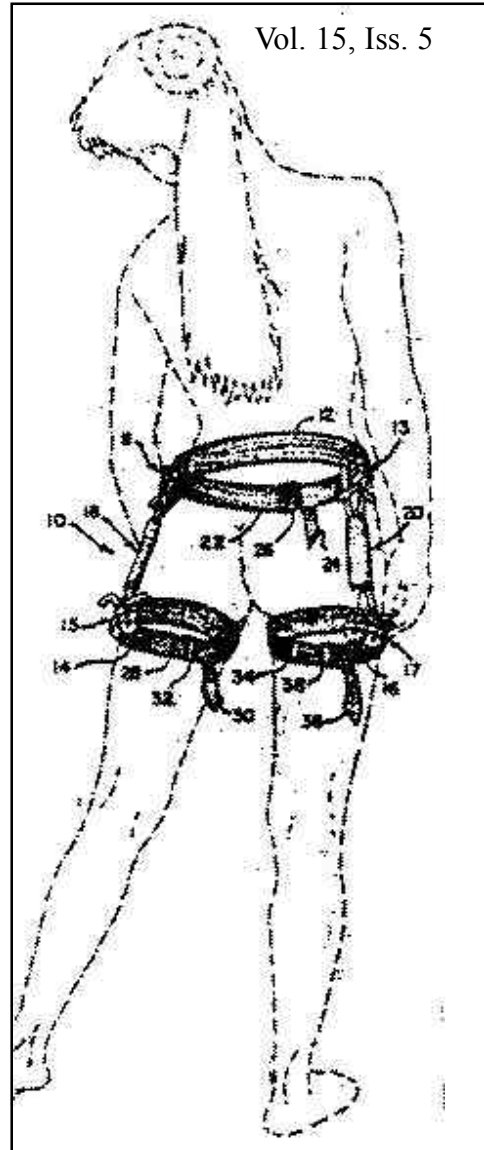


Science

Vol. 15, Iss. 5



<http://www.globalideasbank.org/1993/1993-27.HTML>

“Elaine Lerner, a New England Sunday School teacher, has patented a system of straps and loops to allow one partner to exercise control of the movements of the hips of the other partner during love-making. She is trying to interest NASA in her invention, so that astronauts will one day be able to effect the delicate docking maneuver of zero gravity intercourse. NASA has rebuffed Lerner's approaches to date. She's decided to market the device on her own...” (source: Global Ideas Handbook, <http://www.globalideasbank.org/>)

Science

by Sean Hammond et al. Illustrations by Marc Trzepla, Vol. 2, Iss. 8

*A child of five could understand this.
Fetch me a child of five.*

Though I am an acolyte to the sciences, I have become disenchanted with them. It is refreshing, from time to time, to hear the naive but sincere sentiments from people whose opinions of science date back to the Enlightenment: "Science can understand everything." I'm sorry, but that's just not true.

It has to be understood that any scientific theory is subject to cultural interpretation, which then can change it's meaning. Look what happened to Darwin's theory of evolution, particularly the "survival of the fittest." When the businessmen finally got around to either reading Darwin or hearing bastardized half truths about what he said, they thought to themselves, "Hey...not bad. Survival of the fittest? Competition? Just like business!" Soon you had everyone trying to make a biological model fit social functioning. Sure there are similarities, but if you're not careful, you get eugenics.

No, science can not understand everything; science can only understand what it can observe. Can't see it? Can't measure it? Can't explain it. On top of that is the ethnocentric baggage that every individual carries around with them. Need proof? Look at how blindly the monks of the Middle Ages followed the words of Aristotle, even when it was obvious he was wrong. Hell, the only reason the Church recognized that a vacuum could be created was because they needed a place for heaven to exist once the idea of the "heavenly spheres" was shot to hell. The heresy of the thermometer....

Scientists are nothing more than well conditioned lab rats. Pavlov taught dogs to salivate at the sound of a bell, only because the dogs could recognize a connection between the bell and food. Scientists just recognize patterns. Pull the level and get a food pellet....

In fact, now that I think about it, animal behaviorists make the best lab rats. The behaviorist's method, in field or lab, is to record accurate data, measure precise distances and exhaustingly catalog number and

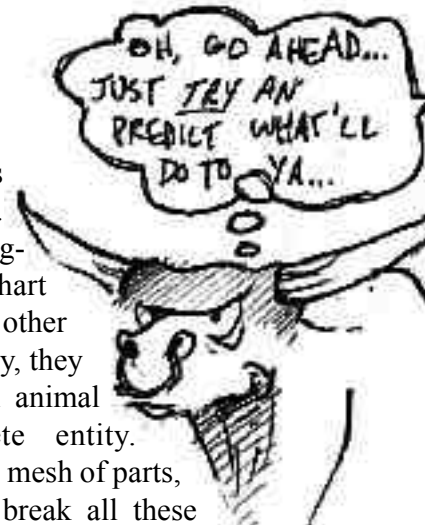
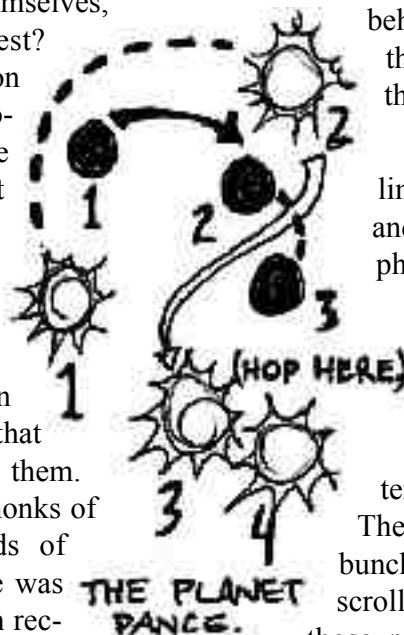
shape of moose doots per square mile. While they painstakingly gather data to chart graphs that will make other animal behaviorists cry, they tend to miss how an animal acts as a complete entity. Behavior is a complex mesh of parts, and sure it helps to break all these parts down to sections that can be conveniently studied, but don't think that a chart of bat food consumption versus environmental temperature explains bat behavior. It's usually right when a human thinks he can predict an animal's behavior that the human gets gored.

Let me give you an example of the limitations of science. Get up in the morning and watch the sun rise (there's a hint in that phrase). Now we, in our educated aloofness know that the earth goes around the sun (so the sun doesn't rise...the earth falls), but if the sun did go around the earth, it would look exactly the same. The earliest astronomers were just noticing patterns, and came up with a good theory. There was just one problem; actually, a whole bunch of them: planets. All the others stars scrolled smoothly across the sky except for those pesky "wandering stars." They'd go forward, then back, then seem to stand still.

To explain all of this meandering, intricate systems were devised to explain their actions. To this day, horoscopes depend heavily on the apparent wandering of the planets. Then some bright boy said, "Wait! If the Earth and all the planets were to go around the Sun, that would explain the wandering!" And of course it did.

As the earth overtook or was passed by planets, their apparent motion in relation to ours would make them seem to wander back and forth. All the kinks were worked out of motions of the heavens.

Great...but what holds the planets where they



belong? Little tracks? Gold chains? God? Ah, gravity. Of course, it was gravity (we're nearing my point. Bear with me). Physicists have experimentally (experimentally. That means they've watched something over and over until they see clear patterns) determined simple algebraic formulae to determine the attraction between any two objects with mass that are separated by any amount of space.

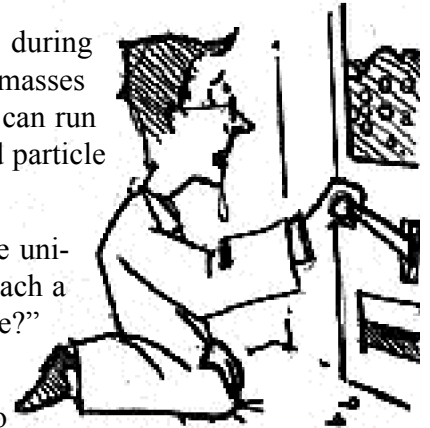
Einstein took it even further and explained gravity roughly like this: space and time are like a huge trampoline. Anything you put on the trampoline will cause it to sag and that sagging will pull in other objects, just like balls rolling down a hill.

Amazing. Through simple observation (and some brave leaps of intellect during particular time periods) we have the theory of gravity. OK. But why do two masses "dent" space/time? That can't be answered. There's nothing to observe. Science can run along fine until...oops, there's no more track. The frontiers now lie in accelerated particle physics, using gigantic cyclotrons. But they too will hit the wall.

Man will never "invent" anything. We will simply continue to observe the universe around us and find new combinations of things to make. Should we just reach a certain level of knowledge and simply say, like a frustrated parent, "just because?" That worked for the Europeans during the Middle Ages.

Until we can find something beyond science, humanity is destined simply to follow the dots and create ready made pictures; we'll never be able to make a simple stick drawing on a blank page. If we could understand the fundamentals of the universe? Well, then we'd be gods, wouldn't we? We could make our own rules.

Anyway, I'm going to go pull my lever...I'm hungry.



Description: Necessity is the mother of Invention, but also of Creativity and Ingenuity, three wee babes with too much time on their hands. The estranged fathers don't pay for child support, mostly because they fear Necessity may find them. Necessity is actually a member of that exclusive group of screaming harpies, known for vanquishing men's eternal souls to the far reaches of the Earth in utter torment, otherwise known as the Roman Furies. Thus we derive the phrase, "Driven by Necessity."

Random Fact

compiled by Sean Hammond, Vol. 2, Iss. 1

In 1964, a freighter carrying a cargo of sheep sank in the harbor of Kuwait. Afraid that the dead sheep would contaminate drinking water, people feverishly tried to devise ways of raising the ship. Luckily someone remembered a Disney comic book in which Donald Duck used ping pong balls to raise a sunken ship. So the ship was filled with 27 billion plastic balls and was soon afloat.

NASA

by Sean Hammond, Mark Nowak, Kelly Gunter *et. al*, Vol. 3, Iss. 4

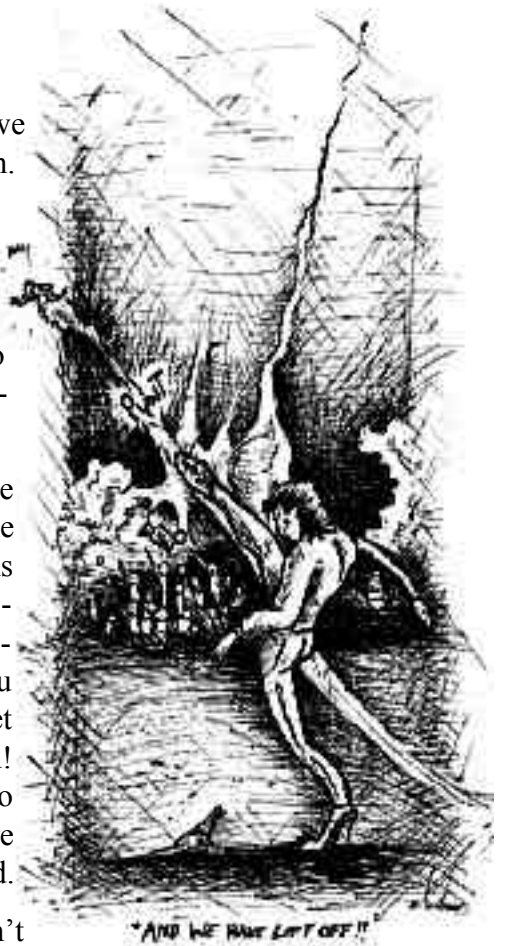
What the hell happened with the space program? In ten years we went from doing one lap around the Earth to landing on the moon. What have we done since then? We've sent up lots of probes, but let's face it, we've done less probing then most priests do in a day of choir practice. I was watching the news with a friend the other day until suddenly we heard, "...and the space shuttle had a successful landing today..." We didn't even know it was up there! My friend said he had to watch the news more often, but in reality the news probably said very little about it.

Does anybody remember back in the days of yore when people actually got excited about the space program? I remember watching one of the launches in anticipation of take-off. The only thing NASA seems to do now is send up superfluous crew members, malfunctioning satellites and the all important TESTING THE EFFECTS OF WEIGHTLESSNESS!!! Hey, guys, we KNOW weightlessness is bad for you. You don't have to be uh...a rocket scientist to figure that one out. NASA, let me give you some advice: take all those engineers that say, "Oh man! Weightlessness is really bad for you. I wonder what tests we can do to measure it," and send those bastards up for ten years and let them figure out a solution. They'll figure out a way around it in 6 months, guaranteed.

Testing the effects of weightlessness on the common people isn't any more exciting, except when you reduce one plebeian to many bite size chunks care of faulty o-rings, which you then sprinkle (or splatter) liberally over the Gulf of Mexico. A teacher, a dentist, a four year old with attention deficit disorder in space; Jesus, I can put a four year old in low earth orbit by kicking him in the ass and draw more attention than NASA's lame launches. Seen it, done it, had it, been there. You want people to become interested in the next lift off? Let us give you a passenger list: OJ Simpson, Michael Jackson, and Lorena Bobbit. What a crew list! Hell, ninety two percent of the US population has heard of all of these characters. A spousal abuser, an accused child molester, and a woman who went into mutilation mode against her spousal abuser. It would be on every channel. Or better yet, you could just turn the whole space program over to Spielberg.

