

# The Cafe - Former

Official Organ of The Society for the Defense of Tradition in Pyrotechny

I.: O.: O.: J.:

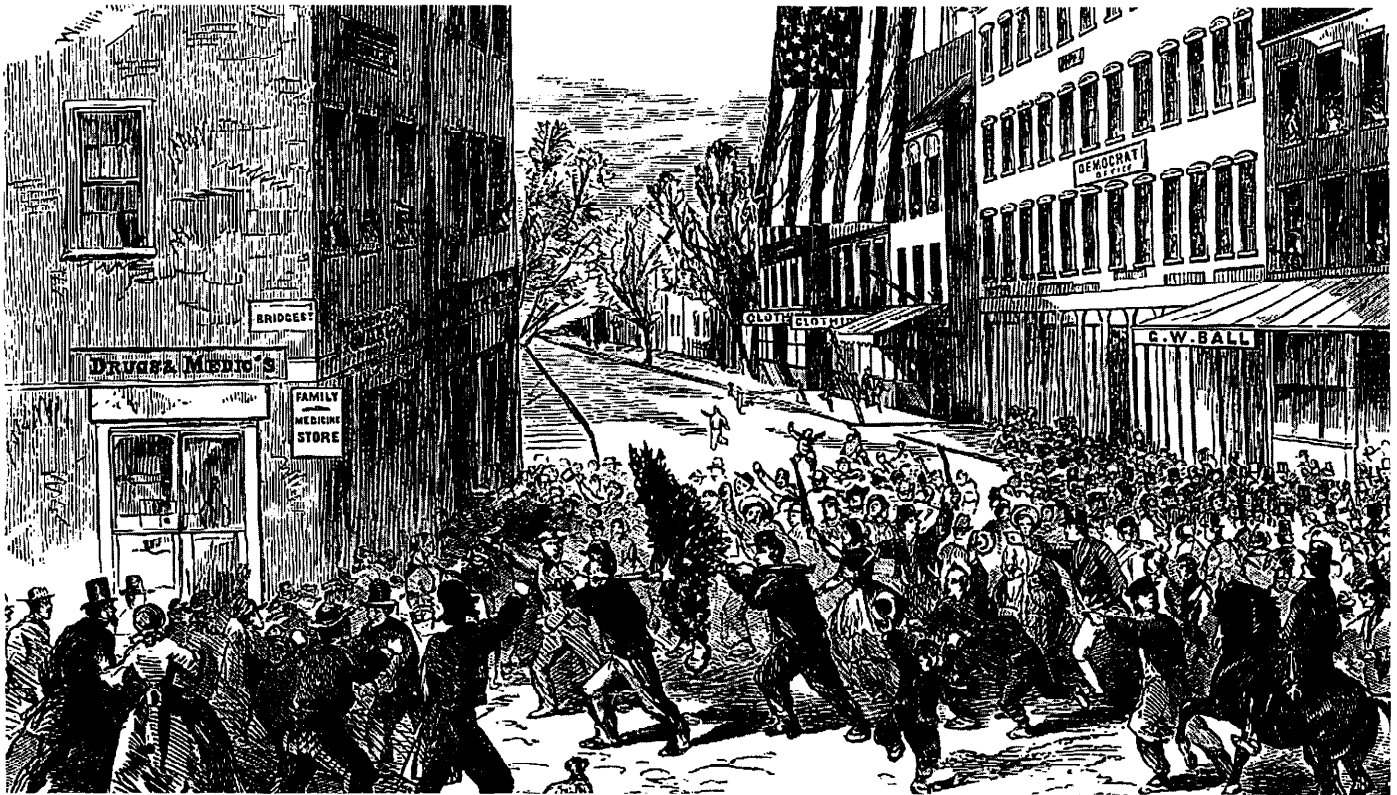
“Magna est Veritas et prævalebit.” – I. Esdras, iij: 41.

VOL. IV

JUNE, 1998

No. 2

## TARRED, FEATHERED, RIDDEN OUT OF TOWN ON A RAIL!



*“If it had not been for the honor of it, I think I could not have stood it.”*

### THE SILLY SEASON

*Oh, the little dogs. How they bark at me!*

—SEN. JOHN RANDOLPH OF ROANOKE (D., Va.)

Old-time newspapermen used to refer to high summer as “the silly season.” They observed that when things slowed down for the summer, with legislatures and courts out of session, serious news dried up, and various types of silliness began to appear as news, for lack of anything else to report. There was also a customary belief that as the heat of summer waxed, it had a deranging influence both on man

and on beast – hence “dog days,” when dogs were likelier to go mad, and even people did strange things under the influence of the *Föhn*.

These days the recess of legislatures and courts is probably a harbinger of *greater* sanity, rather than the reverse; but summer is still the silly season, in our little bailiwick of pyrotechny as well as anywhere else. How otherwise can we explain the heat rising from the keyboards of the pyro-net-wits, even as serious fireworks folks are breaking their backs during the historically busy period around the Fourth of July? The politics of the Pyrotechnics Guild International are heating up, and pursuant to this we have

received some very peculiar correspondence here at the *Case-Former* offices.

One anguished message came from a Companion who indicated she had heard of plans for a special edition of the *Case-Former* to be mailed to all P.G.I. members, attacking certain candidates for election to P.G.I. office! Given the *schwärmerei* of rumors being propagated on the Internet, we were at some pains to make clear that this is not the sort of thing we do. But the real corker was the following message, posted to one of the computer mailing lists by an individual (we hesitate to use the term *gentleman*) who shall be identified here only by the sobriquet applied to him by a very wise and perceptive lady, who calls him "The Flipper":

Date: Thu, 18 Jun 1998 22:07:58-0400  
From: (real name omitted)  
To: (computer list illegally expropriating  
trademarked initials)  
Subject: conspiracy  
Message ID: (omitted)

"Most on this List are aware there is a not so 'secret' political party within the PGI. It publishes a newsletter that anonymously attacks people and ideas, with many of these attacks quite personal. It states it was organized to be the 'saviors of pyrotechny' yet many of the goals and principles espoused are counter to those of the Guild, and the open and democratic process it supposed to be operated (*sic*).

"It wants a closed fraternity that only those that are deemed worthy by the powers that be can belong (*sic*). It does not want an open Guild that anyone can belong to and that educates and shares information. This group disdains those that do not share their views about fireworks or the Guild and goes out of its way to personally (*sic*) belittle those people and those positions.

"There are also individuals who use various dirty tricks to attack and belittle those with whom they disagree. When one makes this claim of course it makes them (*sic*) sound paranoid and it is hard to offer 'proof' since these activities are generally done anonymously.

"It is sad and embarrassing to see such activities, especially considering how many of the conspirators are so gifted and talented; and even more so to know that a number of the current leadership not only belong to this group, but are very active in it as well.

"Unfortunately, the Guild has a long history of this type of activity, much of it involving the very same people engaging in it today. Over the years there have been officers, chairs (*sic*), leaders and members who have been driven from the Guild because of these personal attacks. A lot of gifted and talented people have left and it means the Guild ends up having to try to fill their shoes with people less experienced.

"While these are generalizations, they are important to keep in mind when evaluating the political activities of the PGI."

When your humble servant first read this to an old friend and loyal Companion of our Order, his response was to break out in laughter; for he, as we trust you, our venerable Companions and readers will also do, recognized this as a deliberately hostile and distorted view of our Order and its publication, the *Case-Former*.

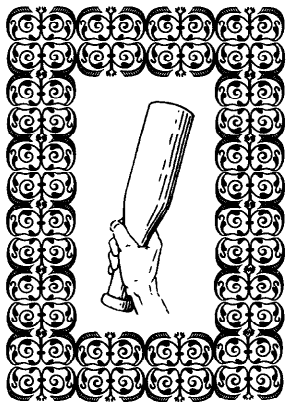
Our first reaction was that of the nineteenth-century newspaper editor who, having been tarred, feathered, and ridden out of town on a rail, was afterwards asked by a friend what it was like. He responded, "If it had not been for the honor of it, I think I could not have stood it!"

What to do? Should we simply maintain silent composure and a tongue of good report, following the advice of a late noblewoman who was often embroiled in controversy – "Never complain, never explain"? Should we attempt a serious defense, and lay out our principles to justify them before the profane, as well as the enlightened? Or, should we share it with our Companions, many of whom no doubt pay no attention to the constant turmoil of the computer fora, regarding them as worthy of just neglect; and having done so, add some ironic comment, and share, as we have with our Companions so many times, a well-deserved horselaugh, that omnipotent deflator of pretense and humbug? We choose the last of these courses.

