

Excerpts from the May 2000 MIND

The Newsletter of

[Central Indiana Mensa](#)

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This is Volume 35, Issue Number 5, May 2000

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MY PIECE OF MIND

GEORGE DUNN

Gandalf and the Nine-Spined Stickleback

I write this column on Good Friday, which is anything but "good" as far as the local weather is concerned, with a (predicted) one-day reprise of winter. A glance at last month's calendar will reveal how compressed is becoming the time between the last elements of the MIND and the MINDBending party.

The sticklebacks are a group of small fishes of the family Gasterosteidae, the species distinguished mainly by having various numbers of dorsal spines, which have been studied for over a century largely on account of their unique mating behaviors. Gandalf is, of course, the wizard in The Hobbit and Lord of the Rings, and I mention him here as a reminder of the quote, "Meddle not in the affairs of wizards, for they are subtle and quick to anger."

Male sticklebacks, it seems, are also quick to anger, at least when they're in breeding mode and they see red. Literally. When "in season," the normally drab stickleback develops a big red splotch on his ventral (belly) surface and in this condition he relentlessly attacks anything red (including red cars passing the aquarium window) on the off-chance that it might be another male stickleback. This kind of simple stimulus-response is understandable in a creature with a brain the size of a snow pea, but it can depress us to reflect on all the instances of human behavior that occur due to equally nonspecific triggers.

This last week, in fact, just the last two days of it, has become rather packed with anniversaries of aggressive events, from the siege of Waco through the bombing of the Oklahoma City federal building and the shootings at Columbine. By sensitive procrastination, Janet Reno dodged adding the Abduction of Elian Gonzales Riots to the mix. As it is, we've effectively smothered the remembrance of April 19 as Lexington - Concord Day, which provided the former title-holder to the "Shot Heard 'Round the World."

Critics delight in castigating the US for its citizens' ready access to thunder sticks and fulminating compounds, but I wonder if the problem isn't more in the cortex than the trigger finger. Technology, after all, is not going to go away and even if we land-filled every musket and pocket pistol in private hands, the future would bring forth some new and more horrible weapon.

This does not mean that Beaver Cleaver needs an Uzi, but a responsible gun owner is less of a threat than a bloke with a beer bottle and a stickleback's reflexes.

Mensa might have a contribution to make here if the Better Brain Theory has anything going for it. Sadly, our internecine squabbles don't exactly illustrate our collective wisdom, but at least we don't shoot each other.

Wizards, I imagine (I don't actually know any), may be prone to exasperation in their dealings with people who can't quite keep up with them intellectually, but the best of them (I hope) remember that what the mundanes pick up on is not how profound they are so much as how touchy they can get.

April's got a lot to live down, but it's also got Passover and Easter and Beitane, and R's never too late to make a new start.

RVC.Comm by Will Steinke

Last weekend Deb and I went down to Champaign/Urbana Illinois to the Region 4 Leadership Development Workshop (LDW). Heart of Illinois and our Assistance Regional Vice Chair Joanna Soper did a terrific job hosting this event. This LDW had the feel of a mini-RG (Regional Gathering) because Paul Soper, John Massura and Mary Jo Havens did a fantastic job of preparing and presenting the food and making sure there was plenty of food for thought. Besides eating, we did a lot of thinking and listening: Joanna put together a diverse group of thought-provoking speakers.

We had 30 participants of which 15 also acted as presenters. Joanna was also able to get Debbie Stefert, a psychologist, as a keynote speaker. Debbie discussed the Psychological Barriers to Success: Procrastination, Negativity, Perfectionism. Also, she had us work on a case study in Conflict Resolubon/Problem Members/Crisis Management.

This weekend was a challenging and informative event. Thanks, Joanna and Paul Soper, for your time and effort in making this a superb experience.

The previous weekend Deb and I went to Norfolk, Virginia. I went to the AMC meeting and Deborah went to Williamsburg. She had beautiful weather and didn't find anything to buy until she hit the giftshop at the hotel.

Dave Gunderiach (Local Secretary) and Tidewater Mensa arranged to have local members pick us up at the airport and take us to the hotel. Our hosts were nice enough to make a side trip to a local K-Mart because United Airlines decided I didn't need my luggage. I booked a non-stop flight and United decided to send my luggage to Reagan National -- I wonder if that entitles me to double mileage. United finally got the luggage to me by 5 pm Saturday.

Other than that, it was a good and productive weekend. Deb went to Williamsburg Saturday with Liz Remine and Stormie Kuliman. They shopped, went sightseeing and ate at the Trellis; I was later told the food was to die for.

Oh, the meeting, it was good too. The budget passed. One additional item was

added. A five-person committee consisting of the Treasurers, First and Second Vice Chairs and the two Past Chairs will administer a \$5,000 fund to help financially-strapped local groups. The Local Groups bootstrap Fund Committee will consider local group funding requests submitted through their respective Regional Vice Chairs (RVCs).