It's painfully obvious what NASA needs: Some good old fashioned Cold War paranoia. After the Soviet Union bit the big one, it looked like our countries could cooperate scientifically and financially on space exploration. But cooperation isn't as exciting as competition, especially for Americans, and the language barrier between scientists could have been disastrous (I said put water in the cooling systems, not vodka!).

Besides, the Russians have all the budget problems of American public schools. They're down to nuclear secrets as their main export, forced to accept the prices of any Third World dictator or would be James Bond Villain™ just to pay the heating bill. If they sold Siberia to another country (say, Yemen) and weather-stripped the new border they could cut way down on heating costs. They won't because then they'd lose the Lake Baikal region (home of "The



"AND WE HAVE LIFT OFF!"



Image by Scott Peterson
Vol. 3, Iss. 6

Deepest Lake in the World” Theme Park) to newly proud Yemenites, breaking the secret honor code held among industrial nations to ensure that Third World countries have nothing to be proud of^f. Besides, this would result in the loss of their prestigious “U.N. Security Council” status.

NASA’s best hope is to get the CIA (another Cold War agency left out in the warm) to convince the Chinese government to start up a competing space program. China has all of the right qualifications: Communist, huge population to tax, long history of gunpowder and fireworks expertise, Tibetan monks to get rid of, and no pesky “human rights” ethics.

Meanwhile...back at the ranch, NASA could shrug off that festering bureaucratic tumor called Congress (motto: Budget Plan, Schmudget Plan) and be turned over to free enterprise. Think of the wonderful unregulated competition (Ayn Rand would be proud). Rockets being sent up held together with duct-tape (only a buck a roll), superglue, and elastic bands. The casualties would be high, but think of the news salability! “Happy Spaceman Rocket Collides with Hang-Glider. News at 11.” We’ll be Terrorforming[¥] Mars in no time.



^f Please excuse the rambling sentences. I just read James Joyce.

[¥]Move over Rimmer.

Tibetans in Outer Space

by Sean Hammond, Jason Olshefsky et al. Illustrations by Matt Messner, Vol. 8, Iss. 4

In case you’ve been in a cave, on Mars, contemplating Yogi and Flattop, with the grizzled sounds of the late Kurt Cobain drowning out the vibrations from that shiny blue ball up there in the sky (Earth, you dummy. Remember, you’re in a cave on Mars listening to “Smells Like Teen Spirit”), I’m sure you’re aware that China has regained control of Hong Kong.

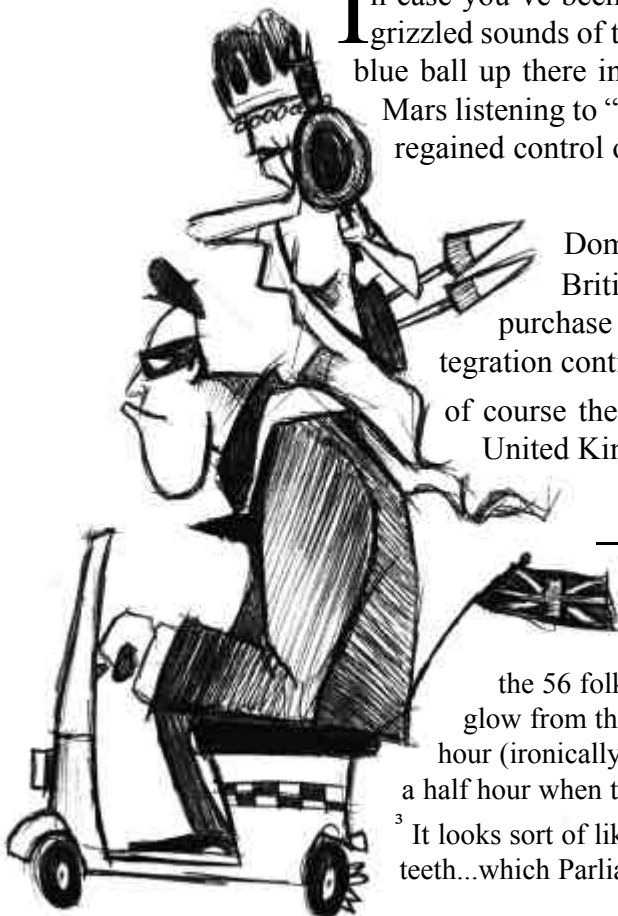
To the British, the loss of Hong Kong officially ends their Dominion. No longer can it be said that the sun never sets on the British Empire.[†] Quite to the contrary, England has been forced to purchase a night light. Even on its own little island-Kingdom the disintegration continues as the Scots, Welsh, the two literate blokes in Sussex, and of course the Irish, bicker and rail against the Monarchy,³ fast making the United Kingdom an oxymoron.

Meanwhile, their royal Highnesses are busy sleeping

[†] Actually, the British “Empire” is still open 24-7 but they’ve lost a good chunk of their electronic and Thai food departments.

Between the transiently inhabited islands in the Indian Ocean and the 56 folks on the Pitcairn Islands (shall I name them all?), there is a 24 hour glow from the bright burning incandescent ball in the sky. Even in their darkest hour (ironically, on the longest day for Mother England), June 21, there’s still about a half hour when those little colonies share the sun.

³ It looks sort of like Parliament on a rowdy day, except with scones and bad teeth...which Parliament also has.



around, causing scandals, and otherwise cracking a smile as often as Jesus changed his knappy. Any respectability left in the British Royalty's gene pool bugged off with Edward VIII when he abdicated the throne for love of a commoner. How can *that* compare to the pompous wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana? Even the writers of "Airwolf" knew that divorce was imminent.

Back to the point, such as it is.

While Imperialism wanes among European powers and their cowboy cousins across the pond, the national equivalents of Johnny Come-Latelies are picking up where their old overlords left off. Hell, even the Evil Empire of Ayn Rand's goldenboy (God, wouldn't I like to smack her) has gone the way of tinkle-down economics and reverted back to its numerous separate countries...most of whom are more interested in fighting with themselves than anything else.

China, behind the times for the past few centuries due to the convoluted nature in which their original incense clocks^δ mapped to Greenwich Mean Time (the poor yellow bastards inadvertently misplaced a few centuries and dropped the ball with explosives. *Now* imperialism's cool? As if! That's *so* last century! This century everything is internal turmoil. God! Get with the program. What's the next thing they're going to completely ignore until it's day is past, jams and grunge?), is just now reaching its stride and finding out how much fun it can be to overrun neighbors and forge an empire on the wormy bodies of their dead children.

Go China!

Now that North Korea is starving itself to death and planning on a massive nuclear strike against the South in an attitude of, "Yeah, I'm dying...but I'm feeling rather peckish today," China can really come into its own as the last bastion of sweatshops, pantsuits

and down to earth hard-core Communist dogma. Where the United States of America, and MCC, have the Monroe Doctrine to justify their annexation of all the land they could get their grubby little mitts on from sea to oily sea, the Communists have the philosophy of Marx, Engels, and Mao guiding them...but since all these buggers are silly foreigners,[¥] no one listens to them anyway. Still, given the inevitable proletariat revolution that will sweep across the globe any day now, its only logical for China to be interested in regaining territory that either was or (they believed) should have been theirs.

Typically chalked up to xenophobia and general bullyship, what isn't taken into account when examining China's foreign policies is the notoriousness of the Communists for their five year plans. Unlike most human organizations (with the exception of Secret Societies, which have the unnerving tenancy to think in terms of centuries when planning. The bastards are like Asimov's Second Foundation) that are interested only in a quarter's profits or current opinion polls, the Communists have shown their mettle in planning for the future. In one shining example of Soviet ingenuity under Stalin, the bread lines were perfected in a scant half decade. In a close second for planning is Pol Pot: now there was a mass murderer with vision.

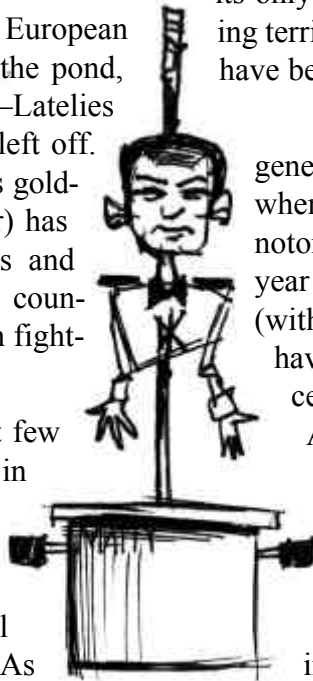
When the Chinese Army liberated Tibet from itself on 7 October 1950 AD, they were planning something so grand it dumbfounds the imagination. Their recent reacquisition of Hong Kong and their saber rattling over the Diaoyutai Islands (covered at high tide and, incidentally, the first region to produce wet-look-knit-wear) are simply continuations of their plan.

You see, on the eve of the Communist victory against the Guomindang and the founding of the People's Republic of China, Mao Zedong had a

^δ Invented in 1073 AD, the incense clock tied in nicely to the early 20th century Relativity Theories where, in four dimensional space, the burning of the incense works in a linear fashion consistent with the fourth dimension of time, hence allowing complex theories to be developed. More complex, I might add, than you can understand.

[¥] Alternate ending to sentence: "...none of our readers know who the hell they are anyway."

[†] Nope. They don't only happen to Christian Saints.



vision.[†] Well educated and well read in the emerging genre of speculative fiction from the decadent Capitalist countries, Mao could foresee a time, far after his death, when the Chinese would be among the stars in tight spandex minis. With this vision to guide him, years before the CCCP and the USA began their race to put primates in orbit, the People's Republic of China began its long range plans to send its people to the stars.

<star trek fight music>

Their first step was the annexation of Tibet. Though this seems useless, remember the underlying problem with space travel: long distances. In the absence of being able to travel very fast, tesser, or have enough in-flight movies to last for centuries...or at least enough movie theatre popcorn, the Chinese opted for recruiting from the few people who could survive the trips without the popcorn.

</star trek fight music>

World renowned for their ability to induce death-like meditative states where their metabolism slows to a crawl, Tibetan Yogis now form the core of the Chinese space program. The Dali Lama, on the lamb, has attempted to organize an American training school at NASA as part of America's deterrence policy, but potential American Yogi's tend to bomb out after reaching Zen 101.³

To provide an excuse for sending Chinese to the heavens, the Chinese government began a program to

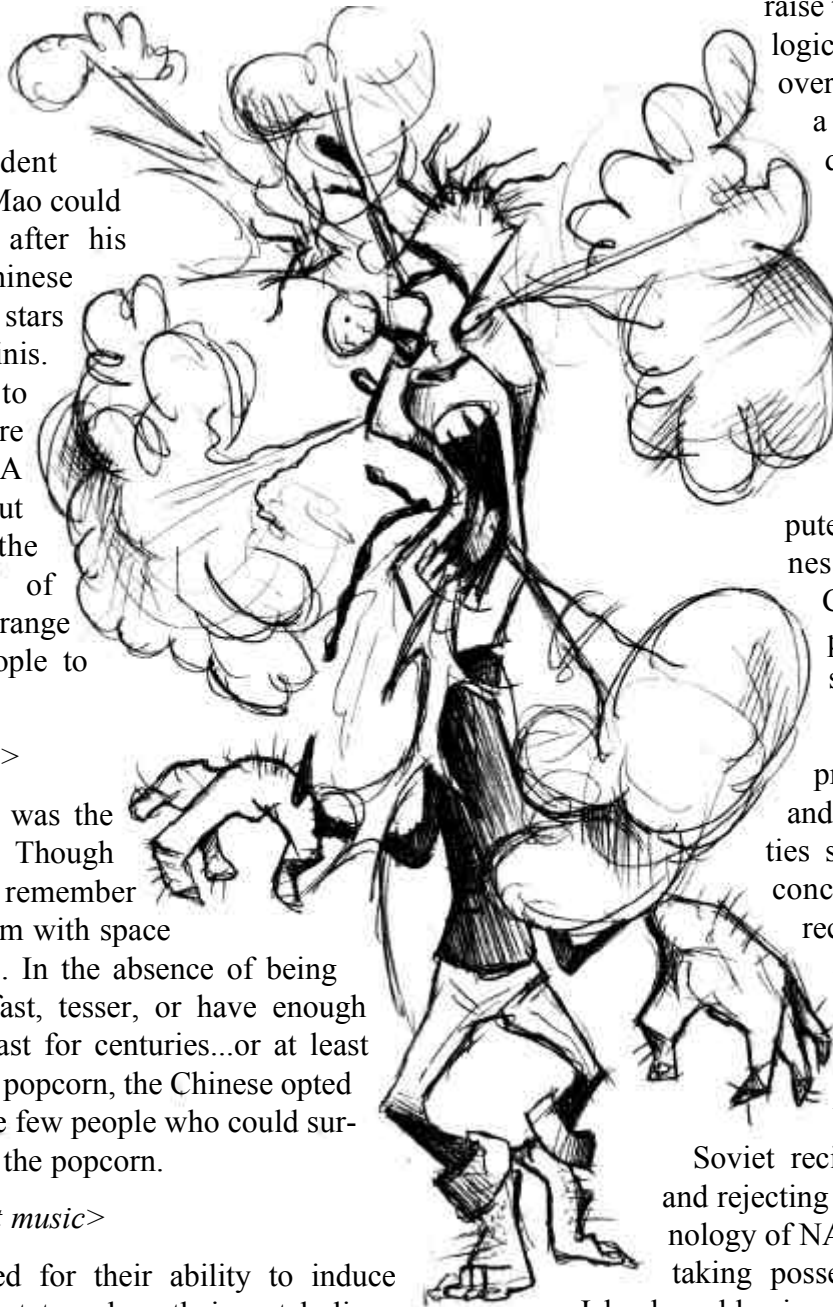
raise the population beyond all logical limits. Today, there are over a billion Chinese; quite a sizable population to draw potential colonization fleets from....

