Shoemaker Village

Volume 30 - July 1999



VANDALS CONTINUE ON NEIGHBORHOOD RAMPAGE; DAMAGE NOW IN EXCESS OF $500

In *The Knights of the Square Table*...new characters join the group!



PLUS!

End-of-the-year happenings in *The Bear Facts*!
Biggest *Discussion Forum* ever! 5 articles this month!
Humor from the Village Square still strong!
Max returns in *Going to the Dogz*!

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Editor's Pages

Information you should know

Welcome to the July issue of *Shoemaker Village*!

As we always start off with good news, we would like to announce that our readership total has finally recovered from its February levels, meaning that July will be the second most distributed issue ever. Unfortunately, though this issue will be widely distributed, almost a quarter of the subscribers on the subscription list will be expiring in August. Therefore, we are asking you to please consider renewing your subscription when you receive a notice. Because of the high cost of publishing and mailing, we will not be sending any more notices than the one you receive on the cover of the magazine and a letter that is sent out later in the month. We hope that our readers will continue to support the *Village* in the future.

We would also like to thank all who responded to our latest subscription drive around the neighborhood. We now believe that there is enough neighborhood support to continue the once ill-fated Neighborhood News section. Hopefully, they will continue their subscriptions past the free trial month.

In case you haven't noticed, the *Shoemaker Village* webpages are becoming a formidable source for *Village* news, articles, and other resources. If you haven't checked it out, our address is **http://come.to/ShoemakerVillage.** The pages will be updated weekly beginning after this month's publication. We are currently in the process of renovating the pages so that up-to-the-minute news will be featured as soon as it occurs. We invite you to check out our webpages soon!

Also, for those of you who requested that we publish enlarged copies of the *Village* for our visually impaired subscribers, they are currently available beginning this month. We will judge from the response we receive whether or not to continue publishing these copies in the future. If you would like a copy, and haven't signed up already for enlarged publication, send us a letter or an E-Mail requesting the change. Unfortunately, since we must use so much ink to print these copies, there will be a $2.00 charge per month (for non-subscribers, $1.00 for existing subscribers) to receive an enlarged copy. We are sorry for any inconvenience this may cause you, but it would be impossible to print these copies without donations from those receiving them.

Speaking of donations, we are happy to report that all except one of the subscribers on the UMHS portion of the subscription list have decided to continue their subscriptions through the summer. Many of these teachers also made monetary donations to the welfare of the *Village*. We would like to thank Mr. Learn, who again donated $3.75, Mrs. Haney, who also donated $1.75, and especially to Mrs. Kilpatrick, who benefited us with a large donation of $8.75! Thank you to all of these people, who have made it possible to mail July's issue to you after our unexpected delay.

During the month of June, we sent letters to most subscribers, informing them that this month's edition of the *Village* would be postponed until July 2 from the previous date of June 16. We apologize to those of you who did not receive a letter.

The incredible amount of work that is dumped upon students during the last week of school was unaccounted for when we set last month's publication date. As a result of the postponement, we have been forced to mail this copy to all of the subscribers who signed up for summer mailing.

And now, a few points worth mentioning. We would like to congratulate Lori Blickley for being reelected as President of the Junior class at UMHS for the 1999-2000 school year. (Lori was the President of the Sophomore class at UMHS for the 1998-1999 school year.) Also, Amanda Dilks, who has been writing with the *Village* for a few months, has now become an official storywriter for the *Village*. Congratulations to both of them on their new posts.

That's about all for this month. Thanks to all who have continued to read the *Village*, and we'll see you in August!

Acknowledgments

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The next issue of *Shoemaker Village* will be published on Friday, July 30, 1999.
All contributions for the next issue must be received by Tuesday, July 27, 1999.

Upcoming topics in **The Discussion Forum:**

August 1999: What should be done to stop the vandalizing spree in the neighborhood, and what can be done to keep potential vandals from causing any destruction?

Puzzle Page

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

Air Conditioner
August
Basketball
Bike Riding
Boating
Camping
Fans
Fishing
Heat
Hiking
Hot
July
Kite Flying
Leisure
No School
Ocean
Outdoors
Parks
Play
Recreation
Relax
Sports
Summer
Sunshine
Tennis
Vacation
Water Skiing
Woods

Neighborhood News

July 1999

VANDALS RELENTLESS REGARDLESS OF POLICE VISITS; NEIGHBORS POISED TO TAKE ACTION

The incredible streak of vandalism that has ravaged the neighborhood for the past few months has recently taken a dangerous turn, leaving residents wondering what will happen next.

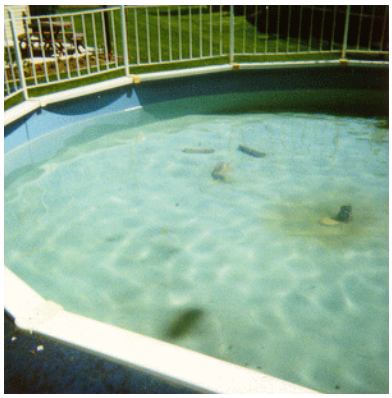
As you may recall, on September 12, 1998, Jason and Thor Rorvik went on a rampage, destroying neighbor Jean Sokolowski's garden, and throwing wood in her pool, among other acts.



Algae grew in abundance on the wood that was in the pool.

This had been all but forgotten by Saturday, May 29, when Henry Sokolowski began the task of opening his pool for the summer. What he discovered, however, was nothing less of a disaster.

He removed the cover to find that 13 pieces of wood had remained in the pool since the previous Fall. In addition, the cover to his skimmer basket had been thrown into the pool, and part of the skimmer assembly had been destroyed and left in the pool.



This picture, taken from a different angle, shows the extent of the destruction.

As you can also see from the pictures, which were taken from different angles, the entire bottom of the pool was covered with algae, which had formed on the wood after the pool had thawed from the winter.

In order to remove the algae, which was multiplying profusely, Henry had to purchase a large container of algaecide, along with a new skimmer cover and flap, approximately $40. It also took hours of work for his family and him to clean the pool later that day.

Henry, furious, phoned the Rorviks to issue a warning. Reportedly, Chris Rorvik hung up on him, tired of the calls from angry neighbors.

As if the vandalism had not been bad enough, it took a serious turn during the last week of May, when unknown vandals slashed the tires of a truck that Steven Spiecker, the neighbor at 2000 Butternut Drive, had rented.

Reportedly, the vehicle had been rented because the truck that he owned and normally parked in his driveway was under repair. Thus, Spiecker was forced to pay the full extent of the damage to the rental company, bringing the estimated total damage of the neighborhood vandalizing spree to a whopping $510.

"These kids just do it for kicks," one neighbor commented. "They don't realize what they're actually doing."



This tree limb was knocked off by the vandals on May 17.

To complicate matters, one subscriber recently phoned *Village* headquarters and informed us that they had witnessed the Rorvik brothers, Jason and Thore, climbing on the weeping cherry tree limb that was felled on May 17 outside the Sokolowski home. They reported

that the limb broke after the boys had tried to climb out on it.

Neighbor Scott Hammerman, who resides at 2060 Butternut Drive, reported to us during a recent conversation that it is possible to get a writ against the parents of the vandals, if they are discovered. Following the issuing of this writ, if the vandals entered onto that person's property, their parents would be fined and held responsible for any damage that was caused.

In addition, several pranksters have been ordering pizzas for delivery to the Sokolowski household during the past month. Each of the first two times, which occurred on June 16 and an unknown date, the pizza parlor called Jean Sokolowski before the pizzas were delivered to avoid any mishaps.

