

# Excerpts from the April 1999 MIND

The Newsletter of

[Central Indiana Mensa](#)

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## CONTRIBUTION GUIDELINES

MIND accepts contributions from all interested parties, with preference for publication going to members of Central Indiana Mensa. **Contributions should reach the Editor's postal box 50946, Indianapolis, IN 46250 at least twenty days before the 1st day of the publication month. Materials must take the form of legible written copy and/or camera-ready art. Please do not submit items on magnetic media.** Contributions may undergo editing for length and to eliminate patently offensive remarks, including personal attacks. The Editor must know the name of any contributor before publication; however, he will withhold that name from the public on request.

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## MY PIECE OF MIND

GEORGE DUNN

### Out of Repair

I thought it would make a nice change of pace if I used this column to harumph about something besides late contributions, so sit back and relax in the confidence that you won't be mentioned - at least not in your Mensa status.

The nasal bridge, that little piece of plastic that keeps the metal edges of the frames from resting on the bare schnoz, popped out of my eyeglasses recently and bounced into some oblivious corner. You wouldn't think of that as a major calamity unless you've had some experience with the modern American Repair Quotient (RQ).

Of course, we're a generation and more into Planned Obsolescence, that industrial breakthrough that replaced "Fixed good as new" with "Throw it away and buy more!" so I didn't think I was just going to drop my specs off at the local fixit shop. However, I was semi-aghast to find the institutions which presumably know the eyeglass trade responding as though I'd asked them to adjust my astrolabe.

I checked with two of the "majors," which I'll pseudonym "Dr. Travail" and "Crafty Lens," and got the kind of helpless stares you associate with severe combat injuries. One woman in a starched white coat actually began shaking her head before I completed the introductory sentence, "I've lost the..."

The element I found most distressing was not the refusal per se, but rather its formula. Instead of simply stating "We don't do that here" both clinicals intoned - with considerable gravity - "That's impossible," as though some physical law had been repealed since my original purchase.

Okay, so it doesn't require a Spinoza to read the subtext, "Our business is selling new glasses (at \$200 a pop), not keeping old ones in service," but venal motives aside, I had the impression that both women sincerely thought that frame repair was inaccessible technology.

Like the city schoolchild who answered, "the store" to the question, "where does milk come from?" vendors today seem to be losing touch with the concept that people actually make things. While some high-tech mass production items such as computer chips are effectively nonrepairable, more and more people are applying an inappropriate despondency to the challenge

of fixing anything.

Only the biggest-ticket items continue to enjoy a modicum of maintenance facilities. You can still find auto shops and jewelers and plumbers; the persistent can turn up the occasional TV repairman or watchmaker and cobblers and "alterations" hold on in cubbyhole stores, but that's about it.

Even no-labor-required repair parts leave "shopping associates" flummoxed. I shop at a giant hardware store (we'll call it Shortes). They've got tons of stock but six out of seven times I can't find even an acceptable substitute item, be it stove bolt, furniture caster, sanding pad or drill bit. I know these things exist because I own broken ones, but to the store they're mythical.

How far can this go? Will the day dawn when people will trade in cars to update their on-board computers and public television will feature "craft" programs showing people changing watch batteries and refilling lighters?

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## **LOCSECTION**

**Grace Falvey**

I'm ba-a-a-a-ack!

Who would have believed it? For the second time in this decade, I find myself serving as Local Secretary because the person elected to that post resigned.

My "promotion" was made official at the last meeting of the Executive Committee, on February 21. At that meeting, the ExcCom also elected two members to fill vacancies: Jerry Hunter and Adren Yates (Adren had resigned because of ill health, but he is now ready to resume his ExCom duties.)

We have our work cut out for us. It will take several people just to replace Greg Crawford. In addition to being LocSec, he served as chairman of this year's Regional Gathering, chief donor to the auction, book-sale guru, and general factotum. That was, of course, both the good news and the bad news.

The good news was that Greg accomplished a great deal. But in taking on every job for which there seemed to be no ready volunteer, he set himself a pace that he could not sustain.

Greg said it seemed as if most of our members want to enjoy the benefits of belonging to the group, but they expect somebody else to do the work.

I'm hoping that's not true.

Primarily, I hope it's not true because I want to think better of my fellow Mensans. But there's also the stark fact that Somebody Else doesn't live here anymore and if you ask us ExCom members what we're going to do about a problem, our response will be to ask you what YOU are going to do about it.

One ever-present need is help at the monthly meeting: setting up, cleaning up, and participation in the "catering."

