Meetings
21 Agenda Conference
20 Teacher/ Student Holiday
28 Board Meeting

October 1999
5 Committee Meetings
8 Early Dismissal (All Schools)
12 Committee Meetings
19 Agenda Conference
26 Board Meeting

November 1999
1 Parent-Teacher Conferences Elementary Schools
2 Parent-Teacher Conferences Elementary Schools
3 Parent-Teacher Conferences Elementary Schools
9 Committee Meetings
16 Agenda Conference
23 Board Meeting
25 District Holiday
26 District Holiday

December 1999
3 Early Dismissal (All Schools)
7 Board Reorganization
24 District Holiday
28 Teacher/Student Holiday
29 Teacher/Student Holiday
30 Teacher/Student Holiday
31 Teacher/Student Holiday

January 2000
4 Committee Meetings
11 Committee Meetings
17 District Holiday*
18 Agenda Conference
25 Board Meeting

February 2000
1 Committee Meetings
8 Committee Meetings
15 Agenda Conference
17 Early Dismissal (All Schools)
18 District Holiday*
21 District Holiday
22 Board Meeting

March 2000
7 Committee Meetings
14 Committee Meetings
15 Parent-Teacher Conferences Elementary Schools
16 Parent-Teacher Conferences Elementary Schools
17 Parent-Teacher Conferences Elementary Schools
21 Agenda Conference
28 Board Meeting

April 2000
4 Committee Meetings
11 Committee Meetings
18 Agenda Conference
19 In-service (All Schools)*
20 Teacher/Student Holiday*
21 District Holiday
24 Teacher/Student Holiday*
25 Board Meeting

May 2000
2 Committee Meetings
9 Committee Meetings
16 Agenda Conference
23 Board Meeting
29 District Holiday

June 2000
6 Committee Meetings
13 Graduation
14 All Schools End
15 In-service (All Schools)
20 Agenda Conference
27 Board Meeting

○ District Holiday
□ Teacher/Student Holiday
▽ Staff In-service
* Snow Emergency Dates
⬠ Parent-Teacher Conferences Elementary Schools
☆ Early Dismissal (All Schools)

APPROVED BY SCHOOL BOARD 4/27/99

The 1999-2000 UMSD calendar departs from tradition in almost all respects.

During the first two weeks of May, the entire Northeast United States was hit with a dry spell that affected just about everybody.

The drought wilted new plants and began to yellow grass, which was growing profusely before then, leaving many neighbors out to water their lawns much earlier than they expected.

The drought was caused by a high pressure system over the area that forced other systems south of the area, most times just bringing a few high clouds.

As you may recall, last year, from May 1 to 14, the Philadelphia area just missed setting a record for the most consecutive days of rainfall - 13. The record was 14, set a hundred years earlier.

Update: Just hours before publication, several severe storms ravaged the neighborhood, ending the dry streak. Over an inch of rain was recorded during two days, May 23 and 24.

Severe storms also ravaged the area on Monday, May 24. Though no significant damage was reported, the wind blew leaves off trees and scattered debris, turning some lanes into a disaster area. High winds continued the next day, further aggravating the problem.

NEW SEWER PIPE INSTALLATION UNDERWAY

Last year, while the Pioneer Road Reconstruction Project was underway, one objective that was accomplished was installing new sewer pipes under Pioneer Road. The final phase of the sewer upgrade is now in progress.

Throughout the past month, houses along the far side of Shoemaker and Pioneer Roads have had new public sewer lines installed in their yards. Reportedly, the houses used septic systems before the construction.



This house was the most recent to receive new pipes.

On May 18, in the most recent construction, the Schrope family, most widely known for their enormous display during the Christmas season, had their yard dug up and a new pipe installed.

The new installations are expected to continue for several months but will not affect

neighborhood residents.

NEW SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATES TO VIE FOR OFFICE IN NOVEMBER

During the month of May, future school board candidates competed to win the primary elections, which were held on Tuesday, May 18.

The incumbent members were defeated in a landslide victory. Winners David Bender, David A. Hasiuk, Ronnalee Colontonio, and neighborhood resident Skip Lynch, among others, will vie for the seats in November.

OTHER NEWS TIDBITS

-Mrs. Patricia Gemberling, mother of neighborhood resident Shelly Slousky and grandmother of Scott and Gregory, recently passed away on May 7. We extend condolences to the Slousky family on their loss. We know that this fine lady will be missed by all.

-The semi-annual multi family neighborhood yard sale was held without any problems on the weeks of April 24-25 and May 1-2. Neighbors who participated in the sale witnessed a steady stream of cars entering and leaving the neighborhood, many more so than previous years.

Going to the Dogz

MAX RETURNS

While the vandals have gone on a spree of destruction throughout the neighborhood, residents have also been forced to deal with Max, the Rorviks' dog, who invaded properties several times during the past month.

Max was first sighted in early May, as he lumbered around the streetlight in front of the house of Bob and Pat Altimari, and then into neighboring yards. Henry Sokolowski, who had been irritated by vandalism earlier that week, phoned the Rorviks, who picked up the dog.

Later that week, Max was spotted in the Spiecker' yard, across the street from the Altimaris', apparently while he was urinating on a tree bed. He then continued through the yard and onto the Hoffman's lawn.

During the second week of May, mysterious dog feces have been discovered in lawns, forcing the owners to clean them up several times, but it cannot be confirmed if Max was responsible.

Max was also sighted again on Wednesday, May 19, in the backyard of the Sokolowski house, where he stayed for several minutes while Jean Sokolowski yelled for him to "Go home!"

One unusual quality that Max, a black Rottweiler, possesses, is that he can be distinguished from the unknown dog that appeared last month if he answers to the call, "Go home!", in which case, he will.

The Upper Moreland Police do, in fact, possess an animal control unit. When reported, the unit will respond to the call, round up the animal, and return it to its owner, after slapping him or her with a $50 fine.

With the recent streak of vandalism, neighbors are taking no chances. We'll have more information as this dangerous situation continues to unfold.

OTHER DOG NEWS

-Klaus, formerly owned by the Hoffmans, has finally left the neighborhood after 3 years of residence. The dog was originally intended as a gift from Meredith to her husband, Tim Hoffman, Jr. However, for unknown reasons, the Hoffman family cared for the dog for three years afterward.



Klaus left the neighborhood on May 15.

The Bear Facts

By Lori Blickley

June 1999

WOW! Can you believe that the 1998-1999 school year is already coming to a close? Only one more month for the students! Important school board elections have been held, most after-school sports have ended, and many final activities are underway.

PAST ACTIVITIES/EVENTS

The senior class went to Walt Disney World at the end of April. All the seniors that I have talked to said, "It was sooooo much fun!" or "The trip was a blast." Well, I know I am looking forward to going there!

The class of 2000 just held their class trip this weekend. They went camping. They were canoeing, hiking, swimming, and basically adventuring in "the great outdoors."

School Musical - This year's school musical entitled *Once Upon A Mattress* went well. There were three public performances. The basic storyline followed that of the childhood story, "The princess and the pea." But, our school's version of the story was more of a comedy. In total, there were around 25 cast members. However, behind the scenes, over 80 students are involved in putting the musical together. This includes the ushers, lighting crew, stage crew, make-up crew, and "pit" musicians. Also, there is "The Drama Company" which puts together the programs, collects ads, raises money, publicizes, gathers props, finds costumes, makes the tickets, and basically organizes the show. The students run mostly everything, with the assistance of only a few adults.

Sports: Many sports have ended their seasons. However, our varsity lacrosse team still plays on. They have made it to the play-offs! Their first game is in two weeks. The junior varsity "lax" gals also had a great season. They went 16-0 in the league. Yup, undefeated!

There are also some track members that are continuing in additional meets and races. Some young track-stars have already made it to "regionals" and then eventually "states!"