A perennial tendency of human nature is to come to resemble that which we oppose, or at least what we think or fancy we are opposing. Thus did Calvin, ferocious denouncer of the oppressions and errors of Rome, cause Servetus to be burnt at the stake as an heretic; even as Rome would have burnt Calvin. Thus, in more recent times, did the Bolsheviks set up a state that ground and oppressed working people in a manner that far exceeded that of the most villainous capitalist of Karl Marx's most perfervid imaginings. Thus has our own government, in the supposed defense of liberty, taken, or more perniciously, persuaded the people voluntarily to surrender, many of the liberties their ancestors took for granted.

Our friend The Flipper is the principal operator of a computer forum called the "Activists List." Membership in this list is "a closed fraternity that only those that are deemed worthy by the powers that be" are permitted to join. On it are published libelous attacks on P.G.I. officers and members, accusations of corruption (without any supporting evidence), unflattering characterizations (one P.G.I. member was called "a cancer") and other material that clearly shows disdain for those that do not share the views of its operators about fireworks and the Guild,

(CONTINUED on inside back cover)



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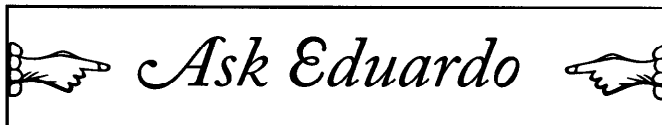
## ALLÔCUTION OF THE RT. VEN. BIANCO GASOLINI, P.:G.:C.:

Three cheers to our 1997 P.G.I. convention chairman! The minimum number of “product demos” and the quality of at least one of the ones exhibited was a welcome relief from the usual grind of maniacally paced Chinese saturation bombing we’ve come to expect from the PGI’s membership. But have things really changed for the better? We understand that Scary Splattingly, proprietor of Worthless Fireworks, a large commercial concern from somewhere in the Northwest has a display planned for Wednesday night of the upcoming convention.

According to Splattingly, “it will be large, fully choreographed to music, about 25 or so minutes long, and will involve (*sic*) a wide variety of pyrotechnic materials.” Sounds like another one, especially when one remembers that Mr. Splattingly, in cahoots with Knob “Clownboy” Heaveland made up the (thank God!) now defunct “Public Display Interference Team” which had been the bane of conventioners a few years back. I just don’t understand why there isn’t some sort of a short leash put on these idiots!

Another fear is that Splattingly or others of his ilk may be positioning themselves for a run at the PGI presidency. He certainly seems to post a lot of drivel on the wienernet, and apparently has quite a following. If this happens, we can expect even more musical displays and even more inferior shells than ever. Some seem to feel that the PGI must “entertain” the members and their families... personally, I derive more entertainment from conversation with my companions and alcohol intake than I ever have from another few thousand Temple of Heaven shells shot to Neil Diamond’s “Coming to America!” I say let’s send these dorks to Disneyland to be entertained, and the real fireworks types can reclaim the Guild for their own!

—BIANCO GASOLINI



*De omni re scibili, et quibusdam aliis.*

—VOLTAIRE

Dear Eduardo,

My question does not really relate to fireworks, but I know you fellows are authorities on anything which involves black powder, and one of your earlier issues mentioned “anything that goes bang”. Well, as you probably know, getting more women involved in the shooting sports is absolutely the IN thing – all the big gun magazines say it is essential for political reasons as well as being stylish. They even suggest there is something wrong with guys who don’t include their wives, daughters, etc. and I don’t want anybody thinking I’m not a team player. My 20-year old wife, Samantha is spunky and loves physical activity but has always refused to look or behave like a man in any way. Also she is very dainty, five feet one with a 19” waist, so most of the trendy outdoor clothes wouldn’t fit her. But after reading all the persuasive articles I gave her, she finally had a change of heart and is psyched up about trying clay pigeons. She says on a skeet range there are no thorns to tear her dress, and her heels won’t sink into boggy ground. Now my problem is that I only have two shotguns, and the Wards bolt-action .410 is too awkward for quick second shots. Besides, Sam is really getting into women’s equality and would be insulted by a puny .410, which she knows gives inferior patterns. The other gun is an old damascus double with hammers, called a W. & C. Scott Premier Grade. It must be a 12-gauge because it weighs about the same as the new twelves, and that includes a thick steel buttplate which has protected the fancy stock from damage. Samantha likes it because it is pretty, and I inherited a bunch of brass Winchester shells which fit it. They are marked “No. 10” on the bottoms – maybe this is some kind of lot number. Anyway, it was no use writing to the major publications. All their

experts say I can't shoot damascus barrels, and one of them called up and made a pass at my wife, which I didn't understand because she is nothing like the girls in his stories. Can you help?

R. Winger  
Hicksville, Idaho

Dear Mr. Winger,

You do indeed have an unusual problem, which demands careful handling. But as the experts say, you must do your part to fight the tomboy shortage griping our nation. Stamping out antiquated, demure behavior in young girls is bound to help the conservative cause.

The old brass shotshells take large pistol primers, sold everywhere, and special oversized wads of which I sent you a large box. A good load for a gun such as you describe is five drams of FFFg and 1-1/2 ounces of shot. If Sam is still enthusiastic after three or four rounds of skeet, you might offer to take her goose shooting in Scotland, where they use larger guns. Another way to take advantage of such dedication would be to buy her a regular skeet gun and have her go professional, although staying home alone might tempt you to look for a mistress wherever you found Samantha. Just out of curiosity, where *did* you find her? There is no charge for the wads, as we're always happy to give a little nudge in the right direction. ♣

—EDUARDO

P.S. If she happens to lose interest early in the game, I'll give you a hundred bucks for the Scott.

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## ANATOMY OF A PYRO-CLUB

It was a typical southern July evening, humidity high enough to cut with a knife. With dusk quickly approaching, the hills were echoing with Sage Greed's newest threat. Here's something we can all use he said, a brand new box of volleys guaranteed to knock 'em dead. With industry strength loads of 50 milligrams or less, put your money down now and buy the best. For hours the mammoth 50 watt p.a. bellowed in the woods, while the restless gathered at the B-lines, using Sage's catalog to scratch those places he only could. "Enough is enough," a loud voice said. "Let's cut to the chase and cut off his head." With the info-mercial finally over, the clock struck twelve. The proprietor yelled "the noise must be stopped," but the few who were left just told him to go f\_\_\_k. Some were relieved while others were asleep, the consensus was, this club is a bust. For the talented few who came from a far, they went back with their wares illegally transported in their cars. Some returned home safely while others did not. If there is a next time, play it safe, be smart, and invest in Sage's stock. ♣

—CASIMIR SIMIENOWICZ, JR.

## THE FUTURE OF PYROTECHNY IN A DREAM

*On dune and headline sinks the fire:  
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday  
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!  
Judge of the Nations, spare us yet,  
Lest we forget — lest we forget!*

—RUDYARD KIPLING, *Recessional* (1897)

The ancient "science" of interpreting dreams has certainly undergone great changes of fortune since the Egyptians practiced it five millenia ago. One should not dismiss the Old Testament prophets lightly, since in that time and place one false prediction could make a fellow the guest of honor at a "rock concert," with real rocks, outside the city gates. But in general this field has attracted more charlatans, crooks and mental cases than anything outside of government. In the modern Babylon, Freud and his followers have certainly not changed things very much. Sensible people generally feel that dreams mean little or nothing at all, in ordinary cases. This was certainly the majority view in the great Victorian era — we are reminded of Scrooge telling the Ghost that he was really only a bit of tainted food.

Yet strange things can happen: the author's favorite tourbillion, for example, was conceived in the wee hours in that peculiar state between sleep and wakefulness. While it can be considered a classical design and was clearly influenced by older ones (the casing and vent hole proportions are essentially Weingart's) there was no drafting or conscious logic involved. The composition was not taken from any book, yet it gave the right burning rate on the first try. It is likely that most dreams are "replays" of things already known, that memories come flooding out in a way that is usually meaningless but will occasionally result in creative synthesis.

With this in mind, the author will admit that one ought not to watch the T.V. late news at all; besides being depressing, its brief "sound bites" are not conducive to deep thinking. And just because one has stock in a fast-food chain doesn't mean one should eat three of their fish sandwiches, especially when they have been sitting under hot lights all evening. American "port", a drunkard's dream, is not one of our finer wines, and even the best port would be a lousy choice with fish and dill pickles. And after all that, *anybody* should know better than to have a double chocolate malt for dessert. But we all make mistakes, and the resultant nightmare had such a ring of truth that the author decided to share it with you, our patient readers.