Another very special volunteer is needed from the ranks of those who enjoy the Outdoor Gathering. Only someone who relishes a weekend close to nature can take over the chairmanship and make the event a success. If nobody

cares enough to do this, we may have to drop the OG from the calendar.

As for me, I don't enjoy dining al fresco, so instead of having a new members' picnic this year, I'm going to hold a welcoming reception in my home on Sunday, April 25, from 2 to 4 p.m.

OK, that's my story. What's yours? What would you like to contribute to the success of Central Indiana Mensa? You can tell me about it, or speak to any member of the ExCom. There are big jobs and little ones, in many different areas. Let's see where you fit in the big picture.

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## LETTERS

In Greg Crawford's resignation letter he asks why far fewer of us contribute to MIND than in the past. I would like to offer my answer to that question.

Indianapolis Mensa was my first Mensa group, and since I lived too far away to attend as many events as I wished, I participated by writing for the newsletter. It was incredibly rewarding, and I even won a national Mensa award for my column. People were generous with their praise and often told me how much they enjoyed what I wrote. Writing for MIND gave me the success and confidence I needed to write for non-Mensa publications, sometimes for money. I will always be grateful for that. Eventually I moved and have belonged to two other chapters, but I have always written for my local newsletters.

I moved back to Indiana (still too far from Indianapolis to attend many events) and rejoined the Central Indiana group, looking forward to once again writing for MIND. I am sorry to say that hasn't worked out to my satisfaction.

Several months ago when members complained about the seemingly endless Creation vs. Evolution arguments the editor suggested that if we wanted other topics to appear, we should submit articles on subject in which we were interested. I did, but only about 20% of them have made the cut.

As an ex-editor, I understand and sympathize with the problem of late submissions, so one month when I wrote about a particulate theme I made certain my contribution arrived long before the deadline. Since the article was written specifically for the upcoming themed issue, I enclosed a self-addressed, stamped postcard so I could be certain it arrived on time. My submission was in the editor's hands well before the deadline, but he held it until the following month. (There were several articles in that issue not addressing the theme, so I thought it would have been better had he held one of them over instead.) When my opinion did appear, it was immediately followed by editorial comments that I found to be snide and vaguely insulting.

Since I planned to donate several strange videos to the RG auction, I decided to write reviews of them for MIND. I spent time writing (and carefully re-writing) what I considered to be humorous reviews, and submitted them well before the deadline for the January issue. As any writer does, I happily anticipated the reactions of my readers. Much to my surprise descriptions of my videos did appear, completely re-written in the editor's own words. I can hardly imagine how an editor could overstep the bounds of "editing" more egregiously than to completely re-write a submission, entirely discarding the original.

I think I have answered Greg's question, at least from my personal viewpoint. This is my final submission to the current MIND editor.

Teresa Fisher

*[Besides regret at Teresa's dissatisfaction, I can say only that this is the first notice she gave of it. I hope if any other contributors feel themselves slighted, they'll say so before they feel obliged to quit. -Ed]*

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## David Asher Vaprin

### Honor

"What is honor? A word." - Falstaff. I Henry IV

"My dear sir, we live in a utilitarian age. Honor is a medieval conception." - Sherlock Holmes: His Last Bow

Here are the most common views of honor, spoken as they should be by a buffoon in Shakespeare and a villain in Conan Doyle. We see another aspect as celebrities accept the People's Choice Awards. "Such an honor," they sigh. But surely there is more to the concept than a fraud, an antique, or an ego trip.

The sense of honor began with warfare. It first of all meant skill and courage in battle. That meaning is still important to us, even in the atomic age. The U.S. is the last great military power, and we still expect our soldiers to be skillful and brave. Furthermore, it is the honor of the trained soldier that helps prevent the slaughter of civilians or captives in war. To behave like Bosnian Serb irregulars, massacring, raping and burning, is a disgrace for real soldiers. The honor of the warrior or the guardian (the police) is mostly what stops them from yielding to blood lust. It takes time, discipline, and a professional code of honor to create that esprit de corps, without which we are in constant danger from those we send out to safeguard us.

The Greeks developed this skillful and magnanimous military man into a social ideal that contained most of what we admire and distrust about honor. The honorable man will be great-souled and accomplished, indifferent to riches or mere praise or even to saving his own life at the cost of dishonor. He will also be proud and haughty, despising the attentions of the rabble while demanding the respect of the "honorable elite" as his due. And in a society with slaves or other lower orders, honor reinforces the sense of righteousness in the oppressor. The American slave owning class was obsessed with honor.