However, on June 21, the pranksters ordered pizzas from Louie Louie's, located at the intersection of County Line and York Roads. When the visibly upset delivery man was informed that the pizzas had not been ordered, Jean called the pizza place for more information.

"They gave their name as Christopher and provided very explicit directions on how to get to my house," said Jean. Afterward, Jean finally called the police for the third time that month, only to find out that they could not do anything without a trace being done on the call.

"I felt sorry that the delivery guy had traveled such a distance. I don't know why they didn't call first to confirm the order," Jean said.

MORE ACCIDENTS ALONG PIONEER ROAD; NEIGHBORS CONCERNED

Many neighbors believed that Pioneer Road would finally be made safer after the construction project was completed last year. However, it seems that the number of accidents is increasing every month. During June, there were four separate incidents.

The first occurred on Friday, June 4, 1999, at about 4:54 p.m., as a car was traveling down the road from the Shoemaker-Pioneer intersection. It collided with a parked Trail Electric truck on the side of the road, causing a loud noise and prompting the police to come to the scene. While the incident was sorted out, several other Trail electric trucks and other cars lined Butternut Drive. Fortunately, all of the cars were cleared before 5:30 that night.

Later in the month, as students of Upper Moreland High School were walking home on Tuesday, June 8 at about 12:50 p.m., a station wagon turning left off of Shoemaker Road almost collided with a smaller car as it rounded the corner of the Shoemaker-Pioneer intersection. It appears that the smaller car did not stop for the stop sign at the intersection and continued to make a right turn.

Additionally, the next week, again as students of UMHS were walking home, another accident was visible in front of the Schrope (best known for their huge Christmas displays) family's house. This appeared to be caused by one car following the other too closely, causing a rear-end collision.

Finally, on Monday, June 14, an ambulance was spotted parked in front of the Rorviks' driveway. It is unknown what the reason for this was, but it appeared that there was another accident further down the road.

The rash of accidents during the past months leaves many neighbors concerned that they could be next. "They drive down this road at 50 mph, with all the trucks that go through when they shouldn't, and expect that they'll be fine," one resident said.

In recent days, there has been a campaign, spearheaded by the Rorvik family, to decrease the speed limit of the road from 35 to 25 miles per hour. Upper Moreland Police, however, declined to take action, citing that for the level of traffic on the road, a speed limit of 25 mph would not be sufficient. They did state, however, that they would use driveways along the road to catch speeders. This, however, has not occurred as of yet.

We'll keep you informed of any further developments in July.

DROUGHT CONTINUES

The strange weather has continued

throughout the neighborhood during the past month, changing first from a rain-soaked deluge earlier this Spring to a long drought recently.

Just from looking at the grass around the neighborhood, you can see that the area is in need of rain. Recently, a voluntary water restriction was placed on 59 counties in the state of Pennsylvania, requesting that people not water their lawns or wash their cars.

As you may recall, this is the third consecutive year where drought conditions have existed in the area. In January, there was another drought warning that lasted for a month, and the summer of 1997 also brought drought concerns.

Fortunately, July, however, is traditionally the wettest month of the year over the past 30 years, with an average of 4.28 inches of rain during the month.

We'll keep you updated on any developments.

OTHER NEWS TIDBITS

-Mr. Daher, former Vice Principal, has been confirmed by several teachers as being the next principal of Upper Moreland High School. We wish him luck in his continuing endeavor.

-New telephone lines were recently installed in the neighborhood, eliminating the problem of the line that traveled down the pole, prone to accidents.

Going to the Dogz

MAX CONTINUES TO INVADE NEIGHBORHOOD DESPITE COMPLAINTS

For those of you who thought that you would be seeing the last of Max, the Rorviks' dog, think again.

The dog was spotted twice this month, once while on an adventure in the Spieckers' yard, and again later in the same week in the Sokolowskis' yard.

This poses a serious health risk to all neighborhood residents, many of whom are worried about the droppings that Max leaves wherever he goes.

"Anymore, every time I hear a key jingle or Jake run outside barking, I always look around to see if a dog is coming to attack me," said one neighborhood resident recently. "We shouldn't have to live in fear that, everytime you walk outside, a dog will attack you."

The Bear Facts

By Lori Blickley

So, summer vacation has already started. Ahh, it feels nice to get away from school for a little while. However, there are many things and especially people that students will miss. I know we will all miss the retiring teachers who have put numerous years of service into educating children. The retirees include. . .

from Round Meadow Elementary School. . .

Bruce Brown
30 years of service
5th grade teacher

Betsy Stein
33 years of service
4th grade teacher

from Cold Spring Elementary School. . .

Sarah Harvey
22 years of service
Kindergarten teacher

James Kilmer
37 years of service
Health and Physical Education

from the Middle School. . .

Dr. Susan Bitner
29 years of service
Principal and Vice-Principal

John Kinsky
32 years of service
Mathematics teacher

Roberta Martin
12 years of service
Duty Aid

Susan Pezzi
36 years of service
School Nurse

Patricia Redican
25 years of service
English teacher

Emma Smith
23 years of service
Social Studies teacher

from the High School. . .

Phyllis Bray
29 years of service
English teacher

L. John DeLaurentis
40 years of service
Principal

Pam Gallagher
31 years of service
Science teacher

Richard Kellerman
22 years of service
Math teacher

Dorothy Long
35 years of service
Social Studies Supervisor

Philip Mossburg
33 years of service
Science teacher

Donald Weaver
35 years of service
Math Supervisor

Everyone here at the village staff would like to thank these Upper Moreland employees for their hard work and dedication to our school district.

In other news, the high school voted last Tuesday on whom their class council officers will be for the upcoming 1999-2000 school year. The election results are as follows. . .

Sophomore officers:
President - Shawn Albert
Vice-president - Kristin Enoch
Secretary - Laura Enama
Treasurer - Allison McFatridge
Public Relations - Deanna Long

Junior officers:
President - Lori Blickley
Vice-President - Anne Luetzow
Secretary - David Meinhart
Treasurer - Jason Roberts
Public Relations - Meredith Mintzer

Senior officers:
President - Jaclyn Pitt
Vice-President - Lori Jessup
Secretary - Shannon Barkley
Treasurer - David Matthews
Assistant Treasurer - Brian Ward

Answer to Jedi Mind Trick (Page 12):

The number you picked was 7, right? Isn't that weird? Free will or synaptic wiring?

Recap on Graduation

On Tuesday, June 15th, the class of 1999 held their graduation ceremony. All was going well as speeches by Jess Biddington, Allison Dwyer, and Brooke Leonard were wonderful. Tasia Kavilek sang beautifully while Adam Kurland "tickled the ivories" and Dannette Arbol performed sign language to the heartfelt lyrics. It was a sad time for all students and especially our retiring principle and teachers. The class of 1999 is the last class graduating in this millennium.

Parents and friends came to the commencement to support and "cheer on" their loved ones. Each family supported their child. Even the family of Terrence McGuckin. When Terry's named was called, he walked toward the principal like every other grad. However, this senior was very different. Upon receiving his diploma, he tore off his gown. Then, he continued his tirade as he threw his diploma into the stands of awed and breath-taken watchers. He ran out of the graduation ceremony with a police officer right behind him. Supporting friends cheered for the Terrence and his parents were proud of him. They even yelled from the stands, "Don't go after him."

Humor from the Village Square

DRUNK WITH GUNS

A man in a state of excessive inebriation rolled up at a fairground rifle range booth and threw down the necessary money. The booth operator at first refused to let him have a turn, considering that his inebriated state would endanger the public. But the drunk insisted and was given a gun.