The Boundaries Committee report was presented and the agenda item to increase the number of RVCs from nine to ten was considered. It was "defeated" 8-8-2 and the vote split between the RVCs and the remainder of the AMC. Seven RVCs voted for, Ike Kullman abstained (his region was to be split), Stone did not attend, Dr. Michael Jacobson also voted for and Marie Mayer abstained.

There were several changes in region makeup: Evansville will join our region from Region 3, Rochester will move from Region 1 to 3 and Utah will move from Region 8 to 9.

All in all, it was a pleasant and productive weekend.

News from National: the final numbers are in for end of March 2000, and we ended with 47,367 members, a 5.7% increase over last year. There were 4,120 new members and 3,012 members who rejoined after a lapse of more than a year. Also, as of 3/3/00, 72% of our members have renewed.

Thank you to all for renewing and to another great year.

Until next time, have fun and be safe.

Will

Mary Lee Kemper

Pagan Churches

As a Wiccan, I am quite happy the US Army has recognized our Way. The chapter on Wicca in the manual for Army chaplains is well researched. They rightfully speak against the myth that we are Satan worshippers. Quite correctly, the manual is full of the words "often" and "generally." That is because there is no set way for Wiccans to worship. There is no "from on high" set ritual to perform day in and day out.

The idea of accepting Wicca will spread to Society as did the acceptance of certain immigrants and their religions in the last three centuries on American soil. Just as people are dropping their prejudices against same-sex unions, so someday will they allow themselves to be educated and thus lose their fear of pagans and Wiccans. Truly, I'm not sure which Society would consider the greater threat :-)

Official church buildings? Yes, someday there will [be] more. Already there are many established campsites where we can meet. Wiccans prefer to hold ritual outside but snow is cold and summer in the South is still hot and like anyone else, we enjoy our creature comforts. So, sure, we use buildings, generally a coven member's home. The problem with a "church," though, is that there may be a tendency to institutionalize. Institutions generally create bureaucracy and a bureaucracy creates lists. Because of an historical fear of being "outed," many Wiccans will not join a group where they can be easily identified as a member by the greater Society.

Out Of the Broom Closet

Though I am "out of the broom closet" at work, most of my Wiccan friends are not, for fear of reprisal by an ignorant workforce. So for the next hundred years or so, there will be few Wiccan "churches."

Now those who are not afraid of Society's ignorance may well attempt to mainstream their "congregations" by sponsoring youth activities, having a booth at the county fair or answering the phones for the local PBS station pledge-a-thon. As far as ecumenism, there are already Wiccans who have clergy credentials in city wide pastoral groups.

Networking

For a solitary witch, or one who moves to a new area, it would be beneficial to have a "church" where one could find others of like mind. If you search the Internet, you will find many, many pages where groups are listed geographically. American Mensa has a SIG for pagans so that they can network -- Pagan Occult Wicca (POW) SIG.

In order for a little change to happen, a lot of change has to be attempted. The more pagans and Wiccans mainstream, the sooner we will be accepted in Society.

[POW SIG quarterly newsletter, \$10 from Rosemary Kooiman, Box 5269, Laurel, MD 20726-0000. Include Mansa membership number. - Ed]

A Quick Primer on Paganism

Note: There is no one authoritative description of paganism, so this is certainly not that. Consider this an elementary outline for the Mensan who has read no other sources of information. - Ed

The WORD "pagan" comes from the Latin "paganus," and it means, essentially, "hick," "yokel" or "uncultured person." When Rome became the seat of Western Christianity, that religion began to take on a certain urban sophistication, which included a degree of disdain for the practices of country folk. It is thus the equivalent of "heathen," or "person of the heath," or backwoods. Through usage, "pagan" came to be associated with libertine activities, hence the immediately premodern use of the word to sell pulp fiction and "B" movies. It is used today as an umbrella term for a group of Earth-focused religions which often use the names of polytheistic gods and goddesses in their worship.

While any polytheistic, dynamistic or animistic faith can be called "paganism," the principle "denominations" in the US and UK are Wicca, Celtic Paganism/Druidism and Asatru or Odinism. Syncretistic groups incorporate the deities of ancient Greece, Rome, Egypt and the Fertile Crescent.

WICCA, which is the source of our word "witch," (Wicca is from Old English and may have been pronounced either "Wick-uh" or "Wit-Cha" originally referred to a person and its root is "wit," i.e., intelligence. Wicces were "wisewomen," mainly those past their child-bearing years who served their communities as midwives, herbalists and counselors. Insofar as they have an overarching doctrine, the various sects of Wicca concern themselves with the cyclical natural changes of the year and the male-female duality. Where named, the creative principle is usually termed the Goddess. Practitioners of Wicca, male or female, generally prefer to be called Wiccans, although "witch"

is sometimes acceptable for either gender. Wiccans do not use the term "warlock" for a male witch, possibly in aversion to its sinister sound. (Actually, the term has nothing to do with war but comes from Old Norse through Norn or Norse-Gaelic and originally meant "warder" or "guardian.")

DRUIDISM, based on the religions of the Celtic peoples (Druids were the highest of three classes of priests) resembles Wicca in its natural duality and cyclical philosophy and differs from it mainly in having a more highly codified literary and oral tradition.