The Greek notion of honor became more complex or even contradictory when it clashed with and absorbed the Christian view, which also demanded humility and compassion. Dismayingly, the original Greek ideal has returned to us in a devastating form through the demand for respect. "Dissing" someone can lead to violence and death, though it is difficult to know what disrespect includes, or who is part of the honorable elite that deserves to be respected in turn.

In our post-patriarchal age, women face a dilemma in taking honor seriously. Women now honor their own heroes, and women demand recognition for being equally great in skill and courage - and often superior in humility and compassion. But the old sense of honor held that men could be dishonored by women through an unsanctioned pregnancy or sexual assault. The victim was a source of disrespect. The honorable course for a woman in such a situation was suicide, and for a man it was vengeance on all concerned. Such a code is not likely to be an inspiration.

In the Jewish moral tradition (parent, as it is, of the Christian and Muslim traditions), there is a notion similar to honor but more like reputation. And even though persons of high honor do sin - and this tradition first defined "sin" - it is

forbidden to broadcast or gossip about the sins of other (except criminal acts). In fact, exposing those sins to cause shame or dishonor is denounced as akin to murder. Sins are not public property. They are to be resolved through atonement and compensation (through courts if necessary). It is this ancient wisdom tradition about sin, dishonor, and reputation which lies behind the public's continued approval of President Clinton. He gets "probation," while the public is horrified by the whitened sepulcher that dwells within his prosecutors.

As for celebrities, they are not being honored, they are being celebrated. A celebrity is well known for being well known. Andy Warhol pointed out that it is brief. When our admiration is genuine, it is for the celebrity who is not an egomaniac while it lasts and not a whiner when it fades.

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## BULLETIN BOARD

**Positive Change Network:** Fourth Tuesdays 6:15 - 8:45 at Library Services Center, 2450 N. Meridian. Information: 925-9297.

**SPAN Program:** Earn college credit while still attending High School. 10th, 11th and 12th graders who have SAT of 1010 and complete IUPUI placement test may take 100 and 200 level classwork. Info: (317) 274-2660.

**Women of Vision Network:** 5:30 every Wednesday at Cynergi Bookstore, 6358 Guilford. (Broad Ripple) 841-3912.

**PFLAG** (Parents, Family/Friends of Lesbians and Gays) a group for support and education. Second Sundays, 2:00 p.m. at St. Luke's Methodist Church. 86th Street, near Meridian.

**Friends of Jung:** First Thursdays. Information: 466-9214.

**Holistic Health Care Practitioners:** Monthly meetings at First Congregational Church, 7171 North Pennsylvania. Dorothea Mueller Goold, 581-0535, for info.

### Grace Falvey:

It's get acquainted time:

Sunday, April 25,  
from 2 to 4 p.m.

Location: 8116 Fox Chase  
Drive, Indianapolis,

Where LocSec Grace Falvey lives  
with her husband, Bob Dill.

Directions:

From Fall Creek Road and 82nd Street, proceed North on Fall Creek. The first human habitation you'll see is on the right -- a planned community called Fox Chase. When you enter, there's only one road and only one way to go on it. Start counting driveways immediately; we're the fourth one on the left. Our number is 8116. Parking is not plentiful, so share rides if possible.

**Marie Beltrame:** I miss my friends in Central Indiana Mensa! Even though I am now far away in real distance, won't you keep in touch with me in cyberspace? Either [MarieBeltrame@juno.com](mailto:MarieBeltrame@juno.com) or [Beltrame@fls.infi.net](mailto:Beltrame@fls.infi.net)

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## From the Collective MIND

[extracted and gender-neutralized from "The Curious Mensan" column of the MENSAGENDA, official newsletter of Minnesota Mensa. Bill Conlan, Editor]

*Why do they put pictures of criminals up in the Post Office? What are we supposed to do, write to these people? Why don't they just put their pictures*

on postage stamps so the mail carriers could look for them while they deliver the mail? (Jeff A.)

There are actually two reasons for this. First, federal law prohibits U.S. postage stamps from bearing the likeness of any living person. Even if the criminals of whom you speak are wanted for capital offenses, they must first be caught and executed (or die) before they can be commemorated on stamps. Second, a postmark may alter the appearance of the wanted person, resulting in many false arrests due to mistaken identities. Imagine how dangerous a nation this would become if we had to worry about disgruntled postal patrons.

