

The

SCAM

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April Fools!



Mensa is an international society in which the sole requirement for qualification for membership is a score at or above the 98th percentile on any of a number of standardized intelligence tests. If you are interested in joining Mensa, or learning more about us, please contact any of our officers.

The
SCAM
space coast area mensa

Editor
MICHAEL MOAKLEY
moakleymj@bellsouth.net



Calendar Coordinator
Volunteer Needed!

Assembly/Circulation
CLARA WOODALL-MORAN
cew@cfl.rr.com

April
Birthday Greetings!!



- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 01 -- Richard Hussey | 19 -- James Dace |
| 01 -- Aundrea Scott | 21 -- Carol Lane |
| 03 -- Beth Caswell | 21 -- Richard Ward |
| 05 -- Douglas Solomon | 23 -- Mary Ellen Donahue |
| 06 -- Stanford Smith | 23 -- LaVerne Lasobeck |
| 09 -- Kelli Gillis | 24 -- Geoff Price |
| 14 -- Dana Bodine | 26 -- Alvin Baker |
| 16 -- Sandra Morgan | 28 -- Clifford Miller |
| 17 -- Suzanne Leichtling | 30 -- Charlotte Owens |
| 18 -- Patricia Thornton | |

Welcome!!

To SCAM: Gerald Durbin Christy Everette

To SCAM and Mensa: Kristi Van Sickle Milo Zonka

Welcome Back: Edward Bittar John Lurie
Frank Grieco Sam Miorelli
Rudolph Hardick Joseph Zerega



Editor's Note:

The SCAM belongs to the members of Space Coast Area Mensa. Accordingly, we welcome all material submitted for publication in The SCAM. The material may be on just about any subject. Controversial opinions or subjects are encouraged, as are rebuttals to any opinions published herein. The Editor retains the right to edit or reject any material, but will not exercise such prerogative to limit opinions or discussion of any topic.

All submissions must be received by the Editor before the 10th of the month preceding publication. Please allow extra time for mailed submissions, which may be **typed** or **legibly handwritten**. Submissions via e-mail, when possible, is preferred. They may be in **e-mail text** or any of most **word processing** formats. **All** submissions should be sent to the **Editor**, whose address, phone number and e-mail appear above.

Mewsing About



**Clara
Woodall-Moran,
LocSec**

A few years ago, I stepped out of the shadows and ran for the ExComm. I've been involved in the "business" of the group ever since. I'm bowing out for a while. We need some brave folks to step forward now, and take over the reins. But, this time has not been wasted. I think I've figured out something..."why so few show up at events". I've been given many reasons but none of them made much sense.

I believe that folks do not show up events lest they be asked, "face to face", to do something. Some have admitted to lapsing membership just to avoid having to "just say no" to requests to "do something". It apparently is very embarrassing to say no without an excuse, in person. We have several things going on that require assistance from the membership: The election of officers needs candidates; the audit committee needs to be seated; we need volunteers to help out on the RG committee; and last, but not least, we need the members to come out and party at the RG. Beyond that we do need the members to show up at events and to help fill the calendar with events.

Look into you own heart and see if you really need to say no. The ExComm meets only once a month. The Audit committee gets really busy only one night out of the year. The RG committee gets really busy only for a couple of weeks...come on, help us out here.

I appreciate your support over these few years.

**Now Is The
Time...
...to Select Our
New Leaders!**

It is that time when we will once again get to decide who will run the affairs of Space Coast Area Mensa. The NomElCom is tasked with seeking candidates for the ExComm. As of this printing, we have 3 nominees for the 5 positions on the SCAM ExComm. They are:

Joseph Smith
Helen Lee Moore
Sam Kirschten

As you can see, two positions remain vacant. This committee is certain that at least two people care enough about our group to step up to the plate. If you are one of them, and are interested in serving on the SCAM ExComm, contact one of the members listed below:

Fran Hinson
franoosh@cfl.rr.com

J. T. Moran
morwood@cfl.rr.com

Mike Moakley
Moakleymj@bellsouth.net

**From the Horse's
Mouth...**



by
Mike Moakley,
SCAM Editor
(moakleymj@
bellsouth.net)

At first, I did not believe there would be much to write about this month. In fact, I thought I was suffering from a case of Writer's Block. However, there are some matters that need to be brought to your attention.

First, while preparing the March SCAM for printing and distribution, I have committed a couple of errors regarding our regular columns. Since December, Hank Rhodes has been running a series, "*To Measure the World*". Last month's installment was Part IV, and NOT Part III as appeared in the title box. Part V, which is the final installment, runs in this issue (with the correct label. The second article is part of Art Belefant's Gourmet Guide column, "*Romania Then and Now*", contains many errors in its editing. They are too

numerous to detail here. In order to correct the errors to this piece, I will be running the corrected version in the May SCAM. My sincerest apologies to both Hank and Art.

Second, we are continuing to introduce new calendar activities. The Coffee, Etc. at the **House of Joe** in Melbourne on the first Wednesday of the month, has been showing promise, and is in its third month. This month we are introducing another new activity: Our World, Our View. Two SCAM members will be sharing their views of the pressing issues of today. It promises to be intellectually stimulating (which is one of the primary purposes of Mensa). We will continue to introduce new activities, but will need your assistance. If you have any ideas or wish to host an event, please let me or any of the ExComm members know. Our contact info is always on pages 2 and 3 of The SCAM. Which brings us to the next item.