Knowing that Hong Kong under the British would become a technological island, China bided its time. With its return, coupled with its massive computer software pirating business on the mainland, China's ready to take its place as the national version of Microsoft.

With its juggernaut program fully operational and its technological abilities secured, China has been concerned with its capsule recovery program. With the aforementioned population mega-explosion, there is little space for extensive landing sites.

Unwilling to copy the Soviet recipe for cosmonaut pate, and rejecting the Rube Goldberg technology of NASA, the Chinese plan on taking possession of the Diaoyutai Islands and having splashdowns reminiscent of NASA's Mercury Spam-in-a-can™ program.

In the next ten years China will have secured all the land and resources necessary to begin sending its people into space. And with a surplus like they have, its no big feat to imagine they won't be too worried about losses. Their attempt to find Alice Cramdon on Luna failed? Well, send up a new batch to try again. Kill all you want, we'll make more.



³ In one spectacular case, Victor Prince, a bright candidate for Yogiship, had his head explode as he tried to imagine what silence looked like. This is an extreme reaction, but is not unheard of in people who have been trained in engineering and mathematics. Thankfully, to most applicants, the sound of one hand clapping is "cla."

Space: The Disney Frontier

by Sean Hammond et al. Illustrations by Gil Merritt, Vol. 11, Iss. 10

How do you define “space age technology”? As far as I can tell, it only pertains to crafty baubles that are thirty years old: vacuum-tube-dependent mainframe computers, synthetic polymers (i.e. plastic), and Tang. Despite how cool something sounds when we call it space age technology, we have to face the unfortunate truth that the space age IS the 1960’s.

In under five years, the Germans went from playing with Estes solid-fuel rockets to bombing the be-jeebers out of London[‡] with the fury of the V2s. Once the Allies handed Hitler and his goose-stepping cronies a handbasket and told him where to go, the Americans and Soviets divided the spoils of war. Not only did they cut up Germany like a piece of cake, they spirited the Nazi rocket whiz-kids away with the finesse of the Pied Piper.

After locking these poor Krauts in a room and essentially saying, “You’re MY little white boys now,” the Soviets managed to launch a little bleeping probe. Well, this put the fear of the Godless into the Americans; “We could be facing a weightless research GAP,” a prominent general is reported to have said.

Thus motivated, the Americans, renowned for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, more than happily ignored the civil rights of the ex-Nazi[°] bright boys and put them to work.

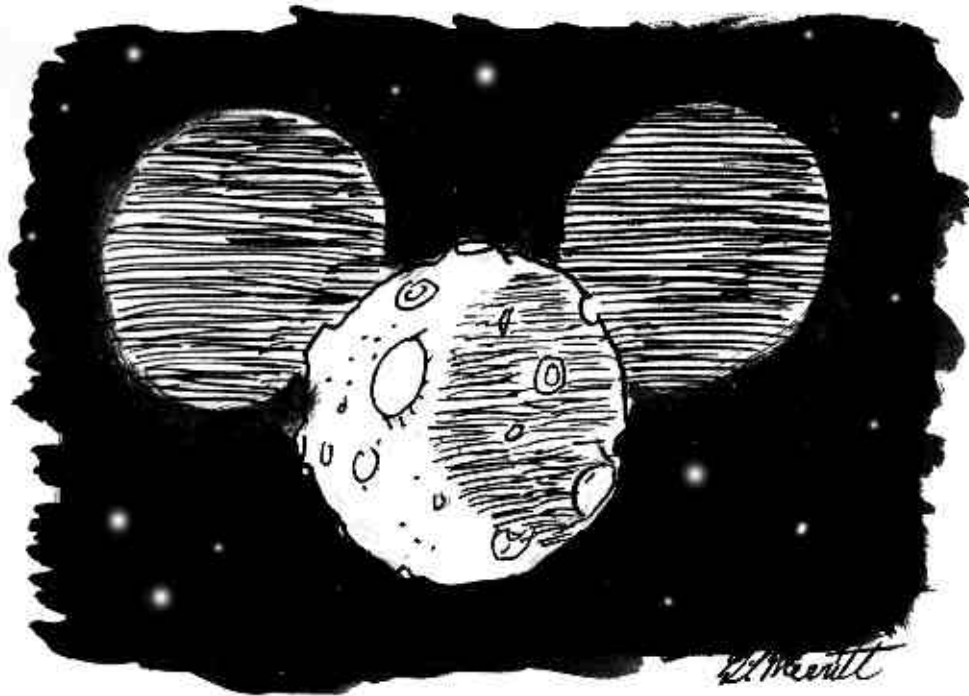
With Kennedy sitting in the Oval Office and receiving regular visits from one of the hottest blondes in history, the American public were quick to rally behind his impassioned challenge when he said that “We choose, to go to the moon...in this decade...and DO the other things!” Next year will represent the 30th anniversary of the lunar landing, and I think its about time we got around to those other things. And I’m not talking about studying the effects of weightlessness on water...again.

Thirty years. The TV has told me a lot about what to expect in the future, and frankly I’m getting tired of waiting. I want my self-aware, homicidal computer singing “Daisy.” I want Martian colonies to demand independence and for an interplanetary civil war to break out. I want gads of space vixens in spandex knocking on my motion sen-

[‡] “Be-jeebers” apparently means “children” in British English.

[°] “Ja, mein Führer...er...Mr. President.”





sored portal and saying they come from a planet without men and need good breeding stock.

Instead I get John Glenn.[Ⓔ]

It's time for those of us who wish we could build rockets in our garages to face the reality that NASA is never going to make space travel as sexy as it should be. NASA is not Audrey Hepburn in a teddy. And it really could be! We're talking about the most powerful machines on the planet. Big, hulking, phallus shaped rods of unadulterated, raw, raging power! If the thought of getting your cherry popped in the back of a Shelby Cobra¹ gets you wet, imagine getting it on in a rocket destined for Venus...the planet of loooovve.

No. John Glenn is not exactly the Sean Connery of the 1990's; unlike good wine and cheese, John does not get finer with age. Given, Glenn has pulled in some much needed media coverage (mainly because of the running bets as to whether the old man will bite it while in orbit)— NASA hasn't seen a circus like this since the heyday of space reporting under the tender hand of Walter Kronkite.[»] This sort of attention can only be short lived, however. The chance that NASA will use this as a springboard for true space exploration is remote at best.

The obvious recourse at this point is for NASA to

[Ⓔ] And he's OLD!

¹ You limber bastard.

[»]And what a tender hand it was. Oh, Uncle Walter....

sell out completely. Just bring in the corporate sponsors and turn them loose. Paint the booster rockets for the shuttle so they look like they're wearing massive condoms and emblazon "Trojan: To the Moon, Baby!" on the side. Of course Microsoft, always looking for a plug, would emblazon "Where do you want to go today?" on the side of a shuttle.

Short of this, NASA should stage the greatest hoax in history. Zimmerman telegram be damned! Using the latest US military technology, NASA could construct a series of space weapon platforms aiming Val Kilmer's 31337 "Real Genius" laser at targets in the US, Russia, China, France, India, Pakistan, Germany, Britain, and Liechtenstein for good measure. At the signal, death from on high would strike all these countries simultaneously, precluding their ability to blame one another and start a war of global annihilation.

NASA would, of course blame aliens. With the world population primed by "Sightings" and "X-Files," how could they disbelieve? With a fire like that under the collective asses of the major world powers, a new space race would begin. This time, however, the competition wouldn't even exist and there's no way we could feel safe in slowing down our progress. To the stars in glorious wars of conquest and revenge!

Realistically, what will happen is that the most powerful nation in the world, Disney, will simply annex NASA. It only makes sense to add interplanetary conquest to the list of their weapons of evil. Besides, imagine the thrill rides they could make! Screw Disney Land, EuroDisney, and Disney World. Bring on Orbital Disney, complete with a fatty monorail. It'd be like Babylon 5, but less rendered and with better parking.

After retooling the shuttle to look like an inverted Mickey Mouse head, Disney would rule the heavens and the earth.

To promote the glorious age of the Mouse, Disney could finally steal the last children's book of value and produce "Disney's Little Prince". Appealing to the young girls, he has everything going for him as a lovable pre-pubescent planet-hopper, and with that scarf, he's got a sort of Dr. Who look to sucker in the old PBS donors. You could follow his adventures as he travels from planet to planet battling the evil Baobabs ø with his sidekicks Sam the Snake and Ruby the Rose.

Until Disney manages to gain control and bring space to the masses, we'll have to put up with NASA's glacial rate of progress. Deep Space One might be a stupendous technological step, but in the end it's just another bleeping probe. Ion drive. Yea. But until Disney's coup, this is the author writing the 1049th word of this article. From *Gracies Dinnertime Theatre*, goodnight and God bless.

ø We are the superior beings. Ex-ter-min-ate!



LETTERS

DATE: FRI, 29 MAR 1996

FROM: MICHELLE AMORUSO

SUBJECT: DEVIANT BEHAVIOR

DEAR GDT,

I AM A FAITHFUL UR READER. I WOULD LIKE TO INFORM YOU OF SOME DEVIANT BEHAVIOR I WITNESSED ON THE ACADEMIC QUAD IN THE PAST WEEK. ONE OF YOUR WRITERS, MARK NOWAK, WAS SEDUCING CAMPUS SQUIRRELS WITH A SNICKERS BAR. I SUGGEST AN INTERVENTION BEFORE HE EITHER GETS HURT OR GETS LUCKY.

A CONCERNED READER

Sent by Michelle Amoruso, Vol. 4, Iss. 4

Universe

By *et. al* with inspiration from Mark Nowak and Michelle Amoruso.
Illustrations by Scott Peterson, Vol. 4, Iss. 7

“At least it's better than Frank, who shoves pens up rats asses and sends them into the future.”

Time is fun, but only for those who can handle it. There are beings in the multiverse that can dip in and out of time and reality. Actually, they spend more time leaping about from reality to reality than stepping outside of time. Even They™ get the willies being outside of time. Once outside, time smells yellow, feels loud, and just overall makes you think that you're a water fowl. It has never been explained why this is....

Never the less, one of the more interesting features of the multiverse is that everything not only has the possibility of happening, but HAS happened.

I mean everything. With an infinite amount of time and an infinite number of different realities, sooner or later, you're going to get repeats.

So it was just a matter of statistics that one of our staff (for matters of anonymity, let's call him...Mark) would be seducing squirrels with a Snickers® bar. It's an odd hobby; baiting squirrels to come close enough to club. Not to kill, mind you, just stun them. Of course there were years of experimentation and practice to work out the means and methods. Wiffle-ball bats move too slow. Steel bars just pulverize their little skulls. Elastic bands scare the bejeebers out of them. Over the years casualties built up, along with a field filled with shallow graves holding tiny, indistinct bodies (who look as if the last noise to flee their rapidly diminishing form was either an inrush of air far to large for their tiny lung capacities, or that tell-tale sound of gooey crackles, much like the sound emitted when driving a steam roller over a large wad of packing paper that had grape jelly substituted for the air pockets), and notes...lots of notes.

Eventually, Mark was able to faun in just the appropriate manner and the squirrels came. They came even when the ground around him was littered with the faintly twitching bodies of their stunned relatives. It was always the same. A squirrel appears, is coaxed close, and ends with the satisfying impact of rod with skull. But once, instead of the usual routine: Closer. Closer...and...BAP!

Well, there was a dust devil...vaguely shaped like a surprised squirrel, then nothing. Slowly, Mark put his staff away and sat for a very, very long time.

There are things that just happen. Your jaw will just start to hurt sometimes, or no matter what you do, your side burns never are the same length. That was the case with the squirrel. It just happened. Using the mighty resources of Hell Inc., we found that conditions were just right to send that little fuzzy shit back through time before the big bang occurred. Of course, the life span of the extremely surprised quadruped in question was slightly under 20 seconds in the pre-Universe. With a temperature of 0 Kelvin, and no external pressure, the little bugger exploded and froze all at once, looking amazingly like a piece of reddish popcorn. Incidentally, this is why the temperature of the universe is just above 0 Kelvin. When the squirrel with its endothermic, though short lived, body appeared on the scene, the heat in the universe went from 0 to just above 0 Kelvin. I'm getting ahead of myself, though.