Several third-world nations have experimented with postage stamps that show their most dangerous criminals - usually the very ones who are running the countries at that time. The results have always been less than satisfactory.

spurious advertisement

## MENSANS! EMBARRASSED BY YOUR IQ? ACT NOW!

Remember those great days when people thought being in the top 2% meant you were a Genius? Have you had it with smart asses claiming to be in Intertel, Mega or ISPE? Are you weary of snotty socialites who used to go big-eyed when you flashed your pin now sneering, "Just Mensa?" Are you suffering low self-esteem because you cant crack the fifth standard deviation? Well, your troubles are over! You can now be an applicant for **TANTALUS!**

**TANTALUS** is *the* most exclusive IQ Society possible. Our standards are very high and completely subjective. Frankly, we don't think you'll make the cut - but, all those swollen cerebrum types in ISPE, Mega, Triple Nine and Four Sigma - *they won't either!* By just *applying* for **TANTALUS** you instantly elevate yourself above those snobs who don't dare put their brains to the real test. And who knows, even though no one has ever made it in, and we don't expect anyone to, *you might be the one!* You won't know unless you try, so don't delay! Send seventy-five dollars, cash or postal money order made out to "boxholder" to POB 50946 and copies of the five or six toughest questions you've ever answered and we'll process your application the next business day. Don't worry if you dont make it; we won't embarrass you by sending you a rejection, so you can go right on telling your friends. "I applied for **TANTALUS!**"

## MINDBENDING HONOR ROLL

[H = Host]	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Dale Amlee						♥
Dave A.			♥	♥	♥	♥
Alison Brown	♥H			♥H	♥H	♥H
Greg Crawford	♥	♥	♥H	♥		
George Dunn	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥	
Grace Falvey						♥
Carol Gould	♥					
Jud Horning	♥	♥		♥	♥	♥
Jerry Hunter		♥	♥	♥	♥	
Jeff Lake					♥	
Larry Marcus					♥	
Treva Marks	♥	♥H	♥	♥	♥	
Jean Miller					♥	♥
Nancy White	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥

# Dom Jervis

## Honor

"Does 'honor' require some adherence to a generally recognized set of standards? Yes, it does. Unfortunately, such standards, like any other words, are vulnerable to interpretation biased toward an individual's self-interest. Is there an answer to this quandary? I believe there is.

Acting with a sense of what is good and proper (one of the World Book Dictionary's definitions of "honor," and probably the one most pertinent to our inquiry) can be grounded in a sound philosophical concept. Immanuel Kant's proposition on ethics states, "Act as though, were everyone to act the same way, society would be improved." This tenet has survived philosophical attack for two hundred years.

Toward more pragmatic ends, doing the following, in my opinion, would make one worthy of honor.

Tell the truth, gently. Consider other's feelings, even if you don't mind others being blunt toward you. Not everyone is blessed with a thick skin.

Refrain from asking others to lie for you. It is grossly unfair to place another human being in that situation. Fight your own battles.

Apologize when you err, and atone if possible. However, if you are wrongly accused, defend yourself, and refuse to give an empty, meaningless apology.

Choose your commitments carefully, but live up to them all. Otherwise, people will remember the time you failed before they remember all of the times you delivered the goods. They will also wonder if you will come through the next time.

Commit to your goal, and to those assisting you toward that goal. Make your good attitude contagious. People do want to do a good job, but they also want to know that their effort will be toward a meaningful end, and will be appreciated. Even if you are the only one who acknowledges gratitude for their efforts, you have done the best you can, and it may be enough.

Don't spread yourself too thin. You *can't* do everything. A few projects performed well are preferable to a larger number of them accomplished in a mediocre manner. You are more likely to be judged on quality, not quantity.

When you lead, do so by example, and with quiet strength. You will get better results if your charges perform tasks because they want to do so.

Manage, but don't micromanage. You won't get people to buy into a cause if you stifle their individual judgment and creativity. Remember that your way is not necessarily the only right way. If you seize a task from your charge, insisting that you can do the job better yourself, the loyalty of that person may be lost forever.

Do your best to accomplish your task, without any expectation of accolades. Unfortunately, the vast majority of good deeds performed are not recognized. An important job done well is its own reward.

Please think about these things, the next time something needs to be done. Take the initiative. Leave your mark. Make our world a better place. Make

yourself an honorable person.

When you do, you will hear my thanks, in spirit.