Third, the NomElComm, of which I am a member, was only able to find *three* candidates to fill the 5 positions on the 2004-05 ExComm, all of whom are serving on the current ExComm! Not an impressive showing by any stretch of the imagination. Space Coast Area Mensa belongs to its members and, as such, depends on you to conduct its affairs. But that cannot happen if no one steps forward. This is especially true if you believe we should be doing things differently. It's up to you to step up and make the difference.

Fourth, you have read, *ad infinitum*, about the American Mensa "Proxy Quest". If you've noticed, this is the first time I am mentioning Proxy Quest. I assure you it will also be the last. I urge you to get all the facts (see last month's LocSec column for the applicable Corporation Law website), then let your conscience be your guide.



***A View... From
Somewhere Else
To Measure the
World - Part V***

by
Hank Rhodes
©2004

Author's note: The previous articles in this series described the origin and progress of the seven-year expedition to accurately measure the circumference of the earth, by the astronomers Mechain and Delambre.

The source of Mechain's malady was not generally known for 200 years. The mystery unraveled only when historian Ken Alder found a box of papers that Delambre had placed under seal in the archives of the Paris Observatory. Alder discovered that Mechain had been concealing a painful secret. Delambre became aware of this secret shortly after Mechain's death, but to protect the reputation of his colleague, Delambre had sealed the relevant papers before storing them.

During Mechain's final winter in Barcelona, he had attempted a second measurement of the Barcelona latitude, from his hotel rather than from the fort where his observatory had been sited the previous year. Mechain found a significant discrepancy between the two results, which could not be explained by the distance of about a mile between the two places. With an inaccuracy in the latitude measurement, the length of the meter could not be accurately derived. Thus Mechain was painfully aware that all of their labor was for naught, and the expedition was doomed to failure. The course of the stars could not be wrong, and Mechain assumed his instrument was perfect as well. Therefore, the only source of the anomaly was himself.

The logical solution would have been to reperform the observations and calculations. Mechain, however, had already sent summaries of his data to Paris before he discovered the discrepancy. Thus, he suppressed the conflicting data until he could resolve the matter. Circumstances prevented him from ever doing so. This may also account for Mechain's slow progress afterward, in that he was distracted by constantly reworking his calculations. He was too proud to request help directly, and too honest to simply ignore the problem. Mechain's final expedition appears to have been intended as an attempt to resolve the discrepancy, or render it irrelevant by extending the meridian survey into the Mediterranean. Mechain was determined to find the right answer, and sacrificed himself in the quest.

Tragically, we now know that Mechain's blame was misplaced, and his agony was unnecessary. Educated people of the time knew the world was not a perfect sphere. The exact amount of the eccentricity- the flattening at the poles- was still subject to theoretical debate. What was just becoming to be understood, however, was that the surface of the earth is also highly irregular. Thus, any measurement of a meridian could yield an accurate result, but this length would still differ from an equally accurate measurement of another meridian. While this helps explain Mechain's anomaly at Barcelona, it is not completely satisfactory, since the two points were only a mile apart.

This irregularity, however, is the reason for subsequent redefini-

tions of the meter, most recently in 1983. An additional field of science relevant to the problem is the study of error. Later analysis of Mechain's data considered this.

To determine the latitude, Mechain sighted stars passing both to the north and the south of his location. When the data from the northerly stars from both locations was analyzed separate from the southerly stars, these observations show a high degree of correlation. This is also true of the data from the southerly stars. Thus Mechain's results were *precise*. When the data from both the northerly and southerly stars is analyzed, however, there is wider deviation. This suggests that there may well have been an *inaccuracy* introduced by Mechain's instrument. Poor Mechain did not have the benefit of our knowledge of scientific error, and blamed himself as a failure.

Indeed, during his portion of the mission, Delambre experienced some anomalous data, and at one point discovered some loose screws on his instrument. In ascertaining the latitude of Dunkirk, he only used northerly stars. Considering current knowledge regarding the shape of the earth, Delambre and Mechain had an impossible task from the start, and yet they succeeded in advancing the course of science.

In view of the tendency of people of our age to dodge responsibility, Mechain's agony seems archaic, somewhat pathetic, but also admirable. Equally admirable is the way Delambre and Mechain treated one another. Naturally, there is a tendency for every man to occasionally glance over his shoulder to gage a colleague's progress, but there is no indication of any serious rivalry between these two. This contrasts favorably to many scientists of our own age who seek honors solely for themselves, to the exclusion of others who may be equally deserving. Delambre and Mechain never engaged in backbiting, and remained friendly colleagues to the end.

Before we dismiss Delambre and Mechain as quaint relics from a bygone age of science, we should consider how little we really understand of our universe. The best picture provided so far, by the Wilkinson Microwave Anisotropy Probe (WMAP) which was launched from the Cape in 2001, indicates the universe is 13.7 billion years old. But to define a working model of the universe, astrophysicists must still rely on the relatively crude concepts of "Dark matter" (23%) and "Dark energy" (73%), leaving only 4% of the universe capable of being observed by our current technology.

No doubt, this will be rectified by future generations, who may be amused in passing by our ignorance. To Mechain and Delambre, however, eternal credit is due, for giving the human race our basic tools of scientific measurement.