I have "heard it through the grapevine" that many of our loved teachers are retiring. It is even said that Mr. DeLaurentis, the high school principal, is leaving. Also, it may be Dr. Bitner's, the middle school's principal, last year. One of the retiring teachers includes Mrs. Gallagher. She teaches biology and is also greatly involved with extracurricular activities. She heads the drama company and class council. Every retiring employee will be missed!

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES/EVENTS

The class of 2002 will hold their class trip at the end of June. The freshman are going to Six Flags Great Adventure Theme Park. Let's hope they enjoy themselves.

The class of 2001 will be going Whitewater Rafting on June 26. Their trip is at Whitewater Challengers, White Haven, Pennsylvania. The students will be rafting the day that the dam opens. This means the river will be higher and more "rapid." It sounds like fun.

Purple and Gold Day is Friday, May 28. Students will have the chance to compete in fun races and listen to student bands. Some kids will relax in the sun and "soak up the rays." Other students choose to take this free-time opportunity to play sports with their friends all day. Either way, it is a nice break from the grueling work and headaches that four 1:30 hour classes can give you.

News From the Curries

(Article contributed by Michael Curry)

Scott(dad)- The grass is even better then ever. The king of the grass has worked hard to fulfill his dream. Our lawn is the best in the neighborhood in the family's words.

Susan(mom)- The tulips and other biennials did not come up this year. They seem to never come up. She has worked so hard, spending a lot of money on flowers this year.

David- The sophomore in highschool was a star on the j-v team for Pius. He has recently



The Curry Family

moved up to varsity and seems to be the fastest kid in the league.

Allison- She has recently made the softball team for the Perkettes. When I asked her how the game was, she said some big girl hit a sky rocket in the sky and made out with a great catch at third base.

Mike- Has recently started as a 7th grader on the varsity baseball team. It is a 7th and 8th grader team. The other game one of our pitchers was in
trouble. But Mike (super man) came to the rescue. There was a guy at third, one out. He struck the first kid out and made the second kid ground out. This is a kid to look for in the pros.

Humor From the Village Square

To celebrate the end of the school year, this month's *Humor from the Village Square* has been dedicated entirely to school jokes. Enjoy.

CONGRATULATIONS!

We would like to congratulate Brian Sobolefski, son of neighborhood residents Leon and Barbara, for being reelected Herald for the second year in a row of the Delta Pi fraternity at Bloomsburg State University. Brian has the truly distinct honor of being one of the few Heralds in Delta Pi history who have been elected twice to such a prestigious post. This often sought after position includes, among its various duties, the most important role of calling together the Fraternity Family for social gatherings, while maintaining good relations with neighbors of the community (noise control). We congratulate Brian and wish him well in the upcoming social season.

NEW DEFINITIONS

Some new definitions to add to your favorite dictionary:

ACCORDIONATED (ah kor' de on ay tid) adj.
Being able to drive and refold a road map at the same time.

AQUADEXTROUS (ak wa deks' trus) adj.
Possessing the ability to turn the bathtub faucet on and off with your toes.

AQUALIBRIUM (ak wa lib' re um) n.
The point where the stream of drinking fountain water is at its perfect height, thus relieving the drinker from (a) having to suck the nozzle, or (b) squirting himself in the eye (or ear).

BURGACIDE (burg' uh side) n.
When a hamburger can't take any more torture and hurls itself through the grill into the coals.

BUZZACKS (buz' aks) n.
People in phone marts who walk around picking up display phones and listening for dial tones even when they know the phones are not connected.

CARPERPETUATION (kar' pur pet u a shun) n.
The act, when vacuuming, of running over a string or a piece of lint at least a dozen times, reaching over and picking it up, examining it, then putting it back down to give the

vacuum one more chance.

DIMP (dimp) n.
A person who insults you in a cheap department store by asking, “Do you work here?”

DISCONFECT (dis kon fekt') v.
To sterilize the piece of candy you dropped on the floor by blowing on it, somehow assuming this will `remove' all the germs.

ECNALUBMA (ek na lub' ma) n.
A rescue vehicle which can only be seen in the rearview mirror.

EIFFELITES (eye' ful eyetz) n.
Gangly people sitting in front of you at the movies who, no matter what direction you lean in, follow suit.

ELBONICS (el bon' iks) n.
The actions of two people maneuvering for one armrest in a movie theater or on an airplane.

ELECELLERATION (el a cel er ay' shun) n.
The mistaken notion that the more you press an elevator button, the faster it will arrive.

FRUST (frust) n.
The small line of debris that refuses to be swept onto the dust pan and keeps backing a person across the room until he finally decides to give up and sweep it under the rug.

LACTOMANGULATION (lak' to man gyu lay' shun) n.
Manhandling the “open here” spout on a milk container so badly that one has to resort to the `illegal' side.

NEONPHANCY (ne on' fan see) n.
A fluorescent light bulb struggling to come to life.

PEPPIER (pehp ee ay') n.
The waiter at a fancy restaurant whose sole purpose seems to be walking around asking diners if they want ground pepper.

PETROPHOBIC (pet ro fob' ik) adj.
One who is embarrassed to undress in front of a household pet.

PHONESIA (fo nee' zhuh) n.
The affliction of dialing a phone number and forgetting whom you were calling just as they answer.

PUPKUS (pup' kus) n.
The moist residue left on a window after a dog presses its nose to it.

TELECRASTINATION (tel e kras tin ay' shun) n.
The act of always letting the phone ring at least twice before you pick it up, even when you're only six inches away.

UPHILL... BOTH WAYS

Dear Mr. Cameron:

As a courtesy, we are sending you a copy of a letter we recently wrote your 15 year old daughter in response to a query we received from her.

--

Dear Ms. Cameron:

Thank you for your letter. Yes, we are pleased to report, your father's old high school is still standing and our library was able to find yearbooks dating “all the way back” to his graduation. In fact, a few teachers even remember your father, to which I will get in a moment.

In answer to your first question: In every picture extant of your father he is well shod, wearing what I believe were called “earth shoes” back then. Also, the weather here is

moderate, with snow generally lasting from December until March-hardly the entire school year. Thus, his descriptions of the conditions under which he "struggled" to school in the morning do, as you suggested, seem a bit exaggerated. In fact, our bus logs are (remarkably) still intact, revealing that not only was your father a registered passenger, but that his parents paid the extra ten dollars a month for door-to-door delivery.

I am sure there were days when your father was very "sharply dressed," as you state he puts it, but in every single photograph I was able to uncover he is wearing exactly the same thing: bell bottom blue jeans with white strings trailing from the edges onto the floor, horizontal rents in the knees, and no belt buckle. His T-shirt displays a message easily communicated with hand gestures. His hair hangs past his shoulders and looks as if it was exposed to a lot of wind - perhaps he rode the school bus with the window open.

As to academics and "concentrating on the basics," one must remember the times: the "basics" back then may very well have embraced some of your father's elective subjects, which included "Personal Citizenship", "Ecology", and one which apparently was called "Relevance". We have no record of what, if anything, was taught in these classes. What records we do have show that your father did indeed take Geometry, just as he claims. In fact, he took it his sophomore year, repeated it his junior year and repeated the course again his senior year - Geometry was required for graduation.

Now as to Mr. Muggins, who had your father in a class called "Problems of Modern Relationships." Mr. Muggins does not wish to dispute the claim that your father always had his homework done early, he merely wants to point out that no matter when it was done, it was always handed in late. In fact, your father sticks out in Mr. Muggins's mind as having the most outrageous excuses for being unprepared, including having to evacuate his home because it was infected with the China Syndrome.

Your father was not, sad to say, President of the Student Council. Perhaps he is confusing student government with a social group called "The Slackers," which Mr. Muggins recalls was a group of boys who sat in the hallway and made loud groaning noises whenever an attractive girl strode past. Your father was assistant vice president of the club, and, to our knowledge, is the only past member not currently serving time in a federal penitentiary.