Now, the funny thing is, there was bound to be a reality with the same general set of conditions. And wouldn't you know it? The whole place was anti-matter, complete with an anti-Mark and anti-squirrels. Of course some poor anti-squirrel got clobbered and "IPAB" it vanished. It actually went hurdling back through time and popped back into the time stream just before the Big Bang occurred.

It was only by freak eventualities that both squirrels ended up light years (but there was no light. In fact, there was nothing but two squirrels. Does that make it dark years? Maybe squirrel years: The amount of distance covered by 2 squirrels in a year?) away from one another in that pre-Big Bang space. Anyone with basic physics under their belt is going to realize that two bodies of any mass will attract one another, and with only the Two Squirrels, there was nothing to deflect their course. For eons, the two entities slowly moved toward each other, gaining speed,



becoming dark blurs against a field of nothing.

In reality, it really wasn't all that spectacular to see. If you ever go to Mammoth Caves and go down to the lake and they shut the lights off, that's about how stunning it looked. Trust me though, they were traveling along at speeds that would make most physicists shiver and take a cold shower.

So eventually...

“Q–FUCKIN’
BOOM!”

Actually, there was no sound. Just a sudden increase in the amount of things to be seen, and in the amount of light to see them by. As a matter of fact, everything suddenly got kinda bright. Rather conveniently, matter and antimatter totally annihilate each other on contact, producing gobs of energy, so from the moment of contact, the view was much more interesting, then again watching a cow chew its cud is more interesting than just waiting for two squirrels to collide, you can't see them, you can't even try to take bets.

The long and the short of it is, the entire multiverse came into existence when two squirrels ran headlong into one another. Thanks Mark.

The Squirrel Saga Continues...

by Sean Hammond, Josh French, Kelly Gunter, B.J. Leopold *et al* with inspiration from Mark Nowak and Michelle Amoruso. Illustrations by Scott Peterson, Vol. 4, Iss. 7

Often, when the staff of Gracies Dinnertime Theatre is working on front page material, there is a natural selection process; survival of the fittest. When we began publishing last year after being rejected by the Reporter with first one, and then two pages, our limited space requirements led to whole-sale slaughter of ideas; in same cases, as much material had to be discarded as was kept.

After a year of conditioning, we have had an extremely hard time overcoming our Skinner Box training (“Oh, I’m sorry..... That issue is too long.” !ZAP! “Ahhh!”). With this issues, however, we had enough material to fill at least 2 more issues. Anyway, here are some of the outtakes from this week’s issue. Enjoy.

Even before the founding of Hell Inc., many of its founding entities were intimately aware that our universe was created by the obliteration of two tiny, unaware vermin, traveling at dangerously high speeds. For centuries, the Hell Inc. staff in the Cronus Corporation have been trying to jump start the Big Bang (think of the glory, think of the prestige, think of the copyright infringements). The Cronus Corp., being a gentler, more caring company, wanted to add an extra little twist to creation of the universe (as if two squirrels traveling just under the speed of light isn't strange enough). For years, the blue-collar workers of the corporation have been taking squirrels and sending them spiraling back through time with a AA mini-theater penlight strapped to their muz-





zles. The writing staff of Hell's Kitchen is still unaware of whether this was meant to be an additional perk, showing the furry little rodent where it would be going, or if it was intended to introduce the ill-fated creature to the fact that within a relatively brief amount of time it would soon be careening at speeds now unimaginable to the human mind, toward a small sparkling light in the distance attached to a mirror image of its anti-self[†]. Not that the neuroses of the Cronus Corp. actually matters too much in light of the fact that if those fateless little buggers even did make it back to the correct time[‡], they'd only have a fraction of a sec-

ond to contemplate it, and even then this time would most likely be filled with the squirrel equivalent of, "AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!"

From our vantage point at the end of the twentieth century, the physical dynamics of the pre-bang era are quite questionable. The incredible truth of this strange journey is that as the two squirrels traveled back in time toward the dawn of existence, they both started picking up excess mass and matter, much like the moon collects asteroids and Bert collects bottle-caps. At any rate, when they finally made it...they were huge. They were still squirrels, but squir-

[†]The concept of a flashlight in the mouth of a squirrel traveling at the speed of light predictably sparked a week long debate among the staff of Hell's Kitchen on the physics behind the idea. There were two factions (well, three. One group didn't see the point of arguing, since the little guys exploded and wouldn't be seeing much of anything): The majority felt the squirrel wouldn't see anything, where as the minority felt the squirrel would not only see the light from their flashlight, but any other light around them. After much debate, exchanging of formulas, and vague death threats, it was determined the question was phrased incorrectly.

Because no object with mass can travel the speed of light, the question has to be rephrased as "If a squirrel traveling just under the speed of light had a flashlight in its mouth, would it see the light, or any light around it?" Then, the answer is yes, though any outside observer would see an infinitely small point that is the squirrel...and no light from the flashlight.

[‡]Though the time travel abilities of the administration of Hell Inc. are extremely advanced, the methods used by the various satellite corporations and divisions are shotty at best. The method currently in use by the Cronus Corp. can best be described as "the shot gun" method. The workers can not control when a squirrel will appear in time.

For eight hours a day, 5 days a week, the floor workers of the Cronus Corp (A section. The people working in C Section shove pens into rats' bums and shoot them into the future to bring about Armageddon. The less asked the better. "Just sign you're name here sir...". Presumably, B section sends some kind of furry mammal with a prostheses into the present (though they really can't tell. I mean, if you are time traveling into the present, you don't move a whole heck. Because of the apparently insane nature of the job, the workers in B Section are all Zen Masters. Heck, working in B Section is like living a Zen Koan)) talk with co-workers about who they are fucking and their damn kids while they stoically shove flashlights into the mouths of stunned squirrels rolling along a sort of assembly line (insert cartoon assembly line music). Eventually the squirrels reach the end of the line, and disappear³.

Where does all the Time go?

by Mark Nowak *et al.* Illustrations by Scott Peterson, Vol. 3, Iss. 8

“If you torture the data enough, it will confess.”

Warning, Achtung, Attenzione: the ambient randomness and bizarre nonreferences contained herein grossly exceed any and all prerequisites for a contiguous and linear literary experience; you ‘ave been warned.

You rush from your room to class, from class to class, from class to go eat, from eating to your room, and your day is over in a blink. Soon your week, month, and quarter have gone the same way. In four years, you look back and you simply can not figure out where the time went. So where does all of your time go?

rels you might think twice about before trying to shoo them away from the bird feeder.

They were galactic size squirrels.³

Even being as large and as glorious as they were, with quite literally the weight of the universe on their backs, they still ended up looking much like a couple of freezer (and Christmas) ready Pop Secrets®. All the matter in the universe can be traced to these two founding critters. In fact, that dark matter that physicists are so keen to believe in, much like a child might wish on a star, is there. It exists, but it might be better named “Squirrel Matter.”

This has led to the embarrassing discovery of little mammal skeletons with corroded bits of zinc and copper in their mouths at various archeological sites and imbedded in the shale of many quarries. Of course, Hell Inc.’s security division, Pandora, works diligently to insure this information is never released to the public at large. The only reason we are able to print it is no one believes what we print. Hell, people thought my After Dinner Mint about modifying IBM SIMMs to work in Macs was a joke.

³ Along with the portion of the assembly line the squirrel was on. This has resulted in a massive recycling program, encompassing all of time and space.

⁴How’s that? A one word paragraph consisting of only 5 words. Nothing like flaunting what you haven’t got.



Of course you must know by now that we have been thinking hard about this very topic (and no, your time does not travel through a vortex straight to us. We simply maintain rock steady grade point averages of 1.2 while coming up with random thoughts to amuse ourselves). We figure there are some pretty obvious culprits who until now have eluded the larger public’s detection. Here’s the Most Wanted List:

•**Santa Claus** (“..you have a very nasty habit of surviving”), We can buy the fact that he can make toys for all the world’s children in one year (hooray for non-existent North Pole labor laws!), but delivering all the goods in one night? Forget about it. He must suck up some of everyone’s free time and use it all on his midnight run. Think of losing your time as a trade-off for one magical, feel-good day (maybe he uses quantum physics; after all, if you believe in Santa, it’s no great stretch to believe in quantum physics). What’s that you say? Your time evaporates like toluene on a hot plate and you don’t even celebrate Christ-x? Well, start! It doesn’t matter what religion you are! We just took the “mas” out of it for you!

•**The Inventors of Stupid Things**, No one is immune from the plague of infomercials congesting our airwaves, and actual people have to invent these damn things to be sold *en masse* (just think of all the “harmless” infomercial radio waves that pass through your body every day, not to mention the horrible influence radio waves shot into space are having on the Zxqtvpl battle fleet as they decide whether or not to



enslave the third planet from Sol or just steal all of their *I Love Lucy* memorabilia). And we're not talking about "Formula P-38 Car Protectant (Restore the shine after a nuclear holocaust!)". At least there's some schmoe in a lab somewhere putting time into developing that stuff. We mean the things that obviously no one would ever, ever think of buying until it comes on TV with the promise of making your life even less laborious than it already is!

The Shiwala™, in case a cinder-block sized car sponge takes too much time. The little foot pump for raising the toilet seat so you don't actually have to bend down to lift it. The Vacuum Sealer™, that pumps excess air out of potato chip bags to keep them (the chips, not the bags) fresh. Like potato chips last long enough to become stale anyway. The Salad Shooter™. The Salad Shooter?!? When did the knife become obsolete, and why, in the name of God, would someone want to go around shooting poor innocent vegetables? I wonder if there is a waiting period to buy the Salad Shooter....

We're willing to concede that the ideas come to these inventors in sudden flashes of insight (This microwave bacon rack will solve domestic kitchen problems forever!). Your time gets taken in the mass production and rapid marketing of this stuff. And these products don't leave you with more time, just with less money.

- The Government**, using alien technology to steal the time out of your existence. They could use it to come up with a budget plan, but it probably ends up in some dinky bureaucratic corner like The Federal Moose Surveying Center. Maybe we should lay off *X-Philes* for a while.

- Computers**, Computers save time like kudzu stops soil erosion. 'Nuff said.

- Childbirth**, Any woman in labor (or baboon, or what ever else they happen to be using as surrogate (the next huge political scandal...right up there with...oh, I forget the name of it. Happened at that hotel, with the guy who was a crook and died....) mothers these days) can tell you that it seems like it lasts forever (especially since western medical practitioners insist on having women lie down instead of squatting, like they should). It doesn't take forever, but can, potentially, absorb it. As the child is born, the inevitable stretch marks almost instantly form, and capture time. The space-time continuum has been compared to a trampoline, where any large mass warps it. In fact, the space-time continuum is more analogous to mother's bellies. Those stretch marks are actually time capacitors (as are those mysterious tire marks found on back roads that look as though a car going 70mph suddenly slammed into reverse and somehow drove sideways (so the tires don't roll, but flip. Come on guys, keep up with me here). These are the crop circles of high populated areas (which also appear, rarely, as burnt rubber in your underwear. I have no idea why this is, though entire philosophies have come and gone, attempting to answer this critical question); spot welds in reality, absorbing all the time you waste when saving time using your computer (see above suspect)). That's why, to men, women always seem to have more time, and are expected to cook, clean, raise kids, have an outside job (as long as she isn't making more money than he is), dote on her mate, do his laundry, and essentially make her life revolve around him.



And why shouldn't she? She potentially has all the time in the world.

Mal-Mart

by Sean Hammond *et al.* Illustrations by Scott Peterson, Vol. 5, Iss. 2

*Black holes are where God is
dividing by zero.*

Whether or not there are millions of years of hunting and gathering hardwired into my psyche, I am not born to shop. I abhor entering malls and department stores. Of course this leads to the unfortunate situation where I put off shopping so long I must spend hours in the store just getting the basics to survive. You know: milk, toilet paper, the newest Terry Pratchett book, the usual.



When I'm shopping, I move like I'm in a race. There have been instances where the ultra-pure, air-conditioned atmosphere of a mall or shopping center, coupled with my quick walking, have dried my peepers out, leaving me sitting on the floor, rubbing my eyes and cursing.

It's not so bad when I have a group to shop with; we divvy up the list and get through the store in record time. It's a beautiful sight to see. The 4x100 relay team representing GDT zips through a store, leaving perplexed old ladies trying to determine why they're missing groceries and their false teeth are in backward.



"Pass the Baguette. Go! Go! Go!"

Regardless of how quickly you can get everything you need, you eventually have to get into line. The lines are the great equalizers. Everyone young, old, speedy, ugly they all stand in lines that never move.