ASATRU, a newly-coined word from roots meaning "Gods" and "Faithfulness," uses the pantheon of the North Germanic peoples as the focus of its ceremonies. It tends to be less agrarian in tone than Wicca or Druidism and deals more heavily with Fate and adapting oneself to chaotic energies. Runes are associated with Odinism.

All groups practice Magic (or Magick), which is not prestidigitation, but symbolic harmony with natural forces.

Dear Mom and Dad...

HAPPY 40TH ANNIVERSARY!!

What a marvelous thing, especially in this day and age. I guess this is an opportune moment to thank both of you for having such remarkably good taste. I guess you knew it from the beginning, but time has proved you out. It couldn't have always been this easy (nothing good ever is), but you couldn't prove it by me. Whether you had one kid or four, I was always so sure that the two of you had it all under control that I thought every family must just automatically run smoothly at all times and forever.

Of course, now that I'm older, and just a wee bit wiser, I realize that isn't even close to the truth. Just maintaining a one-on-one relationship requires constant effort, care, compromise, and, of course, lots and lots of love. When you factor in little, loud, fast and demanding critters with no jobs, all the resources get stretched a little thinner. So you make the money go further and you get by on less sleep. You don't buy yourself all the nifty gifties you might want, you go camping with the young `uns instead of staying in a nice hotel, and--SHAZAM--your children grow up believing that time, love and shared fun are more important than things. Amazing.

I like to tell people that I'm the only person I know (siblings excepted) who didn't grow up in a dysfunctional family. My parents (I only have *two*!) are still married--to each other. I only lived in *one* house ever--even our phone number and license plates never changed (talk about stability...). No alcoholics. No child abuse. No none of that stuff. Are we weird or what? I even love all my brothers, to this very day. And we're friends, no less.

Oh sure, we had fights, big and small. We got into snits and carried grudges. But I always told people "I can bitch about my family, `cause they're *my* family. But *you* bad-mouth any of `em and I'll slug you!" Because we KNEW we were loved, and we knew we were family.

Every good thing I am or have today, I owe to you two. I'm smart because you let me know it was a good thing to be intelligent, curious and to have a sense of wonder. While other kids were being baby-sat by the television, or reading Nancy Drew, I was reading encyclopedias, Addams cartoon anthologies, science fact and fiction, and nearly anything else I could get my hands on. I still do. And you didn't *tell* us to read. *You* read--constantly. Christmas and

birthday gifts usually included books--for Dad, for Mom, for us. On any given evening I remember that Mom or Dad would as likely be reading in front of the TV as watching it. You read to us, too, and we read back to you. Then, as now, one of my greatest pleasures was to come up with just the right book as a gift for one of you, or to be able to loan one, saying. "You're going to *love* this one!" I would (and still do, of course) crawl through Kroch's or Crown Books, on the hunt, looking for real-life adventure books for Dad, or the latest by one of Mom's favorite writers.

Oh, I could go on for hours--from reading grew my love of language, my curiosity about different countries, religions and customs, my knowledge of animals and plants I would never actually see. You gave me the key to this world, the world of the mind, and even parallel universes, the past and the future.

You taught me, too, that it was not only O.K. to be yourself, to be true to your inner voice, it was essential! If other people didn't like you because you were different, or smart, it was their problem, not yours. Your *real* friends, you told me, will stick with you regardless. How very right you were--as *always*, I'm finding out as I get older. (Oh, Dad ... I *still* rag people who say "irregardless.")

And, although I'm sure it gave you sleepless nights and some early gray hairs, you let me make my own mistakes, let me figure out it was wrong and why, and loved me any way. No need for details, but a lot of parents would have booted me out on several different occasions. But--you're not lots of parents. You're Ted and Mary Jane Tala--*my* parents. thank you very much--and you loved me even when it hurt to do it. I know I can't ever thank you enough--but I'm trying, I'm trying.

It's because of you that I can't imagine a houseplant not thriving in my care. That I talk to sparrows on my way to the health club. That I dance country, Scottish, salsa, ball-room and a kick-ass polka, too, thank you. That I ride motorcycles. That I belong to Mensa (thanks for that idea all those years ago, Dad.) That I finally realize I really *don't* need all that makeup (you were right, Mom). That in the worst of times, I still believe people are mostly good, life is mostly good, and this, too, shalt pass. That I know St. Jude has an "excellent track record" (I now know first-hand). And that, in the best of times, when the universe and I call truce, and things are humming along smoothly, I sometimes sit with a silly grin on my face, ecstatically happy simply to be who I am, what I am, with no desire to change places with any other person, living or dead, sure that I must have the finest of all possible places in this marvelous slice of creation.

Thanks to you, I know that there is no dearth of marvels in this life, that miracles happens, and that there are endless wonders for me yet to discover. I think I need the T-shirt that says:

"I don't need to be born again.
My parents got it right the first time."

Like a little kid, I wish you could be there to see me when I Scottish dance, do stand-up comedy, give a Mensa presentation. I feel I've only just really begun blooming in the last two years, but I want you to know it's just as good late as early. If life begins at 40, I don't think I'm gonna be able to take the excitement. But I'll surely give it a go.