Sources and notes:

Primary source for this set of articles is Ken Alder's excellent work, *The Measure of All Things*, published by the Free Press in 2002.

Note that the term "scientist" is used here in its modern meaning.

**The Casebook of
Anthony Chianti,
Private Eye**



Ken Thornton-Smith

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**The Wabasso Triangle: Episode 32°
Void Where Prohibited by Law**

It should not have happened, but one thing is certain: it did happen. Defying all known Laws of Physics and the majority of Disney shareholders, almost certainly the Wabasso Triangle has probably struck again.

This month's update brought to you in high-definition widescreen PastaVision by Anthony Chianti, the manic monozygote AND Licensed Private Eye and Indian River Community Pasta Detective, &C.

It was Thursday, early last Thursday, as I dragged myself out of bed for an early appointment. Crossing the dining room I tripped over the huge pile of wood from last weekend's project: my new do-it-yourself flatpack kitchen cabinets. Assembling all the bits, I was doing great and they looked pretty much finished to me, but halfway through the instruction booklet everything went wrong when I had to take them apart and start putting them back together in Spanish.

I set my feet on autopilot and pointed them at the office. I try and arrive on time, but was dreading this meeting. The client was late, as usual, and she shuffled over to the desk, sunglasses over pale skin and a little flowery hat covering her wavy white hair.

"Do you mind if I call you Anthony?"

"Of course not – I like to keep things casual."

"Well, as you may be aware, I suffer from photophobia..."

"Ah yes, photophobia -- acute aversion to light. That explains why you're wearing sunglasses, I thought it might be some kind of disguise."

"No, silly, not that kind. My kind of photophobia is an irrational fear of photographs – in particular, photographs of grandchildren."

"But Mom, you haven't got any grandchildren..."

"...especially photographs of other people's grandchildren. They just remind me that my only son is TOO SELFISH TO GIVE HIS POOR OLD MOTHER A GRANDCHILD WHILE SHE IS STILL AROUND TO APPRECIATE

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

THEM..”

Days later, Mom’s words still echoed around my empty head: *“Do you mind if I call you Anthony?”* Only that wasn’t the problem, it was the: TOO SELFISH TO GIVE HIS POOR OLD MOTHER A GRANDCHILD part that really hurt. It probably all depends on how you define “selfish.”

I nodded a “Yes, please” as the waitress came over with the coffeepot then returned to the crossword.

“You’re looking glum today, Mr Chianti, cheer up!”

“I tried that once, back in 1973 – it’s overrated.”

“Oh, Mr. Chianti, I love your sense of humor, you’re so funny – you weren’t even born in 1973...”

“That’s right, sweetheart. With my sense of humour and your looks we would have very pretty children.” I glanced at her name tag: Cathy. Of course, with my luck they would have her sense of humour and my looks.

“You really think so? You’re only saying that...” Cathy slid into the booth and sat down opposite, smiling and primping her hair.

“Okay, you found me out, I was only saying that.” She did have nice teeth. I pointed at the headline on the newspaper:

“Did you know that yesterday the Florida Department of Homeland Security increased the security status from YELLOW ALERT to ORANGE AND GRAPEFRUIT ALERT?”

“Gee, Mr. Chianti, you’re so smart, the way you read newspapers and do crosswords and stuff. I bet you even graduated and everything.”

“Mainly everything – that was my major, everything... the rest of my class were bagels.”

“You’re so funny.” She grinned again.

“Of course, petal. It pays not to take things too seriously in my line of work.” Of course, I graduated long before 1973. In fact, that year I was

(Continued on page 21)

THIS PAGE IS RESERVED ...JUST FOR YOU!

*A View
from the Right:
Amend This!
Part I*

by

*A View... From
Somewhere Else*

*A View
From
The
Car-
riage*

*The Poetry
Corner*



*My Point
of View
Education*

"Opportunities"



Is The SCAM too POLITICAL...?

...Too liberal?

Too Conservative...?

Needs more fiction?

More poetry?

...Maybe you'd like to see something else?

**Why not write for
The SCAM??**

The SCAM welcomes written submissions on just about any subject matter. It must be your own work. Remember, deadline is the 10th of every month for the upcoming issue. Please see Page 3 of every issue for details.

***The Alchemist:
Paddle Your
Canoe***



Al Thomas

©2004

***al@mutualfund
magic.com***

At some time in your life you have been on a river in a canoe and hopefully you had a paddle. You know about being up the creek without one.

You quickly learned that paddling up stream is much harder than paddling down stream. The lesson of going with the flow can be applied to many aspects of life and especially to the stock market. In the creek it is easy to know which way the current is flowing, but in the market it is much more difficult. At least that is what Wall Street wants you to think.

On the river there are markers and navigations buoys to help you with your passage, but in the money world there are few such true indicators. Actually it is very easy to determine the flow of funds in the market. Standing on the shore are people (brokers) shouting to go to the right and another next to him screaming to go to the left. "Buy, buy, buy". Very few of them know

which way the current is headed. You have to figure this out yourself.

Fundamental analysis is excellent, but it is very poor to let you know when and where to paddle (put you money). There are many technical tools available, but these can be difficult to master for many people and few brokers know or care to learn them. However, there is one very simple method that does work.