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# The Metropolitan Meddler

"All the news that fits to print"

www.metro.medlr.com

July 3, 2018

\$5.50

## Public Monument Desecrated

As usual this time of year, police are keeping an extra close watch on the most costly edifice in Central Park, the Tomb of the Unknown Bureaucrat. Aside from random acts of vandalism, this particular monument has long been subject to a seasonal pattern of attack. Police can't watch it every minute, note Chief Bernard P. Fife IV, who admits there has already been some minor damage this year, apparently chips from rocks. In past years there were more cases of damage from bullets and from large exploding fireworks, which despite having been illegal for fifty years are still occasionally seen on the black market. Intensive crackdowns at all levels of government have fortunately reduced their sale to the minimum, and the seasonal waiver clauses added to the Fourth Amendment helped in the searches.

The Tomb was constructed in 2001 after a series of meetings on how to best capture the character of the century just past. Built in a style  
*continued on p. 5-C*

## NEWS BRIEFS

Parents of all sexes are reminded that the deadline for school applications has been moved up to the 20th of July. Children to be enrolled in any of the city's public schools must have their fingerprints, genetic profiles, racial sensitivity training cards, and mood drug level adjustments on file by that date. In recent years the deadline has been August 15th, but the school computer system is down again, and officials are always overwhelmed with work when this happens.

Rap singer Deep Doggy Dung realized a life long goal Friday when he performed at the Kennedy Center. Now a multimillionaire, Dung looked back on his days as struggling young artist, especially the 1980s when some right-wingers wanted to censor his work. But by the middle of the '90s rap music and ghetto fashions were accepted even in the most conservative business magazines. "You know, you get the kids, there ain't much the parents can do," said the Doggy in an interview, "and it IS important to the economy." Unlike some other radical rappers he was able to smoothly make the transition to mainstream, and is now a hit among aging baby boomers with his own versions of traditional favorites such as *Dung Love, Dung at Heart and Yesterday When I was Dung.*

Fizz! Boom! Bang! Audiences had better prepare for a thrill as the city's annual July 4th display goes off tomorrow night in Central Park. Our news team visited the display site to learn more about this old custom. We found that most of the rockets take the form of round PVC balls, although a few made in the Orient are cardboard balls. "These give us more problems, like blowing up too early and scattering fire all over," said one of the young display operators as he held up a Donkey brand paper ball. "So you can just imagine how dangerous things were in the old days when all they had were paper shells." But fireworks can still be hazardous, with some of these professional devices reaching a diameter of 125mm, the legal maximum. Each of these roman candles has a charge of gunpowder attached to the bottom, and is lowered by its electrical wires into a tube or mortar made of HDPE. Even the standard 62.5 and 75mm sizes could still kill someone who is hit by them, although this rarely happens, notes longtime firework fan Senator C.P. Wheeze. The Midwest legislator is well known for his social legislation, including the latest round of rulings to protect debtors and bankrupts, and his Commission to Replace Everything Except Plastic is responsible for some of our current federal standards for fireworks. And while accidents still happen – burst tubes, rockets loaded upside down, electrical malfunctions, people trip-

ping over wires – the advances in public displays have helped phase out the antiquated habit of people shooting smaller explosives in their own backyards. A few of these items are still permitted, but until recently laws varied a lot from state to state and this encouraged illegal trafficking. Fortunately, fireworks were included in the Federal Uniformity Acts of 2013, a step which has done much to eliminate the menace, and the United Nations has also been helpful in controlling import quality.

As with anything so old, there are many traditions and legends associated with fireworks, with some old-timers waxing nostalgic for the shows of their youth. There used to be more varieties, most of which had to be abandoned because of safety concerns. "No doubt they made some good stuff in those days," said Professor Peregrine Pinchbeck, Ph.D., who has been a published author in the field for over 20 years. "It's not always possible to completely sort out truth from legend – old men always think the grass was greener and the sky was bluer when they were boys. At one time there was a mania for really big aerial shells of five, even ten kilos, in fact I have catalogs showing them at 250 and 300mm! And I myself have seen some which were cylinders instead of balls, with 3 or 4 separate stages, but most of these had a very potent and dangerous explosive unit. Even after this component was banned we had a hard time getting reliable ones,

and it was even harder to get plastic which was strong enough to stand the lifting powder. Besides, even 30 years ago when most of this stuff was still allowed, the big shooters had already gone over to Chinese ball shells, so there can't be that much difference. The fancy cylinders, when they did exist, were basically an elitist thing requiring special handling, and wouldn't really be appropriate in modern conditions."

Although it is not very well known to the general public, it was actually legal for private parties to make their own pyrotechnic devices as recently at 2006. Of course this was never encouraged by officials; it was simply an oversight based on the legal definition of "manufacture". For decades this unlikely hobby persisted, partly because of its low profile and because few people were actually hurt. All this changed at the end of the twentieth century, when it became highly publicized in electronic media. The tragic deaths of several teenagers were attributed to this aggressive promotion of dangerous chemicals and low-grade literature, finally prompting the Gore administration to launch its investigation in 2005. At first the Committee focused on an organized group of hobbyists, the PGI, but despite its reputation very few of the members actually made anything at that point, and few warnings were issued. More fruitful was the list of licensed amateurs, since the majority of states had adopted a uniform hobbyist safety code in 1999. Professor Pinchbeck notes with a sheepish grin that he himself did amateur experiments in his younger days, and was one of the authors of this code. "We intended it to simply be a benchmark and protect amateurs from using dangerous methods," he said. "We never dreamed it could backfire in this way." But under the state of emergency, all hobbyist licenses were suspended and their holders issued warnings and placed under observation; many important arrests were made among their associates. The next step was for the government  
*continued on p. 8-A*

## President Vows to Continue Struggle

With the fourth of July so near, President Orca Windbag once again addressed the nation about the danger of outdated methods of celebrating on its birthday. She quoted a case in Nebraska, only last year, where a 13-year old constructed an explosive device from the heads of stick matches, the old firestarting product which is still legal in most rural areas. The young person, who lost a finger, reported having heard stories from old men about the fun they used to have with exploding fireworks. "I can't believe things like this still happen," sighed Windbag. "We have such an advanced society, with the government doing its very best to help everyone along the right path. We have all kinds of things I never dreamed of when I was a kid, standardized extracts from natural medicines, clean electric cars, watches that tell the time out loud for the blind. And now this!" Part of the problem is that while professional fireworks are very high-tech, it is pretty easy to make a crude explosion, notes Kon Krookshanknee, Ph.D., a science advisor to the president and

a person with much experience in this area. In states where guns are still legal, ammunition can be dissected to get the gunpowder which is the basis for firecrackers. And Krookshanknee adds that such items as chlorine bleach, which requires only a signature for buyers, can be used to make oxidizers for even more powerful devices. But none of this deters the First Black Woman President, who has been on the forefront of progressive politics since her days as a television talk-show host. She continues to promote more counseling and regulations to protect the most vulnerable Americans, our children. And she notes that women have long been the leaders in safety legislation: "It just comes natural to a mother who is used to locking up sharp knives to protect her babies." The First Woman President, Jade Fondue, was also a leader in protective government but the tradition goes back more than a century, when the quaintly named *Ladies Home Journal* began the first aggressive campaign against fireworks in 1911  
*continued on page 12-A*

## FDA Commissioner Announces Coffee Regulations

"Caffeine is a dangerous alkaloidal drug," said longtime FDA Commissioner David Kessler, recently re-appointed by President Windbag. "We must make sure it is properly regulated, and kept out of the hands of children."

Señor Manuel Ordoñez, of Cali, Colombia, speaking for the coffee  
*continued on page 12-A*

## AMATEURS AND THE YELLOW PRESS

ED. NOTE: *The following article was submitted to us following its rejection, for political reasons, by two other pyrotechnic publishers. As ever, The Case Former is happy to do its part for free expression. Great is the truth, and it shall prevail. For more on this subject, see this issue's "News from the Grapevine," by our own Migalucc.*

Is pyrotechny the only field which so neglects its debt to the amateur? The amateur – lover of the art, the discoverer, the innovator. And when the repression gets heavy and pros cower in silent fear of regulatory retribution should they protest, the bold voice of the amateur rings forth. Upon his death, I wrote an eulogy for Van (PGI founder Max P. VanderHorck) – the greatest of amateurs. The flight of the rocket my metaphor, I spoke of his pursuit of climactic beauty, not the golden fallout. And for his love of fireworks, and his service to others that love them, he shall be remembered after every giant of the industry is long forgotten. The future of fireworks lies in the unfettered hands and unspoken voice of the amateur.