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## To Keep In MIND

### Upcoming Gatherings and Events

*** 1999 ***	
April 16-18	<b>April Fooling Around V</b> Best Western Travel Plaza, Baltimore, Maryland; rooms \$80; Registration \$60; Registrar David Hubbard, 3820 Autumn Way, #1C, Jessup, MD 20794.;
April 30- May 2	<b>SEMMantics XXI</b> ; Van Dyke Park Suite Hotel, 31800 Van Dyke, Warren, MI 48093; rooms \$69 regular, \$89 tower suites; Registration: \$45 thru 4/23 (St. George's Day), \$50 after; Contact Betsy Y. Mark, Ypsilanti, MI. <a href="mailto:BetsyYMark@aol.com">BetsyYMark@aol.com</a>
July 1-5	<b>Orange County AG</b> ; Hyatt-Regency Long Beach, (800) 233-1234; rooms \$99 - \$119; Registration: \$59 to 5/31; Greg de Hoogh, PO Box 53841, Irvine, CA 92619-3841
July 23-25	<b>Columbus Area Mensa Coup d'etat RG</b> ; Days Inn North, 1212 E. Dublin-Granville Road (Rte 161), Columbus, OH 43229 (614) 885-9696, ext 0; rooms \$35 (Mensa rate); Registration: \$40 thru March 31, \$45 thru may 31, \$50 after; Registrar: Marshall Ankrom, Columbus, OH. <a href="mailto:Mankrom@netwalk.com">Mankrom@netwalk.com</a>
September 3-6	<b>Rivers III</b> ; RG Chair: Bob Heasley, Sewickley, PA; <a href="mailto:bheasley@usaor.net">bheasley@usaor.net</a> Registration \$40 (checks to Western Pennsylvania Mensa)
October 1-3	<b>CAMbake</b> Contact Concetta E. Bartosh, Cleveland, OH; or <a href="#">Dave Michel</a> , or MensaPhone (216) 556-1333.
October 29-31	<b>HalloweeM 24</b> Arlington Park Hilton, 3400 W. Euclid, Arlington Heights, IL 60005-1099 (847) 394-2000; fax (847) 394-2095; rooms \$79 (reserve by 10/08 and mention Mensa); Registration \$45 thru 7/31, \$50 thru 9/15, \$55 thru 10/15; \$60 after; Bill Slankard, Registrar, Arlington Heights, IL. email: <a href="mailto:registrar@chicago.us.mensa.org">registrar@chicago.us.mensa.org</a> . Website: <a href="http://www.chicago.us.mensa.org">www.chicago.us.mensa.org</a>

*** 2000 ***	
July 5-9	<b>Delaware Valley Mensa AG</b> (Philadelphia) (Joint AG with Mensa Canada)

*** 2001 ***	
July 4-8	<b>North Texas Mensa AG</b> (Dallas)

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A \_\_\_\_\_  
S \_\_\_\_\_  
I \_\_\_\_\_

## MADRIGALS OF MONEY

Big bucks are a comfort, I know,  
(Sing heighdy, sing heighdy, sing ho)  
But use charge accounts,  
And you'll find large amounts  
Of spondulix are rather *de trop*.

Another thing strikes me as funny:  
(Sing fa, and sing la, and sing nonny)  
Some people can be  
(My good wife, e.g.)  
Quite rich, though without any money.

The odds sweepstakes offer today  
(Sing hip, sing horray, and sing hey!)  
Are exceedingly thin,  
And you don't have to win  
To be one in a million -- just play.

The drawing takes only a minute  
(Sing zip it, sing snap it, sing pin it)  
But whatever they draw,  
There is one certain law:  
To win it, you've got to be in it.

Buy respect? No, by George, you just can't  
(Sing "A" as in aardvark and ant)  
But a man who has spent  
Enough money can rent  
A pretty darned good sycophant.

\* \* \* \* \*

I've no need for millions, 'tis true,  
(Sing rose, sing rosemary, sing rue)  
But that's speaking of need;  
Whereas limits to greed--  
Well, only the skies will do.

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## Could Jesus Have Been a Mensan?

Spectulative question: Could Jesus of Nazareth have been a Mensan?

Assuming that Mensa or a counterpart high IQ organization existed in the First Century, might Jesus have been candidate material?

Not that He would have joined, of course; our goals, laudable as they seem to us, would have been frivolous in comparison to His mission. But would He have qualified?

Obviously, there were no IQ tests back then, at least not by that name, but there certainly was the recognition that some people were cleverer than others and that this was, by and large, a good thing for them.

Now, for the folks whose faith states that Jesus was God, the question of how smart he was is kind of *infra dig*, since God is omniscient, Jesus obviously would ace any conceivable intelligence test. However, without denying what many Christians accept, it only makes sense to consider the question from the perspective of what we know from reports of the man. Considering what many

Mensans are like, we might examine these reports to see if He would fit the Mensan profile.

Personally, I think the answer is "yes." Consider these several suggestive aspects of Jesus's life:

He was Jewish. Admittedly, this isn't a requirement for Mensa, but it does have a certain statistical correlation.