That method is too simple for brokers who want you to think that you need their "expertise". They sure don't want you to find out as you won't have to pay them commissions any more. The paddle you need to have to propel in the right direction is called the 200-day Moving Average Paddle and you can get it free if you know where to look. You can make this yourself, but if you have a computer just go to the web site **www.bigcharts.com** and click on their Interactive chart box and they will do all the work for you. You can do this at the library if you don't have a computer at home.

Using an index such as the SP500 you easily see that when the price (your canoe) is above the 200 line (the current of the river) you should be a buyer of stocks and mutual funds and when the SP500 price is below the 200 line you should be in a money market (even if it only pays 1%). You don't want to be under water. This is a simple way to see the direction the market is flowing and will keep you from losing money when the market starts down.

No one knows when the current will change. And don't try to guess. Let the river (market) tell you the direction of flow.

Get yourself one of those good paddles and learn to steer your own canoe.

Copyright Albert W. Thomas All rights reserved. Author of "If It Doesn't Go Up, Don't Buy It!" www.mutualfundmagic.com comments to al@mutualfundmagic.com

Deb's



Corner

I enjoyed the latest book sale at the Melbourne Public Library last month. What I wish to write about involves something I don't usually agree with let alone get involved, but I have grown to really admire both this group of people and some of the individuals in this group.

The group I am talking about call themselves "Wrappheminlove". As you may have guessed by the name they are computer group, but what we don't know about them and all the things they do could fill a book.

I have no idea how long this group has been together but they are "Love with a capital "L". This group of people have been known to feed the hungry, clothe the poor and send hand-made quilts to the cold and homeless...the number of quilts is high, maybe even in the thousands.

A member of this group, Luanne, has decided to go one step farther, with the warm support of her husband and children. She will be taking several weeks of her time to travel to one of these far off locations. Her plan is to teach the poor women and children how to make quilts of their own, for comfort and maybe to sell to support their families. It seems that I read somewhere that to teach a man to fish you feed him for life, maybe I am taking it one step further but I believe this applies.

Sometimes a handout can be nice, but teaching one to survive, can enrich the soul and give a person or people hope. Getting down from my soapbox, I would like to thank the "wrappheminlove" group and Luanne for showing me that one person can make a difference.

Please remember to support you local libraries.

Thank you for visiting my corner,

deb

April 2004 Calendar of SCAM Events

Membership in American Mensa, Ltd. makes you eligible to attend SCAM social functions. Escorted and invited guests of a member or host are welcome. Adult family members of Mensans are encouraged to participate in SCAM activities, as are well behaved children. However, attendance at any social function in a **private home** is subject to the hospitality of the host. Compliance with published house rules is required, and "Kitty" payment is **not optional**. As a courtesy, notify the host if you plan to attend. Announced hosts should attend their events or arrange for a stand-in if unable. When reservations are required, you may not be able to participate if you fail to call.

S-Smoking; *NS*- No *Smoking*; *SS*-Separate Smoking Area; *P*-Pets in the home; *NP*-No Pets present; *BYO* -Bring Your Own: *_Snacks*, *_Drinks*, *_Everything*.

Regular Events

C.A.B.A.G.E. (North) at Barnes and Noble: Monday, the 5th & 19th
6:00PM, Merritt Island, across from Merritt Square Mall

C.A.B.A.G.E. (North) at Books-A-Million: Wednesday, the 14th & 28th
Merritt Square Mall

C.A.B.A.G.E. (South) at Books-A-Million: Wednesday, the 7th
Post Commons

Spend the evening with friends playing games, drinking gourmet coffee, and devouring sweet treats, and perhaps even reading a bit. It's free (except for any purchases), no pets, and outside smoking.

C.A.B.A.G.E. North Host: Karen Freiberg

Karen@Freiberg.com

C.A.B.A.G.E. South Host: Sam Kirschten

632-5147

4th	4:00 p.m.	ExComm Meeting
Sunday	Free	S/P (Cats)

The Executive Committee of the group meets to conduct its monthly business. All members are welcome to attend, to volunteer, and to see how things are done. This month's meeting will be held at the *home of our Treasurer, Helen Lee Moore, in Har-dee-ville.*

Helen Lee Moore

Moorehelenlee@cs.com

7th	6:00 p.m.	Coffee, Etc. at the House of Joe
Wednesday	Coffee/M meal Cost	NS/NP

Let's get together for some coffee, sandwiches, bagels, and a lot of books to borrow or trade. Bring your favorite game! Featured is a free Wi-Fi hotspot for those with laptops and a wireless Internet card. They also have a guitar handy for those so inclined. **The House of Joe** is located at **1220 W. New Haven Ave.** (across from Toys-R-Us) in **Melbourne**. See you there.

Trish Thornton

trishka665@earthlink.net

9th	6:00 p.m.	Pub Night
Friday	Food & Drink Cost	S/NP

Let's meet and unwind at the Shamrock and Thistle Pub, 2035 Cheney Highway (State Route 50), Titusville. Carry-in or order-in food.

Helen Lee Moore

moorehelenlee@cs.com

10th

NL and Calendar deadlines

All newsletter submissions must be to Mike no later than today. Ditto for calendar events being to the calendar coordinator. *moakleymj@bellsouth.net*

10th

12:30 p.m.

Mensa Testing

Saturday

\$30.00

NS

Do you know someone who ought to be in Mensa? Send them to Cape Canaveral Hospital today! Or have them call 632-1831 for information about Mensa qualification.

