

# Excerpts from past issues of MIND

The Newsletter of

## Central Indiana Mensa

### LATER, THE TUSCARORA

George Dunn

Every modern era (which is to say, every era) looks on all its predecessors as either quaintly or wickedly defective in their view of human nature. Most commonly, we imagine our ancestors as wholly ignorant in matters wherein we are fully enlightened.

It comes as something of a surprise to discover "modern" concepts in antique and primitive cultures.

For example, I think it would surprise most readers to learn that during the time of the Salem witch trials, the notion of mental illness was well established and the substantial majority of people accused of witchcraft on the basis of bizarre behavior were acquitted. Salem represented an aberration in its own time.

A similar but later anachronism occurred in George Patton's penchant for slapping wounded soldiers during the Second World War. Disabling injuries to the mind had been recognized since the First, when they were known as "shell shock." Today the same illness goes by the iatro-friendly name of "post-traumatic stress disorder" but even in Patton's day the more masculine-sounding "combat fatigue" covered the same ground.

Keeping step with societal views of mental illness march the attitudes about how one may legitimately treat them. Drugs in particular have experienced a roller coaster ride in public tolerance.

The years following the American Civil War saw thousands of wounded veterans calmly treating their morphine addictions at the local drug stores. The eventual description of this as a problem in the medical literature of 1882 did not prevent the Saver company from introducing heroin in 1899.

The Noble Experiment of the 18th Amendment fell on the alcohol users while the hemp-smokers of the Southwest went largely unmolested. later, the tables would be turned.

In fairness, most repressions arise from belated perceptions of problems in the social fabric, even the ones retrospect characterizes as hysterias. Unfortunately, intolerance manifests rapid onset and slow decay, so every era carries fears disproportionate to the actual conditions.

The present society has a fascination with "individual responsibility" which leads it to perceive a threat in the notion that significant portions of the population need drugs to cope. Depression, ADD, learning disabilities and obsessive compulsive disorder in chief are suspect ailments to the people who don't suffer from them and "don't believe in drugs".

My own attitudes have come almost full about since the days I would have with Jack Webb divided the entire population into "citizens" and "hopheads." The idea that folks with brain circuitry deficits should just "pull themselves together" seems as ludicrous as asking the hearing-impaired to just listen harder.

Although increasingly effective treatments for mental illness appear and prove their utility every year, I suspect a future era will, as we have done with benighted times of yore, look back with condescension on our resistance to helping the struggling mind.

(Above From March 1997 MIND)

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## MILLENNIUM WATCH

Now that we're within one Presidential term of the event, and even have a network TeeVee show named for it, it will be the crowning failure of a procrastinator's life if the thing sneaks up on him/her. The "thing," of course, is the Millennium, arriving on January 1, 2000. Or is it 2001?

Well, technically, it will be 2001, there being no year "0" in the count, but I seriously doubt many will have the discipline to wait the extra year to engage in whatever merriment they have planned. Moreover, 2000 will be the year we get to see all the computers go crazy. Their internal clocks were programmed to calculate with only two year digits; it's anybody's guess as to whether they will think it's 1900, with potentially fascinating effects on interest payments, or the Year Nothing, in which case they will probably just self-destruct, like all those AI creatures Cap'n Kirk discombobulated with paradoxical questions.

Apparently, we need some guidance here, and what better source from which to get it than Mensa newsletters? Considering the volume of comments generated in the various newsletters (which is sure to increase), diligent readers will either obtain a) the definitive word on the matter, or B) alternatives sufficient to secure themselves against any possible calumny of millennium-ignorance.

Sequentially considered, MIND's own Editor pointed out that inasmuch as the year count purportedly begins with the birth of Christ, and inasmuch as modern scholars now believe that the calculations of Dionysus Exiguus erred by four years (i.e., Christ was born in 4 B.C.), it's really the year 2001 now and we've all missed the Party!

However, Rich Kapnick of The Oracle offers all so depressed an opportunity to beat the mundanes to a Millennium celebration by years! Rich uncovered a bit of chronology, which, interestingly, would have been common knowledge only as long ago as the last Century. In the mid-17th Century, Bishop James Ussher discovered the date of the Creation by the straight forward if laborious method of adding up all the "begats" in Holy Writ. He found it to be 4004 B.C. Somewhat thereafter, Dr. John Lightfoot, vice-chancellor of Cambridge, refined the exact moment to 9:00 am, October 23. Well, guess what: October 23, 1997 will be exactly 6,000 years since the Creation (remember there's still no "A.D. 0"). The Seventh Millennium will start this year, on a Thursday.

But, if you miss them all, take heart: Herb Barry, writing for Phoenix, points out that a "millennium," or indeed any multiple of 1,000, is only significant under a decimal system. For example, in hexadecimal, the transition from 1999 to 2000 looks like 7CF--7D0; big deal! Perhaps hexadecimal isn't your cup of tea, but surely you're familiar with binary. Ah, then, 1999 expressed in binary is 11111001111 and 2000 is 11111010000. That's sort of dramatic (five digits), but if you can hang on until 2047 (or 11111111111), the next year will be 100000000000.

Won't that be satisfying?

(Above from February 1997 MIND)

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## ROBERT O. ADAIR

### Tutti-Frutti, Indeed!

Carl Sagan is dead. Now comes the great question: where will he spend eternity? If Sagan is right, he will spend it rotting in the ground like a pile of garbage.

This is very inspiring. It inspired Hitler. It inspired Stalin the greatest mass murderer of all time.

If evolutionary mythologists are right, there is no ultimate retribution for an evil life. The forced dissemination of their myth had had an appalling effect on morality.