He was a first-born son. Perhaps he was an only son, James being his cousin in some versions, but certainly He was nobody's kid brother. Again, statistical significance.

He was precocious. When He was twelve, nor yet bar mitzvahed, He was bugging senior Temple staff with smart-ass questions.

He liked to party. Several gospel accounts place Him at wedding receptions, picnics and dinner parties.

He was often in trouble with the traditionalists for not following senseless rules. He didn't stand on ceremony.

He enjoyed puns. Calling Peter a "rock" probably drew smiles all around the apostles, at least the ones who knew Greek.

He made His own wine. Somewhat unconventionally, true, but that's the kind of hobby that appeals to many Mensans.

He took people as He found them. While He did make forceful objections to people's behavior, He didn't judge people on the basis of ethnicity or profession.

He had some self-doubts (Garden of Gethsemene), but He didn't surrender His principles to please authority figures.

He suffered detractors who were constantly trying to "catch" Him in errors.

He was probably unmarried.

Reports of His demise were exaggerated.

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## Herman Hagemier

### Simple Arithmetic

There is a simple method of solving some problems in three variables. This is the method of putting the problem into a hypothetical form. We can illustrate the method by solving for the time needed for a light beam to travel a round-trip distance, moving with the motion of the earth in one direction, and against the motion of the earth in the other direction. This is the problem which you need to solve if you wish to understand the Michelson-Morley experiment.

The following illustrates the hypothetical, no-algebra, approach to the problem. He can give the speed of light the value, 1, and give each lap of the round-trip distance, the value, 1. The test value for the speed of the earth in its orbit should be a very simple figure also, so that the arithmetic will be simple. A percentage answer can be applied to the real figures, or a formula can be verified. We will have no unknowns in the problem and no algebra will be

needed.

The simplest value for the motion of the laboratory would be  $1/2$  the value of the speed of light. We can use  $1/2$  for the speed of the laboratory, 1 for the speed of light and 1 for the distance to the mirror and 1 for the return trip. The laboratory, moving with the earth, will travel  $1/2$  a unit of distance in 1 unit of time.

First, we wish to find out how long it will take a light beam to reach a mirror which is 1 unit away when the light beam leaves its source at the half-silvered mirror. The target mirror is moving away at half the speed of the light beam. For each unit of time the light beam will gain  $1/2$  a unit of distance. In two units of time the light beam will reach the mirror.

Now the light beam is 1 unit of distance from the half-silvered mirror. This is because the mirror and the source move with the laboratory equipment at the same speed. There is 1 unit of distance to cover, but the source is moving to meet the light beam at  $1/2$  the light beam's speed. The light beam will travel  $2/3$  of the distance and the mirror will travel  $1/3$  of the distance. For the light beam, units of distance are equal to units of time, and that time will be  $2/3$  of a unit on the return trip. The total round-trip time for the light beam would be  $2\frac{2}{3}$  units.

You have been told that the light beams, in the Michelson- Morley experiment, returned as if there were no movement of the laboratory relative to the light beams. The waves came back as if there were no movement of the laboratory through space. They came back in 2 units of time, or so it seemed. The laboratory, however, had to be moving with the earth. This could be explained if the laboratory contracted just enough to conceal the extra time needed for the round trip. To calculate the contracted dimension, we can divide 2 by  $2\frac{2}{3}$ . Calculating would show that to be 75 percent.  $6/8 = 3/4$ . The distance to the mirror and back would have been contracted to 75 percent of the path's length in order to explain the light beam's return in 2 units of time.

The light beam would be traveling twice as fast as the mirrors, so it would travel 1.5 units of distance in 1.5 units of time, while the mirrors are traveling  $.75$  units of distance. On the return trip, the light would travel  $2/3$  of the distance and the source would travel  $1/3$  of the distance. Light travels twice as fast as the laboratory.  $2/3$  of  $.75$  would be  $.5$  units of distance and that could be traveled in  $.5$  units of time.  $1.5$  plus  $.5$  would give us 2 for the total time for the round trip.

If the contraction occurred, the time for the round-trip distance would be 2. That shows that the contraction of the laboratory equipment could conceal the fact that the laboratory was moving relative to the movement of the light waves. Einstein abolished the relative speed of light rather than accept the possibility that the contraction was real.