He aimed unsteadily in the general direction of the target and, after trying to focus, pulled the trigger three times. The booth owner, on inspecting the target, was astonished to see that he had scored three bullseyes. The star prize for the evening was a large set of glassware; but the showman was certain that the drunk wasn't aware of what he had done and gave him instead a consolation prize, a turtle. The drunk wandered off into the crowd.

An hour or so later he came back, even more drunk than before. Once again the showman demurred, but once again the drunk insisted and once more scored three bullseyes and was given another turtle.

Eventually the drunk rolled up again and insisted on a third attempt. Once more he picked up the rifle, waved it around in the general direction of the target, and pulled the trigger three times. Once more he scored three bullseyes. But this time there was an onlooker with good eyesight.

"That's fantastic," the man said. "Hasn't he scored three bulls?"

The showman, cursing his luck, made a play of going over to the target and inspecting it closely.

"Yes, Sir!" he announced to the crowd. "This is fantastic! Congratulations, sir, you have won the star prize, this magnificent 68-piece set of glassware."

"I don't want any bloody glasses," the drunk replied. "Give me another one of those delicious crusty meat pies."

DESTROYED BY THE GOVERNMENT

The Lord said to Noah, "In six months, I'm going to make it rain until the earth is covered with water and all the evil is destroyed. I want you to build an ark and save two of each animal species. Here are the blueprints for the ark."

Six months passed. The skies began to cloud and rain began to fall. Noah sat in his front yard, weeping.

"Why haven't you built the ark?" asked the Lord.

"Oh, forgive me," said Noah. "I did my best, but so many things happened. "The

Answer to Jedi Mind Trick (Page 12):

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blueprints you gave me didn't meet the city's code and I had to change them. Then the city said I was violating the zoning ordinance by building an ark in my front yard, so I had to get a variance. The provincial Forest Service required tree-cutting permits, and I was sued by an animal rights group when I tried to gather up the animals. Environment Canada required an environmental impact statement concerning the flood. The District Municipality wanted a map of the proposed floodplain. Revenue Canada seized all my assets, claiming I was trying to avoid paying taxes by leaving the country, and The Canadian Human Rights Commission said I wasn't hiring enough visible minorities. I'm sorry, Lord, but I can't finish the ark for at least five years."

Suddenly the rain stopped, the skies cleared and the sun began to shine.

Noah looked up and said, "Lord, does this mean you're not going to devastate the earth?"

"Right," said the Lord. "The government already has."

JEDI MIND TRICK

This little Jedi mind trick is kinda freaky, till you think about it a little while. Then it's even more weird. Just follow the instructions below:

DON'T read too fast - do it slowly and follow the instructions below exactly, doing the math in your head as fast as you can.

It may help to say the answers aloud quietly. FOLLOW these instructions one at a time and as QUICKLY as you can!

What is:

2+2?

4+4?

8+8?

16+16?

Quick! Pick a number between 12 and 5.

After you've picked a number, look at the top of the next page.

MOM'S DICTIONARY

AIRPLANE:

What Mom impersonates to get a 1-yr.-old to eat strained beets.

ALIEN:

What Mom would suspect had invaded her house if she spotted a child-sized creature cleaning up after itself.

APPLE:

Nutritious lunchtime dessert which children will trade for cupcakes.

BABY:

1. Dad, when he gets a cold.
2. Mom's youngest child, even if he's 42.

BATHROOM:

A room used by the entire family, believed by all except Mom to be self-cleaning.

BECAUSE:

Mom's reason for having kids do things which can't be explained logically.

BED AND BREAKFAST:

Two things the kids will never make for themselves.

CARPET:

Expensive floor covering used to catch spills and clean mud off shoes.

CAR POOL:

Complicated system of transportation where Mom always winds up going the furthest with the biggest bunch of

Answer to Jedi Mind Trick (Page 12):

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kids who have had the most sugar.

CHINA:
Legendary nation reportedly populated by children who love leftover vegetables.

COOK:
Act of preparing food for consumption. Mom's other name.

COUCH POTATO:
What Mom finds under the sofa cushions after the kids eat dinner.

DATE:
Infrequent outings with Dad where Mom can enjoy worrying about the kids in a different setting.

DRINKING GLASS:
Any carton or bottle left open in the fridge.

DUST:
Insidious interloping particles of evil that turn a home into a battle zone.

DUST RAGS:
See "DAD'S UNDERWEAR."

EAR:
A place where kids store dirt.

EAT:
What kids do between meals, but not at them.

EMPTY NEST:
See "WISHFUL THINKING."

ENERGY:
Element of vitality kids always have an oversupply of until asked to do something.

"EXCUSE ME":
One of Mom's favorite phrases, reportedly used in past times by children.

EYE:
The highly susceptible optic nerve which, according to Mom, can be "put out" by anything from a suction-arrow to a carelessly handled butter knife.

FABLE:
A story told by a teenager arriving home after curfew.

FOOD:
The response Mom usually gives in answer to the question "What's for dinner tonight?" See"SARCASM."

FROZEN:
1. A type of food.
2. How hell will be when Mom lets her daughter date an older guy with a motorcycle.

GARBAGE:
A collection of refuse items, the taking out of which Mom assigns to a different family member each week, then winds up doing herself.

GENIUSES:
Amazingly, all of Mom's kids.

GUM:
Adhesive for the hair.

HAMPER:
A wicker container with a lid, usually surrounded by, but not containing, dirty clothing.

HANDI-WIPES:
Pants, shirt-sleeves, drapes, etc.

HANDS:
Body appendages which must be scrubbed raw with volcanic soap and sterilized in boiling water immediately prior to consumption of the evening meal.

HINDSIGHT:
What Mom experiences from changing too many diapers.

HOMEMADE BREAD:
An object of fiction like the Fountain of Youth and the Golden Fleece.

ICE:
Cubes of frozen water which would be found in small plastic trays if kids or husbands ever filled the darn things instead of putting them back in the freezer empty.

INSIDE:
That place that will suddenly look attractive to kids once Mom has spent a minimum of half an hour getting them ready to go outside.

"I SAID SO":
Reason enough, according to Mom

JACKPOT:
When all the kids stay at friends' homes for the night.

JEANS:
Which, according to kids, are appropriate for just about any occasion, including church and funerals.

"JEEEEEEEEZ!":
Slang for "Gee Mom, isn't there anything else you can do to embarrass me in front of my friends?"

JOY RIDE:
Going somewhere without the kids.

JUNK:
Dad's stuff.

KETCHUP:
The sea of tomato-based goop kids use to drown the dish that Mom spent hours cooking and years perfecting to get the seasoning just right.

KISS:
Mom medicine.

LAKE:
Large body of water into which a kid will jump should his friends do so.

LEMONADE STAND:
Complicated business venture where Mom buys powdered mix, sugar, lemons, and paper cups, and sets up a table, chairs, pitchers and ice for kids who sit there for three to six minutes and net a profit of 15 cents.

LIE:
An "exaggeration" Mom uses to transform her child's papier-mache volcano science project into a Nobel Prize-winning experiment and a full-ride scholarship to Harvard.

LOSERS:
See "Kids' Friends."

MAKEUP:
Lipstick, eyeliner, blush, etc. which ironically make Mom look better while making her young daughter look "like a tramp."

MAYBE:
No.

MILK:
A healthful beverage which kids will gladly drink once it's turned into junk food by the addition of sugar and cocoa.