Now at this point, you're probably thinking that we are going to say something about the seven items or less isle and how idiots with two shopping carts mounded with nothing but "Alpo" pick these lines and insist that they have only one product. Well, you're wrong. That sort of thing has been beaten to death[†], and it really isn't as annoying as the fact that all lines move at the same speed. Actually, those "seven items or less" isles move slower than any other lane. I think it's because the cashiers of these particular circles of hell think to themselves, "Hey, this is the cheesy lane. No reason to work at normal speed. What's the rush?"

The really interesting thing is that you can get into line with only 3 others ahead of you, and once you reach the shelves, there's suddenly 5 people in front of you. A bit disconcerting, but perfectly logical. Allow me to elucidate:

At about the same time that laser scanners began to be installed in grocery stores around the country, another technological marvel was slipped in as well. Thanks to the same research that brought you Silly-Putty, stores now possess the ability to fold space in check-out lines. The up side is that the customer sees only five to seven people in any line at any given time when in reality there can be 20 people folded into their devious little Mal-mart Moebius strips; you can't see those cockled little buggers until you've reached the fold yourself, and by then, it's too late.



[†]Not that GDT is against a good beating.

That's why isles have shelves on either side. Though functional, the shelves are nothing more than attractive walls keeping customers from exiting the folded space crosswise. In trial stores when the technology was first being developed, prospective customers that entered the lines in their 20s and then traveled sideways in the fold could exit white haired and toothless. There were even some that never exited.³ Tricky business, folding checkout lines. Sometimes, the whole system crashes, throwing customers as far as 20 feet into the stacks of Spiderman Toothpaste marked down 20% and causing minor earthquakes as the building suddenly expands to accommodate the new space.

There are accidents of this kind all the time in southern California. The high temperatures simply over-heat the complex systems involved. In Mexico, however, standards are lower and failures can level entire villas.

Another bonus, brought to you by the minds at NAFTA.



³Recently NASA and the FDA sponsored an expedition into the folded space of various checkout lines to try and discover exactly what happened to the missing shoppers. Within the rift, whole shanty towns were discovered. Living only on candy bars and packs of gum mistakenly knocked off the shelves into the gulf, these diabetic refugees had been warped receiving news of the outside world through such noted periodicals as *The Weekly World News*.

In the end, both NASA and the FDA agreed that a rescue attempt would be infeasible due to the tremendous cost involved in reintegrating those poor souls back into society



Think Differently

CloningCloningCloningCloningCloningCloningCloningCloningCloning

by Sean Hammond, B.J. Leopold *et al.* Illustrations by Vinny Bove, Vol. 7, Iss. 2



Illustrator...

Cloning. It's all over the news like necrotizing fasciitis...which is also all over the news. After slightly under a kajillion[†] unsuccessful attempts,^đ Dr. Ian Wilmut of Scotland has recently cloned a sheep named Dolly.⁻ This has led to some obvious postemptive reactions in this country: every student who has ever asked if a differentiated cell could be made to be totipotent by implanting its nucleus into an unfertilized egg has been vindicated, and a new Senate subcommittee¹ has sprung up *de novo*, dedicated to debating the ethics of the issue.

Cloning may be new and interesting, but the Senate debate itself is as foolish as ever. While they're hemming and hawing about the ethics of the technology, nobody has even mentioned the economic feasibility of the issue. Sheep are a precious commodity in some parts of the hills,⁻ but if you can clone wool and lambchops then Dolly just becomes a freak-show type of novelty (Baaahh⁻). Sure, there will be a global audience wanting to see this touring sheep, but there's no chance of repeat customers: if you've seen one clone, you've seen them all. Besides, can it really be cheaper to clone a sheep than to just wait for the damn things to go into heat and let nature run its wiggly, wily course?⁻ Why force the poor Scots into shame⁻ for creating this technology unless we're sure it isn't going to make us any money?

CloningCloningCloningCloningCloningCloningCloningCloningCloning

When the question of cash is on the table, why shiver at the mention of *Brave New World* and 1984? Turn those frowns upside down! It's time to stop reading those prophetic books as a warning and see them as a promise of a better tomorrow. Big Brother is already here...has been for quite some time. Spy satellites that can read the box of cigarettes your holding post images to the Internet and with only a little electronic background, nearly anyone can go to Radio Shack and build sophisticated hacking and phreaking equipment. Modifications to oscilloscope and cellular phones allow people sitting in parking lots to learn PIN numbers from people using ATM cards.

We have all become Big Brother. There is no question of who watches the watchmen; we all watch one another. Misdirected voyeurism in the post-industrial world.

[†] How much is a kajillion, you ask? Well, it's less than a googolplex³ and more than a quadriplegic.

³ What's a googolplex? Well, it is a 1 followed by a googol of zeros. The name originated in 1955 with Edward Kasner, a mathematics professor who, when asking his young child what he should call the number, was confidently told, "a googolplex."

^đ Otherwise known in more politically correct circles as "effectiveness-impaired attempts."

⁻ Why do Scots wear kilts? It's so the sheep don't hear the zi—oh. Never mind.

¹ Ohh, a Senate subcommittee. Now there's a group of blokes who can get the job done. With years of practice at filibustering, it shouldn't be much of a surprise that very little gets done in subcommittees other than the engaging reading of "the C section" of the Hong Kong phone directory.



CloningCloningCloningCloningCloningCloningCloningCloningCloning

C10nln8C10nln8C10nln8C10nln8C10nln8C10nln8C10nln8C10nln8C10nln8C10nln8

Where technological invasion into all of our lives has been accepted as a necessity of living in a dangerous world (a world where the dangers come from those who use the latest tools against us. Ouroboros anyone?), reproductive changes will be driven strictly by economics. Face it: sex sells. Prostitution is not only legal in many parts of the world, it is a thriving business with owners of some of the larger cathouses considering selling stock, and the



only businesses able to succeed on the Internet thus far have been dedicated to pornography. With women constantly applying to be artificial inseminated with the sperm of Nobel laureates and Forbes 500 groupies, there is a definite market. Cloning is just the next logical step.

To paraphrase Harlan Ellison, what's the use of having money if you can't use it? There's a market for nearly everything: fake dog poop, white slavery, sleeping gimps, child porn, and most of it is done willingly. No one is being coerced into buy-

C10nlu8C10nlu8C10nlu8C10nlu8C10nlu8C10nlu8C10nlu8C10nlu8C10nlu8C10nlu8

ing fake dog-poop. The best way for the government to control cloning would be economically. If they were really smart, they would change birth certificates so they could double as official copyright notices. Any human clones then become copyright infringements. Then they'd have to worry about China cutting black-market clones ("Hey buddy, want a spare?").

Besides, Hollywood (if she could) has made cloning out to be the coolest thing since the Spruce Goose and it's difficult to feel apprehensive. Movie after movie has shown the power of cloning. *Jurassic Park*: cloned dinosaurs running amuck killing people? Cooooool. *Multiplicity*: a woman getting screwed by three genetically identical men? Again, coooooool. Clones of Adolph Hitler running around in Argentina? Well, not so cool...but funny.

Don't get me wrong, I understand the biological implications of cloning perfectly. I just don't care. A

shrinking pool of genetic variation is a serious problem, biologically speaking, but if some stupid git thinks they are the apex of evolution and that it just doesn't get any better than this, so be it. Even if an ego-maniac like George Foreman wants to make his offspring even more like himself (Hi, I'm George, this is my brother George, this is my other brother George, and our newest edition... George), that's his business. The desire for more sameness and continuity is in each of us to a greater or lesser degree. If it weren't, then most of the staff of GDT wouldn't have been so traumatized by all the kids in junior high trying to be just like each other...and trying to screw each others' siblings. Then again, frats and bitch-houses are along the same lines. For that matter, so is any social organization.

All biological concerns aside, I don't really see what the problem is. What's that, Senator Christopher "Git" Bond, a Missourian Republican? "Humans are not God and therefore should not play God"? Well, don't we do that already? You know, with the exception of a few individual parakeets and all cats, I've

never run into a more self-important group with no particularly good reason for it than humans. Looking at things in perspective, you have to admit that mankind seems to think it can should play God just because we have opposable thumbs.

Don't believe me? OK. You're right, Fat Man and Little Boy could never be considered playing God.[†] Then again, if we are made in God's image, maybe everything we do is driven by our desire to be God. After centuries of mystics searching for God, NASA's activities (the National Aeronautics and Space Association, as opposed to the National Association for Sword Advancement) are only a more advanced version of the Tower of Babel. Besides, Yhwh told his cute little bipeds to be fruitful (i.e. not taste good with cheese) and multiply. Up until this moment we've only been able to add to



[†] What do you want for Christmas, guys?—I wanna decide who lives and who dies!—Oh, I don't know....



Senator Tom Harkin looking quite pleased with himself.

our numbers. Thanks to Henry Ford and Dr. Ian Wilmut, humanity is on the verge of complying with Yhwh's commandment. We really could multiply.

Personally, I prefer to go about things in a more natural manner, but if some socially overzealous parents want to give birth to the most beautiful child in the world, who are we to forbid it? It's about time we killed our last sacred cow. Just as the sun does not revolve around the Earth, the Earth should no longer revolve around mankind.

At least Senator Tom Harkin, a Democratic Illianawan, agrees. That man has seen the future and is willing to replicate himself in it:

"To attempt to limit human knowledge is demeaning to human nature. What utter, utter nonsense to think we can hold up a hand and say stop it." He went on to say, "Human cloning will take place in my lifetime, and I don't fear it. I welcome it. I think it has untold benefits for humankind."

Right on, Tom! Now there's a man with vision! ("There's a man with vision. There's another man with vision. And there...oh...no, he's not a man with vision. My friend, you are blind. You are not a visionary.")

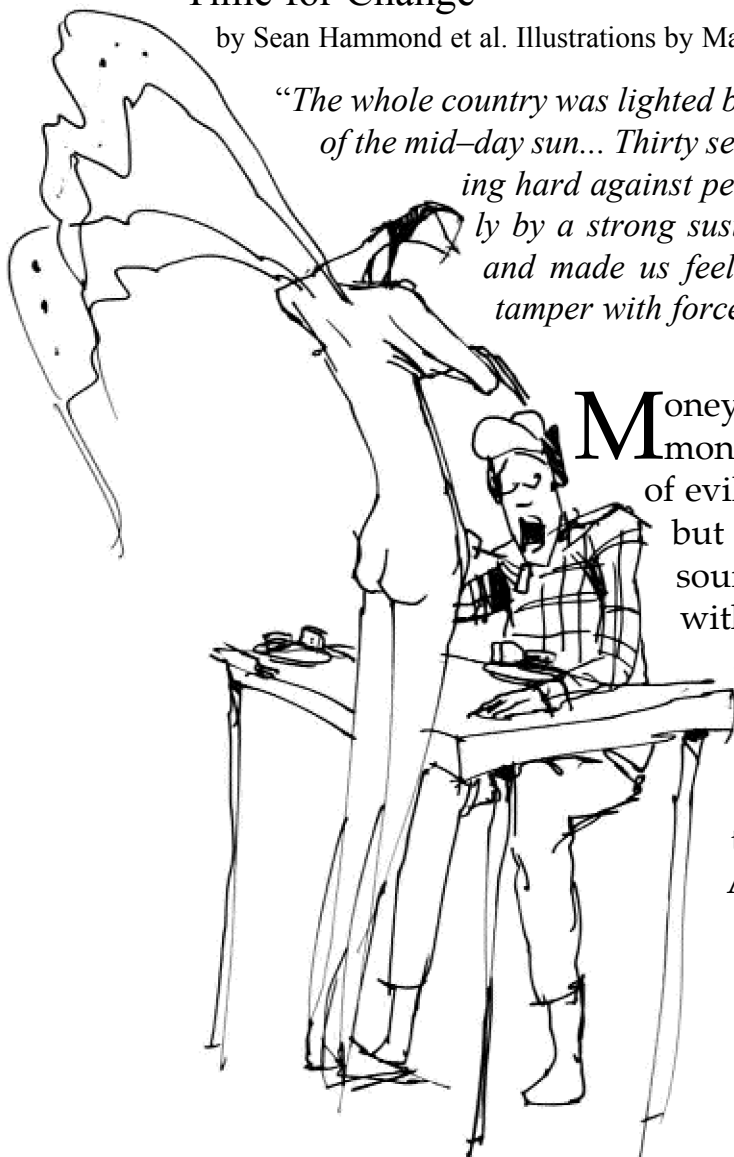
Time for Change

by Sean Hammond et al. Illustrations by Matt Mesner (Vol. 9, Iss. 6)

"The whole country was lighted by a searing light with the intensity many times that of the mid-day sun... Thirty seconds after the explosion came, the air blast pressing hard against people and things, to be followed almost immediately by a strong sustained awesome roar which warned of doomsday and made us feel that we puny things were blasphemous to dare tamper with forces heretofore reserved to the Almighty."