In the preceding problem the contracted length of the laboratory apparatus was  $.75$  of a unit. That can be written as  $(1 - .25)$  because  $.25$  or  $1/4$  would be the amount of the contraction. When this problem has been worked out, using algebra, the answer for the contracted length is  $(1 - V^2/C^2)$ . When the speed of light,  $C$ , is given the value, 1, the speed of the laboratory can be written as  $V/C$ , a fraction of the speed of light. When the speed of the laboratory is given the value,  $1/2$ ,  $V/C$  would equal  $1/2$ .  $1/2$  divided by 1 equals  $1/2$ .  $V^2/C^2$  would be  $1/2$  squared and that would be  $.25$ , or 25 percent. That would be the contraction in the line of motion.  $1 - V^2/C^2$  or  $1 - 1/4$ , would be the contracted length of the laboratory. Formulas can be very useful. We could square any speed of the laboratory and arrive at the amount of contraction that would then

take place in the line of motion.

The contraction in the lateral direction is handled differently but the formula would still be simple. As was explained in the February issue of Mind, we would use the Pythagorean theorem for solving for the length of the hypotenuse of a right triangle. That would read, "The square of the hypotenuse is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides." We learned that in grade school.

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## Random Sample

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### Looking out the Window

February 22, 1999

One of my responsibilities as an airline safety manager is to ride in the cockpit of commercial airliners about once a month. It's also a perk—you can see so much more from up front. As I write this, I am at 33,000 feet above sea level. We will soon begin our descent into Las Vegas.

About a month ago I flew from Las Vegas to Indianapolis at night in a Boeing 727. This is the smallest of the airplane types my company flies, and the flight deck is pretty cramped. The jumpseat, where I ride, is directly behind the Captain's seat, and has only a little legroom. There is just no graceful way to sit in this seat, and believe me; I never wear a skirt. It's not too bad with a normal-size pilot—but our Captain that night was 6'7". That 3½-hour flight was a long one.

I thought that night would be really dark, and that we wouldn't be able to see much. I had forgotten that the moon was nearly full. Moonlit mountains with good snow cover are a beautiful sight. I even spotted a ski resort. You could see where they had made the artificial snow. It looked like a freeform white painting on a dark background.

Today I'm in a Boeing 757, which is much roomier, and more automated. The 757 has a two person crew, as opposed to the three required to fly the 727. This means that when one pilot leaves the cockpit, the other has to put on his or her oxygen mask while the other person is away from the flight deck. There is plenty of room for legs (my size legs, anyway), and the jumpseat is higher. I'm looking over the top of the Captain's head, and the view is spectacular. No wonder pilots love to fly! This is a daytime flight, so we are able to pick out a lot of landmarks. I notice something I've seen before in the cockpit, especially one with more automation. Pilots not only like to look at the scenery (in between flying their airplane, and watching for other airplanes, of course); they seem to find it a challenge to pick out individual cities, sites and sights. Our First Officer notes that he sees Vail, Colorado.

Earlier in the flight, cloud cover was solid from the Illinois-Indianapolis border to Denver. The smooth and flat clouds looked like a snowy landscape, with a distinct horizon. More distinct, in fact, than the real horizon usually appears. The sun was shining back at us, in a way I had never seen before. It looked very much like there was a shiny, glassy lake just below a layer of mist. There was no lake—simply the right conditions for an unusual visual effect. I would much rather look at the clouds from above, they are much prettier. Did you know that if the sun is situated right, you will see circular rainbows? Sometimes they even have a silhouette of the airplane in the center. Neat.

Now we can see some of the mountains. There is less snow now than there was a month ago. The weather must have warmed up quite a bit to melt off that much.

March 5, 1999

Before I wrap this up, I'd like to give you a couple of safety hints. Be aware that you probably won't be very comfortable on an airplane, unless you are one of the very few who can afford first class. Even then, there are no guarantees that the ride will be completely smooth. Bumps and shimmies due to turbulence do happen, especially over the mountains. Usually that is just uncomfortable, but at times it can be frightening and possibly hazardous. The flight or cabin crew will make announcements about seatbelts. I can't emphasize enough the importance of keeping your seatbelt on. I know your intent is to go flying, but you really don't want to be flying around inside the airplane!

I have a couple of personal guidelines that I try to follow when I fly. I ask for a window seat. During turbulence, and sometimes on a smooth flight, things can fall from overhead bins. People in the aisle seats are more likely to be hit on the head with a laptop computer, pool cue, briefcase, or bowling ball than I will be in my window seat. Also, I try to wear natural fabrics, like wool or cotton. Cotton, especially, is more comfortable. I don't wear skirts, no high heels, and definitely no pantyhose. The chances of an accident and a fire on board are very slight. Even so, if there is a fire, this type of clothing is much safer and will reduce chances of injury.