You know, I tell people, with no small pride and pleasure, that we always say, "I love you," when we say good-bye on the phone. I tell them it's because we're farther apart now (geographically), and God forbid anything should happen to any of us, and the last thing we'd heard from each other shouldn't

be I love you." Not that we don't know it anyway, but it still needs saying.

So it is with this letter. It's been in my head for months, and a friend. said, "Do it now. Don't wait." So here it is. It's certainly not everything--I don't believe there are enough words in the history of the language. But it's the heart of it, and that's what this letter is all about--my heart. So, for the two incredible people who not only made me, but made me *ME*, here's all my thanks, and all my love. A fortieth anniversary truly could not happen to two more wonderful people.

Best of everything and more, from your experimental model,

Mary Jane

P.S. I love you

[Verbatim text of a letter MJ sent to her parents in 1992. Mr. and Mrs. Thaddeus Tala will shortly be celebrating their forty-eighth anniversary. - Ed]

Fiction by Dom Jervis

[Editor's caution: This story contains graphic violence]

Requiem in Waiting

It had all started with such promise, with a loving family, a good education and the world at my feet. Then, blown-off opportunities, living only for the moment and an arrogant belief that I had plenty of time left to "make it," made my day of reckoning seem cruel, but somehow just. A time bomb ticking inside me since birth had reared its ugly head. The doctors gave me a year to live. That was fifteen months ago, but that was little comfort. My strength was fading, I tired easily, and the searing pain was ubiquitous. None of that mattered. The only thing that did was that I had to seize this last chance to make something meaningful out of my wasted life, die trying, or resign myself to the fact that it would never matter that I'd ever lived.

So here I was, in the pitch-black bedroom of a sleeping child, my moribund body coiled in a corner. This was no dream. I had asked for this, for I had seen the future, and it was just not meant to be understood. I just knew that the most important moment of my life was right now.

It was midnight, but I wasn't sleepy. I couldn't be. Inside boiled the rage of all humans ever held powerless to thwart a pending heinous injustice. They were with me in spirit, suppressing the fleeting doubts I could not squelch by myself, imploring me to stop this atrocity. I was here to stare down death's hideous face, and I vowed not to blink.

My mind wandered to what I'd seen. The indescribable heartache, the disgusting feeding frenzy, the politically-decreed non-search for the truth. It had to be stopped. So much would stem from the single heinous act of the only person on Earth whose life benefited mankind less than mine. It seemed so ironic. I had wanted to leave behind at least one book. Instead, my mark would be an act swaddled in anonymity.

I was snapped back to the moment by the creaking door. In crept a stealthy figure, young, male, muscular. I was surprised. I had expected an old, clumsy,

ponderous blob of human suet, one who rigged his avocation toward being around children, helpless little victims for his gut-wrenching prurient fantasies. This man was in much better shape than me. So what? I know his intentions, and the mere thought of them made me choke down my own bile. It just meant I would get only one chance. He crept in, closer to us, closer...closer...Now!

The blow to his solar plexus took his breath, pre-empting a scream. It was all the time I needed to stuff the fetid rag into his agape mouth, and clasp his throat as if to make his eyeballs spring from his demonic head. The kick to his groin doubled him over, then the other knee broke his jaw. He crumbled to the floor in a heap, moments from his final judgment.

This wretched, quivering mass, unable to breathe, his progeny on fire, with no idea what had happened. left me only one more questions, "How to cancel his check?" I quickly glanced upward, my fingers still attempting to meet around the throat which would have bragged about this vile act. She was asleep, hadn't even stirred. Visualizing her beautiful face, nearly removed from the world forever by the sorry pile of protoplasm now at my mercy, make my choice dear. It had to be the most excruciating method I could muster with just my hands. I twisted and pulled his hair back until my arm burned. Then, aiming for two inches beneath the surface, I drove my fist into his exposed throat. His larynx crumbled under my knuckles.

This would be fitting, for his to feel his final, agonizing moments as though he were breathing through a cocktail straw, while his convulsions caused the shattered bone and cartilage where his throat used to be to shred his flesh like glass shards. He would, in all likelihood, drown in his own blood.

Tying him was easy. He had other concerns. Lashing his nefarious hands to his ankles, via one an one-half revolutions around his neck, ensured that the more he struggled, the more he would choke himself to death. He wasn't going anywhere, except to his appointment in the underworld.

He deserved nothing less. For reasons only he will ever know, he would have stolen the beauty of this young woman from the world. She would be safe now. His mutilated corpse would serve as a lasting testimonial of the sanguinary zeal of her guardian angel. The fact that it was a one-time event would be the joke on them.

She would be upset in the morning, this strange, hog-tied heap in her bedroom. No doubt his death-mask would be grotesque. But, she would recover, survive, even thrive, never knowing how close she was to becoming a tragic statistic. She would never know her knight, but this was irrelevant. She would live this day, and many more, and that was all that counted.