“MOMMMMMMM!”:

The cry of a child on another floor who wants something.

MUSH:

1. What a kid loves to do with a plateful of food.
2. Main element of Mom's favorite movies.

NAILS:

A hard covering on the end of the finger, which Mom can never have a full set of due to pitching for batting practice, opening stubborn modeling clay lids and removing heat ducts to retrieve army men and/or doll clothing.

PANIC:

What a mother goes through when the darn wind-up swing stops.

OCEAN:

What the bathroom floor looks like after bath night for kids, assorted pets, two or three full-sized towels and several dozen toy boats, cars and animals.

OPEN:

The position of children's mouths when they eat in front of company.

OVERSTUFFED RECLINER:

Mom's nickname for Dad.

Year-Round Schools

Although most students will disagree, and many people may think I am insane, Upper Moreland should institute year-round schooling. The advantages are truly enormous. To begin, many other countries have already established year-round schools. Therefore, this is not just any dumb suggestion. Next, holiday vacations and days off will change in a favorable manner. Lastly, students will not have a long summer break which causes them to forget their academic skills. These three reasons are among many which prove year-round schooling benefits students and the educational system.

Many European and Asian countries have already established year-round schooling. These are the countries which have risen above the United States' intelligence, becoming the most advanced in education. So, the question arises, is it because of the school system? I strongly believe it is. In Japan, the students are ingenious. They are forced to work hard and always try their best. The year-round school systems have surely aided the Japanese and other advanced nations.

With year-round schooling, our vacations will change. This year, for example, I only had off for a two-day Christmas break. That is ridiculous! I realize our break was shortened due to the teacher strike; however, the vacation was originally supposed to be a week. This is still not enough time. With only a few days off, it is impossible to visit relatives. Most of my close family lives in Colorado; I am never able to visit them during the school year. So, if all-year-round schooling were established in all American schools, I would be able to spend time with the relatives I love so dearly. The winter and spring break will be extended for three weeks. The summer would obviously have to be shortened; however, it will still consist of a whole month off.

Over the summer I become stupid. I honestly do. I return to school in September and retain no knowledge from the previous year. I forget how to do certain math problems and I know absolutely no vocabulary. My foreign language skills are awful, and I barely know what a cell is for science class.

When the teachers start to teach new information, I get so confused! If we did not have such a long summer break, this would not happen to practically every student across our country.

The United States is suffering academically since the whole nation does not institute year-round schooling. Other advanced countries have obviously succeeded and soared with the system. Plus, our students will receive a sufficient winter and summer break. Our education is presently being jeopardized with three months off in the summer. Channel 57 says, “Education is paramount.” Do they really believe that? If year-round schooling is not established in every school across the country, it is hard for me to accept their declaration as true.

On Year Round Schooling

So, here it is. School has ended and summer has begun, but not for everyone. Year round schooling has become a popular alternative to regular schooling in the past few years. Instead of going to school for nine months and having the summer off, year-round students attend school for approximately 6 weeks at a time and have three-week long intermission between. There are a few advantages to this but there are also disadvantages.

No summer. That's what the majority of kids think when they hear year-round school. Summer is what keeps kids going. After a few weeks, or days even, parents start to hear that all too familiar sound of, "I'm bored." Summer has only been going on for eight days, but I already have nothing to do. I'd be happy with no summer. Well, make it a couple weeks of summer, and I'd be happy as a clam. You may also recall that I'm the kid who wrote about how she wouldn't mind having really strict driving standards . . . well, no, I'm not nuts. I just tell it like it is, and summer is already starting to bore me. Even with a part-time job, there is nothing to do. My mom says only un-intelligent people get bored; I think this is full of bologna. If I could simply pull myself together enough to overcome my fear of driving, then I could get my license and go places. If I had a car, it would be even better.

Here's the one problem I see with year-round school. During the intermissions, all the other kids in the area who don't use year-round schooling will all be in school. "Experts" who write about the advantages of year-round school claim that, during intermissions, students can get part-time jobs, much like regular summer jobs that other kids get. But if you were looking for a job, and you had to tell the boss that you could work for three weeks at a time every six weeks, how excited do you think they would be about hiring you? My guess is not very. Other than that, though, I think year-round school is (in the words of a teenager) "all good".

Even though it's a controversial system, I would like to give year-round schooling a try. I know

that it will never happen here in Upper Moreland, but it would be neat to try. Who knows, maybe that's how they felt when they were first instituting block scheduling. I'm open to try new experiences. And even though this probably sounds crazy coming from a soon-to-be high school junior in the prime of her summer freedom, I like school. I like to learn new things, and summer just isn't doing anything for me at the moment. When I think back to the middle of March, without a break in sight, I think of how great it would be if, all of a sudden, we had three weeks off. It's a nice break in the action, without being too long so that you forget everything you just learned, as some people, including me, have a tendency to do during the summer. Maybe year-round schooling is not as bad as its name suggests.

School Year-Round? No Way!

This question has been asked many times. Everytime you ask me this question, I will give you a quick no. You will probably read at least one article in this Discussion Forum that says we should have year-round schooling. That writer will probably say we can have one week off from school every month. That may be true, but who would want one week off? I know for a fact that some people go on vacations that are longer than the one week we have for vacation. I am usually home doing pretty much nothing, but I don't account for everybody in the school. Imagine for a moment. It's a Friday in June (or whatever month "the end" of the school year is), and you are a sophomore. When you come back on Monday, Surprise! You are a Junior, learning a new set of ideas. All students need a couple of months to calm down after a hard nine months of Algebra equations, Shakespeare books, and World Wars. Students need a couple months to think about sports, vacations, and long walks along the beach. (Sometimes I get carried away).

Year-round schooling would be such a bore. Can you imagine running into the same teachers day after day after day? Some teachers are very nice and it's not too bad going to their classes five days a week. However, there are exceptions to every rule. I won't name names because I don't want to hurt anybody's feelings. There are some teachers that I don't want to be in the same class with. Everybody has at least one teacher at least once in their lifetime that they didn't like going to. Imagine going to school year round without any breaks. Would you like that? I don't think so.

Every now and then we need a break. I am very happy with the school schedule as it is right now. We don't need changes now. Why change just for the sake of change? If the students and faculty are happy with the way things are right now, we don't need to change!

Year-Round Schooling Ought to Be Instituted in Schools Today!

The purpose of that title was to grab the attention of the extremely closed-minded individuals who are FOR year-round schooling. If you were really steadfast to the idea, you wouldn't even want to read one opposing idea. But you can't spark change that way . . . or in this case, retard it. If my title were, "Year-Round Schooling: The Sickest, Worst, Most Despicable Idea Ever," you probably wouldn't have bothered to read it. Right? I'M ON TO YOU! I know your type! *That* title is the best representation of how I feel, though. And if you're thinking that I took a chance, with my title, of alienating people who share my views, then you're right. I took a chance that those who defend the old are more open minded than those who bring in the new. If my deception worked, then EVERYONE should be reading this article. My reasons for my beliefs are few and all objective and refutable.

Summer vacation is a necessity! After being in school for ten months, vacation is a blissful thing. For the first week of vacation, I went to bed at two o'clock in the morning and woke up between eleven and four later that day. I was HEAVILY sleep deprived during the last several weeks of school. Granted, it was entirely my fault. I made VERY poor decisions when budgeting my time, and I paid for it. My body actually broke down, resulting in, among other things, high susceptibility to a cold that I'm just now getting over. When the summer came, I was, for the first time in I can't remember how long, at peace. School has been out for about two weeks now. My ulcer doesn't bother me anymore, and my hair has almost totally grown back (<<<joke here, joke here). My point is, if I were still in school right now, still having to wake up at six o'clock and still being under constant deadlines, you wouldn't be reading this, because I would have hanged myself a week ago! I'M DEAD SERIOUS! And that's why whenever I hear someone supporting the idea of year-round schooling, I want to look at them, eye to bloodshot eye, and hit them with a sack of pennies. Hear me now! DON'T TAKE MY SUMMER AWAY! Got it?