One thing IS completely verifiable: your father's name is, indeed, carved above the door to the school. Please be advised that, now that we have noticed it, we will need to have it sanded out and refinished, at a cost of approximately three hundred dollars. We would appreciate it if your father would agree to pay for the damage without having to engage lawyers.

The honor roll to which he apparently referred is not above the door, it hangs outside my office. I will leave unanswered the question as to whether his name is upon it.

Thank you very much for your letter, which we found most amusing. Be sure to tell your father hello from Mr. Muggins.

THE EXAM

At Duke University, there were four sophomores taking Organic Chemistry.

They did so well on all the quizzes, midterms and labs, etc., that each had an "A" so far for the semester. These four friends were so confident that the weekend before finals, they decided to drive up to Charlottesville to the University of Virginia and party with some friends up there. They had a great time ... however, after all the hardy-partying, they slept all day Sunday and didn't make it back to Duke until early Monday morning.

Rather than taking the final then, they decided to find their professor after the final and explain to him why they missed it. They explained that they had gone to UVA for the weekend with the plan to come back in time to study, but, unfortunately, they had a flat tire on the way back, didn't have a spare, and couldn't get help for a long time. As a result, they missed the final. The Professor thought it over and then agreed they could make up the final

the following day. The guys were elated and relieved. They studied that night and showed up the next day at the time the professor had told them.

He placed them in separate rooms and handed each of them a test booklet, and told them to begin. They looked at the first problem, worth 5 points, something simple about free radical formation. “Cool,” they thought at the same time, each one in his separate room, “this is going to be easy.” Each finished the problem and then turned the page.

On the second page was written:

(For 95 points): Which tire?

MINIMALIST ENTERTAINMENT

Things you can do with another person:

Have a water drinking contest:

(Amusement Potential: 5-10 minutes) While the competition is fun, you probably won't feel too well afterward. To give your event an old western theme, slam the cups upside down on the tables after you have emptied them.

Stare at the back of someone's head until they turn around:

(Amusement Potential: 2-5 minutes) This works on the “I have the feeling I'm being watched” principle. Conduct an experiment--does this really work?

Have a “Who is less competitive” competition:

(Amusement Potential: 1-3 minutes) Trying to win at this will make you lose. Trying to lose makes you win which makes you lose. Not trying at all makes you lose which makes you win which makes you lose.

Pick up a dog so it can see things from your point of view:

(Amusement Potential: 3-5 minutes) Think about it: your dog has only seen the house from a viewpoint from 6" to 2' high (15 to 60 cm for all you metric fans). It's never seen the tops of counters, what you keep on your desk, the tops of shelves, etc. Try looking at things from its point of view, too.

Pull out a hair, stick in someone's ear:

(Amusement Potential: 1-5 minutes) Best done to sleeping people. Added challenge in having no one else around, because then you can't blame it on anyone else. Try to beat your record number of times before the person catches on.

Pour water in hand, make sneeze noise, throw water on back of person's neck:

(Amusement Potential: 5-15 minutes) Always a good gag. For an even bigger reaction out of the person, act like you're not sorry at all for what they think you did. Comment instead on how big that sneeze was or about how there was a lot of mucus in that one.

Rampant Vandalism Continues

A *Shoemaker Village* Special Report

It was the evening of Monday, May 17, and neighbor Henry Sokolowski was looking forward to returning home from a long day at work. Since he would be leaving on travel the next day, he had driven home in a company car, and, therefore, had arrived slightly later than usual. The minute that he turned into his driveway, all hopes of a peaceful night had been shattered.

The pictures below speak for themselves.

There were three confirmed incidents of vandalism since April 30, and several suspicious actions, amounting to an official police estimate of $160.

The first incident occurred around

Monday, May 4, when the lights to the right were spotted broken around 6:45 p.m.. It was estimated that the crime happened sometime between the hours of 5:45 and 6:45. As you may recall, this is not the first time that the lights had been damaged. The first two incidents occurred in April. The police were called after the second incident, but no action was able to be taken at the time because the perpetrators were not known.

Suspiciously, Jason Rorvik continued to ride his bike back and forth in front of the Sokolowskis' house for several minutes after the damage was discovered as Genevieve and Henry Sokolowski, Henry's parents, left in their car. After they left, Henry confronted Jason, and received an emphatic denial. When Jason still continued to ride his bike in front of the house, back and forth, Henry called Jason's mother.



This light was destroyed again, for the third time.

"She was very friendly and understanding," Henry commented. "She said that she would talk to him." It was not known for sure if the Rorviks were responsible for the vandalism.

In addition, later that week, the sign to the left marking a pipeline was found destroyed. Shortly before the incident occurred, Henry's wife, Jean, spotted one of the Rorvik children twisting the sign back and forth.

"I yelled at him to go away and went inside," Jean said. Apparently, he didn't, because a few hours later, the sign was found destroyed. Henry, furious, called Sun Pipeline, the company in charge of maintaining the pipeline. By the next weekend, the sign was replaced with a new one, but the remnants of the old one, a twisted piece of plastic, still remain in their original location, next to the new sign.

To complicate matters, a large tree limb was discovered felled on May 17, at about 7:00 a.m.. At this time, it is estimated that the offense occurred sometime the previous night.

It is almost certain that the limb was destroyed by vandalism. Since there was no wind or inclement weather, and the break appeared to have been forced downward from above, it appears that the criminals were climbing in the tree when the limb broke, sending them crashing down.



This sign was also broken during the vandalizing spree.

Henry, deciding that he had had enough, phoned the police a second time to report the offense. Speaking to the same patrol officer who had investigated the previous offenses with the walkway lights, they agreed that it was necessary to talk to the children, who were suspected of the incidents.

Damage over $100 can be reported, the officer said, and the department will take action. The cost of the 15-year-old Weeping Cherry tree was conservatively estimated by Henry, though the actual cost may be about several hundred dollars for purchasing and planting a large tree.

Later that night, officer Peter Ruddell of the Upper Moreland Police spoke to the neighborhood children. "If it happens again," he reportedly said, "we're going to have to start investigating what's going on a little harder. We will catch whoever's responsible."



The police were called twice during the month.

As if the events that were clear acts of vandalism were not enough, several suspicious incidents also happened earlier in May.

Rita Wilkowski, sister of Jean Sokolowski, parked her new Saturn outside of

her house for a birthday dinner one night in April. When she returned to her car after the evening's festivities had concluded, she was horrified to find a foot-long scratch on the trunk of her car. Because the mark was on the top of the trunk, it was very unlikely that it was caused in any other way than deliberate vandalism.



This tree limb was clearly knocked off by the vandals.

As you may recall, Jason and Thor Rorvik were responsible for destroying Jean's garden on September 12, 1998, while Jean was at her nephew's wedding, and for leaving a box of toys scribbled with obscenities.

It is still unknown who is responsible for these criminal acts. There has yet to be a sighting of the vandals at work.

In addition, throughout the past several months, the Hoffman family has been terrorized by crank phone calls during the middle of the night.

"Every morning, at about 5-6 a.m., we would get phone calls, but nobody answered. You could hear that somebody was on the other end of the line, but was just listening. We were going to get our phone number changed," Mary Sue Hoffman recently said.

The Hoffmans report that sometimes, there were several calls during one night, and the calls continued over several months. She now reports that, while the frequency of the calls has decreased, the problem has not stopped altogether.

"It was very unnerving," Mrs. Hoffman said. Now that Klaus isn't here anymore, she is always wary that somebody could sneak into the house.

Those affected by the different acts of vandalism are aggravated. "I just want it to stop," Henry said to Officer Ruddell after his report. "I don't want to cause any trouble. I just want it to stop."

Should the Driving Age Be Raised From 16?

When Stephen told me that this month's discussion forum topic was about the driving age, I was instantly excited to write my opinions on the subject. Some people would say that I am rather opinionated, loud-mouthed, stubborn, etc., but I would like to say otherwise. I will admit that while I am opinionated and stubborn, I am by no means loud-mouthed, at least not all the time. I have very strong opinions about driving and the driving age.