—Bank Examiner auditing one of the new reserves

Money is a funny thing. The Bible says that love of money is the source of evil (actually it's the love of evil that's the source of money. Ironical, ain't it?), but as far as I can see, the lack of money is the source of much of people's dissatisfaction. Those with heaps of cash are rarely seen worrying about how they are going to meet their next student loan payment or, at an even more basic level, whether they can afford caviar. But they never have to worry about whether they will have enough money to buy food.[†] After all, food is what other people eat. The



closest they have had to a bad night's sleep is when they wonder whether all the arrangements have been made with the caterer for their daughter's debutante ball.

Conversely, those who are living in poverty are fairly cheery. They may live in squalor, they may be looked down upon, but (at least outside of urban areas) they, their wife, and their 48 children are hardened, proud people who, when faced with the thought of where their next meal is coming from, go out into the yard and kill a 12-gauge or load their chicken and go hunting.³

It is in the Middle Class that misery from money is most evident. Evolving from the traders and merchants of the Middle Ages, today's middle class is (pardon me if I sound like Engels and/or Marx),^δ little more than a glorified serf. Capitalism is a feudal system, with the Lords (CEOs) at the top of the pyramid and all his vassals under him...and in the some instances, this last

statement is to be taken literally when referring you attractive vassals. I'm not saying this is good or bad; I'm just tellin ya the way I see it.



Anyway, money itself is a curious thing, if you think about it. Barter is easy to understand: I think that my horse is worth 1614 tomatoes, so we make a fair trade. But money is neat. Believed to have been invented somewhere on the Anatolian Plateau in what is now modern Turkey, someone said, "Hey! That metal is really rare. I'll trade you 1614 rabid, headless roosters[¥] for it."

Eventually, people started weighing the pieces of metal, and standards were made. A seven klog piece of gold was worth the same as a horse. That's all fine and good, but all those klogs got heavy.

Eventually, someone with thick walls and a lot of friends with weapons said, "I'll just keep all your gold here and give you

[†] Of course, that's what food stamps are for. However, there still exist people out there who, for whatever reason—usually pride—are unwilling to reach out, however tentatively, pressing their slender, cold fingers into the Great Grab-Bag-O'-Life that is the American Welfare System proffered to the public by thousands of reverent do-gooders, who most commonly resemble high school bullies ("Do you want this? You're gonna have to reach for it. Oh you can reach farther than that.).

In a way, welfare is very similar to faerie food: faerie lore indicates that if you ever encounter a fae or enter their Realm, you should never eat their food. Besides the obvious fact that it taste like piss, it binds you to their world forever. Using a more familiar example, Persephone ate an undisclosed number of seeds from the pomegranate after being spirited away by Pluto to Hades and is forced to return to His dark realm every year, causing grief in her mother Demeter, who lets the land die (winter).

Welfare seems all too similar; if you accept their help, offered in genuine good will, you may be bound to them for the rest of your life.

³ Helpful Hint(tm): Inbreeding often causes insanity among the ruling classes, and disorientation among the less well to do. Besides, that chicken has been in the family for years and is responsible for 7 confirmed kills.

^δ The quintessential comedy duo of the 1800's.

these light pieces of copper that say what they're worth. If they don't believe you, tel-l'um to come see me and my boys. If you don't believe me, me and my boys will come and see you." In that moment, banking and the Mafia were born.

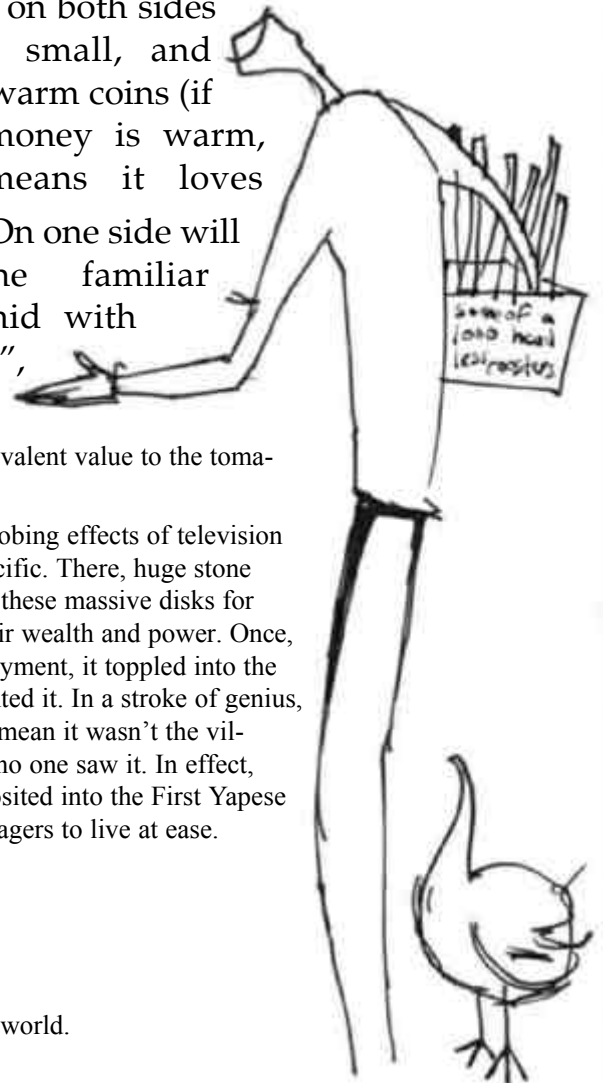
So, thanks to those long forgotten clever chaps, we carry around discs of metal or paper, which isn't inherently worth anything. Yet, we all agree that a given pile of metal of differing size and composition represents one dollar of gold...almost. Our economic system — and as far as I know, every modern economic system⁻ is based on the gold standard. Periodically, there are those who call for a change. Here in the United States, a popular alternative is the silver standard. A platinum standard has been tossed around, but rejected. In some regions in Latin America they still kick around the Coca standard. Few areas seriously consider salt anymore, so gold is still king.

But gold isn't really that rare, and has no built in safeguards to control ones accumulation of it. Not so with plutonium. Isolated in 1940 by the bright boys working

on the atomic bomb, plutonium²³⁹ is some of the rarest and most powerful stuff on earth. Why shouldn't it be our basis for cash?

Starting in 2005, the Treasury Department and the Department of Defense will issue several thousand "dollars" worth of the new plutonium based currency. As a special treat in this first, highly historic issuing, they plan on doing away with the whole concept of money and issue the real stuff: thousands of kilograms of weapons grade plutonium.

Referred to as Pluti after the Greek God Plutus, son of Demeter (Hey! This is starting to feel like a show by James Burke. Kick Ass!), and the personification of wealth, the first issuing will have the standard graven images on both sides of the small, and oddly warm coins (if your money is warm, that means it loves you²). On one side will be the familiar "pyramid with an eye",



[¥] Tomatoes are a gift of the new world, and thus not available for sale in the early agrarian markets of Turkey. Thus we assumed something of equivalent value to the tomato.

⁻ The obvious exception to this are the societies not yet addicted to the strobing effects of television sets. One example are the Yapese people of the Caroline Islands in the Pacific. There, huge stone donut shaped discs are used as a kind of currency. Villages will exchange these massive disks for services with one another and erect them around the village to display their wealth and power. Once, while one of these behemoth was being transported across a lagoon for payment, it toppled into the sea. The poor people struggled to retrieve the stone, but conditions prevented it. In a stroke of genius, some brainiac suggested that, just because the stone was in the sea didn't mean it wasn't the village's. They could still own the stone and have that prestige even though no one saw it. In effect, they invented banking. It is unknown whether other stone discs were deposited into the First Yapese Harbor, but the interest earned off the first stone alone is allowing the villagers to live at ease.

² The Magic Penny Song:

Love is something if you give it away, give it away, give it away.
 Love is something if you give it away, you end up having more.
 It's just like a magic penny, hold it tight and you won't have any.
 Lend it, spend it, and you'll have so many. You'll blow up half of this world.
 Love is something if you give it away, give it away, give it away.
 Love is something if you give it away, you end up having more.

symbolizing Trinity, Little Boy, and Fat Man where the all seeing eye is the unused fourth bomb produced. The glory about the eye is the atomic fireball itself. Of course the inscription *OVUS ORDO SECLORUM* remains, because that's exactly what the Trinity project brought about: a new world order. On the flip side will be the scientists and leaders who brought us the power of the atom: Albert Einstein (1 plutus), Otto Hahn and Fritz Strassman (2 pluti), General Leslie Groves (5 pluti), Enrico Fermi (10 pluti featuring a backdrop of the University of Chicago's squash court), Emperor Hirohito (25 pluti) and of course Robert Oppenheimer (50 pluti—the largest denomination), just to name a few.

Weighing approximately 100g, the Eini, as we're sure it will be called, is the smallest unit. The largest, the Oppenheimer, is also the rarest. Featuring a unique departure from the rest of the coins in that it lacks the pyramid on the back, it has the gaunt, tortured face of Robert Oppenheimer on one side and a depiction of the many armed Siva on the other. In addition to the *NOVUS ORDO* inscription, the side having Oppenheimer's likeness will proudly read *PERDITOR MUNDORUM*. Unfortunately, the Oppenheimer is over 5kg and tends make big holes when exposed to most anything.

Given the inherent danger and physical properties of pluti, the mass of any given denomination will decrease over time, thereby decreasing its value. Similar to Twinkies and soda, pluti will have a discrete "Best if used by" stamped onto their surface allowing the holder to know how long they have to use their currency. It will be a society spending as much pluti as quickly possible. Our standard of living will dwarf that of other countries. And all thanks to radiation...thanks Madam Curie.

To deal with the unfortunate quality that the money tends to explode when more than 50 pluti are in one place, banks will become like nuclear reactors. There, within their lead lined walls where surveillance cameras watch all who come and go (the eye!), bank tellers will don their lead lined clothing, put on their radiation badge, and count out their customers' money, knowing that a miscount could result is a pile of change that has reached critical mass and ruined their last chances for a promotion.

And talk about having your money work for you! Interest on your money will be determined by how much energy your monies can supply while they're used for fuel to super-heated water and run turbines. Actually this will result in a loop hole for the banks/reactors to squeeze a few more pluti out of you and your pile: since they will undoubtedly become the cheapest source of energy around, you will, in effect, be giving the bank back part of your interest each month with your electric bill payment.

Already, Nike has begun designing clothing specially adapted for use with radioactive currency. Lined with a thin, comfortable layer of lead, the company plans on promoting the attire not only as an aid in exercise, but being safe, under the motto "Just In Case."

Of course, giving out a virtually unlimited amount of weapons grade plutonium to the general public could be seen as a threat, but that is a stance only taken by the same mamby-pamby liberals who think hand guns and automatic weapons should be banned. The Treasury Department, taking council from the NRA, has taken the stance that there will be no nuclear threat if everyone has weapon grade plutonium. I concur. Once everyone has the ability to blow up a chunk of firmament and it's occupants, soci-

ety will start taking care of the bad apples in the barrel. The whole world will become a better, safer place. Besides, using a nuclear weapon on an enemy under the plutonium money system would be like making bullets out of gold today. It would be absurd to think about wasting all that wealth!

Removal of large scale nuclear threats does not mean that unwitting individuals won't become threats to themselves and others. Example: I tend to horde change. It's a habit I picked up from my father. He would come home after being away on a construction job for months, and have a suitcase full of the jingly-jangly stuff. I remember helping him and my mother roll over \$100 in loose change one time. Over time my family has gotten increasingly more advanced in its change hoarding in that they now use a large water-cooler container.¹ Hoarding change could become a criminal offense when dealing with pluti. I can just imagine the headlines as coin collectors and little old ladies unwittingly reach super critical mass with their coins and level whole city blocks....

INT. APARTMENT ROOM DAY

An old woman sits counting change at a small desk in front of an open window. She's softly humming to herself. All over the interior of the room are an immense number of cats. Meowing, sitting, eating, they dominate the room. Outside, the day is brilliantly clear. The sky so empty that one gets a sense of what infinity means. As the woman continues counting all other sounds fade out. This is emphasized by shots of cats meowing without any noise. Closeup of the woman's hand as it reaches

for the 50th pluti. Cut to shot out of focus and slow motion. Woman's hand enters the scene slowly. The only sound is the woman humming, real time. The sun catches the metal and it glints brightly in the camera.

Fast zoom away from hand out window and away from building accompanied by a rushing noise and humming. The cityscape is that of a large urban area. Chicago, New York, London. The camera stops five miles away and the humming of the old woman continues. The humming stops suddenly and after only a short pause, the woman is heard to speak for the first time.

WOMAN(faintly concerned)

Oh dear...

The spot where the apartment building is five miles distant erupts in a nuclear fireball. Allow the full mushroom cloud to form before cutting to—

EXT. CITY STREET

—scean of people down on the street. The light from the blast brightens their day, but they are far enough away not to be incinerated. After a slight pause as the rumble passes and people stop to look up, as though hearing thunder and looking for rain clouds, they continue on their way. All this time the sound of the explosion has been fading and is replaced by a news bulletin.

TYPICAL ANNOUNCER VOICE

Coming up on CNN Headline News: Another blast rocks Manhattan as a coin collector reaches critical mass, reports on how Ben Netan-yahoo and Mabus Hussein are *both* the Third Antichrist, and Socks the Cat mistakenly eaten by Vietnamese immigrants.