The greatest theologian of all time, Jesus Christ, gave us a number of objective standards by which to evaluate the worth of ideas. One of them was: "By their fruits you shall know them." (Matt, 7:20)

Evolutionism has been very fruitful indeed. It laid the foundations of racism. If the evolutionist myth is true, then Hitler, Stalin, the KKK, and the abortionists are right. Thanks to Darwinism, and its atheistic supporters, tyranny and mass murder have reached unparalleled proportions.

Mass murder in the past killed tens of thousands. In this, the bloodiest century of all recorded history, mass murder achieved the scale of hundreds of millions. As Joseph Stalin said: "The death of one man, that is a tragedy, the death of millions that is just statistics." The evolutionist myth represents the decay of true science and in society a reversion to savagery.

Editor's Comments: Though brief by his previous standards, I think Bob has lost none of his ability to inflame, or I don't know my readers. As always, letters and essays in refutation and debate are welcome, but since I have this opportunity (and this extra space), may I suggest to those of you who will offer germane rebuttals that Bob's points, I believe, are these:

- 1) The doctrine of ultimate TANJ (there ain't no justice) inspired Hitler, Stalin and presumably other vile actors of the world stage.
- 2) Rabbi Joshua bar-Joseph, aka Jesus Christ, provided humankind with the ne plus ultra of theological insight.
- 3) Darwinian evolutionary theory, as supported by atheists, is the wellspring of racism.
- 4) Evolutionists, abortionists, and certain named architects of terrorism have common cause and a common philosophical heritage.

You may, of course, address other issues, but I ask you to steer clear of the path of personal invective. If anyone thinks I let Dr. Bob get away with that in his remarks on the late Dr. Sagan, I answer

- 1) Carl Sagan was a public figure;
- 2) the fate to which Dr. Adair assigns him is, though expressed with deliberate inelegance, the same that the Cosmos guy picked out for himself: the atoms of his "star-stuff" to recycling and his consciousness to oblivion.

I might add, though it's probably not necessary to do so, that one need not oppose all of Dr. Bob's views in order to oppose any of them.

(Above from February 1997 MIND)

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## SHIRLEY WASHBURNE

### Entropy/Apathy/Atrophy

The weirdest things are happening to me. I think I have always had a reasonably good relationship with my body; at least for the most part it has done what I asked of it without complaining too much.

Now, however, it's in a peculiar state of rebellion, disarray and utterly unreasonable behavior. For example, my feet are farther and farther away; tying shoelaces is really all the effort I am up to early in the morning, so I find myself looking for shoes that just slip on. This does not, unfortunately, do

away with the necessity of socks, for at least part of the year. The curious thing is that my right foot is where is always was and is still moderately accessible for shoe tying and toenail-clipping, but my left foot might as well be in Central America, especially in the morning. And this is in spite of the fact that my legs still appear to be approximately the same length!

A friend supplied me with the following bit of doggerel:

*"The pounds I shed come back in haste To join their friends around my waist. "*

It seems that this was always true, even in the salad days when I could shed five pounds a week by a moderate adjustment to my diet. So if those were "salad," what days are we in now? post-dessert? Or more accurately, post-appetizer, post-baked potato with sour cream, post-prime rib AND post-dessert. (Some days are simply post-chimi or post-Big Mac.) Where there once resided an identifiable waistline there is a firm, rotund torso that is unresponsive to any measures I have the energy to take. This, as you may have guessed, does not include any meaningful alterations to my comfortable lifestyle in the areas of diet or exercise.

There was a little documentary about liposuction on TV the other night. A young woman who was planning to have her shape altered was asked, "...but you're a young, active woman. Why not just diet and exercise?" To which she replied, "I don't want to. I've been there, done that and I don't want to do it again. I'm doing it THIS way THIS time." Hurray for her!

Meanwhile, lacking the financial resources for non-insured cosmetic procedures, I am faced with the same old (he-hum) choices, none of them attractive. I don't feel like doing any of those things. I don't feel like making a decision, either. I think I'll go look in the fridge for a lo-cal dessert. Or not. Is it spring

(Above from May 1997 MIND)

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## **Give Them A Piece of Your MIND**

(Form letters to serve your inspiration when the mundanes have gotten to you. This month, something for the corporate minds who consider using real people to answer their telephones coddling the public.

Dear Sir/Madam:

I write to you on the matter of telephone etiquette. In this "Information Age" of electronic services unimagined by our parents, the employment of VoiceMail, or, as I like to call it, FoneRobot, seems an ideal vehicle for processing human callers whose time is, by definition, not as valuable as yours.

Routinely requiring a caller to listen - at his expense - to a menu of issues that do not concern him seems from your end to be an extremely efficient way to save the bother of asking, "How may I help you?" and using your wet ware to direct him to the proper authority.

You should know of a developing consensus among the population on the other end of your so efficient robotic communications: 1) Any automatic message which does not, within the first quarter-minute, give the caller the option of selecting a human partner, or at the very least letting him know that no human will be available on that line is guilty of rudeness; 2) Any arrangement which exacerbates that rudeness by having the victim buy the time to hear it (i.e., is not on a toll-free number) is guilty of profligacy.

From a strictly pragmatic standpoint, you should remember that your telephone answering technique is usually the first interactive contact prospective supplicants, members and supporters have with your organization. It undermines all the sympathetic images of your literature to have your callers realize that 1) you don't care to listen to them, and 2) they've just lost money trying to be heard.

VoiceMail salesmen, and corporate types who've been sold, like to tell you that the "little people" understand how extremely busy you are doing good for them and theirs and that they don't mind in the slightest the minor inconveniences imposed by the new technology.

We do

Sincerely,

(VoiceMail is a registered trademark)

(Above from May 1997 MIND)