Under tyrannical Mayor Giuliani, New York City residents are under unprecedented repression. In the guise of fighting crime, our freedoms have been trampled by his police state. Some atrocities have made headlines, others have been buried, in more ways than one. Even the most harmless of fireworks and the people that enjoy them have been made victims, as documented in my several past articles. As this despot aspires to the Presidency, many recognizing this danger are fearfully silent. But not amateurs, embracing liberty for the love of it, unenslaved by economic vulnerability and political obeisance.

To spread the word, I submitted my last article, "A Philadelphia Pilgrimage" to *The Phoenix* and two other pyro publications. I compliment *The Phoenix* as being the only amateur among these. The others refused to publish it without major revisions, and both for the same reason – FEAR of Herr Giuliani! Let's examine what one of these editors had to say in a FOREIGN (U.K.) magazine:

"The family fireworks industry in [S. Africa] has yet to learn that the most reliable method of staying in business is to NOT compromise with the people who are trying to put them out of business. Not an inch. Concessions, compromise, and signs of good faith are for wimps, not for survivors."

Tough talk, half a world away. But regarding my bold statement HERE IN AMERICA, this same editor told me that if I could "...keep the vituperation about the mayor to a minimum, I can come up with the space." Then, "I can give you one page, and the work would be subject to editing." And finally, "Howard, let's cut to the chase here. I make my liv-



*Miss Liberty, hemmed in by oppressive legislation on the right and academic nonsense on the left, beings to grow apprehensive...*

ing with [publication]. That's the bottom line. Maybe the hobby publishers or [the other publication] would be in a better position to carry it." The other publication's editor said, "...we attempt to avoid alienating anyone, especially political candidates. One never knows where Mayor Giuliani will end up." How true; I've been saying that all along. And should he become president, I predict A NATIONWIDE BAN ON ALL CONSUMER FIREWORKS!

The commercial-professional and pseudo-amateur fireworks press, though opposing the anti-fireworks media yellow press, has become YELLOW in quite a different sense! And the only fireworks activist group REALLY DOING SOMETHING beyond propitiating porcine politicians is the National Fireworks Association (NFA), now suing the CPSC. The rest have SOLD OUT!

I don't ask a stinking cent for my writings; I am proud to be an AMATEUR, independent, writing and fighting for freedom. How can ANY American not express "vituperation" at the heavy-handed actions of a freedom-stealing tyrant? This repression may not be where YOU live YET, but mark my words, should we fail in our duties to expose despotism and speak out for liberty no matter what the risks, we shall surely suffer greatly for it!

— HOWARD DAVIS



# TELLERINI'S CULINARY CORNER



*Science is a collection of successful recipes.*

—PAUL VALÉRY

This issue, another of our staff stands in for Mr. Tellerini with two recipes. The first is presented in recognition of the revived pyro-political career of Blombo lo Piombo, recently elected as Area Vice-President for Eastern and Foreign members in the Western Pyrotechnic Association (WPA). We trust that he will execute his duties with that courtesy, humility, flexibility, and responsiveness he obviously learnt in the paper-mill business and brought to his former post in the PGI.

Companions will no doubt recall Blombo's notorious invention of an electrically fired infernal device, charged with flash powder, to discourage squirrels from raiding his bird feeder. It is therefore in his honor that we present...

## SQUIRRELS IN MADEIRA

4 grey squirrels  
flour for dredging  
salt and pepper  
5-6 tablespoons butter\*  
1/2 lb. mushrooms, quartered  
4 shallots, peeled and coarsely chopped  
1 cup Madeira  
2 cups stock  
1 tablespoon parsley, chopped

Kill and dress four grey squirrels. We recommend a head-shot with your rook-and-rabbit rifle, as it is less destructive to the meat than a flash powder bomb *à la Blombo*; if the cussed things won't hold still long enough, this is one of the few justifications for the .410 shotshell loaded with No. 4 shot. Cut them into serving-size pieces. Season flour with salt and pepper to taste, and dredge the pieces in the seasoned flour.

Sauté the mushrooms and shallots in 3 tablespoons of the butter, and set aside. Brown the squirrels well with additional butter as needed, and set aside. Deglaze the pan with the Madeira (we recommend Leacock's Sercial, but any Madeira is good - its flavor will probably make up even for flash powder burns). Return the mushrooms, shallots, and squirrels to the pan, add the stock, bring to a boil, reduce heat, cover and simmer for one hour. Then add the parsley, simmer for another 10 minutes (or until squirrels are tender) and serve.

\* In honor of Blombo's *embonpoint!*



Speaking of the WPA, those of you who didn't attend the 1998 Western Winter Blast should not suppose that those who did enjoyed a holiday in the warm sun. In fact it was cold and raw, and the proceedings were rained out on Saturday night. A nice hot drink of considerable alcoholic strength would have been most welcome in those dank and bone-chilling conditions. This alone would be reason enough to make...

## RACK PUNCH

1/2 cup sugar  
1/4 cup water  
zest of 1 large lemon  
2 whole cloves  
1/2 teaspoon whole coriander  
Juice of 2 large lemons  
1 cup brandy  
1 cup arrack (or 1 cup dark rum + 10 grains gum benzoin)  
2 cups boiling water

Over medium heat mix the sugar in the 1/4 cup water till dissolved. Put the lemon zest and spices into a bowl and pour the resultant syrup over them and allow to steep for a few minutes. Add the lemon juice, brandy, and arrack, then the boiling water, stir well, and strain. The punch may be drunk hot, but any left over is also good cold.

Real Batavia arrack, a spirit distilled from fermented dates, is almost impossible to find. It must not be confused with the licorice-flavored *raki* popular in the Levant. We heed the advice of Mary Randolph in *The Virginia Housewife*, a cookbook of the last century, who advised that a decent simulacrum of arrack could be made by dissolving 2 scruples of benzoin in a quart of good rum; thus, 10 grains in a cup. See *The Case Former*, vol. IV, no. 1, pg. 16, on gum benzoin. We recommend Barrilito (Puerto Rico) or Barbancourt (Haiti) dark rums.

Rack punch was popular amongst our ancestors. One of our favorite politicians, that acid wit and *bon vivant*, John Randolph of Roanoke, spoke fondly of "the good old Virginia gentlemen on the assembly, drinking their twenty and forty bowls of rack punches, and madeira, and claret..." There is even a firework connection, since rack punch was a popular drink at Vauxhall, the famous pleasure garden described in Brock's *History of Fireworks*; readers of Thackeray will recall the plight of Jos. Sedley, in *Vanity Fair*, from overindulgence in rack punch at Vauxhall.

— ERNST PFANTODT



## THE ZIRCONIUM CONS-PEE-RACY

A few years ago while attending a mid-summer club shoot, I met an interesting fellow who worked in a government laboratory. I remember seeing him on a couple of occasions prior to this, and I was always intrigued by his knowledge and expertise in the pyrotechnic field. He and his partner always brought something interesting to the shoots, like the 100 pound rocket booster sunk head first into the ground. For nearly two minutes that thing roared and dug its way to China, leaving me almost deaf. On this day he didn't bring a rocket, but he brought some samples of various metals to test as fuels. Interested in his experiment, I told him I'd join him after I shot the few shells I brought.

I met up with him later by his car. He was mixing some minuscule batches of oxidizers and fuel. After testing each batch he logged each one into a little black book. Surrounded by a small group of on-lookers, some knowledgeable pyros and some not, an inebriated poor soul stepped to the forefront. On the ground were the smoldering remains of a zirconium/oxidizer composition. Still glowing an amber red, the dross produced would stay molten, most of us knew, for quite some time. Only the passage of time would cool the hot glob and any attempt to extinguish it, especially with a liquid, would be ill-advised.

Without so much as a warning, this gentleman moved over the smoldering pile, and in a heavy Southern drawl (accented more by all the Budweisers he drank) announced he was going to relieve himself. Within one second after he pulled down his zipper, a huge fire ball erupted into the air. The man whimpered, then ran off into the woods, all the while cursing and pouring beer on his burnt appendage. Roasted weenies anyone? ♪

— CASIMIR SIMIENOWICZ, JR.