¹ This was fine until my younger brother peed into it. After a few weeks we finally noticed the unusual smell coming from the change bottle. Of course all the coins had to be washed, but the bonus was that the urine has stripped the silver off of most of the coins. Whenever we paid with those greenish, ancient looking coins, we received curious looks. God, my family is fun.

Global Warming

by Sean Hammond, Jason Olshefsky *et al.* Illustrations by Matt Mesner, Vol. 8, Iss. 8

In recent weeks the Republican Hate Machine has shifted its tactics away from scandalizing President Clinton and his penis with “distinguishing characteristics,” to Vice President Tree Hugger Gore. Scandal, shmandal! Who cares if they used a Buddhist temple to help raise money or rolled some modern robber barrens over coffee? Certainly not me. And apparently, not the administration either. Instead of using Gump technology to document tapes,[†] the president and his homies have been jetting about. While the Prez and the first Chick have been in Brazil, Gore has been lecturing weather forecasters on the inevitable effects of Global Warming.

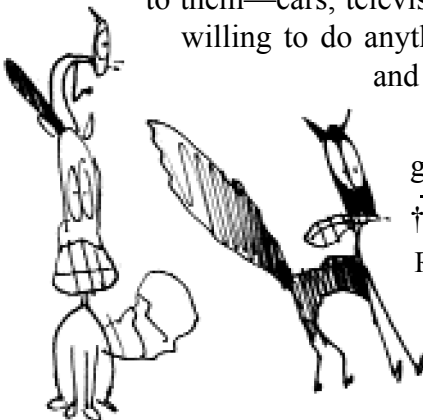
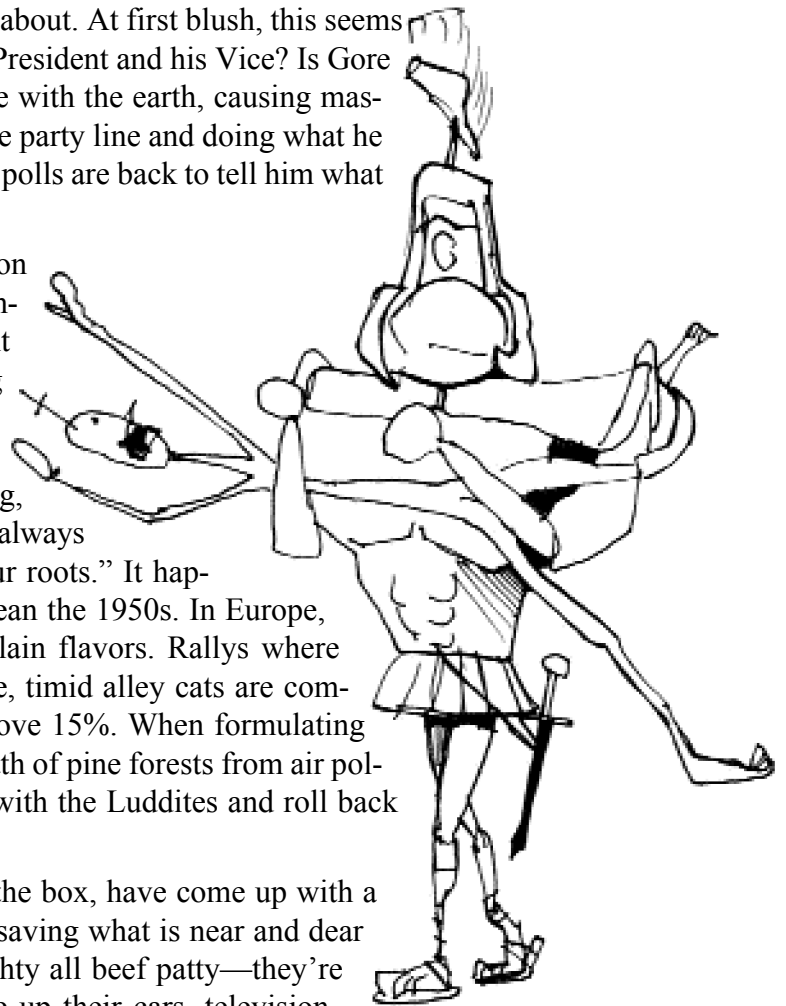
Despite the fact that numerous industrialized nations have begun serious talk about setting emission standards, the United States, land of the free, home of the brave, and apparently of land mines and gads of carbon dioxide emissions, has refused to sit down and talk about. At first blush, this seems to be the real scandal. Was there a rift between the President and his Vice? Is Gore a rogue politician, miles across and ready to collide with the earth, causing massive destruction—oh! I mean, is he going against the party line and doing what he genuinely feels to be right...even before the opinion polls are back to tell him what is right? No. Stop being cynical!

As is usually the case, there's more going on here than most people realize. Though global warming is pretty much accepted as fact by most sentient denizens on the planet, the European idea of cutting back on emissions is, well... so European. Packed with a rich and full history, our Euro-spending brothers across the pond are, all and all, a boring, reactionary lot. Whenever a problem arises there's always the rise of conservatives calling for a “return to our roots.” It happens in the United States as well, but here, they mean the 1950s. In Europe, they usually mean the Roman Empire, Holy or Plain flavors. Rallies where men dressed as gladiators throw Christians to large, timid alley cats are common in Italy whenever the unemployment goes above 15%. When formulating how to deal with global warming and the steady death of pine forests from air pollution, the Europeans were forced to compromise with the Luddites and roll back emissions.

The Americans, known for thinking outside the box, have come up with a better schemes to deal with it. For the purposes of saving what is near and dear to them—cars, television, and the mighty all beef patty—they're willing to do anything...except give up their cars, television, and their cow patties (uh, yeah).

Truth be told, between you, me, and the hedgehog, global warming from greenhouse gasses isn't all that important to most humans. In fact, most

[†]And don't kid yourself: they had more than enough time to alter the video tapes that Republicans have been watching with more interest than *Sperminator 2*, *Judgement Spray*. Imagine President Clinton portrayed as a bastion of virtue as wealthy white slavers from Asia kneel at his feet offering him jewels, concubines, and fists full of money. “No, no! Take these poor, misguided souls away!” They could have done it, but they didn't.



Americans would like the world to be a bit warmer.[†] The real problem is that all the deforestation around the Equator has reduced the earth's massive midriff, causing it to rotate faster.^δ Since temperature is average kinetic energy, and all of the earth's mass is speeding up, the planet is warming. While global warming might mean New York City will have to replace taxi's with gondolas ("Hey! I'm poling here!"), the change in the planets rotational speed screws up television reception because all those fancy geosynchronous satellites are still going the old speed.³

Damn it! That's unacceptable. I want my MTV!

Endeavoring to protect every American's God Given Right™ to cable television, the government has called upon various brain trusts to develop policies aimed at restoring the Earth's baby-makin' hips. One of the more ambitious concepts, made almost realistic thanks to NAFTA (God, what hasn't NAFTA done for us?) and Clinton's recent trip to Brazil, was the largest US proposed construction project since the WPA.

Under this plan, the United States and nearly every other nation along the equator with the exception of Chad,[¥] would enter a historic agreement to construct the largest mall in history. Stretching 12,756.3 kilometers, this tribute to Freeman Dyson would span the globe like rubber bands on sheep testicles, but instead of causing testicles to shrivel up and fall off, the mall would restore the needed mass to the Earth's equator.



Voila, problem solved. Mass restored, mall erected, cultures marked down. The Yanomamo must go! As a bonus, the sanctity of American pop culture would be upheld and introduced to tribes that currently don't know the joy of seatless pants. But the mall would have several drawbacks, starting with the long lines for the mag-lev monorail system (propelled by the super power of superconducting, yttrium barium copper oxide infused collectible Freaky Freezies which are appropriately supercooled by Dairy Queen Blizzards™), and copious amounts of human waste slurry pumped into the southern edge of the Sargasso Sea, eventually enabling it to eventually be mined for coal. Unfortunately, projections showed there would be the worst ethnic battles in the history of the world, due to the cross-cultural differences of the mall rats. Spurred on by the stresses of the holiday season, the worst of the mall rats would form a neo-Warsaw Pact and vow to oppress the thousands of janitors dressed up as Santa Claus, resulting losses of sales approaching three easy payments of US\$19.99 and destabilizing the mall's structure

[†]One of GDT's own is personally attempting to make the Great Plains a shallow ocean again. Each morning when he first gets up, he rushes out to his car and starts it. It isn't until he's almost out of gas several hours later that he goes to work. Keep up the good work, Josh; you'll have those glaciers gone in no time.

^δLet's say Brian Boytano is spinning with his arms out then we chop them off at his shoulders, he spins the same speed. If he simply pulls his arms in at the last moment to avoid our whirling blade, he spins faster. The former is called fun, the latter is called centripetal force.

³Kind of like Brian's severed arms.

[¥]Republic of Chad: Infant mortality 122 out of 1000 (better than some batting averages), they make beer, cigarettes, textiles, and have a literacy rate of 17%. With unexploited uranium, they have no use for the vibrating chair at Brookstone.

in the segment off the coast of Easter Island.

Because the US didn't want to piss off Chad at any cost (that's one country you don't cross. They'll crush you like a grape), the mall was placed on the back burner. Luckily the boys at NASA have, of course, been on top of the accelerating earth problem for years...just like the rest of us. The difference is they knew about it and were thinking up ways to stop it. When good old John said, "We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things," what do you think he was referring to? Our boys, God bless'em, have been making a flotilla of Boeing Sea Launch platforms with rockets that make the Saturn 5 look like a Geo Metro. They plan to spread them out along the equator with the business end pointed to the sunset in an attempt to slow the rotation of the Moon's moon (it's all relative, baby). Unfortunately, they've been busy defending their budget and acting like AAA for the world's orbiters, leaving little time to complete their goals in recent years, much less by the end of the 1960's.

In the mean time, all the cows we've had in the little latitudes have been helping slow things down, but physicists realize the mass of a cow is much less than that of a tree, let alone a Dysonian mall, and we simply can't achieve a high enough bovine density...unless we stack them like cordwood, which tends to make the cows less viable. Recent years have seen advances in effective bovine densities by creating smaller cows with leaner meat. Packed into Japanese style apartment

complexes, some more advanced beef producers can approach a gigacow per cubic kilometer, which is really pushing the envelope. That's 10 cows in the area of one normal cow. Small cows means less mass, however, and no matter how many midget cows you have, they're still stupid looking. What we need are super cows! Giant, genetically engineered super cows towering majestically hundreds of feet in the air...totally without heads thanks new cloning technology. If you think Recombinant Bovine Growth Hormone (RBGH) is just for more milk, you're sadly mistaken.

Mind you, such an undertaking just can't be done in one generation.[†] It has to be done gradually, and our cattle are already starting to be evolve into Megacattle, friend of all children. In fact, the average domestic cow has gotten bigger,^δ but the experimental cows are already ten times larger than their domestic cousins. This will solve a number of problems. First and foremost, the giant cow will replace the trees around the equator and keep the Earth aligned to the precious satellites. Second, big cows mean big beef. Every Good American™ wants more beef—think economies of scale. Of course there's the issue of all that supersized feces, but all that nitrate has to be good for something. Anyhow, the plan is that by the year 2001, we'll have massive farms of six story cows spread about the Equator, bringing balance and peace to the world. Well, ok...maybe just balance. Least until some drunk frat boys push one of those bad boys over.

[†]In fact, it was tried with disastrous results. In the mid 1980s the first calf from the Quinity Project. Weighing three metric tons one month into the pregnancy, the mother of the experimental calf collapsed under the weight and formed a singularity. Used to dispose of the government's more sensitive documents, you can see the singularity at an attraction in Wall Drug, South Dakota—just hold on to your keys.

^δThere are actually fewer cows now than in 1976, but that number of cows makes more beef. Either we're eating brain stems or the cows are getting bigger.

Toopid People

by Sean Hammond et al. Illustrations by Matt Weaver (Vol. 10, Iss. 7)

"The amount of common sense is fixed, but the population keeps going up."

"Come out, come out where ever you are!"

An obese man wearing Osh Kosh B'Gosh coveralls and flip-flops making ridiculous "flip-SLAP" sounds, because of his limp, exits through the screen door—literally through the

screen door. He evidently had forgotten that the screen door even existed and blundered his way into it, ripping it from the edges and bending the lightweight metal. Warped and under stress it wasn't designed for, the screen leapt from the sliding glass door frame like a spring with a satisfying "PWOANNNGGGG!" landing unceremoniously ten meters⁷ away and sending a large cloud of dust into the stagnant early afternoon air. After a moment of disorientation, the screen killer, with a voice more like the low growl of a creature on the island of Dr. Moreau—a growl that rippled through one's ears and caused images of banjos and uni-tooths to flit through one's subconscious—says, "I'm sorry, he can't come out to play. He says He won't come out until *you* decide to play fair. You've got to tell Athena and the Lady to go home first."