My other reason is not so convincing to most. It is, quite simply, CHANGE IS BAD. The current school schedule is one of simplicity and efficiency. I don't care what other people say. Five days of work and two days of, well, not leisure (not in high school anyway), but days of rest. To try to uproot everything one day and reform the school calendar . . . well, I would like to be a fly on the wall at that meeting. "It's too complicated!" he whined pitifully (he being me). Just leave it alone. Blast you all, you with your radical ideas!

The strongest reason I have for my standpoint is the one that I can only hope I have successfully conveyed to you. I just have a feeling that year-round schooling would be disastrous. I KNOW I WOULD HATE IT! It would destroy me. I believe the majority of the articles you will read on this subject (in the *Village*) are those supporting the idea of change. Just remember this is a VERY limited sample and probably not a fair representation of the masses. Many students I have spoken with shun the idea of year-round schooling. If you haven't guessed, **"hate"** is not a strong enough word to describe how I feel about it. I loathe the idea. And it's not just students, either. Some teachers have professed that year-round schooling would be a calamity, and, in the end, would do more harm than good. And that's all I have to say on the matter. It's a bad idea, and I hope that it is never instituted . . . at least not while I'm in school. Don't torture my generation with that bull!

Year-Round Schooling: A Better Alternative For Everyone

At the end of last month, the *Village* staff and I were struggling to think of what the topic would be for The Discussion Forum for the next few months. One of the first topics that came to my mind was the thought of having school held year-round. Though the topic had been touched upon in previous issues, only one point of view was presented, and many people complained how there were no opposing articles. So, we decided to open the topic for discussion this month, after a long wait.

However, there is no worse time to ask people to write about year-round schooling than in June. Right now, it's 10:45 a.m. on June 18. The school year has barely been over for twenty minutes, yet I am writing about why school should be held year-round. Some people, as another article puts it, "may think that I am insane". Some people are obviously being influenced by the end of the school year, but that can't be helped. Since I haven't read the article yet (it's supposed to be a surprise), I can't say that either side is in the majority.

For those of you who forgot why school is held the way it is now, let me recap. Back when most of the country was comprised of farmers, children worked on the family farms during the summer, especially during August and early September, when they were needed to help with the harvest. Some schools have already partially discarded this tradition, their breaks now extending only from May until August instead of the usual time of June through September. But for the majority of schools, they stubbornly stay true to their old standards.

As everybody knows (except the 3% of the country who aren't Christian), the time around Christmas is always so busy that it's impossible to get everything done. Most of the schools that are already in the year-round format have extended their Christmas vacations to three or even four weeks, so that the students and teachers have the majority of the month of December off. I don't know about anybody else, but for the entire month, I had no time just to myself to do whatever I pleased (although there was enough to get things done); hence there was and always has been no January issue of the

Village. But with the new system, all these troubles would be solved.

Of course, there is the obvious reason that students would forget everything they learned over the summer. I know for myself, especially in English (by far the hardest subject of all) that I forget virtually everything I learned the year before, especially the grammar rules and the contents of the books from last year. And no, assigning a summer reading list does not help matters at all. Since the teacher isn't reading along with the students and pointing out key concepts and points to remember, it's hard to grasp the point of the reading.

And then, of course, there are always those students who cause trouble after they run out of things they like to do. My brother is a prime example of this point. By the end of August, he practically jumps out of his skin, complaining that he is "bored", meaning that he doesn't feel like doing anything that my mom will suggest or he can think of. By the beginning of September, he begins to cause trouble around the house. Some children, however, won't stop at that and will turn into troublemakers. The first act of vandalism in the neighborhood occurred on September 12 last year, while school began on September 22. Notice any connection?

There are times during the school year when students and teachers just need a break. Year-round schooling is a perfect opportunity to give them the break they need. I know for myself that I need time to recover once and a while. Take Matthew Care, the Assistant Editor, for instance. You may remember last month's article entitled *My Weekend in May*. Though he was under the influence of anesthetic drugs at the time, the article shows how tired he was of school, and I'm sure that many people felt the same way. It would certainly be nice if there were a few extra days off in late May before the rush of work at the end of the year.

As you can see from above, the advantages of year-round schooling far outweigh those of stubbornly staying with the old system of education with a summer vacation. Though many people will advocate the old system, there are really no benefits for our schools to continue this way. Hopefully, administrators and politicians alike will soon realize the good things that will come out of

this change.

Problems

There's so many problems in the neighborhood, and the world, that even a 2000-page dictionary couldn't do them justice.

With the recent variations in weather, many people are wondering if it isn't nature causing the problems, but people altering the earth's climate that cause these troubles. With events such as the cold war over, environmental destruction will be the largest threat to the survival of mankind in the future, and something must be done soon.

Thirty years ago, when the first Earth Day was held, environmental awareness was at its peak. For years, people had been disgusted about the state of their neighborhoods and had decided to do something about it. It worked, too, and for a short while things began to get better. But something of that magnitude would not happen today. For some reason, most people today don't have the energy to *make things better*. Most people will say that "it's good enough", but won't finish the job. I have experience with several people who feel this way. They cite reasons like they have too much work to do, don't have the energy, or make other excuses, but don't face the truth.

But the environment, no matter how much specialists will complain, is in a better condition than it was back in the 70s. It's the *effects* that people are feeling. For example, the area has been in drought conditions for the past three consecutive years. If the neighborhood were supposed to receive this much rain in a certain period of time, it wouldn't be called a drought. For one year, or even two, it might be normal, but now it seems that every June or July there's a drought. July, on average, is the wettest month of the year, but yet yellow grass persists during the month. There's something that's not right.

Imagine what the world would be like if all the nations of the world put aside their petty differences and worked together to accomplish one common goal. Just look at history. Even back to Roman times, there have been problems. If barbarians had not put an end to the comparatively

advanced cultures of Rome and Greece, we would be exploring the stars right now. Some people might say that we should fix all the problems on Earth first before looking toward space. If that happened, the earth would be destroyed before humans could survive on other planets.

Simple acts also create larger problems. On a smaller scale, the vandalism in the neighborhood is inexcusable. Most likely, these vandals became troublemakers because their parents were unable to take care of them when they were younger. Therefore, the kids now destroy property, punch kids walking down the street, and wreak havoc among neighborhood residents.

The underlying cause of this is that many people don't look ahead to the consequences. The vandals don't care what will happen to them if they get caught. People choose to have babies, but don't want to care for them, and decide to have an abortion. Even industries destroy the environment and don't take responsibility for what will happen.

But then again, it's just my opinion.

Fright Night

by Matthew Care

The spotlights, hanging from the rafters of the old meat packing plant, are on the center ring. I and my competitor approach from different sides and walk around to the gate side; no big procession. No theme music. I'm not one of those freaks in the WWF. Stadium seating surrounds the cage on all sides and rises up on a very slight incline. There is not a big crowd tonight. There's a lot of empty seats. My guy, Greig, is throwing questions at me. "The gloves fit okay?" "You feelin' alright?" "Not nervous, are you?" I'm nodding to all the usual questions, but his words aren't making it past my ears. My mind is already in the ring, and I'm looking out on the people, all shrouded in darkness. Finally, the gate opens and we enter the Octagon. The texture of the floor is different, and familiar, as I have been on this side of the cage a number of times. The lights reflect off of the floor and blind me for just a few seconds. I float to my corner, letting my mind's eye guide me. When my surroundings come into focus, my nose is inches from the cage. I turn, and everything outside the cage, sight and sound, phases out.