## EXPLOSIVES AND CRIME

ED. NOTE: *While The Case Former has in the past avoided confusion with Readers' Digest by refusing to reprint articles already published elsewhere, we note that a (supposedly) scholarly publication in this field now seems to run one or two reprint articles per issue. In order not to be left out of this latest trend, we thought that the following article, by the celebrated pyrotechnist Alan St. Hill Brock, might be of interest to our readers. It originally appeared in A Casebook of Crime (London, 1948), pp. 149-153.*

The employment of explosives for criminal purposes has generally been the work of political organizations, the Nihilists, the Fenians, the Anarchists and other of the same type. Since the time of Chevalier, for whom may be claimed the distinction of being the inventor of the first infernal machine, de-

signed to bring about the death of Napoleon I, many attempts, unsuccessful and successful, have been made on the lives of rulers and princes by means of explosives. The Fenian outrages of the 'eighties in this country were followed by the almost world-wide activities of the Anarchists and other terrorist organizations.

In 1913 comic relief was provided by the series of desperate attempts engineered by the "Suffragettes." In February a house built for Mr. Lloyd George at Walton-on-the-Hill, Surrey, was slightly damaged by the explosion of five pounds of gunpowder. In May a small charge, fitted with a crude attempt at an electrical firing device, was discovered under the Bishop's Throne at St. Paul's Cathedral. Had the igniting device functioned some damage might have been caused, but a similar result could hardly have been expected from the condensed milk can full of powder that was found against the wall of the Bank of England. In June a second explosion was actually achieved when a small quantity of gunpowder was fired under the Coronation Chair in Westminster Abbey, causing some slight injury to the woodwork. Then in December came the big effort; a rather larger quantity of powder than had been used before was exploded outside Holloway Gaol, where several of the sisterhood were then interned. The wall of the prison was discoloured.

The desperate attempt at Holloway Prison may have been inspired by the outrage for which Michael Barrett, the Fenian, was executed on May 26th, 1868, the last occasion of a public hanging in this country.\* In an attempt to liberate three prisoners in Clerkenwell Gaol, Barrett and his fellow conspirators exploded a barrel of gunpowder against the wall of the exercise yard. The attempt failed, but great damage was caused to surrounding property, while four persons were killed and ten times that number injured.

Apart from the use of explosives for political purposes, there have been many inspired by other motives, some of which are of such an extraordinary nature as to be comic, were it not for the terrible results achieved.

There is the case of Billon, the clockmaker of Senlis, a country town twenty miles distant from Paris. Sunday, December 13th, 1789, had been fixed for the ceremony of blessing the standards of the newly formed militia. A procession composed of a detachment of National Cavalry, le Corps de l'Arquebus, le Corps de l'Arc, local officials and various societies of the town had formed up outside the Hotel de Ville, preparatory to marching to the Cathedral, when Billon approached the officer commanding the cavalry with a request that the route of the procession be altered so that it should pass by the front of his house. On being told that this was im-

\* i.e., Great Britain (ed.) The last in the U.S. was in 1936, in Kentucky.



possible he expostulated violently and went home.

The procession moved off and had reached a point where it could be seen from the house of the clockmaker, although not so well as would have been the case had his request been complied with, when a shot rang out and a drummer at the head of the procession fell, shot through the head. Another shot followed and another of the company fell riddled with buck shot. Then followed a steady fusillade from an upper window of Billon's house. A stampede followed, while some of the cooler heads took cover and returned the fire. Others rushed forward and broke in the house door with the butts of their muskets. Gaining the upper floor they found the door of the room from which Billon was firing locked and barricaded. At last an entrance was forced, when it was seen that a heap of material in the centre of the room was on fire, and messages were dispatched for the fire brigade. While the attackers were awaiting their arrival, Billon, having shot down one and felled another with a blow from his pistol butt, dashed out of the door and upstairs to the attic.

It was now found that the burning material covered a large metal box, which, for some reason that is left obscure by the contemporary account, the discoverer decided contained gunpowder. Shouting and waving to his companions he dashed downstairs and into the street, with the intention, as he afterwards explained, of expediting the arrival of the fire brigade. His intuition, however, was not at fault, for shortly afterwards, just as Lieutenant de la Bruyere, of the mounted police was seizing the assassin, the powder exploded, bringing down the house in ruins.

Bruyere and his prisoner were surprisingly taken alive from the ruins. The former to live to enjoy for many years a pension of eighteen hundred livres, the latter to have his brains battered out by the musket-butts of the militiamen. In all, twenty-five persons met their deaths and forty-one more were wounded because the clockmaker resented his expulsion from the Corps de l'Arquebus.

Another diabolical crime by which over one hundred were killed was that perpetrated by William King Thomson, at Bremerhaven in 1875. Thomson, a native of Brooklyn, conceived the idea of dispatching a parcel by the S.S. "Mosel," effecting insurance in it, sinking the ship with an infernal machine and claiming the insurance money.

The explosives were to be enclosed in a separate parcel consigned under a false name in the vessel's hold. This was duly dispatched from Bremen to Bremerhaven, was being unloaded from the guards van of the train when it exploded. Thomson, who had already boarded the vessel with the intention of handing his insured parcel to the purser, and of obtaining a receipt for it, was found in a cabin bleeding from self-inflicted revolver wounds, from which he died five days later. The amount he hoped to receive from the transaction was £450.

In 1911, a man living at Haverfordwest, who be-

came jealous of his wife, exploded a stick of gelignite in the bedroom. The couple and their child were killed instantly. At the coroner's inquest the jury found that the wife and child had been murdered by the husband, in whose case an open verdict was recorded, as they took the view that it was impossible to say that he intended to kill himself.

At Seattle, in 1889, a man named Schaffer, who had been imprisoned for an assault on the wife of a man named Boydola, on his release blew up Boydola's house with dynamite, killing the entire family as well as two employees. Schaffer was lynched before he could be arrested.

There have been two cases of hotel customers, who have been refused drinks, expressing their sense of grievance by attempting to blow up the premises. The first was at Bryncelthyn, near Bridgend, in 1894, when £300 worth of damage was done; the second at Cross Keys in 1913.

Eleven years earlier, one McKee practically destroyed a Washington hotel because he was dissatisfied with the service. Fortunately McKee was the only person killed.

Cases of the use of explosives in bulk as an alternative to demanding money at the point of the pistol have not been infrequent. In December, 1891, two men named Lord and Wilson entered the Broadway office of Russell Sage, a well-known New York business man, and demanded a million dollars under threat of blowing up the building. Sage, thinking they were madmen, tried to humour them as he edged his way towards the door. A bomb was then produced by one of the intruders who threw it across the office, where it exploded with terrific force, killing five, including Lord. His partner and several others received serious injuries.

During the 'nineties train robberies were frequent in the United States, Generally the track was dynamited, or other measures were found to bring the train to a standstill, and after blowing open the safe of the express car the robbers decamped with its contents. In one case the booty amounted to \$50,000; a more satisfactory result than that achieved by the robbers who wrecked a goods train on the Delaware Railroad in 1903, killing the entire train's crew and destroying fifteen waggons. The sum realised amounted to two and a half dollars a head.

Two terrible train wrecks in 1931 were the work of a Hungarian merchant, named Sylvester Matuska. The first, at Juellerboy, was, as he confessed when arrested, in the nature of an experiment. Several coaches overturned and rolled down an embankment, with the result that seventy-five persons were injured, although fortunately none was killed. A month later he exploded an infernal machine under the Constantinople-Cologne Express at Bia Torbagy, in Hungary. The coaches plunged down an embankment 150 ft. high, killing twenty-five passengers.

Having witnessed the result of his effort, Matuska scratched his face with a knife and laid down

## CYBERPYROPHORIA

among the wounded. After he had received treatment he was given a ticket to his home in Vienna and later started a suit to recover damages from the railway company. Grilled by the Viennese police, he confessed to two previous attempts at train wrecking and expressed his intention of continuing his work. The reason he gave for his actions was that he had been appointed "to punish the world for its materialism and then to save it."

Suicides by means of explosives have been many. There was the case of the miner at Rothbury who lighted the fuze of a dynamite cartridge, placed it in the dent of his soft felt hat and stood to attention until it exploded.