The course had been changed. There would be no headlines, no trite conversations about what a shame it was, by people who didn't really care, who just took gleeful solace in the fact that It wasn't them. There would be no infamy for her sleepy little town. It could go on with its life of quiet desperation, as thousands of other cities do in anonymity every day. Best of all, there would be no funeral for a little girl whose life would have been snuffed out solely for being a diamond in a world of slag.

I gazed upon the sweet face of this angel whose ascension to heaven would be delayed, hopefully by several decades, all because someone who had never benefited his world was given one last chance. I felt myself start to fade out, as I had materialized only minutes before. I was going back to where my own demise was probably just a few days away. but, I never felt more alive. If these were to be my last drams of strength, they could not have been better

spent. I managed to hoarsely whisper to her before I left:

"Have a wonderful life, Jon-Benet."

To Keep In MIND

Upcoming Gatherings and Events

*** 2000 ***	
May 5-7	SEMMantics 22 , Ann Arbor MI. Registrar: Betsy Y. Mark . Registration \$50 to 4/28; \$55 after; hotel: Clarion Hotel, Atrium and Conference Center, 2900 Jackson Rd, Ann Arbor, MI 48103 (734)665-4444, \$65.
May 5-7	Year 2000 Mensa Mind Games Atlanta, GA; Summer Suites Hotel, 1899 Sullivan Rd, College Park, GA (770) 994-2997, \$75; Registration \$55 by 4/29; Registrar: Mary Dwyer Wolfe, PO Box 1371, Stone Mountain GA 30086, email: Y2KMGA@us.mensa.org
June 9-11	DAMNations Lucky 13 , Dayton, OH; Howard Johnson Lodge, 7575 Poe Ave, Dayton OH, 45414 (937) 454-0550; rooms \$45; RG Registration \$60 to 5/31, \$69 walk-in; contact Nita Fields, Needtoread@aol.com .
June 30-July 2	Canadian AG Torono, Ontario; dharris@eco-on.net
July 5-9	Philly Phrolics Delaware Valley Mensa AG (Philadelphia) (Joint AG with Mensa Canada) http://www.libertynet.org/dvmensa/ag2k/ . Register with American Mensa Ltd., 1229 Corporate Dr. W., Arlington TX, 76006-6103.
July 28-30	Mensalympics Down Under , Columbus, OH, Days Inn, 1212 E. Dublin-Granville Rd, Columbus, OH 43229; (614) 885-9696; rooms \$39; RG registration: \$50 to 5/31. \$55 after; Steve Herrick, Steve_Herrick@compuserve.com .

*** 2001 ***	
July 4-8	North Texas Mensa AG (Dallas)

*** 2002 ***	
July 3-7	Phoenix AG

B _____
A _____
S _____
I _____
L _____

by Basil Wentworth

Her skirt was so short, if you please,
That it seemed to be miles from her knees.

When I asked where she dared
To appear thusly bared,
She replied, "I just wear it to tease."

Her eyebrows arched high in surprise
At my question: "Do you realize
How much flesh you display?
Do you like it that way?"
And she said, "It's a matter of thighs."

I admit, though, the sight is a gift
That gives my morale a great lift,
And although it takes nerves,
If a woman has curves,
I think that I'd give her short shift.

But while the discussion is hot,
One question I ponder a lot:
Is how they can dare
(With one garment they wear)
Call them slacks, which so often they're not.

And now I've come many a mile
(With my eyes open wide all the while)
I can truly declare
That the best thing to wear
Is a gracious and heart-warming smile.

* * * * *

So I say to the fair ladies who
Have delighted me all my life through
Though I've watched you a-plenty,
Still (deo volente)
I'll always have eyes for you.

Poetry by Janette Greene Dollar

PEOPLE DON'T UNDERSTAND

At birth we are so empty of the distractions in this world,
Distractions created in ignorance of what we are to do,
A baby is an untarnished mind and spirit.
How do these get to be so muddled?
Because people don't understand.

They don't understand why the baby cries, why anyone cries.
They don't understand why people get angry, why others don't.
Why we must work for our lives.

People don't understand
Why they don't understand each other,
Nor why they persist in ignorance
Without even any idea
of their motivations.

Funny, if not for so tragic
How cluttered minds are robbed of memories,

Of what truly makes them happy.

If only memories could float
In the murky waters of tarnish and grime
People could teach those minds and spirits
Brought forth each day
What makes them happy;
What we are to do.

Teach confidence in being here
And direction for our lives,
Leaving the silt to settle below
To swim in the clear, clean waters,
Forgetting what makes them murky and sad.

NAMELESS

Hush, be subtle
and follow me.
Slip through this place and see
this whole new side you've never seen.

Remarkable, you shall never be the same
it you acknowledge it wasn't a dream.

A Wiccan Calendar

Wicca is tied to the Earth and its rhythms, specifically to the rhythms of the North Temperate Zones, where we have four seasons. The Wiccan year is marked off with eight approximately equally spaced celebrations of which the lesser four are the two solstices and two equinoxes, sometimes called Yule, Litha, Ostara, and Mabon, and the greater four are the "Quarter Days," traditionally 1 November, 2 February, 1 May and 2 August. By no coincidence, these are also the days on which rents are due in Britain.