Helen Lee Moore

moorehelenlee@cs.com

10th

7:00 p.m.

Venison Feast

Saturday

\$3.00 Kitty

SS/Cats

Clara and J.T. invite you to their annual celebration of J.T.'s successful hunt in the Great North Woods of Pennsylvania. There will also be plenty of other goodies for those not inclined to partake of wild game. So bring a hearty appetite to *Port St. John*.

Clara & J.T. Moran

cew@cfl.rr.com

16th

6:00PM

Talk-about

Friday

\$3.00

SS/P

We all like to sit around talking with each other about all manner of things. Join us to just talk. No TV or videos — just great conversation and some good food for thought.

Clara and JT Moran Port St. John.

cew@cfl.rr.com

17th

7:00 p.m.

Our World, Our View

Saturday

\$3.00

SS/P

Come and hear what two of your fellow Mensans think. You will also be given an opportunity to question and comment. Coffee, tea and sodas will be served with dessert after the initial presentation. This is an event which will attempt to fulfill one of the purposes of Mensa, intellectual stimulation.

Helen Lee Moore

moorehelenlee@cs.com

18th

11:00 a.m.

Brunch with Jim

Sunday

Meal cost

NS/NP

We'll join Jim for his monthly Sunday brunch at the *Colossus Restaurant at 380 N. Wickham Rd., Melbourne*. You must be seated no later than 11:00 a.m. or you may not be seated with us: we can't save any seats for latecomers.

Jim Trammell

24th

6:00 p.m.

S.N.O.R.T.

Saturday

Meal Cost

SS/NP

Wasabi! Join us at our best-attended monthly event and sample some great Japanese fare; take a break from the mundane for some sushi, teriyaki, and tempura. *Miyako's* is located at *1511 S. Harbor City Blvd. (US1) in Melbourne*.

Mike Moakley

moakleymj@bellsouth.net

**The Gourmet's
Guide:**

**The Metric
System**

by

Art Belefant

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Hank Rhodes's recent (March) article in SCAM describing the origins of the metric system of measurement reminded me of the problems with that system vis à vis the traditional system used in the United States. The failure of one of our space probes because of confusion between our traditional system of measurement and the metric system is an example. I have worked professionally for many years both in the SI (*Système International*) and in traditional systems; therefore I have some insight into the advantages and disadvantages of each.

The metric system, the common name for SI, was originally intended to be both a unitary system and a decimal system. The designers of the system failed immediately in their innovative intent. The metric system as initiated was an MKS (meter, kilogram, second) system. The basic units were the meter, kilogram, and second.

To be unitary, all measurements should relate to each other by a factor of one. Therefore one cubic meter of water should have a mass of one gram. But no, in the metric system one cubic meter of water nominally has a mass of 1000 kilograms (1×10^6 grams). Therefore the SI is not unitary. In the MKS system, one cubic centimeter of water in the MKS system should weigh (on earth) one gram, but now a cubic centimeter of water weighs only approximately one gram.

In 1901 the liter was defined as 1.000028 cubic decimeters. In 1964 this anomaly was resolved by eliminating the liter as a standard unit of measurement. This also is not unitary. The only true unitary metric system is in electrical measurements where one volt across a resistance of one ohm produces a current of one amp.

Not only does the metric system fail in not being unitary, it is not completely decimal. The S part of MKS is the same as in the traditional system. Sixty seconds make one hour and so forth in a non-decimal manner. Months have 30 or 31 days, the same as in the traditional calendar.

The basic units have changed several times since originally adopted. The meter is no longer one ten millionth of the distance from the equator to the North Pole on a line through Paris. The meter is defined as the distance light travels, in a vacuum, in $1/2997922458$ th of a second (the second, as noted above, is a non-decimal number equal to the time for 9192631770 vibrations of the cesium -1333 atom to occur). The kilogram is no longer the mass of one cubic liter of pure water. It is the mass of a specific platinum-iridium cylinder in France. Therefore relationship between length and mass is not even an even multiple of ten.

Where the metric system fails most severely is in that it is

not human scaled. The traditional systems, and there were many, in all countries were based on the human body;

the inch = the length of the thumb,

the hand = the width of the hand,

the foot = the length of the foot,

the yard = the span of one arm,

the cubit = the length of the forearm,

and so forth. We must not denigrate these old measurements. Remember that Noah's Ark, the Great Wall of China, the Pyramids of Egypt and Mexico, and all the great Cathedrals of Europe were built before the metric system was adopted.

The metric system is supposed to be decimal and for the most part the traditional systems are not, but there are exceptions. The old Japanese foot was divided into ten inches (were Japanese thumbs proportionally longer or Japanese feet proportionally shorter than European?). Surveyors in the U. S. forgo inches and divide the foot into tenths and hundredths.

Ford used inches and tenths rather than fractions. How much better would it have been to rationalize and decimalize the traditional measurements rather than impose non-human scaling.

The SI does not provide for any unit of length between the meter and the millimeter. Imagine how difficult it is in construction with no units equivalent to an inch or a foot. It is like having money with only cents and ten-dollar bills. The same is true in weights. The SI allows only grams, and kilograms. But in Germany potatoes are sold by the *pfund* (pound) not the kilogram. The metric pfund (not a legal measure, but one used by housewives) is arbitrarily set at one half kilogram, close enough to the traditional *pfund* for grocery shopping. If the buyer wants less she will ask for a *halb pfund*, not 250 grams. That is the way humans think, in fractions, not tenths.