In the second floor window of what, for lack of a better word, is the house from which the behemoth of a man emerged, an aged and sun stained shade shifted and for the briefest of moments, He could be seen peering out with a troubled look on His once proud face.

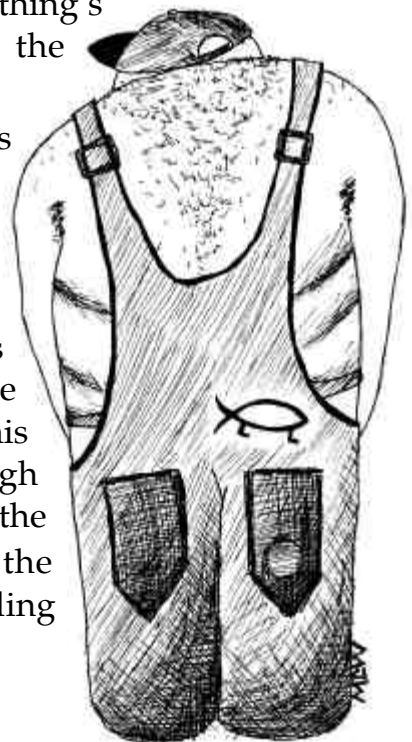
In a fit of contrariness, the petitioner raised his fists to the heavens and whatever personifications still dared to abide within them and vociferated, "Evolution! You can't hide in there forever! You'll have to come out sometime."

"Yes," He replied at a near whisper, "but by that time you will all have died." Slowly He withdrew from the window, deeper into the semi-darkness of the room to wait. Patience was something He had plenty of, for He'd caught Her eons ago with Her guard down. After years of drying, pulverizing, and bottling, there was more than enough of Her to wait out Mankind's cleverness. He some-

times thought He could even out wait the Lady's fascination with these strangely intelligent idiot bipeds, but He never allowed Himself to fully contemplate the idea, lest the Lady find out and spite Him for all time....

Evolution is no longer in action, His role of ultimately forcing the world to make sense and be as one with the Gods of Enthalpy in a sea of Entropy has been usurped under the guise of equal opportunities for unequal people. Despite the noble sentiment that we're all brothers, it's fairly clear that we are not all created equal. In a just society, everyone is equal under the law and should be given the same opportunities (the operative word being equal. No special benefits anywhere. Yes, I know the argument behind affirmative action, but forcing businesses to meet their quota of blacks is demeaning. Forcing bigots to hire people they don't like won't help remove racism. Re-education camps and furnaces for the helpless cases maybe, but not affirmative action). But when knives need little labels saying "Caution. May be sharp" in order to ensure that the playing field is level for all people to understand how knives operate, then something's wrong with the game.

There was a time, not so long ago, when a man who decided to pick up his child and lift the cute tot over his head, as though supplicant to the Gods,⁷ into the inviting, spiraling



⁷Jimmy Carter would be proud. Take that, Free Masons.

°You've got to capitalize "Gods" because they think they're an ethnic group.

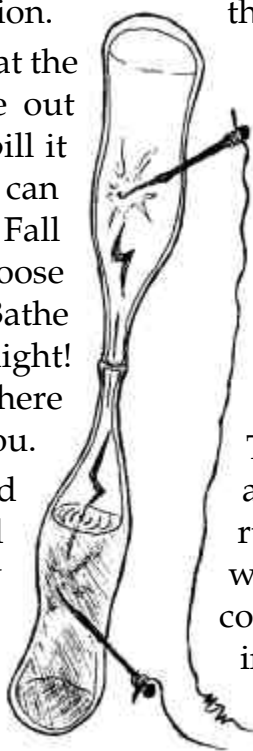
arms of a ceiling fan would not have been allotted a large cash settlement from the company for its failure to place a warning sticker on the fan saying "Warning, sticking children's heads into moving blades is not nice and may result in toddler dismemberment. Do not sharpen blades," and would probably have been stoned or squashed underneath the middle school's censored book collection.

Today, however, it is expected that the stupid and the careless should come out ahead. Buy a cup of hot coffee and spill it on your crotch. Oh, boy, oh boy! You can sue for an ungodly amount of money. Fall off a ladder cause you placed it on loose gravel? Eat a moldy chicken finger? Bathe your gremlin squeaky clean (Bright light! Bright light!)? It's not your fault, and there are millions in cash prizes awaiting you.

Of course, the statement "stupid people shouldn't breed" is funny and may have some merit, but as my mother always said, "The world needs its politicians and sanitation engineers." Besides, the truly stupid people don't do things that end up endangering themselves. They tend to live out quiet, banjo filled lives...at least until their single tooth falls out and they can't chew their only source of carbon: Slim-Jims™; they just gum it. If you gum a Slim-Jim long enough, it disintegrates into thick, gelatinous bolus...and gives you mouth cancer.

No, it is not the stupid people. It's the moderately intelligent ones and the ignorant. Case in point: when I was 11 I learned, quite by accident, of the Miller Urey Experiment. Biologists can skip to the next paragraph while I explain. Miller was one of those crazy scientists who believe that life EVOLVED, and set up an experiment to test whether the hypothetical conditions on earth several bil-

lion years ago could give rise to organic compounds. To make a very interesting experiment short and dry, he filled a big jar with various gasses and water, hooked it up to some electricity to simulate lightning and let it loose. Several days later he cracked that bad boy open and found adenine, one of the most common biological components and one of the bases of DNA, had been formed.



Cool, I thought to myself. Armed with the various parts left over from years of tinkering with electrical equipment, I set about to build my own. Of course I had no way to test for organic compounds, but it sounded like a cool thing to do. It was better than trying to make friends.

So after a few days I'd done it. Two Sprite™ bottles attached to one another by the stems, a copper hose running from the top to the bottom and wrapped in fish tank hosing to act as a condenser. To simulate lightning, I had inserted two knitting needles through the sides, but with a modification: one was actually in the water at the bottom while the other was a few inches above. As for an atmosphere, I couldn't really simulate an ammonia rich sky, but I did my best by mixing vinegar and baking soda and letting the heavier CO₂ flow into the bottles prior to sealing it all up with epoxy and tar. That done, I filled an old crock pot with water to act as a water bath, suspended the assembly in the water, and began heating.

The moment of truth came, and I attached what was left of an old fluorescent light to the needles. Wonders of wonders! It worked. Little sparks leapt from the needles and the water was starting to simmer. Knowing my parents would never approve, I moved everything into the basement where it

• Makes mouths happy.

ran for a few more days.

Finally, I wandered down to see if everything was still working and saw much to my dismay that the needles were no longer sparking. Acting as a sacrificial anode, the needle in the water had already disintegrated, leaving only a jagged piece of metal just above the surface of the water.

"Well that's easy enough to fix," I said and slightly tipped the apparatus so the needle contacted the water once more....

Now, as far as I can guess, in the course of several days, the electricity had been splitting the water into molecular hydrogen and oxygen (At some level I knew what should have happened, but hadn't thought the experiment through). So there I was, mucking around with a sealed vessel containing hydrogen, oxygen, and electricity.

As soon as the water hit the needle, there was a spark and I saw the most amazing thing in my life. Descriptions of Saint Elmo's Fire had always fascinated me, but I'd never seen anything like it until then. A sky-blue light emanated from the needle and fluidly moved away as though it had a mission. It crawled up the sides of the vessels, rolling back on itself and constantly changing shape. By this time, I'd

taken a step back, but couldn't tear my eyes off of what was happening.

When the cerulean blue cloud reached the top chamber, it suddenly grew larger, as though angry at not finding a way to escape.

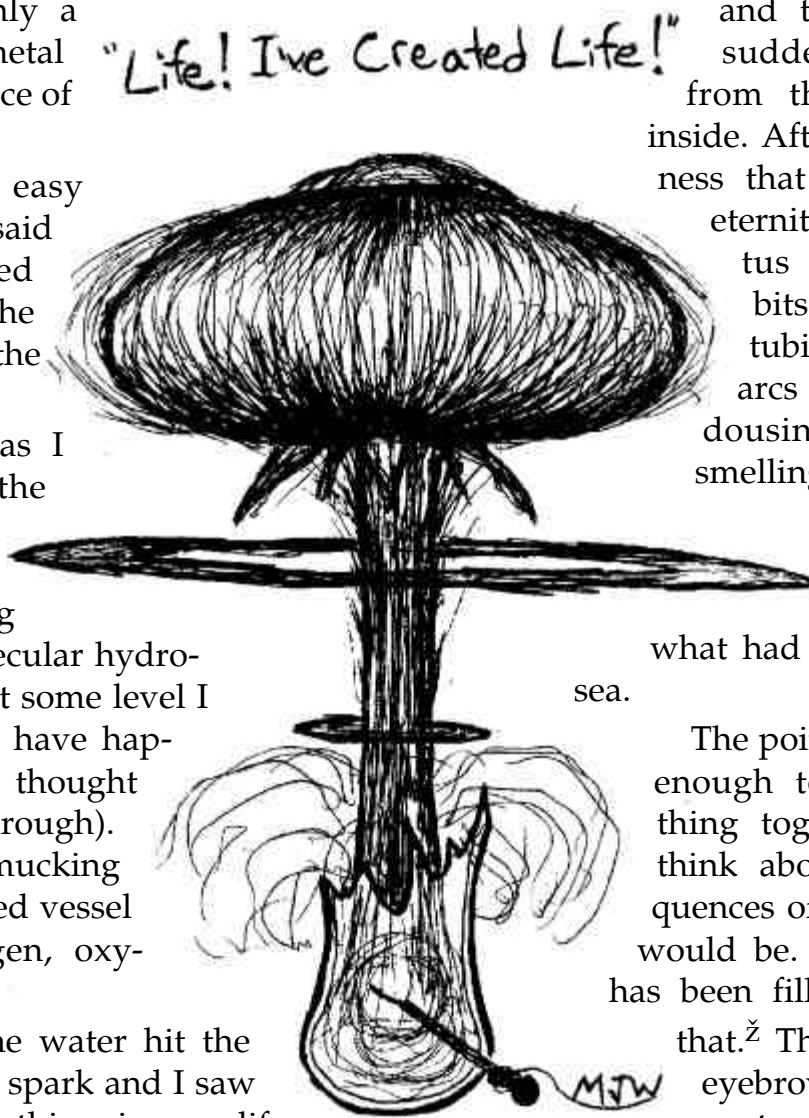
It turned from blue to orange and the entire apparatus suddenly compressed from the vacuum created inside. After a moment of stillness that seemed to last for eternity, the entire apparatus exploded, sending bits of plastic, wires, and tubing flying in fractured arcs across the cellar and dousing me with oddly smelling water.

"Holy shit," I said, awestruck and dripping in what had been my primordial sea.

The point? Well, I was smart enough to cobble the damn thing together, but failed to think about what the consequences of such an experiment would be. Then again, my life has been filled with events like that.^ž The time I burned my

eyebrows off trying to build a steam engine, the time I

burned my leg hair off when my homemade cannon misfired, the time I burned my...well, you don't really want to hear about that. Evolution should have come for me with his sickle long ago, but I'm still here. Why? Mainly Luck. She's fickle, but ever since I told her the joke about the Jew, the Protestant, and



^ž Implying "I dumb."

^ð So a Jew walks into a bar, he's got a corn cob under one arm and some unleavened bread under the other. The Protestant says,...

the corn cob.^δ She's helped me out now and then. But more importantly, I'm alive simply because of the level of sophistication we've achieved.

Let's say that when my Miller Urey Experiment exploded, the copper tube had gone through my skull and given me a lobotomy (Kids: Phineas Gage!). 100 years ago I would have been a very dead little boy, but today, I would have been rushed to the hospital where doctors would have worked over me until I was a very healthy emotionally crippled little boy (Kids: Phineas Gage!). Maybe doctors should have, in addition to all the insurance paperwork, a questionnaire finding out if you were hurt by someone else (good), an act of God (better), or if it was your own damn fault (sorry, no dice. Please go bleed somewhere else. What were you thinking? Trying to make a parachute out of trash bags....)

It has been said that Luck favors the stupid (see above mention of the corn joke) and a thorough investigation into the past of Mankind, which would take all of a couple of minutes, should unearth enough evidence to prove the theory sufficiently (all stories of the dodo aside). The manifestation of Luck has so conspired, in the recent past, to unbalance the ratio of stupid people, that the manifestation of Evolution has been out sourced and gone home to live with His parents to whine.

As long as we're clever and lucky, we've got Evolution beat. He can't get us directly. Sure, He's trying to sneak around us by mak-

ing bacteria and viruses become resistant to all our very clever medicines, but He can't get us just yet. We're the smartest idiots He's ever come up against. He's got Time on His side, so don't be surprised when he shows up one day with a six-pack and says, "Have a soda. It's full of aluminum goodness. Hey, we're missing ABC's TGIF line-up!"

Will we recognize this long lost acquaintance after so many years? Will we invite Him into our homes to eat our microwaved dinners, watch our TV and play Mah Jong with our DNA? Or will we see Evolution as the bum He is, whose occupation we've replaced as easily as the elevator operator?