Slightly complicating this orderly arrangement is the matter of lunar reckoning. Traditionalists recognize that dates for the four Great Sabbats (same root as "shabbas," or Sabbath) were calculated on the full moons, so celebration on the nearest moon is arguably correct.

An additional complicating factor may be the practical matter that since the normal workweek does not make allowances for Wiccan holidays, celebrants may find that practical logistics move either a lunar or a solar date event a few days to a weekend.

Whatever the method, the spirit of the occasions is roughly as follows:

1 November: *Samhain* (pronounced sou'en or sowen). This is the beginning of the year and the time to remember the dead. Just as ancient peoples reckoned the end of the day and the start of the next at sundown, not midnight (who could tell when that was?), so November is the "1sundown" of the year. As it begins with the previous sundown, it is contemporaneous with the Christian All Hallows Eve. (The two days following being All Saints and All Souls, the latter known in Mexico as El Dia de los Muertos, or the Day of the Dead.)

2 February: *Imbolc* or *Oimelec* ("Ewe's Milk"). A time of new life. Roman Catholics still observe the Feast of Candlemas on this date, and, of course, it's

widely known civilly as Ground Hog Day.

1 May: *Beltane*. Just as Samhain marks the "night side" of the year, Beltane begins the "day side." On this day and 1 November (the evenings of 30 April and 31 October) the "veil is thin" between the visible world and the Other World, and both (but particularly this date, when the powers of light are ascendant) are traditional times for new ventures.

2 August: *Lughnasadh* ("luna-sah," named for the British Sun-God Lugh) or Lammas. Practically, this was the time when it became apparent whether or not the harvest would be good, and so it celebrates things in their maturity.

Bob Thomas, on various Biblical themes.

The Ark

How many animals did Noah take into the ark?

According to Genesis 7:2-3, Noah was to take "seven pairs of all clean animals, the male and its mate, and a *pair* of the animals that were not clean, the male and its mate, and *seven* pairs of the birds of the air also, male and female, to keep their kind alive on the face of the earth."

That quote could be from either the New Revised Standard or the New Oxford, as those two happen to be exactly the same here. The Living Bible also says seven, 'pairs: the King James just says, seven." The New International says "seven", but a footnote says, "or seven pairs."

(Of course, Genesis 6:19-20 says either "two" or "a pair" of everything.)

[Biological notes. Just one pair is a little risky for survival of the species. With some species seven males with seven females would result in a lot of fighting. Only one male would also be risky: maybe another one could be kept "in the wings"?]

The Eye of a Needle

Moving to the New Testament. Matthew 19:24 mentions a camel going through the "eye of a needle" or a "needle's eye". In walled cities there was a main gate, and maybe other wide gates. These were open during the day only. At night they were closed and securely locked, not to be opened until morning.

But often a traveler would arrive after dark and want to enter for protection from bandits. A provision was made for this. Either in the main gate or alongside it there would be a small door that could be opened. This was called the "eye of the needle" or "needle's eye."

I have seen many illustrations of needles' eyes. One such showing the Jalla Gate and labeled "the eye of the needle" is on p.21 of *The Good News*, published by the American Bible Society.

The difficulty in going through the eye of the needle is because the traveler is often on a camel. The camel can go through, but only after it has been completely unloaded so it won't be too wide or too high, and then only by crouching.

Two Authors of Genesis

In Genesis 1:1- 2:3 plants were created first (1:11-12), the animals (1:20-25), and man was created *last*. In Genesis 2:4b-25, *man was created first* (2:7), then trees (2:9), then animals (2:19), and then woman (2:21-22). [The order of the first of these stages agrees with evolution.]

The first of these stories was written by the author known as J2 during and after the Exodus, about 1450 to 1300 BC. The second was written by P in the 10th or 9th Century BC. (The original language is different in the two stories, the style is different and different names are used for God, among other things.)

There are other differences between the two. There is a discrepancy/contradiction in the second story. 2:6 says a mist watered the Garden; 2:10 says a river watered it.

The Interpreter's Bible, V.1, p.465, says that besides the discrepancies in the order, the differences in style and feeling are so obvious that no enumeration is necessary; the stories cannot have come from the same hand. (That was obvious to me the first time I read them on my own, in eighth grade, before I was influenced by any teachings on them or did any study of them.)

It annoys me when people say they want the Biblical story of Creation taught but do not say which one! I have never heard anyone say which one they want taught.

(I once asked a Jehovah's Witness to come in and sit down. I asked him if he believed that the Bible is literally true and needs no interpretation or explanation. He said yes. I then asked him to take his Bible and look carefully at those two sections. He looked, got up with baffled eyes, and left without comment. I still feel a little guilty.)

Ten Commandments

What are we to post? If we post the "Ten Commandments", should we post the Jewish 10, the Catholic 10, or the Protestant 10? Maybe the Moslem Commandments? The latter certainly ought to be included if one of the others is used. All of the above? (In a discussion among 15 faculty at DePauw University, someone asked if we had ever seen the Commandments posted in a church. No one had)

In Matthew 19:16-19, a man asks what he has to do to have eternal life. Jesus tells him to follow the Commandments. The man asks which ones. Jesus says obey these and gives five of the Old Testament ten and adds one. So as Christians, maybe we should post this list of only Six commandments. ("Murder", "Adultery", "Stealing", "False Witness", "Honoring Parents", and "Love Thy Neighbor") He definitely omits "Keep the Sabbath", and scholars say that that Commandment is superseded by the teaching of Jesus elsewhere.