When it comes to volumes, the only acceptable metric dimension is cubic meters and cubic centimeters. In most of the world where the metric system is in use, the common unit of volume used is the liter even if not now sanctioned officially. Even in the U. S. we use the liter for sodas and such. But consumers, being human, when talking of volumes less than a liter in size resort to fractions (half a liter) rather than expressing the volume in cubic centimeters.

Distances measured in miles meant something to the Roman soldier. He could pace off the distance as he marched. A mile is one thousand (*mil*) paces. A pace (two steps) is about five feet. Therefore the Roman mile was 1000 paces. How simple and neat. You use that measurement every time you step off a distance.

(Continued on page 17)

Yet Another View

In Defense of an Institution?

by

Mike Moakley

*"A strong America must also value the institution of marriage. ... Congress has already taken a stand on this issue by passing the Defense of Marriage Act, signed in 1996 by President Clinton. That statute protects marriage under federal law as the union of a man and a woman, and declares that one state may not redefine marriage for other states. ... **Our nation must defend the sanctity of marriage.**"*

*-President GEORGE W. BUSH,
State of the Union Address, January 20, 2004*

"A house divided against itself cannot stand."

*-ABRAHAM LINCOLN,
1st Republican President of the United States
In a speech in Springfield, Illinois,
June 16, 1858.*

This month's installment represents a departure from the way I normally do things. I generally regard "morals" issues as personal matters and not usually appropriate for public discourse. I find it much more preferable to bring out those issues that affect Americans as a whole and the American working class in particular. Another departure from the norm is that I do NOT make any stand on the issue of marriage as presented by our President in the quote above. Instead, this installment serves as an illustration for what I believe to be a far more important point that will readily become apparent as you progress through this article.

Let us now take a look at the issue at hand: Our President states that this country, possibly through a Constitutional amendment, must defend marriage as an institution. According to Merriam-Webster Online, Defend means "to drive danger or attack away from". Thus, President Bush asserts that we must **drive danger or attack away from marriage**. To make his case, he cites legislation passed in 1996 that reads in pertinent part:

"DEFENSE OF MARRIAGE ACT, 110 Stat. 2419 (1996):

SECTION 2. POWERS RESERVED TO THE STATES.

"No State ... shall be required to give effect to any public act, record, or judicial proceeding of any other State ... respecting a relationship between persons of the same sex that is treated as a marriage under the laws of such other State ..."

SECTION 3. DEFINITION OF MARRIAGE.

"In determining the meaning of any Act of Congress ..., the word 'marriage' means only a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife, and the word 'spouse' refers only to a person of the opposite sex who is a husband or a wife."

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What are you going to do when you have to pace off a distance in meters?

Unfortunately, the U. S. will have to convert to the metric system, but don't try to sell it to me on the basis that it is better than the traditional system in every respect. We will have to convert simply because we must do what everyone else is doing like lemmings to the sea. But we should recognize that we are just substituting one flawed arbitrary system of measurement for another flawed arbitrary system.

Of course to its credit, only the metric system could give us a measurement of feminine comeliness: One millihelen = the amount of beauty required to launch one ship, or these other conversions:

- 1 million microphones = 1 megaphone
- 453.6 gram crackers = 1 pound cake
- 10 rations = 1 decoration
- 10 decorations = 1 C-ration
- 10 millipedes = 1 centipede
- 2 monograms = 1 diagram
- 1 million microfiche = 1 fish
- 1 trillion piccolos = 1 lo
- 1 billion los = 1 gigolo
- 1 trillion picadors = 1 door
- 10 dents = 1 decadent
- 1/1000 tarry = 1 military
- 1 nanny goat = 1 billion goats
- 1/10 mate = 1 decimate



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After reading this, my question is an obvious one: How does this law drive danger or attack away from marriage? Let us look at a few of the forces that might tend to endanger or attack a marriage. **Divorce** is one, perhaps the ultimate danger, for it actually **kills** the marriage. **Spouse abuse** is certainly an attack on marriage. **Money problems**, especially if they cannot be resolved, can also endanger a marriage. On the other hand, how can **same-sex** or **polygamous** marriages, not recognized by the above law, possibly attack or cause danger to the more traditional marriage that is recognized by the law?

What about the Defense of Marriage Act? How does it drive away *divorce*? Nowhere in the statute is divorce even mentioned. How will it prevent *spouse abuse*? How will it resolve *money problems*? Neither one is mentioned in the statute either. So where is this defense? How would a Constitutional amendment, patterned after this statute, defend marriage? Finally, what is the likelihood that such an amendment would actually pass? A bill proposing the amendment must pass by a two-thirds vote in each house of Congress; then it must be ratified by the legislatures of at least 38 states. The President has no role whatsoever in this process.