I'm not exactly clear on what the topic is precisely, so I will invent my own: Should the Driving Age Be Raised From 16? The answer is an overwhelming no. This semester, I am in a driver's education class at school. All tenth graders are forced to take this class as part of their required physical education sequence. While in class, we learn safe driving habits, parts of a car, etc.. Also, we watch many videos. One such video was a tape of the Oprah Winfrey Show. The

topic was the dangers of teenage driving. Teenage drivers and their parents had agreed to let the show place cameras inside their cars to record the teenagers' driving habits. This was a study to see how safe teenage driving really was and to determine if the driving age needed to be changed. On the show, some of the tapes were played back to the audience. One girl's tape showed that she drove at least ten miles over the speed limit for the entire course of the tape. Another tape of a young man showed he and his friends going to a party where beer was served, putting a case of beer into the trunk of the boy's car, attempting to drive home, getting stopped by the police, having the car searched, and being arrested. A third tape showed a car full of teenage girls almost getting into an accident while speeding through a red light because the driver was too busy fooling with the radio to notice the road.

All three of these situations obviously don't bode too well for teenage drivers like myself. But, in order for the study to be valid, hundreds of teenagers must have had to agree to be taped. Of course, the show would only air the worst examples of teenage driving to make it seem like all teenagers are poor drivers. This is untrue. Some teenagers are very good drivers. I am not afraid to admit that some teenagers are very poor drivers.

Raising the driving age is not the cure for poor teenage driving. Ninety-nine percent of what makes a poor driver is lack of experience. How would raising the driving age help this? It would only make matters worse. Sixteen-year-olds have a lot more time to gain experience than eighteen-year-olds do. While most eighteen-year-olds are high school seniors worrying about college, sixteen-year-olds are only sophomores, not yet worrying about their future.

There are several solutions to improve teenage driving. One is to raise the requirements for getting a driver's license. Right now in Pennsylvania, you must pass an eighteen-question multiple choice test and a vision test to receive your permit. After thirty days, you can go to take the test for your license. The driving test consists of two chances to parallel park, and one of several predetermined road tests in your vehicle. To make this a harder test, or to make the driver more prepared, the department of motor vehicles should up its standards. A certain number of road hours

with a permit should be required. Taking the book and road classes for driver's education should be required. A harder permit test should be administered. Teenagers and licensing examiners should spend a longer amount of time on the road during the road test. One good program that Pennsylvania participates in is graduated licensing. Holders of a junior license have restricted driving hours. Once the driver turns seventeen, they may apply for a senior license which grants more freedom on the road.

Some other ways that parents could enforce to make safer drivers of their children are limiting the number of passengers in the car, making their child drive a certain number of supervised hours before being allowed to take the test, forbidding the radio to be on while the teen is driving, and restricting where the young driver may drive.

Several solutions have been presented in this essay. As a teenage driver, I can honestly say that I wouldn't mind doing any of the above mentioned items, especially if it meant that I would have a safer driving experience. Adults should take to heart that while some teenage drivers are unsafe, there are adults that have unsafe driving habits as well. Perhaps this is where some of the teen drivers learn their hazardous practices.

Why the Driving Age Should Not Be Raised

I don't think that the driving age should be raised from sixteen years of age to the probable eighteen. I know a lot of responsible drivers who are sixteen years old. There are a lot of "hot rod" drivers who are in their teens, but that type of driver will exist at any age. A few weeks ago, I was on my way home from school. I was approaching the traffic light at Terwood Road and Davisville Road. As I was making the curve in the pavement which is closest to the day care center on your right, the light turned green, a guy in a red car burned rubber and darted toward the intersection. The tire tracks are still there today, and at the time, you could see the white smoke from the tires. I do not know why people do this. They probably want to see how long they can go without getting in an accident.

You may read another article in the Discussion Forum that says people at sixteen years of age do not need a car. I don't agree with that. It is true that kids at that age may only need a car for school and other errands that may not take them too far from their home. Imagine if you will. A sixteen-year-old person is being dropped off at the movies by his mother. The person would be embarrassed by his friends because a) he doesn't have a car and b) his mother had to drop him off. An automobile is supposed to symbolize freedom, especially when you are a sixteen-year-old. I personally can't wait to get my own car. Another reason people say the driving age should be raised is because of experience. If teenagers wait until they are eighteen, they will have more experience. You don't get experience unless you get behind the wheel. Some drivers are fifty-years-old, and they still can't drive correctly. A couple of weeks ago, my mom and I were traveling down Old York Road heading toward Abington. A guy pulls out of a parking lot, wanting to go to the other side of the road. Unfortunately, a median strip was separating the two sides of the road, but that didn't stop him. He drove right over the median strip to the other side of the road. People were honking their horns at him, but he still did it anyway. It is true that some teenagers would do that, too. People of all ages would do it.

In conclusion, I don't think that the driving age should be raised. People are going to drive

irresponsibly throughout their life if they are brought up that way. That is no reason to change the driving age of other people who want to drive at sixteen-years-old and are responsible drivers. If any state raises the driving age to eighteen, they are a bad state. You only get better at driving experience. The younger you start driving, the more experience you will have later in life.

The Driving Age: Should it be changed?

If you ask any teenager, that is basically to say, 13 years or older, if the driving age should be raised, the answer would be a resounding, "NO." It is about the time one enters high school that thoughts turn to driving, the great American past time. Driving is an incredible freedom. Of course there are restrictions. There have to be. But when all is said and done, when all the paperwork is done, when your parents have screamed, "BRAKE!" a hundred times, and when you've been around for enough years to earn their trust, then you can go reap the benefits. Well, that's how I see it. I wouldn't know anything for sure . . ..

I have a unique perspective on the subject. Since I'm visually impaired, *or* legally blind, I will never be allowed to get a driver's license. Upon turning sixteen, I can report to the DMV for my non-driver's license. I'm not sure it's actually called that, but you get the idea. So what do I care if the driving age is raised or lowered? Well, if I have to give an answer, I'll say that it is just fine where it is. Many ask, "Why should teenagers be driving at sixteen?" I say, "Why not?" Teenagers have places to go. Many have to work. Okay, well, how many *have* to work? In past generations, a child would never admit to having a job since it was assumed that a working child meant that the man of the house couldn't provide for his family. However, the times have changed, and more and more teenagers do work.

"Why do you need a job?"

"To buy a car."

"Why do you need a car?"

"So I can get to work!"

See? It's futile to try to justify it. Just let us have our wheels. Public transportation is not only for losers. I'm going to rely on it heavily in upcoming years. I'm also looking forward to the possibility of getting rides from friends who can drive. Whether or not they will comply remains to be

seen.

Driving is an important milestone in development. I understand the concerns. Don't think I'm ignorant of them. Vehicular deaths are higher for teenagers than any other age group. But by pushing up the driving age, what will it really accomplish. If the problem is that sixteen-year-olds aren't responsible enough to drive safely, the solution is to teach responsibility. It is presumptuous to say that teens of that age are **incapable** of being responsible. Many are. We all know that alcohol only makes things worse. The problem lies with the raising of the child. If you don't want your child drinking and driving, then it is up to YOU to teach them the ills of doing so. Don't deny a generation of future teenagers the right to this sanctimonious institution.

Money is the root of all evil. Guns kill people. Driving should be reserved until a child has earned it. NO! Greedy people give money a bad reputation. People kill people with guns. Teenagers are capable of driving responsibly, but only if you teach them how. Sixteen seems like a fine age to start learning. "When you are sixteen, adults are slightly impressed and almost intimidated by you," writes John Knowles. So judge not the whole by the actions of the few, who are also the stupid. Make sure we know what is acceptable, what the consequences are, and then, turn us loose. Give your child the keys. When you hear the engine turn over, your heart may jump a little. Get used to it. Don't deprive us of the right, no, the duty, to be independent in this small way.

Driving at 16: Is it Safe?