Suddenly, my body comes to life, as if to this moment I had been a corpse being pushed, against my will, from behind. Every athlete knows that a muscle is like a sponge. My blood is pumping now, and the sponges are full. I can feel every muscle in my body individually working. I see my opponent on the opposite side. The card said he was 6"5', but he doesn't look to me more than 6"3 ½, maybe 6"4'. Well, the card doesn't lie. I've got my work cut out for me tonight. It said two hundred even for the weight. He's got a good build, for a shootfighter, that is. So, he's got about twenty pounds on me. That's okay; I'll kill him in speed. A Muay Thai kick-boxer verses a shootfighter; a well planned, even fight. I stand poised, my body ready to spring to life at any moment. I imagine a fly has just landed on my nose, and I envision my hand rising up from its idle position at my side with such speed that the fly doesn't even know it's coming, and such control that I capture it between my two fingers and hold it. Then I squeeze and fly is crushed. "That's what I'm going to do

to him," I think... The gate closes, and with the sound of the latch, the fate of one of us has been sealed on this night.

The referee calls us in, and we approach from the corners to meet him in the middle. Oh, there's the 6"5'. Why didn't I see that before? We listen as the ref goes through the drill. Stay within UFC ordinances. *Bla, bla*. Following each...*bla bla.* Obey my commands at all time. He's done. We touch gloves and go back to the corners. I'm ready. I'm here because I can be. My qualifications lie in countless hours of training and dozens of previous matches. The round begins. We take carefully placed baby-steps, working our way out of our respective corners until the inevitable collision. My body tenses. "When we get within striking distance," I wonder, "who will take the first shot?" A fist races toward me, and I dodge it. The dance begins. He's on top of me now and grabs one of my arms to force it out of the way. I jerk backward hard and give a swift kick to his knee. Then I charge forward with punches and kicks to the hip and my mean left hook. He's basically doing the same. On one punch, he catches my arm and twists it until I'm turned around completely. He gets me in a choke hold. I try to elbow his stomach, but he's positioned himself out of range. I use my other hand to go behind me and punch, though awkwardly, in the side of the head. He uses a hand to catch the fist. I'd be totally at his mercy, except now he only has his one arm around my throat. I force it off, spin around and get myself free of him. A lot of fighting is patience. It's complicating and repetitive. Let our bruises tell the story. I broke my second rib yet again. If my nose didn't break when I got kneed in the face, then it surely did when he was slamming my head into the mat. It was then that he almost got me in an ankle lock, but I was quick enough to roll out of it, kicking him in the face as I did. That's probably when I fractured his jaw. Broken toes numbered four between us. Four eyes, and each one blackened. It was pretty clear that there wasn't going to be a need for another fifteen-minute round. I'd taken a lot of blows to the head. With about two minutes to go, it was getting harder to defend myself. He wasn't coming on as strong either. I was running sequences of attacks in my mind, but I didn't have the skill to exercise them anymore. I was like a desperate, defeated general, positioning

troops and commanding artillery that didn't exist. He got me in a choke hold. This time, my limbs gone weak, but refusing to submit, I struggled until my last. Everything got blurry and then suddenly I was overtaken by blackness at the very instant I collided with the mat. For several seconds, the world sounded like it was on the other side of a closed door. I became aware that the blackness was the inside of my eyelids. I forced them open and pushed myself up until I was sitting on my butt. I accepted the offer of assistance and was aided in standing.

"The winner by knock out," mocked a little voice in my head, "not me!" But hey, I'm not upset about it. You can't expect to win them all. It wasn't the last time I fought that guy. I went 1 & 2 with him, lifetime. The gate opened and we walked out, our strength depleted. That's when the doctors and the Cut Man go to work. Greig was right there.

"Well, you gave a good fight in there," he said. "Didn't stall for one second, not for water, not for nothin'. But why didn't you tap out when he got you? You know better than that."

"I don't know," I said.

"Well, what? What were you trying to prove? Come on."

"Nothing," I said. "I think I was just too tired to throw in the towel."

And that was it. Everyone's a winner. The fans get what they want, Barret (that's the other guy) gets a KO, and I get to do what I love. Brutality? Yes, but hardly senseless. There's something spiritual about pushing your body to the extreme, and that's why I keep coming back.

The Knights of the Square Table

Chapter 4

"They've betrayed us!" Christopher screamed, horrified. King John, well behind the lines of his soldiers, watched as they slaughtered innocent people as they approached the gates.

"What are we going to do now?" Katie asked in terror. "We're all doomed! If they open the gates, all resistance to Yavin's power will be crushed!"

"We can't just go out there and stop them," Mike reminded her.

"We have to do something!" Dave yelled over the racket. "But what?"

"I guess you've seen what John was trying to do," a voice came from behind them.

They all turned around. Jeff, John's advisor, was standing just inside the doorway, with a helpless look on his face. "I tried to stop them," Jeff said. "But they attempted to lock me inside the secret room instead. I was able to get out, but not in time."

"Do you have any plans?" Dave asked him.

"Only one," Jeff said. "Let's get out of here. There's no way we can fight them off without reinforcements."

"What ever happened to those two knights who went to Gangton and Seatown?" asked Chapin.

"There's been no sign of them," Jeff replied sullenly, as they watched the death and destruction approach.

"Let's get up to the wall," Christopher suggested. "Maybe there's something we can do there."

"We need to get the weapons to the soldiers, too, if that's still possible," said Mike. "It might help a little."

"Good idea," Jeff interjected. "I'll go up to the wall with Mike and Katie, while you other three lead the knights downstairs. Is that OK?"

"Sounds alright. Let's meet back here in a half hour, assuming none of us get killed," Christopher suggested, leaving them to part on that grim thought.

Jeff lead the way, with Mike and Katie following close behind. They stayed close to the walls of the palace and the middle of the town, where there were few encounters with any knights. The fighting seemed to be concentrated on keeping enemies out instead of fighting them within.

When they reached the wall, spears flew and swords clanged as they climbed up a ladder to the terrace above. To their right, there was a loud thump, and a troll fell, covered in blood. Mike froze at the sight, finally realizing how much this battle meant. He shook it off as Katie shoved him from behind and yelled to keep moving.

When they reached the top, they were forced to duck under the stone wall that provided the knights at the top some protection. The doors to their left were, fortunately, still intact, but appeared to have been weakened by the constant attacks. Several trolls from below threw rocks in an attempt to knock the friendly knights off their perches in order to climb up.

"Sir Jeff!" one knight yelled as he spotted the three. "The trolls are continuing to advance. We can't hold them off much longer without weapons!"

"King John had been hiding them in the basement," Jeff said as a spear whizzed above their heads and sailed into the town, impaling itself in the roof of a house.

"Any chance we can get our hands on some of those so we have a chance to defend ourselves?"

"Go down to the basement now and take as many as you need. Watch out for the King's troops."

"Thanks, sir!"

When the knight began to climb down, Jeff braved the projectiles flying toward him and leaned over the edge to see the trolls swarming around the castle. They had arranged themselves in lines, the front line continuing to pound the castle while the others defended the front line and took care of their wounded.