It is obvious to me, as I am sure it is even to our President, that the “defense of marriage” proposal would offer absolutely no protection to marriage. Moreover, the proposal will never be ratified. So what is the real agenda of the President and his supporters? One might be tempted to say the proposal is meant to attack gays, as it does seem to be a referendum on “gay marriage”. But, with the pro-

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Charles L. Schuenger

PO Box 560017
Rockledge, FL 32956

webmaster@focusonbrevard.com

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liferation of expanded anti-discrimination laws to include protection of gays, such an attack is not likely. Moreover, many gays are loyal Republicans. The Log Cabin Republicans, with 50 chapters nationwide and includes a PAC that donates to Republican candidates, consists of Republican Party activists who also happen to be gay. Why would the President alienate such a large and active group of supporters? This leads me to believe that the “defense of marriage”, albeit mislabeled, is NOT a part of the President’s real agenda.

So, what is my point? Certain issues, such as “gay rights”, do tend to be emotionally charged and highly divisive to working Americans. My point, then is this: The true agenda is **“divide and conquer”**. Other examples are the abortion and gun control “issues”, which also serve to do nothing except manipulate our emotions while dividing us into factions. The current “issue” is, in my opinion, really nothing more than a ploy to divide us on yet another emotionally charged nonissue in order to distract us from their policies of consistently raping those of us in the working class at the hands of the extremely wealthy and powerful few. When will we ever learn?

Yes, this is an election year, and we have real issues before us as we choose our new leaders. Our current economic and social conditions are such that it demands we unite rather than bicker among ourselves. We would do well to open our eyes and not allow ourselves to be distracted by junk issues such as this one.



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***A Tribute to
an "Everyday
Common Man"***

By

James Morrison

April the Eighth will mark the tenth anniversary of the death of an everyday common man. As a boy, he was constantly tortured in school and at home by his own father. He was subjected to constant verbal assaults such as, "You will never be good enough." Or "you are nothing to this world." This young man started to build up a lot of angst and torment toward those whom labeled him.

He had become somewhat of a juvenile delinquent.

Even so, he strived for comfort and satisfaction in his life. He obtained this by expressing himself first in poetry then in music. He began pushing himself way too hard for any young man. Once he found this outlet he was unstoppable. He, along with two close friends began making a new breed of sound. Not only did they make poetic music, they destroyed an old genre of music and started a rock 'n' roll revolution.

The music scene at that time had gone over the top with tons of hairspray and big fancy guitars, but people became tired of it. People wanted a type of music that spoke to them and these boys were the best we had to offer. They provided a new face to music, one of originality and pure fun with a twist of angst-ridden fear. Pushing the envelope with controversy and fun, they had made a name for themselves, one that when spoken shattered the world.

This virtually unknown band of miscreants had single-handedly changed the world. Not just for a few, but for an entire generation. The powerful force that this young man had shown became one of light and hope. A spokesman for a dark generation had their ray of sunshine, but only for a little while.

That powerful light of the world was extinguished abruptly, when this young man's demons had finally overpowered him on that fateful Saturday in April of Nineteen Ninety-four.

That young man's name was Kurt Donald Cobain. His band was Nirvana.

The generation who had grown up on Kurt's music will not forget his words of wisdom.

May Kurt rest in peace for all time. We will not forget him.

"The sun is gone, but I have a light."

-KURT COBAIN



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in Africa with the Peace Corps, teaching Ethiopians how to farm. They listened politely, considering they'd only been farming for 30,000 years. Perhaps they thought that the Bronx is somewhere in Idaho.

"Well, I mustn't keep you – expect you have other customers to serve." I glanced at the crossword. She didn't leave, but just sat there, smiling back at me. 1973? Did she really think I looked that young?

"No, actually, just finished my shift, have to go and collect the kids from school, so I have 20 minutes to kill."

I nodded, stuck on 17 across, my only hope of any progress thwarted by the unwelcome attention of Cathy, and now I discover she has children.

"You never say much, Mr. Chianti." She smiled again. She's very attractive, despite the children. What am I thinking? These are not just children, but instant grandchildren, without all the messy stuff.

"As a Pasta Detective, my job is to look and listen. Besides, a closed mouth gathers no feet." I said gruffly, playing hard to get.

"So what exactly do you do, Mr. Chianti?" she fluttered her aftermarket eyelashes.

"Please call me Anthony... I'm a detective, but my specialty is pasta abuse. For instance, only yesterday I booked a restaurant in Palm Bay for premedicated pastacide."

"Premedicated?"

"Yes, they were marinading in Lysol. It's ignorance, that's all it is, ignorance. Also, it tasted like carpet, so I reported them to the Food and Rug Administration... did you say children?" Our eyes met across the table.

"Yes, I have twins – terrible twins, I call them – they're in the first grade over at Compost Elementary."

"Nice age – what are their names?"

"Billy Bob and Chardonmay-Mercedes. Actually, I named Billy Bob and my ex-husband – he's such a snob – he named the girl. They would love to meet you, Anthony, a real live detective."

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“Well, sure.” Maybe, just maybe, if I could stick a pair of kids under my mother's nose perhaps she would give me some peace. And, come to think of it, this Cathy was very nicely put together. I'm sure Mom would like her.

“I'd love to meet them, and Chardonnay is such a pretty name... ” I can see it now, me and Mrs Chianti and some ready-made grandchildren sitting peacefully around the boom box listening to Puccini, Verdi and even some Wagner when the kids are older. I wonder if she would like Klemperer's thundering Mahler's 8th, or the more lyrical Seiji Osawa interpretation?

“Chardonnay and Billy Bob... they sound so cute. What's your last name, Cathy?”