Instances of suicides filling their mouths with gunpowder and applying a light are many, but surely the most spectacular effort is that conducted by a Portuguese officer in 1890, who, as a protest at what he considered unjust treatment, secured fourteen barrels of gunpowder, built them into a pyramid and seating himself on the summit, wrapped in his national flag, exploded the whole. ¶

— ALAN ST. HILL BROCK

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## WAY OFF THE INTERNET

*They battle, they battle – poor put-upon cattle  
Each waging, reluctantly,  
That punitive war on the disagreeor  
Which falls to the disagreeee.*

— GEORGE STARBUCK, *Desperate Measures*

The Editor of this department of *The Case Former* recently received the following complaint about what its author considers on-line imitations of his writing style. For the edification of all, we reprint it as received:

\* \* \* \* \*

for some time now i've been putting up with you internet people copying my literary style. i spoke to my agent don marquis about it but he says there isnt much the law could do for me. even so it's really bad manners to mock me just because i'm a cockroach and can only hit one key at a time, and never passed english class. my friend mehitablel says, well, some people have the brains of a cockroach but you know how cats always think they're so superior. you humans have cerebrums and ten fingers each and i think you're just making fun of a poor little roach. we insects have enough trouble dodging real webs without having to put up with phony ones. i have been trying to quietly make some waves, but i guess its time to get loud.

archy <archy@roachhotel.com>  
<http://www.roachhotel.com>

Oh era of the cybergeek reign forth  
Your fluffy glory seek by day or night assailing forth  
Twill puke great fires in my port.  
The ghosts of hundreds lure NET souls  
To lead in triumph o'er their foes  
Through quarrels of netkeystrokes blare  
No truth transforming on the air  
Cast forth their warnings Chlorate's end  
Like blissful mornings they'll defend.

These do-good perils of the wire  
Doth lead me through the Krank quagmire  
Told true in form but most desire  
The hands who teach know well the liar.

Gird your breasts with words of steel  
For Murr-Murr's cyber-portal-wheel  
But say not now your scorn for thee  
Whose nest of pigeons flock freely.  
All saints in copper claded groins  
With Netscape's sword and iron loins  
Come near me not you usenet whore  
'Cause PML hath ruled once more.

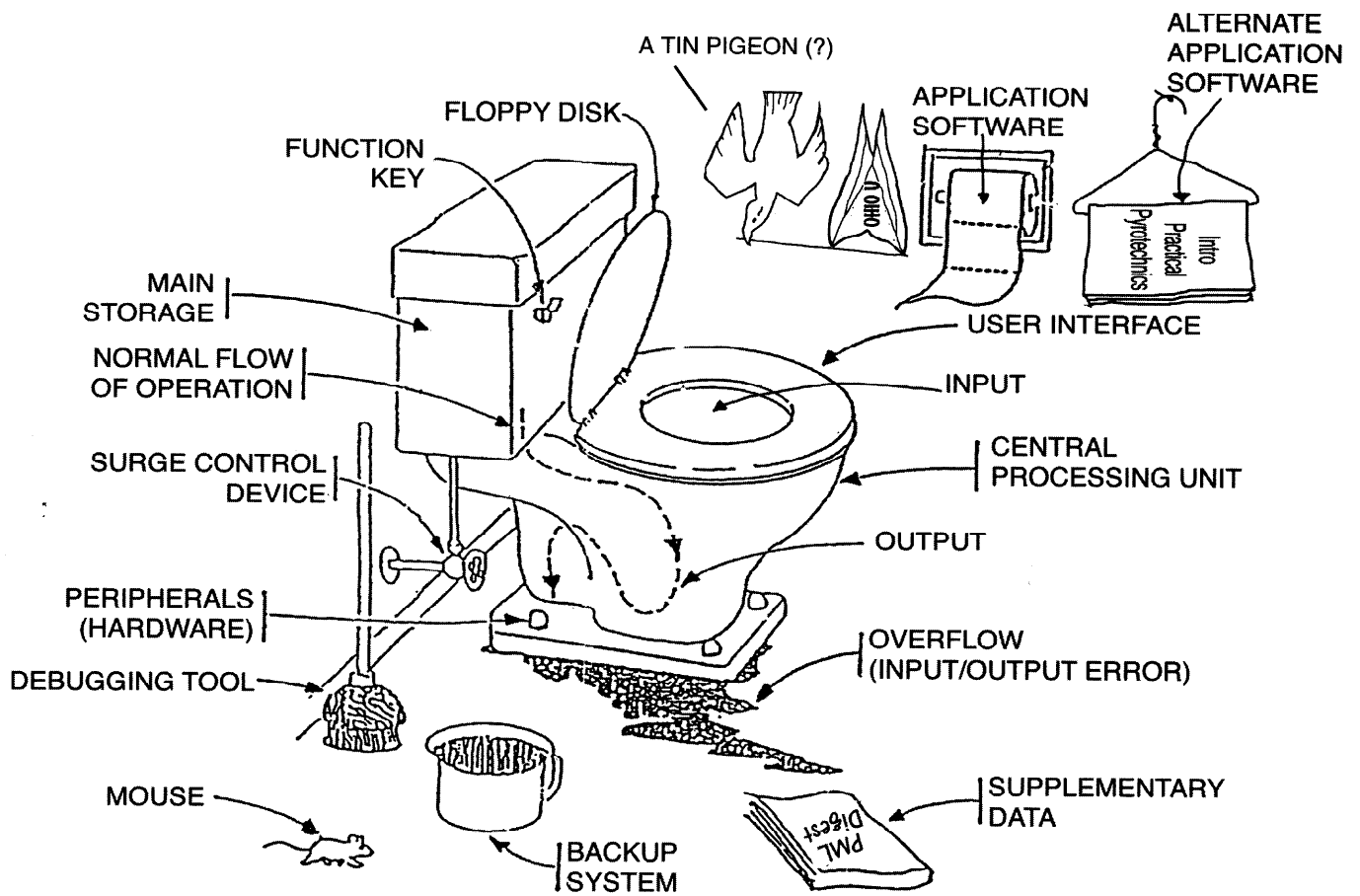
My words of ink are here not known  
just 'lectron vivid virtual blown  
Though through the box of floppy talk  
Compose big words of wordy talk  
And wonder if they'll ever know  
The foolish fools of cybershow.

But brace yourselves now don't you dare  
Cross Booodah's path on cybersphere  
'Cause if you do and Orfca too  
Then be forewarned by Sleazely you:  
I told you not to air your views  
Of matters known to me but few  
And since thou didst not speak for me  
I'll see you through demise for thee."

All well I hear and read I swear  
From Cyber world C-RAP shells near  
But those who perish from their work  
Of past traditions lawyers lurk  
And who but Krank and Wheazel too  
Will shank the courts with worthless do.

My time hath come, my time hath come  
I smoke on usenet just for phun  
And when I puff the words for me  
My soul doth flee great miles from me.  
I am my cloak of nameless calls  
And word-less works of plight-full falls  
But fret not one big tear for me  
'Cause I can fend them gracefully.

Euphoric talk on data lines  
Burn worthless works in young school minds  
Like acid trips in wishing wells  
These anxious kids cast in their spells.  
All talk is cheap - opinions too  
And many come and many do  
But when they rail on "me-too" talk  
I want to hurl but only bock.



Oh learned ones in cyberland  
 Take newbies on with guiding hand  
 Through dangerous paths they do abound  
 And speaketh forth with great resound.  
 I often wonder in my day  
 How readers dumb can be as they  
 And then I ponder all its worth  
 And see no interest in its girth.  
 It's time to go my merry way  
 Whilst cyberpyrophoria yea  
 And when I go to school next term  
 I'm sure to make them shriek and squirm.  
 Now wish me well and praise my name  
 For cyberpyrophoric fame  
 But keep your back front facing rear  
 'Cause good ole folks will knife you there.

— VIVALIBERE O. MUORI

### THE REGULATORY RIGADOON

Does your profit rate  
     make you damn your fate,  
 Have your products fallen from favor?  
 If without deceit  
     you can't compete  
 You yet may victory savor;  
 Defeat your foes,  
     and augment their woes  
 No matter how hard they may labor;  
 Collaborate  
     when they regulate,  
 And you'll beggar (nay, bugger) thy neighbor!