[Some conceivably related filler from the Ed: I once had a conversation with a friend who had just joined a cult. (The facts of this account are slightly altered to confuse the innocent.) At one point in our discussion, he announced, "I'm easily demolishing all of your arguments!" I thought that a peculiar sort of boast until I realised that this was probably language straight from the cult's manual on refuting the nonbelievers ("When they say this, you will easily demolish their arguments by...") My friend was in essence reciting the stage directions along with the script.

It's easy to pick on the refactoriness of cultists, but we all do exactly the same sort of thing when argument touches our emotional bonds: by definition, those debating points which sustain us in our viewpoints are thoughtful, sound, and occasionally brilliant, while those which chip away at our allegiances are necessarily trivial, ill-informed and mean-spirited.

The hopes of Socrates notwithstanding, logic is ever the servant of emotion and reason is to assure those already persuaded.]

MINDBENDING HONOR ROLL - 2000

[H = Host]	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Dave A.	♥	♥	♥	♥								
Alison Brown				♥H								
Rocio Carrasco			♥									
Greg Crawford		♥	♥									
Janette Greene Dollar	♥											
George Dunn	♥	♥	♥	♥								
Marcele Everest	♥H		♥H									
Grace Falvey			♥									
Marion Harcourt	♥											
Jud Horning	♥	♥	♥	♥								
Jerry Hunter		♥										
Dom Jervis		♥		♥								
Larry Marcus				♥								
Treva Marks		♥H										
Bob Thomas	♥											
Doris Thomas	♥											
Nancy White	♥	♥	♥	♥								
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec

Fiction by Jud Horning

Willy and Leroy

Once upon a time, there was this guy named Willy Norman who was a gang leader. In order to get into his gang, you had to have the name of "Norman." It could be your first name, or your last name or your middle name, but it had to be your name.

There was this other guy named Leroy who had gotten a job being king of France. He was a great scholar and had studied the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and he knew about this island that was sort of a dump. The people on this island were always squabbling and Leroy thought that they could use a developer who come in and bring order to the place, somebody to build castles and bring in the tourist trade.

So Leroy came up to Willy, and he said, "Willy, I just had a great idea! Why don't you and the Normans leave France and go over to Britain? Here's the deal: you say to these jerks, 'Hey, I'm a developer. I can make this place really beautiful. All you need to do is give me all the land that you live on and take out a mortgage on our souls, and my gang and I will come and live in castles

here. It will really improve the neighborhood! Such a deal!"

And Willy said, "Wow, man, that sounds really cool. I think I'll do it." So that's what he did.

And then, when Willy and his gang got to England, he said, "I'm here to offer you all jobs. You can all work for me and be my servants."

And the rowdy Brits said, "Wow! That is really a noble thing to do. How can we pass up such a deal?"

So they all lived happily ever after.

[If you say so, Jud. Frankly, that Willy guy sounds like he was a real Bastard. - Ed]

Rhoda's Quiz: Activities Chair Rhoda Israelov had a surprise for the attendees at the April Monthly Meeting: a conundrum as follows, "A father has three natural-born daughters who were all born on May 3, 1958. They are not triplets. Explain."

The "school solution", per Mind-bending Lateral Thinking Puzzles vol. II is that they were three of a higher set of multiple births (quads, quints, etc.) and five Mensans provided that answer.

[Ye Ed would like to note that there were several other solutions which were rejected as "incorrect", since they were not the official answer. however these explanations, such having the daughters born to more than one mother, while unlikely, are not impossible Perhaps some Mensans are better lateral-Thinkers than the author of the book.]

Shirley Washburne

The Leg and I

Some years ago someone wrote a little novel about trying to make a go of a poultry farm, whimsically entitled The Egg and I. Now, I do not feel the least bit whimsical about the title subject of this piece. It is, however, another saga of Trying to (Make a) Go.

It's all quite recent, actually. And a lucky thing for me! In 1996, I used a small but very thoughtful bequest from a favorite aunt to accompany some friends on a trip to England. The trip was wonderful and almost everything I could have wanted, and The Leg (the left one) behaved admirably throughout all the walking, which was a LOT. Even when I sprained my right ankle on the stairs by London Bridge, it uncomplainingly took on more than its share of the work. I couldn't stop and rest the sprain, now could I? So I just wrapped it up and hobbled on, with, I thought, an appropriated pseudo-Brit "stiff upper lip and all that." Such a walking trip would have been impossible a year later.

The current problem began to manifest the following year, with the mysteriously increasing remoteness of my left foot, making it more and more difficult to tie shoelaces or deal with toenails (never a favorite job even when

within reach).