“O'Depletion, but call me Cath. Cath O'Depletion. It sounds Irish, but my family actually came over on the Mayflower. Look, I have something here to prove it.” She dug around in her handbag and handed over a crinkled photocopy. I read it aloud:

“By Order of the Royal Commission for the King's Musick:
Ye Are Hereby Preapproved

His Royal Highness the King, being by the Grace of God a Supporter of the Arts, a Musick Lover and a Philanderer, hereby offers to those purveyors and performers of the musick known as “Bluegrass,” a special invitation-only Musical Winter Bluegrass Cruise to the Caribbean, all-inclusive, ale and vittals provided at the King's expense. Ye will visit Exotic Tropical Paradises in the New World such as “Ellis Island” and more! Report to jolly-olde Plymouth dressed as a Pilgrim by February 10th to take advantage of this once-the in-a-lifetime opportunity. It is important that you bring all your instruments and sheet music. Please indicate on the reply-paid coupon below how many family members you will be taking so we know how many pizzas to order.

Signed, his Royal Kingliness. ”

“And the funny thing is, somehow they missed the boat back and the whole Bluegrass cruise party was stranded here.”

“Yes, how strange. Er, Cath, do you, like, listen to Bluegrass, then?” I inquired as I watched my bubble slowly burst.

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"Of course, all the time, guess it's in my blood. What about you, Anthony?"

"Me? Er – I just remembered, I have an urgent appointment..."

Well, amazing but true, and it can only have happened here. That's about it for this month's update from the Wabasso Triangle.

Anthony Chianti, Indian River Community Pasta Detective, signing off.

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***Maniacal Mus-
ings - It's Legen-
dary!***

***By
Jim Werdell***

Editor's Note: This article has been reprinted from several newsletters (August 2002)

I just received another email warning the other day. Apparently, cell phones have been found to be the cause of numerous explosions at gasoline stations. According to the email warning, answering your phone while filling your tank with gas can be an explosive experience. The email specifically identified three separate incidents where cellular users have been scorched answering their phones under such conditions.

Unfortunately (or, fortunately for those who were apparently singed) the email is another example of an urban legend. There are literally thousands of urban legends floating around. That's not even including the Darwin Award stories --- most of which are fabricated. There are apparently those among us who have nothing better to do than concoct stories that pique our interest and pass them off as true.

Like the story about the crocodile that ate a golfer in Florida, complete with graphic photographs of the croc split open, revealing a human body. Unfortunately for the perpetrator, the picture was of a crocodile that is native to Indonesia, not Florida. Add to that the fact that there has never been a recorded crocodile fatality in Florida. Alligators, maybe, but not crocs. I am amazed at how gullible people can be when it comes to urban legends. It is unusual when I receive only one copy of a legend.

Usually, the legend is copied and forwarded to me by numerous "do gooders" who want to make sure that I've received the message. Heaven forbid that I make the insane mistake of answering my phone at the gasoline pump. Fortunately, you can usually anticipate the entire urban legend story line just by reading the title. The *National Enquirer*-type headline is a dead giveaway. Examples include, "Death from Asteroid Strike," "Buried Alive,"

Minutes of the



ExComm Meeting

The ExComm met at the home of Clara Woodall-Moran on March 7, 2004. Call to Order 4 pm by LocSec Clara Woodall-Moran.

Members present: Clara Woodall-Moran, Sam Kirschten, and Helen Lee Moore.

Minutes for February 2004, approved as published. Move **Helen**, seconded by **Clara**, unanimous vote.

Officer reports -

Treasurer: February 29, 2004 report distributed by Treasurer Helen Lee Moore.

Testing: no candidates were tested in February 2004. No tests are scheduled in March 2004.

Old business: none.

New Business: LocSec Clara Woodall-Moran provided names of proposed audit committee members; each was acceptable to the ExComm. Members will be appointed upon acceptance.

Adjourned 4:05 pm. Moved **Sam**, seconded by **Helen**, passed by unanimous vote. The next meeting of the ExComm is scheduled for 4 pm at the home of Helen Lee Moore on April 4, 2004.

"Orgasm During Labor," and "Waiting in Line to Die: Death at Disneyland." This actually saves a lot of time.

Many urban legends play on our sympathies and attempt to tweak our heartstrings. A prime example is the legend about the baby that was stolen from its parents, gutted and stuffed with drugs to enable smugglers to cross the border without having the drugs detected. Of course, in the legend the mother accidentally sees the child in a passing car, and the rest is history and, of course, hysterical.

Some urban legends are just jokes in the guise of a true story. One of the most famous is of the chicken gun developed by NASA to test aircraft windshields by simulating a collision with an airborne fowl. It so happens that the gun actually exists. The legend is in the portion of the story where another country (insert any ethnic group) borrows the gun to test the windshield of one of their new high-speed trains.

As the legend goes, the chicken easily flies through the windshield, smashes into the control console and embeds itself in the back wall of the cabin. The punch line is NASA's brief response to startled country, "Thaw the chicken." Well, to complete the story of the cell phone-gasoline station legend, I received an email from a close friend who had forwarded to me one of the several copies of the warning I received. Of course, she had been thoroughly chastised by her friends (yours truly not included) for her apparent gullibility. In the email to me she triumphantly wrote, "My brother in law just got a new Nokia cell phone. On the first page of the instruction book is a warning to NOT use the phone while pumping gas."