Two months ago, I contributed an article favoring raising the driving age from 16 to 18. The results (both agreeing and disagreeing) were so great that it was decided that this month's topic would be the same as the article: Should the driving age be raised? Now, however, I found that I missed a few points that I had meant to say back then, and they are worth noting this month.

First of all, there seems to be a trend that, as soon as somebody turns 16, it becomes necessary to run out and get a driving permit just so that they can brag about it to their friends. There is no more wrong reason than this. After hearing the horror stories about people *I know* who have begun to drive at 16, I have some hesitance to drive. A former English teacher always said that in your writing you should show, not tell. So, instead of listing reason like all the other articles in this issue have dones, let me recount some real-life incidents.

One friend of mine, who is now 16 ½, has been driving since he obtained his license shortly after he turned 16. In fact, he drove so much that one of his relatives reportedly bought a used car for him. One night, he was driving along a dark country road, when he saw a deer, causing him to swerve, lose control of the vehicle, careen off the road, flip upside down, and slam into a tree. Fortunately, he was not hurt, and was able to escape with only minor injuries from the car before it began to reek of gasoline leaking from the engine. The car, however, was another story. It was totaled. In addition, when the police arrived, he received two points (out of six) on his license because he was going a few miles per hour over the speed limit. Now not only did he not have a car, and was in trouble with the authorities, but he had to go home and face his parents.

Another person I know also began to drive as soon as he was 16. After passing the tests from the state, he bought a car and was off on the road. The car he had wasn't that new, and, without any prior warning, the engine on the car suddenly blew out, rendering the car useless. Now the car is parked in front of the house, the price of the car being less than the price to fix it.

Many people, in their articles, cite the ridiculous reason that a 17-year-old high school student would be embarrassed to be dropped off by their parents with youths of the same age. This is completely irrelevant because the writers of every article that uses this reason forget that, if they and their friends were 17, and the driving age would be 18, *their friends would not be able to drive either*! Therefore, it would not be embarrassing at all. Since most of the people writing for this topic are 15, are you embarrassed when your parents drop you off now? No, because you can't drive, and your friends should know that. (If they pick on you now, you need different friends).

There are many irresponsible people on the roadways today, and this is because they do not have good judgement. Statistics show that over **48%** of youths age 16 are involved in an accident before they reach maturity. Yet, the rate sharply declines at age 18 or later. There are many reasons for this. One is that some people, whom I touched upon in a previous article, simply are not mature enough to drive. They drive over the speed limit, weave in and out of lanes, ignore traffic laws, and have an overall "I don't care" attitude that protects them from reckless actions until it is too late. Another, important reason to not forget is that boys at age 16 are in the middle of a major growth spurt, during which time, hand-eye coordination, reaction time, and other important driving impulses are impaired. If the driving age were raised to 18, this problem would be eliminated.

As I said in an earlier contribution to the *Village*, many youths age 16-17 do not *need* to drive. It is hard to think of even two places where a car is absolutely necessary. Notice that I say two. Some people would argue that it would be necessary in an emergency, and I won't protest against that; however, if there were an emergency, more professional care would be able to be given in an ambulance than in a car. So, as you can see, even in an emergency, a car wouldn't be absolutely necessary.

As you can see, driving a car at age 16 isn't the best idea for our society, and in fact, our roads would become safer by raising the driving age. In addition, many of the problems that teenagers face by driving cars would be eliminated, making life easier for both the kids and the parents, as well as

law-enforcement officers.

Teachers Do Matter

In today's competitive world, a good education is important to succeed later in life. Many times, the quality of the education received during an adolescent's high school years depends on the qualifications of the teachers instilling that education. Though some may disagree, teachers play more of a role in classes than the subject matter does, and that will change how a student views a subject for the rest of his/her life.

For example, as many of you know, in the middle school, in seventh grade, students are introduced to each of the three languages that are offered (Spanish, French, and German) before being required to choose one to study in depth. Even though I disliked the Spanish teacher, I took the subject anyway, because it was the most spoken language. Therefore, after that year, I hated Spanish thoroughly and dreaded it when it appeared on my 9th grade first semester roster. I soon discovered, however, that the teacher I had was much more forgiving and emerged with a positive experience from it all. Fortunately, I didn't take German, which I even thought about for a few minutes because the German teacher was much better, in my opinion, than the Spanish teacher at the middle school.

One of the most important parts of how a teacher influences his or her students is how they handle discipline. Good discipline is needed to control the class and help out those who want to learn. For example, UMHS recently installed a new E-Mail program. At first, I thought that this would be a good idea, and that those who did not have Internet access at home would be able to see what E-Mail is all about. Unfortunately, my mind changed abruptly later when I discovered the reasons for the change and the restrictions placed on it. I was later told (I can't confirm these rumors) that the E-Mail program was mandated after one student, using a free commercial service outside the school's network, had used it to threaten somebody and had caused trouble for themselves and others. The program was installed shortly after, with a notice being read in all homerooms that "students using any Internet-based E-Mail will be removed from the network." My belief was that the school installed the program

simply to prevent anybody from using outside E-Mail, even those with good intentions. This affects me in that now it is insanely difficult to send a file over the Internet to home in order to work on it. Fortunately, I found a way a few days later, but most times it takes several minutes just to send the file, compared to a few seconds before, time that could be used for other work. The point behind this is that punishing people who are innocent only contributes to the problems that are occurring. To add to this, when I sent home this file on which to work later that night, I discovered that, somehow, even though I had only written it on the school computers, it was infected with a virus. I can only imagine the security procedures that will be taken against whomever put the virus on the system.

One thing that I hate about the end of every year is the sheer amount of work that is assigned. Due to this fact, I have observed times I am scheduled work every year and have divided the last marking period into two periods: Round 1, which usually starts in mid-May, and Round 2, the greater load, which occurs near the middle to end of June, usually in the week before the last of school. During these great stress periods, a lot of teachers just add to the work by assigning additional projects and homework. For example, I was assigned two major projects on May 10, at the worst possible time. If you just walked past the library during the week that followed (you weren't even allowed inside), you would have seen that there were huge numbers of students working on every type of report imaginable, practically fighting for a computer, because most teachers in the school assigned some sort of project during that week. Then, to add insult to injury, it was announced that the library would be closed that week so that I couldn't get any work done during lunch. This greatly affected me, because the report I was working on was due next Monday, and all the information I could need on it was contained in one book in the library which I had been able to partially read before. Instead, I was forced to spend a total of more than 4 hours after school in the Upper Moreland library, trying to find something on my obscure topic of Cartoons during World War II (no, it was not the social studies' teacher's fault, but the library's). You can now see my reluctance in looking forward to the end of school, because every year, without fail, the work is piled on. Teachers that stand out above the others

tend to spread the work out instead of laying it all down in one big lump. I know that they have to assign the work laid out in the course requirements, but it doesn't have to be assigned all at once!

In April, Matthew Care contributed an article with an opinion completely the opposite of mine. You can now see why I feel this way. Teachers, though some people would refuse to believe it, are important parts of a child's education and can determine what they grow up to do later in life.

Ode To My Father

By Matthew Care

Since I first regaled you with stories of my own personal experiences, I may have been giving certain impressions about the people that I care about. I may have rustled a few feathers with my blunt honesty. Unfortunately, I know no other way to express myself, but as I see things. Apparently, you, the reader, have been entertained by it. However, now I wonder if I've gone too far. I've said certain things in my works, as well as omitted things. I'm really concerned that I've made my father out to be some sort of beast. Well, with Father's Day coming up, I rushed to set things straight for the June issue. So, here's the way things are.