As I write, I hesitate to end this talking about accidents. I am really not trying to scare anyone! This has been said many times before—because it is true—flying is safer than driving, or riding on a train, or riding on a donkey. More people are killed every year falling off donkeys than they are in airplane crashes. There were no passenger fatalities on U.S. air carriers in 1998.

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## CURMUDGEON'S CORNER

You know how that "Let It Out" feature of the Star-News has become so popular they've raised it from a weekly to a daily? Well, of course, MIND can't offer anything more frequently than once a month, but same idea.

These are all my own - just to show how it's done, of course - but hereafter anybody with a brief beef has a forum. Editorial guidelines prevent me from accepting anonymous material, but it all runs with no names, so don't you name names, either.

\* Monthly Meeting snacks are not supposed to be complete smorgasbords; there's no point loudly observing that there's no shaved ham or crab puffs. Would you complain like that if a friend offered you snacks?

\* Likewise, we can't accommodate intensely restricted diets: we've got your standard no-cal drinks and your low-fat chips, but the Hospitality staff are not the stewards on the Love Boat, so if you really need sugarfree, no-caffeine, non-carbonated, all-natural drinks without coloring, try water.

\* Your suggestions on any aspect of the Meeting arrangements are welcome, but don't stand there looking hurt because nobody jumps up to put them into effect the same night.

\* Unless you're working there, stay out of the food preparation area; we're not hiding the "good stuff," but even if we were, would you like a dinner guest to

walk into your kitchen to check out the 'fridge?

\* There's a way to enormously increase your chances of having that special convenience (pickle fork) or tidbit (lox-flavored creamcheese) at the Meeting: offer to bring it on a regular basis (we can reimburse reasonable expenses).

\* Mensa doesn't own the buildings where we hold our Meetings; if the landlord locks some of the doors and indicates we should use others, he probably has a reason, one that the Hospitality staff can't overrule.

\* Thanks to anyone who, having set up an extra chair rather than use one of those already out, put it away before he left.

\* Yes, it's five bucks for four hours of live entertainment. You can't see a flaming movie for that these days. Plus, we feed you.

\* Try to remember that the Calendar Editor only reports the events, she doesn't run them.

\* Organize, help, or stand out of the way. Special thanks to those who select the middle option.

Got the idea? O.K., see you in print next month.

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*Primer for the **June** Topics:*

## "My Pets"

Unless he or she was truly deprived, each of us had, at some time in our lives, preferably in our childhoods, the experience of responsibility for a creature that needed us to survive, at least as long as it was in our keeping.

If we were lucky, this creature was a dog or a cat, or even a horse, perhaps even a succession of them. If economics or parental toleration constrained us, perhaps we kept a turtle or a snake, or fish or even snails.

Those operating "outside the box" may have been putative "owner" to an injured raven, or baby alligator. Some may have adopted quasi-pets such as a particular duck on the mill pond, or a not-too-destructive raccoon. Some may have shared pets, like a schoolyard goat, or firehouse dog.

Such as could afford to indulge in the exotic might have fed a monkey, a mynah, a ferret or a llama; the most impish could have kept tarantulas, iguanas or hedgehogs.

Whatever the creature, there should have been a common saga: we acquired it, we learned something about it, probably we had a few crises over it, and it either died or we had to give it away.

In the best cases, we loved it, first as just a plaything, but eventually as a being in its own right, expressing within its ordained limits its own love, fear, cunning and character.

Those pets are part of us, the way all our life's experiences are, but to those which had lives of their own, there is a special connection. Tell us about it.

## "The Rights of Animals"

The Bible says that God told Man to "subdue the earth" and to take dominion over every living thing on it, but it is no merely Judaeo-Christian conceit that animals are best regarded as the property of humans.

Obviously, we eat some of them; others we adapt to toil for us; a few we experiment upon or harvest for parts. Sometimes our mastership is benevolent: everyone can think of a pampered dog or a rescued whale. Far oftener, though, feeling creatures suffer more pain at human instigation than could ever be explained by the latter's need for food, raiment or labor.

Some people are perversely cruel, torturing animals for "sport"; still more are wantonly cruel, breeding, abandoning, harvesting and abusing animals whose most extreme sufferings weigh as nothing against the slightest profit. A further group are cruel by detachment, easily finding clinical justification for every infliction.

The existence of animal suffering did not escape notice. Eastern faiths developed the principle of *ahimsa*, noninjury; ancient rabbis bethought themselves of *tsa'ar baalei chayim*, the pain of living things. Other cultures produced the RSPCA, the Humane Society and PETA.

Others scoff at the very idea that dumb brutes have any rights which humans are bound to respect. Even confirmed atheists find it "logical" to use animals until they're used up.

Where do you stand?

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