Until the pain began, I was inclined to attribute this difficulty to my increasingly matronly girth. Then I began to be taken by surprise more and more in more and more situations that had never bothered me before, but which now caused indignant messages to be fired off from Left Hip to Brain: "Whoa there, pardner, you can't be serious about bending that way just now!? You are? I'm so sorry, but I really can't allow it, and if you persist I'll just give you a Good Twinge to prove I mean business... see there? Now DON'T try that again, hear?"

Messages accompanying attempts to sit down in public places rapidly moved from "Tentatively Okay For A While" to "I Don't Think You Want To Try That" to "Huh-uh, Nope, No Way." During this period I ate more than one restaurant meal standing up or perched on a bar stool, and even had a manicure while vertical! I'm sure the manicurist thought I was nuts, but I was getting Big Red Signals from the hip. I know when I'm well off.

When I could no longer sit for more than a few miles while driving my own comfy little car, and could only ride in someone else's car in a reclining position, I started to research THR, or Total Hip Replacement. This is a nice concept. It involves a large (say 12-14 inch) incision on the outside of the hip area, through which the surgeon saws off the top of your femur and hammers a pointy prosthesis into the center of the cavity of the bone. Another piece of the prosthesis, the acetabulum or "cup," is cemented to the pelvic bone to provide a substitute polyethylene socket for the new metal ball joint to rotate in. This explanation, while not technically complete, should suffice to indicate that this is a fairly invasive and predictably uncomfortably procedure, okay? Still, it came highly recommended as a solution for my rapidly deteriorating arthritic hip, and I had been rapidly approaching the concept of Amputation as Cure.

So, fine. Had it done. For a while, anyway, certain things were better, could drive, could snip toenails, could tie shoelaces, could sit down.

Other things were not better. Much of the time, getting up from sitting down was agonizing and time-consuming while I sent requests southward to The Leg to see if it was going to accept my weight or dump all of me ignominiously on the floor. (That's one of those negative words that has no positive! Ever hear of anyone standing, or doing ANYTHING, "nominiously"?)

After some experimentation I was usually able to walk, albeit with a painful limp. What's more, this scenario became worse instead of better; I tried massage, chiropractic and acupuncture without results. Worse yet, no prescription or OTC palliative I tried, and I tried a lot of them, seemed to really touch the basic pain when it chose to occur. Some seemed to help sometimes, but mostly it was simply that some days were better than others.

My brief career in real estate ended here. One must be able to walk predictably well to do THAT job. And climb stairs, which as you might surmise, were also a problem. Ever see a real estate ad saying "Ranch-style Homes Only"? I don't think so.

Finally, in despair, I went back to the surgeon, who took a new X-ray, looked at it and then looked at me and said, "What have you been doing?" He then explained that the cup part of the prosthesis appeared to be loose, thus accounting for most of the pain. Actually, the worst I experienced was from kicking myself for not going back to him sooner, perhaps for a single injection of epoxy.

Soon I was in the hands of a radiologist who aspirated a small amount of fluid from my hip joint and sent it off to a lab to be cultured. Guess what the result was? I had an "indolent, lowgrade, asymptomatic" endococcal infection in there! I never had heard of an "indolent" infection, but how like me, to have been invaded by a lazy bug!

Back to the OR. Dr. Dro removed the acetabulum and "cleaned up" the site (We borrowed a videotape of the total hip procedure from the hospital library. It's an unbelievable operation, at least to this lay person, involving fancy carpenter's tools. Chisels. Electric drills! Saws, hammers, scrapers, etc. I don't know what he meant by "cleaned up the site." I don't want to.) In the OR, he fashioned an antibiotic-impregnated spacer made of moldable plastic similar to Pla-Do to keep things where they belonged for an interim without the acetabulum. In a X-ray, this looked just like a tennis ball on a trailer hitch.

After reassembling my leg for the second time, Dr. Dro instructed me to stay off it, as it was a non-weight-bearing temporary reconstruction. Furthermore, the infectious diseases consultant prescribed a daily infusion via IV of large quantities of vancomycin. For six weeks.

Now a lot of readers know my spouse, Russ Washburne. He is a devoted and wonderful spouse, but certain things are admittedly outside his preferences, if not outside his capabilities, and the nursing job I suddenly presented was, well, awesome. So I simply checked into the Plainfield nursing home for the duration!! Medicare liked the idea, too.

Once the vancomycin drips were finished, I had another aspiration, and the cultures came back infection free. Next stop, OR again, where the tennis ball came out and a new acetabulum went in.

The day after surgery, the nurses urged me out of bed to attempt a brief foray on The Leg and let me tell you, it was with apprehension and fear and trembling that I put foot to floor again. And again. And ... wait a minute, this didn't hurt! My foray was longer than expected and almost completely pain-free.

The rest is history. I am extremely grateful for a whole list of things that have, effectively, given me a relatively pain-free extension of my life. Russ and IBM's health insurance are right up there. Then there's the surgical team headed by Dr. Dro, and St. Vincent's Hospital, and Plainfield Health Care, and on and on.

You can call me

Happy Camper

[Email us at: indymensa@yahoo.com](mailto:indymensa@yahoo.com)