I can't think of any particular order in which to say this. I respect him. I disobey him occasionally, more as I get older. I always hear what he says; I frequently listen; I occasionally respond. He used to tell me that he is always right about everything. No one can say they are perfect, but he's an intelligent man. He loves history. He made me love history and encourages it still. He's the reason I wanted to learn CPR. My father has the most uncanny sense of direction of anyone you've ever met. That's what I tell people when I need to name a positive attribute. No, it's not that hard to do so. He never stops working. When we're driving, we all just take for granted that Dad knows where he's going. It's just as well since he always does. When I ask him what's for dinner, he never tells me, like it's some sort of secret project. He'll never be able to figure out what kind of music I like. It's too bad, because like me, I think he judges a person a lot by that. Beatles or KoRn? He's never been in any wars, but he's a hero. You ought to see him pack a station wagon! If you've ever taken a child to college, then you know what I mean. My dad only knows that which I tell him about computers. "Scouts? Sorry Dad. I'm not totally comfortable with the idea of impressionable young children running around in para-military uniforms, reciting oaths, and starting fires." "Actually, they just hate me." He's always been able to provide for his family. As I realize the actual likelihood of myself being a rich, huge success in the business world, I hope I do as well as he has. Did I mention

that I respect him? He never asks me to do anything that I can't do, even if **I** don't necessarily think that I can. And if he thinks that this story is somehow going to make me open up to him, then he's crazy!

I'm thinking now, looking back on what I've written, that it might not all make sense. I mean literally, my grammar leaves a lot to be desired and even from an artistic stand-point, this abstract piece is a stretch. I was crazy to think that I could pull it off. You'll have to forgive me. I'm recovering from surgery as I write this, and the drugs are making everything hazy. Happy Father's Day, Dad! Sorry I missed Mother's Day, Mom!

My Weekend in May

By Matthew Care

Well, that says it all, right there. Don't you think? I've established the setting in the title. It was a weekend in **late** May. I never thought that I was very susceptible to the end-of-the-year slow down. It happens when the weather turns really nice outside. You look at the calendar and realize that in only five weeks summer will be here. Unfortunately, it is the slowest time of year. I was never affected by it in past years. However, this year my spring semester is not the walk in the park that I'm used to. Crunch time is on, and I'm not handling it as well as I'd like to. Last week, I took a day off and stayed home because I DIDN'T WANT TO GO TO SCHOOL! This excuse wouldn't even have been validation in **my own** mind last year. I had been so bogged down and sleep deprived (my mom knew this) that I just stayed home. My sister had come home from college the previous weekend. The day slipped by with seemingly little benefit to my mental health, but I know it helped. I slept a lot, but of course my pattern is so disturbed now that a week off wouldn't be enough time to rebuild a sound sleeping schedule. It felt really good. I trudged through the rest of the week. That's how I see school now, as a vile beast that can only be tolerated, but never conquered.

On Friday, the madness came to its abrupt and over-too-quickly pause. The afternoon was entertaining and also constructive enough to lift my spirits. I went to a friend's house after school. I went to the mall for a little while (but not just for the sake of going to the mall--no one really does that, do they?) and got myself a 10:00 dinner at Wawa. Under strict orders from a doctor, I ate or drank nothing after 11:00 that night. The next morning I was woken and rushed out of the house for a medical appointment that I was all too ready for. I had four impacted wisdom teeth extracted. I never once had an uneasy thought about it between the day we made the appointment, right up to the last minute of the fact. The whole thing still seems mysterious to me, and it's not worth explaining. If you've been anesthetized, then you know what I mean. One moment you're awake, and then...not. I'm told the entire procedure took only twenty minutes. I didn't want to wake up, but people kept

saying I had to, so I made my best effort to look conscious. Stumble here...fall down there...as we went out to the car. Home to sleep. Wake up. Eat. Take drugs. Sleep more. The greatest annoyance was the novocaine. It's hard to eat or talk and it always feels as of there is fluid in your mouth that you can neither swallow nor spit out. After another round of sleep, it had worn off, leaving me somewhat pained but better for being able to communicate again. By Saturday night I was no longer **confined** only to bed. I watched some TV. I didn't have to mow the lawn that weekend because I wasn't supposed to exert myself physically for several days. *Hehe...easy street...* Monday I was unquestionably going to miss school. My grandmother had come up for the weekend so she spoiled me while my mom was at work. Severe thunderstorms gave the sky a threatening look that lasted all day. The electricity flickered once. I lay around in the dark and tried to do some reading. All day long the same thought stayed in my mind. "This feels right." "I *shouldn't* be in school today," I thought. "Or tomorrow!" came the realization fluidly. "I hate school!" I concluded with delight. I actually don't hate it, but I WANT IT TO BE OVER NOW! You cannot begin to imagine how badly I want to be relinquished of that burden. On Monday night I was in poor spirits, knowing that school awaited me. It's unavoidable. And yet, as long as I remained at home, it couldn't touch me. Coupled with the fact that my homework wasn't done, this concept left me with no choice but to seek refuge for another day. I did just that. I slept in on Tuesday. When I woke up, it didn't feel like Tuesday. It felt like a nondescript summer day, and it felt GREAT! Another day has gone by now. My oral wounds have mostly healed, but I do still bear scars, the ones caused by a contemptuous obligation to awake at some ungodly hour of the morn and carry a back-breaking sack of books to the local prison where slave masters force you to stay alert and perform menial never-ending tasks. I see it all now! *RELEASE ME! RELEASE ME FROM MY BONDS! I'M TIRED OF SCHOOL! OH COME, SUMMER, AND SAVE ME FROM THE TOIL AND MIND-NUMBING* . . . darn! I have to stop and get ready for bed. I can't avoid school for another day. Pity me. I'm going to have so much work to make up. I yearn for the school year to be over. It's just not fair, not that I put any value in that word, *fair.* I apologize for using

it. I'm a good student. I've done my time. I can't wait for summer to arrive. These are the cries of a broken A student.

The Knights of the Square Table

Chapter 3

The room suddenly grew deafening, as trolls rose from their tables. There was a clink as they began to unsheath their swords.

"Silence!" King John bellowed, and the hall began to get quiet again, but only after other knights attempted to get the situation under control for several minutes.

"Where are these trolls coming from?" the king asked so that all could hear.

"From the east, where the troll camps were. They said that there were ten thousand trolls, at least."

"Ten thousand..." the king mumbled. "How many men do we have around the city?"

"Only five thousand are armed, sir," the messager replied. "There are twenty thousand from other nations attending the conference, but there simply isn't enough equipment."

"How long do we have?"

"Two or three hours at most before they reach the outskirts of the camps."

"Go sound the warning to protect the people!" the king replied immediately, quickly moving toward the door. "Get as many knights as you can inside the city, and close the gates!"

"Aye, sir!" the messager replied, and rushed out of the room. King John, still standing, now looked over the assembly.

"It seems like we have more desperate matters to deal with now," he addressed them. "We have one hour to formulate a plan of defense. Give me your suggestions."

"Do we have any reserves of weapons?" one knight asked.

"Yes," the king replied. "There's a store in the castle basement. But only enough for a thousand men to use."

"Get those distributed immediately!" Jeff said. "Any defense is better than none."

One knight at the back who had been guarding the door rushed out of the room to the storage in the basement. It was now possible to hear shouts and footsteps from outside the hall. Inside, the knights pondered over what could be done.

"I have an idea," Christopher said, and the room grew silent. "We could use the powers of the elementals to put up a force field against the invaders."

"What do you mean?" the king asked. "How would it be done?"

"If we use the powers of the three stones that we possess, we might be able to set up a barracade so that the trolls couldn't enter, even if it was only for a few hours."

"That would be enough time for us to determine a plan for arming the soldiers," Jeff said.

"Get started," the king commanded. "While they are gone, we'll think of a contingency plan in case this fails."

Katie, Christopher, and Chapin rushed out of the hall to get the barrier ready. Meanwhile, Mike was with his now little brother, Dave.

"We need to secure reinforcements," the king suggested, continuing. "It's the only way we'll be able to survive without being armed. Especially since one troll has enough power for two men."

"We could ask for assistance from Harrogen," one knight from the back suggested. "They do have one of the most well-trained armies in the world."