"It's really bad," Jeff said to Mike when he ducked down for cover again. Suddenly, there was a loud bang, and the wall shook below them. Looking to their left, they could see that the trolls were using a sort of ram that they had seen before to attempt to break through the gates of the town. So far, their efforts had failed, but for how long that status remained was questionable.

"We need to do something about this now," Katie said. "We can't just wait here while they destroy the town!"

"I agree. But there's nothing we can do," Jeff said solemnly. To their right, a knight fell, a spear protruding from his chest.

"Let's see if we can help make the doors hold until the others retrieve the weapons," Jeff said as he made his way to the left toward the gates. Mike led the way, followed by Jeff, and then Katie behind. They stayed low, protected by the stone rail that was on the outside. The inside edge of the wall, however, had no railing, and a fall from the height that they were at could have been deadly.

When they reached the doors, they discovered two knights, covered in blood, cranking the handles to open the gates.

"What are you doing?" Jeff asked over the screams and noises of weapons being thrown.

"When they bring that ram back on us, if we can open the doors as it hits, it might lessen the impact," the knight said. "If we don't, the gates are gone anyway. Could you help us?"

"Sure," Jeff said, and motioned for Katie and Mike to move to the wheel for the other door. Looking through the slits in the grate they were standing on, they could see the trolls readying the ram for another run.

"Get ready," the knight said. The trolls moved the ram back further and then began to push. They let go and waited for the impact. "Now!" he screamed, and they all began turning the wheels as fast as they could to open the gates. As the ram approached, the gates parted, *and the ram sailed through*.

Not expecting this to happen, Katie watched in awe with the others as the ram continued on its path into a house, which splintered with the impact. It came to a stop no more than a hundred feet from the gate.

The trolls, also surprised, stopped, and looked to their leader for what to do next. Several, without waiting for orders, realized the opportunity to enter and dashed for the gates.

"Hurry!" Jeff said. They began to turn the wheel in the opposite direction. Even with all their effort, it seemed that they wouldn't make it in time. They put in an extra burst of energy, and the gates clanged shut as the trolls were no more than five feet away.

"Yes!" Mike rejoiced, jumping in the air, but quickly ducked as more objects flew their way.

"This will be a major setback for them," Jeff said. "But only until they can mass enough forces to scale the walls. They have no idea how defenseless we are."

Suddenly, there was a trumpet blast, and an army of trolls began marching across the square, fully armed, led by Christopher, Chapin, and Dave. There were more than a thousand men, each one carrying one of the weapons that was in the basement. They continued to the nearest ladders and mounted the wall.

Seeing that they were not needed anymore and that they were in danger standing in the position

that they were, Jeff led the other two down from the top of the wall. The trolls, however, even with the addition of more knights on the opposite side, showed no signs of weakening, and they now surrounded the entire town.

"Who is in command now?" one knight asked the party as they met in the center of the town. This question took them all by surprise. John's troops were now on the opposite end of the town, but the additional strength that had been added to the friendly forces was helping to hold them back on the opposite end so that they could not cause any more destruction.

"I guess Jeff is now," Christopher said. "You were a military advisor. You should take command."

"But, I'm not sure if I should."

"Who else has the capability that you do?" Mike asked him but received no response.

"You are now the commander of the rebel army," Chapin said to Jeff in an official tone. "The fate of the world rests in your hands."

Jeff, finally accepting his new position, ran off to the wall to help organize the knights at the top.

"What do we do now?" Dave asked.

"The only thing we can do," Christopher responded, "is to watch and wait."

"Let's get on top of that house," Mike suggested, pointing toward a house a few feet away. "We can be at least a bit safer, and we can see everything that happens."

And so they sat on top of the house for hours afterward. It was a nice day, and if the battle around them was not raging on, they could have basked in the warm sunlight as if they were on vacation. However, by the time it was getting dark, despite the efforts of the knights, it appeared that the trolls were gaining the upper hand. The gates were now beginning to crack, even without the assistance of the battering ram.

Making their way up to the top of the wall, they discovered that conditions were worse than they had thought. At one point along the wall, the trolls had dug grooves, allowing themselves the ability to climb. Only a few knights protected Riverbend from invasion by thousands of trolls.

As they watched the destruction in dismay, a shout arose from a knight battling a few feet away. "Look!" he yelled. "We're saved!" He pointed toward the horizon, where a line of knights that stretched as far as they could see moved toward them. They held up a flag that was unknown to the group, but it wasn't Yavin's. The trolls, seeing the advance, began to mill around below, looking to their commander for instruction.

"Hurry!" Jeff shouted from far away, but his voice carried for miles. "Attack!" A barrage of weapons flew downward off the wall, right into the ranks of trolls, who were now in a state of confusion. Looking behind them, the group noticed that the opposite direction also revealed a line of knights storming toward the town. The trolls, trapped in the middle, began to move in between the lines, to the north.

"Open the gates!" Jeff commanded. "Let's annihilate them!" The knights above the gates worked furiously, and even as they opened, knights rushed out after the trolls. As the trolls continued, the two groups to the east and west had formed one single circle, closing in on the trolls as they hurried to escape. From behind the trolls, the knights of Riverbend chased them, throwing spears and shooting arrows as quickly as they could.

Christopher had managed to secure horses for his four companions, and they rode together behind the lines as they approached the inevitable end of the trolls. Though the trolls knew that they would eventually be defeated, they continued to run, to survive as long as possible before their demise.

As they continued to pursue the trolls, however, the trolls suddenly stopped, causing the Riverbend army to halt behind them. They turned, prepared to make a stand. Jeff looked at the other armies in worry. They were still at least five or ten minutes away, and the trolls could possibly take out his knights before the others arrived. Although he saw this, Jeff ordered his men to stand down.

"Ra' Kah!" one of the troll leaders screamed, and the trolls drew their weapons. Most of them were armed with huge sickles, which appeared sharp enough to slice through bone.

"Retreat!" Jeff screamed over the racket. "We don't stand a chance against them!"

"Come on," Mike said, half talking to himself. "Why can't our reinforcements come any faster?" Because they were now running away, the other knights could not catch up to them.

Christopher yelled to Jeff, who was riding next to him. "We can't just run back to the town. We can't let the trolls in, because they'd destroy the entire place!"

"You're right," Jeff yelled. "But we don't stand a chance here."

"Do we have any better chance in the town?" Christopher asked.

"No," Jeff said after some thought.

"We'll make our stand here!" he ordered above the noise, and the horses drew to a stop. The converging armies in the distance continued their trek toward them.

"Attack!" Jeff ordered, and the air filled with clanging swords and flying weapons. Since the six of them were near the back of the ranks, the danger wasn't as great as near the front, but occasionally, they had to avoid a troll attack.

The ground quickly became littered with bodies. With their support only minutes away, it looked as if their entire force would go down before they could arrive. The fierce battle continued. It seemed as if they were losing rapidly, but not fast enough. The allied armies swarmed in, overwhelming the few trolls that were still alive. It was a total victory within five minutes of their arrival, and not a troll was left standing.

Jeff led the way back to Riverbend. Crowds of people now lined the streets, first watching the battle and now rejoicing over the victorious returning knights.

After they had returned from the battlefield, the leaders of each of the armies assembled in King John's former palace to discuss future plans. Christopher was invited, along with the rest of the party and several dignified leaders. Knights were sent out to bury the dead outside the town and to restore the town to order.