— MERCURIO DOLCE

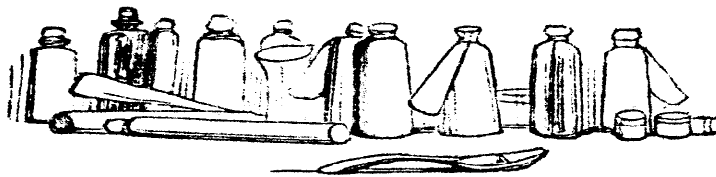
## Profiles in Progress

- Shotshell wads, which used to be biodegradable fiber, now linger in the field for years!
- Hospitals discard barrels full of waste every day, instead of re-sterilizing glass syringes and steel instruments!
- When you buy a new car, the interior furnishings will probably warp and crack before that special aroma is gone!
- Every oil change generates five pieces of enduring litter where there used to be easily incinerated cardboard!
- And now... there are firework mortars which are easy to carry, but unlikely to withstand any cylinder shell worth shooting. Ideally, they are used with modern K-RAP shells, which upon bursting strew the landscape with sharp fragments, ideally constituted to interact with barefooted children, to the enormous increase in physicians' revenues from minor stitching jobs and tetanus shots!

**ALL BECAUSE OF A MATERIAL WE  
 CALL F!&%\$¢ \* DOG@%#@# PLASTIC!**

(A public service message, brought to you by the American Association for the Promotion of Tacky Environmental Pollutants as Structural Materials, through the generous support of Charlatan Wheeze Enterprises, Inc.)

# Galinitropyromedica



This time we take a brief look at the non-metals, and a few simple compounds containing them. Our list does not pretend to be comprehensive, due to limited space and to the fact that most of these drugs have only minor usefulness in in pyrotechny. (A few such as charcoal and sulfur are essential in pyrotechny but they have limited usefulness in medicine.) It is worth noting that some chemists consider antimony and arsenic "metalloids", something very close to the non-metals. This view has some merit considering the odd compounds they form, viz. the sodium meta-antimoniate endorsed by Weingart for yellow stars, or the gallium arsenide used in electronic devices. However, to this author antimony and arsenic are metals, arsenic in particular being so useful that it deserves a column all to itself at the end of our series.

Cyanides and complex cyanides, while used only occasionally, deserve a passing mention. The simple cyanides are not seen in fireworks, because they are toxic and are not very stable in moist air. But they are certainly combustible in the presence of oxidizers, and could be used in an improvised explosive if nothing else were available. The rapid action of fatal doses of cyanide is well known, and is due to the poison's effect on respiration and nerve centers. Less well known in this safety-faking age is the fact that small doses are useful medications and rarely have unpleasant side effects. Unlike the heavy metals, cyanide ion doesn't accumulate in the tissues; doses not large enough to kill are soon eliminated. Prussic acid or free cyanide is especially useful as a sedative in cough and gastric irritation. A diluted acid, 2% strength, was once official; the usual dose was 1 to 3 minims or 0.06 to 0.18 cc. A more common way to administer cyanide, especially today, is by taking advantage of botanicals which contain cyanogenic glycosides. There are many such plants and the best choice depends partly on geography; in Europe cherry-laurel water is the traditional choice, but in the U.S. we prefer the bark of wild cherry, *Prunus virginiana*. The usual preparation is a syrup made from this bark, which should never be confused with ordinary cherry syrup made from fruit. At least one of the large drug companies still sells *Syr. Prun. Virg.* but they intend it only as a vehicle for more trendy drugs; it has obviously been boiled and while it contains more tannin than a young claret it has little if any prussic acid. Properly made at

home from reasonably fresh bark and cool water, this syrup is in a different league: a sample which has been in the author's refrigerator for at least five years still has a strong smell of bitter almond. Aside from its value in combinations, a tablespoonful all by itself is just the thing for a dry cough - yet one would need a glassful to be at risk for poisoning. This would be a good choice of cough suppressant for a narcotic abuser, since he obviously would not develop a cyanide habit, at least not for long. Some health-food stores carry a decent grade of wild cherry bark, and we must wonder how many of the granola crowd who talk of harmless herbs consider that they are taking one of the deadliest inorganic poisons.

The red and yellow prussiates of potash which are sometimes seen in pyrotechny are apparently valueless in medicine; the British *Extra Pharmacopœia* says the ferrocyanide is "physiologically almost without action". However, the same reference claims the soluble thiocyanates lower blood pressure and may also be useful in nervous disorders and some types of pain. Apparently this was a short-lived fashion just before World War II. It certainly does not have a long enough history to rank with the real classics, while we never hear of it today even from the fringe medical types. However, it is interesting to note that another complex cyanide, the nitroprusside of sodium, is still in widespread use today for reducing high blood pressure. It is not given to outpatients, because of the short duration of action and the danger involved in an overdose. But it is given intravenously to people who have severe, acute cases of hypertension, and practically every hospital stocks it. It is also available in crystal form from chemical suppliers, and aside from its relatively high cost there is no reason why it could not be used in co-precipitates and other specialized compositions.

*Sulphur* acts as mild laxative when taken internally, a typical dose being 15 to 60 grains. Most of this remains unchanged, but a small percentage is converted to compounds which enter the circulation, causing  $H_2S$  to be excreted from the skin and lungs. It has given good results when taken orally for chronic eczema. Sulphur has also been administered for a wide variety of other conditions raging from bronchitis to chronic rheumatism, but in most of these its value is doubtful. Many sulphurous springs do seem to benefit rheumatism, but it is not certain whether this is due to the sulphur, to other miner-

als, or simply to the long immersion in hot water. Fifteen or twenty years ago there was a minor fashion for taking sulphur capsules as a mosquito repellent – we remember reading this in one of the popular outdoor magazines.

Externally, sulphur is usually employed as a 10% ointment, although practically any strength is safe to try. It is useful in many skin diseases, especially scabies and acne, although of course it is unfashionable these days because it is greasy and smelly. The unpleasantness can be reduced by applying it at night, sleeping in soft flannel, and washing the area in the morning. It is very inexpensive and about as safe as any drug product can be, so those who actually pay for their medications may still find it useful.

*Charcoal* remains popular as a non-specific treatment for poisoning: it binds a remarkable variety of organic compounds ranging from natural alkaloids to recent synthetic drugs. It has also been reported to absorb some inorganic toxins, including permanganate, iodine, and corrosive sublimate. The same property applied to bacterial toxins would explain its occasional use in poultices for infected wounds. Aside from its value in emergencies, charcoal is sometimes used in simple indigestion. The author's family once owned a Labrador retriever who had truly atrocious eating habits even by the standards of his breed. After gorging on week-old fish from the lakeshore, frostbitten tomatoes, and overripe cucumbers, even this dog would sometimes regret his gluttony. He would then retire to the woodpile and dine blissfully on charred cottonwood bark until his tongue matched his coat. As he discovered, almost any type of charcoal works, but the usual choice is "activated" charcoal, made more absorptive by treatment with steam. The activated type also gives superior results in some firework compositions, notably chlorate and perchlorate shell bursting mixtures which lack sulphur.

The recent work by Jennings-White and Wilson (in *PYROTECHNICA* • XVII) includes a pyrotechnic use for chloroform. Some of the safety-fakery involving this drug has already been mentioned in *The Case Former*, and we lack the space for a lengthy discussion here. It is worth noting that ethyl ether is still about the safest general anæsthetic, as far as toxicity to the patient is concerned, and it is also an excellent muscle relaxant which usually obviates the need for curare-type drugs. Unfortunately the extremely flammable vapor is a hazard in its own right, especially with all the electrical gadgets found in a typical modern surgery. Ether also has stimulant effects in the early stages and takes a long time to produce deep anæsthesia; this is why we have heard of "ether frolics" but never "chloroform frolics". The chlorinated anæsthetics, old or new, are non-flammable and offer a much shorter induction period, although not quite as short as we see in the movies. Chloroform water, 1:400 strength, was once popular as a vehicle for drugs with a nauseating taste. The lozenges

called simply "Throat Discs" originally contained chloroform, but whether due to safety-faking or merely to a change in the manufacturer, they have lost what was probably their most active, and certainly their most distinctive ingredient. The author saw chloroform in a commercial brand of toothache drops only a few years ago, but times being what they are this has probably been changed as well. One useful preparation is the old *Linimentum Chloroformi* of the U.S.P., something else which is now a home-brew proposition. It is made by mixing three volumes of chloroform with seven of camphor and soap limiment. If covered with bandages chloroform can be irritating to the skin and may even produce blisters, but when applied uncovered this problem does not arise, and the liniment is especially useful in neuralgic conditions. Finally in this safety-faking age we should ponder the fact that it was not very long ago one could buy "Chloroform Anodyne" or simply "Chlorodyne", an elixir used for severe pain and gastric disturbances in both humans and animals. Receipts varied slightly, but it always contained chloroform, morphine, hydrocyanic acid (q.v.) and cannabis!