"Would they be loyal to us," asked another knight, "or would they defect to the side of the trolls, heightening the odds against us?"

"We can't be sure," the first said. "But if we stand alone, we're sure to be defeated."

"Are there any other options?"

"My city of Jasper," another knight said, "has some of the finest forgeries in the world. We could produce more than enough weapons for your army."

"How long would this take?" asked Dave, who was sitting next to the King now.

"A few months, at best," came the reply. A sigh seemed to travel through the room..

"Come on," the king said. "In the entire world, there isn't enough force to overcome this band of trolls? There must be some solution somewhere."

"I have an idea," a voice came from the back of the room. The trolls turned to face him. When the rustling had settled down, he spoke:

"I can ask my king, the king of Gangton, to send as many troops from his army as he can to here. They could be here within a day."

"I had never considered Gangton," Mike whispered to Dave, who was eagerly watching the proceedings.

"If I may speak," a highly-decorated knight who was seated at the table immediately in front of the king said. "If we also asked Seatown, to our east, to send help, we could surround the trolls."

"Then," Jeff interrupted, "we could close in, trapping them around the castle, until we send our knights out of the gates of Riverbend to crush them while they're trapped."

"Excellent idea," the king agreed. "Let's take a vote. All in favor of this proposal, say 'aye'." There was a chorus of "ayes" and almost no opposition.

"Then let the plan be carried out. Notify the kings of Gangton and Seatown to send as many reinforcements as they can. The council is now dismissed until the battle is won." With that, the king rose, and the rest of the congregation also began to leave, the two knights leaving more hurriedly than the others.

As Dave and Mike left the hall, it was complete chaos outside. Knights poured through the gates at breakneck speed. Citizens rushed out of their houses to make way for the incoming army. Weapons from the basement were distributed.

Suddenly, Dave was frightened by a blow from a bugle above them. A loud voice cried out, "By the order of King John, the gates shall be sealed in one hour to prevent the trolls' attack."
This only served to increase the mounting panic. Mike spotted two knights leaving amidst the surge going in the opposite direction. After walking for about a minute together outside the gate, they split up, one going east, and the other traveling west. He assumed that they were the people assigned to gather help from their neighbors.

Dave and Mike made their way through the disorder to the castle, finally arriving a few minutes later. The doors were barricaded so that nobody would loot the palace in the chaos, but the guards, upon seeing them, admitted Dave and Mike without any trouble.

Inside, the king was in what had come to be termed the "strategy room", which was in the back of the castle, had only one entrance, and no windows. It was a perfect place for King John, Jeff, and other top advisors to compile their plans in secret, as they soon found out.

When Mike and Dave knocked on the door, they were greeted by a loud, gruff, "Identify yourselves!" When they answered, the voice capitulated to his king's orders, which could also be heard loud and clear, and the door opened.

"Welcome," John said. "We're creating battle plans for tomorrow. How can I help you?"

"Aren't you going to do something about the chaos outside?" Mike asked. "Innocent people are going to get hurt if we don't do something to calm everyone." As he spoke, they heard a call go up from the same watchman outside that the gates would be sealed in forty minutes.

"You're right," the king said, talking quickly. "But I can't do anything about it right now. I need to create plans for the battle. Ask the guards outside to try to calm everyone down." He then abruptly shut the door, leaving Mike and Dave in the deserted throne room.

"What should we do now?" Mike asked, as they exited the throne room and made their way to the palace entrance.

"Let's go find the others. They're probably trying to set up the barrier that will protect us from Yavin's forces."

They made their way to the stairs outside the palace and climbed them until they were on the

roof, the highest point around the city. There, they found Christopher, Katie, and Chapin chanting in strange tones. When they approached quietly for fear of disturbing them, they made no indication that they were there.

Suddenly, after they had been watching for a few seconds, Christopher suddenly lifted his head, and Katie and Chapin stopped chanting. "OK, that's enough. I think we're ready," he said. Just then, they heard the trumpeter down below signal that there was a half hour left. Knights continued to pour into the gates, and the column stretched as far as the eye could see.

It was high noon by now, and, despite the fact that it was October, it was hot in the sun. Christopher, realizing that Mike was watching them confused, hurriedly assured him, "It wasn't you. We're ready to put up the barrier."

"You'd better get out of here," Chapin suggested. "When the barrier goes up, its source will be from the highest point or right here. You'll get thrown off if you don't leave."

"Right," Dave said and hurried down the stairs. When they had gotten down, the knight called the fifteen-minute warning, and the surge seemed to intensify. Mike wondered how all the knights would be able to get inside the barrier in time.

They made their way down to ground level just in time to witness the chaos that was still underway. As the knights rushed in, the ten-minute call was sounded. Citizens of the town rushed away to their homes, while merchants who had been attempting to sell their goods hurriedly packed up their supplies.

"What should we do?" Dave asked as they stood against the outer wall of Riverbend, observing the happenings around them.

"There's nothing we can do," Mike said. "Just pray that everyone gets inside in time. The fate of the world could depend on it."

With that, they fell silent and watched from where they were as the pandemonium continued. Finally, it was time. The knight called that there was one minute until the gates would be raised, and the surge seemed to intensify. But then, a miracle occurred: With only seconds to spare, the onslaught ended, and all the knights were now safely inside. They could now see dark clouds moving toward them, a sign of the evil that was approaching.

Finally, the knight gave the orders to raise the gates. It took almost two minutes to do so, a time during which everybody held their breath so that the trolls would not suddenly appear. Fortunately, they didn't. When the gates were finally sealed and locked, chanting erupted from above on the roof of the palace.

This continued for two minutes, after which Christopher, Katie, and Chapin began to move their arms in strange motions, while holding the balls, which were shining so brightly that it was impossible to look directly at them. Suddenly, a blue light began to emanate from the center of the triangle that they had formed.

The light spread, first upward, and then outward toward the ends of the city, until it eventually reached the ground outside the city walls.

When the shield had been in place for over a minute, the three released their balls, leaving them floating where they were formerly held. Then they began to rotate in a circle, the blue light coming from the exact center of them. Soon, they were spinning so fast that nobody could tell if they were single or one light.

As they backed away, Christopher picked up a bow that had been lying on the roof of the palace next to where they had been standing and shot it directly upward as a test of the field's strength. About two hundred feet in the air, where the arrow made contact with the light, there was a flash, and it returned to earth at a perfect angle that would have impaled Christopher had he not moved out of range. When they were satisfied that the field would hold at least for the time being, they made their way to the stairs, and the townspeople and knights continued about in their mad rush. The entire city was now bathed in a bluish light, even though the sun was visible through the barrier above.

Mike and Dave, from where they were next to the outer walls, could see Christopher and Katie,

followed closely behind by Chapin, collapse at the bottom of the stairs outside the palace doors, unnoticed. Strangely, the guards outside were nowhere to be found. Mike and Dave made their way over to them.

"That was something!" Dave exclaimed. "You should have seen the looks of wonder on the peoples' faces!"

"I'm exhausted," Christopher gasped as if he had been running for an hour. "That's because of the barrier. But I should feel better in a few minutes after the stones' power takes over and reinforces the shield."

"By the way," Katie commented, "where's the guards who were here a minute ago? And where's King John during all of this?"

"I have no idea. They just disappeared. We went into their secret battle room a while ago and they told us to leave because they were drawing up plans," Mike repeated.

"That's strange. There's plenty of time and t here's no way anybody could betray their ideas to the trolls," Chapin said.

"Indeed," Dave agreed. "How long will the barrier hold?"

"We don't know," Katie responded. "It depends on the power of the stones. Several hours at least."

"But it could last a few days if the stones have enough power," Christopher said. "This act will drain the stones' power for a few months after this, but they haven't been used for years because there wasn't any need."

"Let's go see what the king's doing for now," Chapin suggested.

The rest of them agreed. The chaos had somewhat settled down. The five opened the doors to the palace and went inside, but this area was also strangely vacant. There were only a few guards, and they seemed to be concentrating on tasks other than ensuring the security of the palace.