After they had entered the palace and exchanged greetings, the twelve in the palace sat down to make plans. The king of Seatown, who identified himself as Benjamin, sat to their left, while the queen of Gangton, Jean sat on their right at the long, rectangular table that was in the palace hall. The five of them sat between, while Jeff and the other guests sat across.

Earlier, before the conference, Jeff had opened the former King's secret room and exposed the contents: pages and pages of intelligence from knights who had been spying on their supposed allies. Jeff, not knowing whether it would be put to good use or not, had saved it for a later time.

Presently, Jeff was speaking. "I don't think that that is such a good idea," he interrupted. "If we are to stage an all-out assault on Yavin's castle right now, he would be prepared and crush us immediately."

"We must do so now, before the winter approaches. It is October 4th," said King Benjamin. "By the time that knights are sent to the castle, it will be at least two months. We must not delay!"

"Sir, I will not sacrifice my army on a foolish, hastily prepared attack on Yavin's castle," Queen Jean said. "If you wish to ruin our chances of victory, you may continue. But I will not participate."

"I agree," Jeff said. "Most of my army is already in shambles, and we need time to recover."

“Well, then we’re back to where we started,” Benjamin stated indignantly, glaring across the table at Jeff.

“We could wait until spring to attack,” Jean suggested. “That way, the conditions would be more favorable.”

“It might be too long,” Jeff disagreed. “Yavin could double or triple his power at this rate in a half-year. We need to attack soon, even if it means in the middle of winter.”

“That’s suicide,” one of the guests said. “During the winters up north, the sun never rises. It’s cold enough to freeze to death by just taking a nap.”

“What if we attacked the stronghold of the trolls that just attacked us? Who knows how many trolls are still there?” Christopher asked politely, almost mocking Benjamin.

“By doing that,” Katie said, “we would take out a major source of support for Yavin and finish the attack in the middle of the winter.”

“That is an excellent plan!” King Benjamin agreed.

“I agree,” Jeff said.

“Well,” Jean ventured. “I’ll go along with it.”

“Finally, we have a plan we can all agree on!” Benjamin shouted and slammed the table.

“Now there’s the matter of specifics,” Jeff continued. “We can’t use our entire armies on this mission while Yavin quietly returns to our towns and takes them over.”

“But we don’t have enough men left to defend the towns if we want to mount a decent offensive,” Benjamin pointed out.

“This presents a major problem,” Jean pointed out uselessly.

“This has never been done before in my kingdom,” Benjamin suggested, “But we could institute a draft.”

There was silence. Then the queen stood up and shouted outright, “No!”

“I’m afraid I’ll have to concur,” Jeff agreed sullenly. “If we don’t, everybody is going to die anyway or live miserable lives when we fail, so a few soldiers who perish in battle is better off, but still . . . “ He fell silent.

“I will not have my people subjected to this,” the lively queen yelled so that Dave thought the entire world would be able to hear.

“It’s the only way,” Christopher said, keeping his cool. “We have to put up a resistance.”

“Well,” the queen said, grasping for words, but she could find none. “I guess I’ll have to go along.” There was a sigh of relief that seemed to echo throughout the room.

“It’s settled then. I think we can all agree that we should take a week to gather our resources,” Jeff said, and the other two nodded their heads.

“Then, Benjamin,” Jeff continued after they had agreed, “We should meet in Seatown on the eleventh of October to start our journey.” After he replied, the leaders and their guests processed out, leaving Jeff and the five together in the room.

“That wasn’t as easy as I thought,” Jeff said. “But there’s another matter I need to discuss with you.”

“What?” Christopher asked.

“We just discovered the traitor John’s body slaughtered among the trolls. This means that we must appoint a new king for Riverbend.”

“You are the most worthy person,” Katie pointed out to Jeff.

“Possibly,” Jeff replied, thinking for a moment. “But I am a military man, and would rather lead my armies to victory instead of handling domestic matters.”

"Who, then, are you going to appoint?" Christopher asked.

"I am going to appoint you," Jeff said. "If you would accept the honor."

Christopher sat in stunned silence. Nobody could think of a word to say.

"You would make a great king," Chapin suggested.

"But . . . " Christopher said. "I have people to take care of back home in the village."

"There won't be any need to take care of them after we defeat Yavin, which is when you would begin your duties," Jeff explained.

"After we defeat Yavin?" Christopher asked.

"Yes," Jeff replied. "I will appoint someone to care for the town until we return, when you will become king. I knew you wouldn't want to miss out on the action."

"If you put it that way," Christopher said slowly, "I guess I'll have to accept."

"Good choice," Mike said.

"Now, let the people see their new king," Jeff said, motioning toward the door. "They've been waiting for you."

"What?" Christopher asked in surprise but stood up and walked toward the door. Through a crack in the door, he could see the crowd of people outside.

A cheer rose up as he exited the palace.

The rest of the week was not uneventful. Between sleeping and eating, the group of five helped to do chores such as helping to restore order after the battle. A memorial service was held on the second day for all those who had died, and a large memorial was built outside the town where the trolls had made their last stand. The battering ram, which had crashed into a house, was moved to the town square to stand as a testament to those who opposed them. It now stood as the second highest structure in the town, below the palace, of course.

All the people in the town were actively involved in the war now. Those that had been selected to become knights trained all day. The smiths of Riverbend made enough armor to clothe the entire army. Others helped sew heavy clothing for the knights as they were to trek in the cold winter.

Finally, when it was time to leave the town on the fifth day, everybody seemed prepared. After the usual goodbyes and formalities, they were able move by 10:00 that morning. It would take two days, with one night in between, to make the short journey to Seatown.

That night, nothing much of consequence occurred, and they continued the journey the next day, arriving at Seatown at sunset, at the same time the army of Gangton was arriving. In addition, several thousand other knights had camped out around the area from neighboring kingdoms willing to contribute in the war effort.

Inside the town, the leaders of the three kingdoms, Christopher, Benjamin, and Jean, among other dignified persons, had their last full meal together for a long time in the hall of Seatown. They had packed enough food that could last two months on strict rationing, one if eaten normally. They had also brought along hunters if rations were not enough.

Looking around the hall, the group could see that, while most of the people were joyful about the undertaking that was about to occur, others were sad that they might never see their husbands again after they went to war. Still others had a look of fear, wondering what Yavin would do to them if they lost this battle.

Fortunately, however, there was time to test their skills on the trolls at the camp first. This, though, would be no easy battle, either. They had estimated the day before that there were some 25,000 trolls in the camp, all poised to take them out. The attack that had just occurred had proven

that. Hopefully, the trolls' numbers had dwindled substantially enough so that they could attack and be successful.

It had been agreed that they would travel directly north and arrive at the troll camp within a week. After defeating the trolls, they would press on as quickly as possible, because any delay might cost them the world. They had to get as far as they could before the winter snows set in and would hamper their travel.

The next morning, it was finally time to go. When all the knights had gathered in the town square, the three leaders each gave a farewell speech.

"We will return home in victory," Christopher was saying. "Or we will not return home at all.

"All of the evils that Yavin has forced upon the world in the past twenty-five years will be vanquished with this march. By spring, we will return home proclaiming the good news.

"However," he continued, changing his tone, "we cannot fight alone. You, the people, must help. If you lose hope, we can never win. Therefore, we must put aside all the differences between our kingdoms and stay together."

There was a murmur of understanding. Christopher simply said next, "We now proceed." He motioned to the knights in front to begin. The long ranks of knights filed out of the city walls, stretching miles long, numbering in the tens of thousands.

"I only hope we can survive," Christopher said glumly to Jeff as they left the gates. Only the cold, dark nights, the unknown, and Yavin's immense power lay before them.