Therefore, they were able to sneak into the throne room unnoticed, and to the king's secret room. The door was locked, now hidden behind a tapestry that they had not seen before. They knocked, and there was no answer. After several minutes, it was decided that they would go somewhere to rest for a few hours. The entire fate of the city of Riverbend now rested on the two brave messengers who had traveled to Gangton and Seatown to ask for help.

The five slept the entire afternoon, save for waking one time to check on the rotating stones. It was getting dark by the time they were up, but it was not getting any colder. Christopher explained that this was because the force field stopped everything from penetrating it. They had been awakened by shouts from watchmen, who were signaling that they had stopped the trolls on the far hill around the city, and would be at the barrier in under an hour.

Christopher, Katie, and Chapin rushed up to the top of the palace another time to check on the stones. They were not rotating nearly as fast as they had been; in fact, they were only at half their speed. But the shield still held.

By the time it was dark outside, the trolls had completely surrounded the city, just outside the barrier. There were small flashes around the outskirts where some impatient trolls had decided to try to throw things at the field.

The stones continued to slow down. Christopher estimated that the barrier would fail before the end of the night. They could only hope that reinforcements would arrive in time.

Throughout the night, the atmosphere was tense. Every once in a while, there was a shout, and somebody came running across the square on an urgent errand. The king was still nowhere to be seen, but Jeff had visited the five several times to see if they were OK and to bring them up to date on any plans that were being made.

By four o'clock that morning, there was no sign. The stones, Chapin warned, had less than two hours' strength in them. Outside the barrier, most of the trolls were now sleeping, with a few sentries patrolling the area, waiting for the barrier to fall. Inside, the knights who had been brought in to safety readied themselves for the battle ahead.

As the sun rose, the worst happened. Christopher, who had rushed to the top of the palace roof, watched in fear as the stones finally stopped, and with them, the blue light that was streaming out of their middle vanished. The barrier began to disperse, first in the middle, and then following down to the ends.

Finally, the barrier disappeared as the sun broke out over the horizon. There was no sign of reinforcements, and the trolls outside were called to awaken. As they prepared for the battle, the knights inside took up positions around the walls.

With a shout from one who appeared to be the trolls' leader, the battle was underway. At least a hundred trolls began to scale the walls on all sides. Up above, some helpful citizens operated catapults to hurl rocks into the trolls to stop their ascent, while others used their weapons to stop the advance.

Christopher, Mike, Dave, Chapin, and Katie, meanwhile, were caught on the palace roof when the battle began and had a bird's eye view of what was going on. At the point where they were, they could even see over the near wall, and could see that the city was in grave trouble.

"What should we do?" Dave asked. "There's no way that we'll be able to hold them off for long."

"We have an hour," Christopher said, "at most."

"Then," Katie suggested, "let's find somewhere safe to get to before they break through."

"Where could that be?" Mike asked.

"The best place would be the king's secret room," Mike suggested.

"It's too well-guarded," Christopher replied. "There's no way we could get inside. Even if it's not occupied, we wouldn't even know how to open the door."

"What about one of the houses," Katie suggested. "There must be some secret rooms or something that we could hide out in."

"That would take too long," Christopher again refuted.

"The castle basement," Dave suddenly blurted out. "Why couldn't we hide in there?"

"Dave has a point," Christopher agreed. "If we went to the basement, we might be able to slip by unnoticed for a while, at least until things settle down outside. Then we could make our escape."

"Anybody have any better ideas?" Chapin asked. There was no response, and they began to make their way off the roof and into the palace.

When they were inside, they managed to find the door to the basement without much difficulty. Getting inside, however, was another task, as it was locked.

"Think, everybody," Christopher commanded. "Where would the key for this door be?"

"On the guards," Chapin suggested.

"They're not here," Mike said. "But if they're not here, there must be some central station where the keys are kept when the guards are off duty."

"There," Dave suggested. He pointed to a wooden door down at the end of the hallway from their current position. They all ran as fast as they could to reach it, but Christopher reached the location first.

"It's locked, too," he said sullenly.

"If we can't open it that way," Mike said, "then we'll have to do it the old fashioned way." He motioned for Christopher to follow and moved a few feet from the door down the hallway. They then ran at breakneck speed across the few feet that separated them and the door, and crashed into it with a loud bang. It splintered, and shards of wood flew everywhere. The rest of the party covered their faces and emerged unharmed.

Inside was a dark, dank room that contained exactly what they were looking for: keys. In fact, there were so many keys that Christopher wondered how, without any marking, the guards managed to keep them in order. Mike, however, pointed out that each had a different marking on it, and that settled the matter. They made their way back, keys in hand, to the cellar door. There were still no signs of trolls or guards anywhere around the area.

"There's at least a hundred keys here," Chapin said in disgust. "How are we going to try them

all?"

"How else?" Dave said. "The old-fashioned way. Let's hope we're lucky."

Christopher slipped the first key into the lock and attempted to turn it. It didn't turn, so he dropped it on the ground. After a few, he handed half the keys to Dave so that they could alternate trying the lock and finish more quickly. Outside, after they had tried about thirty of the keys, there was a loud bang, and a crunch. Swords clashed, and shouting erupted.

Fortunately, the next key worked, and they hurried inside. Dropping the rest of the keys, Christopher retained the one that opened the door and pocketed it, being sure to lock the door behind them. As they traveled down the stairs, it became too dark to see. When they arrived at the bottom, light shining from a tiny crack in the wall revealed an astonishing site.

"Weapons!" Katie gasped.

"There are enough swords here to supply the entire army!" Dave exclaimed.

Christopher reached down to pick up one of the swords that were neatly organized on shelves against the walls. It was sharp, and real. On the far wall, there were spears and, in between, enough armor for two thousand men. The room was massive, at least as large as the hall.

"What is all this doing here?" Katie asked. "I thought there wasn't enough equipment!"

"There wasn't," Christopher said, "or at least the knight said there wasn't."

"Is it possible that the knight didn't know?" Mike asked.

"Very unlikely," Christopher responded. "The whole time that the knight was talking, King John agreed with everything he said. In fact, he didn't protest a single word that was said during that discussion!"

"To think about it now, I think Christopher's right," Chapin responded.

"What's going on here?" Dave asked. "Why, then, would John want to conceal all these weapons that could be used to protect his kingdom?"

"Without these, his kingdom will most certainly be destroyed!" Katie exclaimed.

"By the way," Chapin suggested quietly, "where is the king now?" Nobody answered.

"I don't know what's going on," Mike said in a confident tone, "but whatever the reason, there's no time to waste! We've got to get these supplies to the knights!"

"Hurry!" Christopher shouted and started up the stairs.

When he reached the top, however, he stopped suddenly and motioned for the rest of the group to be quiet. Outside, they could hear running footsteps, and two voices.

"What happened here?" one voice asked hurriedly.

"Probably damage from the catapult," the other replied. They stopped for a second to inspect the splintered door, and then continued on with loud footsteps.

"That was close," Dave whispered while Christopher pulled the key out of his pocket to open the door. For one tense moment, it stuck in the keyhole, and then finally turned. The door opened, and they rushed out.

Making their way down the hallway, they came to the palace doors. It was still strangely deserted. As they emerged outside, they were met with an astonishing sight.

Arrows were flying everywhere. Swords clanged. Trolls mounted the walls faster than the sentries could force them off. The group was forced to take cover inside the palace doors, helpless to get any further out without any protection.

Suddenly, there was a loud trumpet blast from the far end, near the wall. It was King John and his knights! Finally, Christopher thought. They would be saved.

As they watched, the knights ran across the square, and tramped through houses with a large torch. One knight struck another one from a different country and he fell. All around, the knights were killing their own allies.

"What's going on?" Dave asked, dumbfounded.

"The knights . . . !" Christopher gasped. "They're not on our side! They're trying to kill us all!"