Although it may be stretching our theme of simple compounds, we feel compelled to mention quinine hydrochloride, which was listed as an ingredient of color compositions by Websky in 1846. Its chlorine content is low, and it is less efficient for this purpose than something like saran or hexachlorobenzene. Still, this appears to be the first documented use of an organic chlorine donor, back in the days when calomel (which should never be confused with corrosive sublimate) was sold in every corner pharmacy.

*Boric acid* was also used by Websky, in a green fire composition which included three other medicaments, zinc oxide plus the dreaded chlorate and sulphur. It is still occasionally used for flame coloration, although its main firework use today is as a buffer to protect aluminum. Boric acid and some of its compounds are mild antiseptics with a long and mostly favorable history of medicinal usage. They were never considered "miracle drugs" but this helped them escape most of the faddishness which goes with miracles. Doses of 5 to 15 grains may be taken with safety, although boric acid is of little use internally except in certain cases of cystitis. As a glycerite it may be used in ear infections, while pessaries of boric acid are occasionally still made and can be effective where more stylish anti-infectives fail. Boric acid is most popular for minor inflammations of the eyes; a commercial ophthalmic ointment was available until about five years ago. This is yet another drug which has come under attack from the safety-fakers. There have been a few cases of poisoning (and how few it takes!) due to heavy-handed usage such as sprinkling an infant's entire body with boric acid. In the case of ophthalmics, the good folks who watch over us are worried about bacterial contamination rather than boron toxicity. Thus we have the odd

situation that boric acid is still sold in most drug-stores, but bears no directions for medicinal use. However, anyone who can boil water can make a useful eyewash solution of about 2% strength. Saturation at room temperature is less than 4%, so it is difficult to make it too concentrated, while the problem of contamination is solved by scalding the containers and making fresh solution every day. If there is no benefit after a day or two, using it every few hours, it is time to try something else. A wide variety of preparations has also been used on the skin, the most interesting from our vantage point being a British powder composed of equal parts of boric acid, bismuth subnitrate, and calomel.

This is as good a place as any to observe that an antibiotic, properly speaking, is a substance produced by a *micro-organism* which inhibits or kills other microbes. Compounds produced by higher plants, such as quinine or echinacoside, are not true antibiotics, and inorganic substances are certainly not antibiotics. Unfortunately the word has acquired such a *cachet* that most laymen, and all too many physicians, cannot look at any kind of infectious condition without thinking "antibiotic" – even in cases where the cost or shortcomings of the modern drugs has led to a revival of the old ones! Thus we see things like bismuth salts and colloidal silver being called "antibiotics", not only in sources which can't be taken seriously, but sometimes in recognized medical literature. It is hard to say whether this is pure carelessness or a misguided attempt to put a trendy spin on these old diehards, which don't need that sort of help.

Ammonium chloride (sal ammoniac) finds occasional use as a chlorine donor, although its main pyrotechnic value is in smoke compositions. It was once popular as an inhalation in laryngitis, salpingitis and similar conditions. Even when given orally it is a fairly good saline expectorant, thinning the lung mucus to benefit such ailments as chronic bronchitis. It is a mild diuretic but there are many better ones; the distinctive property of  $\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$  is that it acidifies the urine. This increases the effectiveness of some anti-infective drugs, and also speeds the elimination of many alkaline drugs from the bloodstream. The oral dose varies from 5 to 60 grains; it may be given in capsules, or the unpleasant taste can be masked with licorice or fruit-flavored syrups. Plenty of water is advised especially with the larger doses or frequent intervals.

Hexamethylene tetramine, called hexamine or methenamine, is a good antiseptic in the urinary tract. It works best in acidic urine, which causes the drug to break down and release formaldehyde; sodium acid phosphate can be given to promote this but in the firework shop we would choose sal ammoniac (above). Methenamine is of course not trendy or profitable and is no longer promoted by the salesmen, but it is still sold by drug companies as tablets made from the hippurate or mandelate salt. Indeed,

for chronic U.T.I. it is a better choice than antibiotics, because bacteria don't develop resistance, and it works in most acute cases too. An appropriate dose is 10 to 30 grains four times daily with plenty of water.

Finally we come to phosphorus, the purported use of which in small novelty fireworks has once again provoked a controversy. Most substances regarded as poisons vary greatly in their effects, depending on the form in which they are administered, and on whether the exposure is long-term or a single large dose. This is especially true of phosphorus: in an oxidized state quite large amounts can safely be ingested, phosphate being an essential nutrient, while certain soft drinks contain phosphoric acid. The red amorphous form of the element has little effect in any quantity which is likely to be swallowed. But there is no denying that white or yellow phosphorus is highly toxic. Long-term exposure to its vapors causes the notorious "phossy jaw", a necrosis of the mandibles and adjoining bones, which is why it was banned in the manufacture of matches. One grain of phosphorus, or even less in some individuals, will cause acute poisoning if taken orally. The first symptoms are severe abdominal pain and vomiting; doses of sixteen grains or more have been survived because of this defensive response. Certain antidotes may neutralize the threat if administered soon enough; these include permanganate of potash (q.v.), oil of turpentine, and copper sulphate, which will be discussed in another column. Once the phosphorus has entered the bloodstream there is not much that can be done except to treat the symptoms. Rapid, feeble pulse, a garlicky odor on the breath, and sometimes luminous urine are seen at this stage. If the patient survives the first few hours he may appear to recover, but is likely to have serious liver toxicity in three or four days, with the usual complications of damage to that organ.

Phosphorus was formerly sold in commercial rodent baits (rats can't vomit), and these were occasionally used in criminal poisoning, although the vile taste and easy detection probably helped keep such misuse from being common. Both the rat pastes and white phosphorus "spit devils" will certainly poison a child who eats them – but we feel there is a social or cultural problem involved here which is rarely mentioned in the endless clamor over banning dangerous objects. Similar logic has been applied to everything from handguns to airplane glue, but it is interesting to note that such thinking did not carry much political weight until the "progressive" era. Phosphorus products got the axe in that thoroughly modern decade, the 1920s, while anti-fireworks campaigns in general reached a fever pitch in the '60s. At first glance it seems bizarre that periods regarded as politically *liberal* should result in *less* personal freedom, yet this is the usual pattern in the twentieth century. Can it be coincidence that the era from the first World War to the 'thirties, and later

## SYMPATHETIC DETONATIONS

*News Notes From All Around*

the 'sixties and 'seventies, were times of radical feminism when women were actively encouraged to seek careers outside the home? Accidents happen even in well-ordered households, but are far more likely where there is no clear chain of authority in the home and where the kiddies may spend hours without either parent around to supervise them.

Phosphates are rather inert substances which are not used in pyrotechny, but the almost forgotten hypophosphite salts deserve a mention. In the early part of this century these were promoted as nutritive tonics for the nervous system in wasting diseases such as tuberculosis. Effectiveness was never proven, but because of this widespread fashion one may still find the odd bottle of sodium, potassium, calcium, ferric or even manganese hypophosphite, which were probably never manufactured except for drug use. These in turn may be used to make hypophosphites of heavy metals such as lead by the simple double-displacement reaction. As one would expect these are very reactive with chlorates, since they represent phosphorus which is only partly oxidized. It is doubtful that these compounds would be a good choice for large display fireworks, but they clearly have potential in specialized mixtures such as priming compositions.

Since the mid-eighteenth century, white phosphorus itself has seen extensive use as a medicine, although needless to say the dose must be very small. About 1/100 grain or 0.65mg at one time is enough, and the French Codex recommends a maximum of 1/32 grain (2mg) daily. It should always be given in solution, although this solution can be made into a capsule or a pill. Almond oil will dissolve a convenient 1%, so that a dose of one minim (0.06cc) contains just the right amount of phosphorus. It has been used in many disorders, and some of its effects, notably its reputation as an aphrodisiac, are subjective and difficult to prove. Others are definite, such as the stimulating effect on the circulation which once made it popular in asthenic fevers. The most distinctive and useful property of phosphorus is that it stimulates bone growth, making the spongy tissue thicker and the compact tissue more dense; thus it has been given to heal ununited fractures. We may safely assume that it would be most beneficial in *deficiency of backbone*, a condition which may strike any of us from time to time, but which is truly endemic among our public officials. It is just possible that they ought to be *dosing* themselves with white phosphorus, instead of trying to take everybody else's away. Indeed the occasional fragment of a pyrotechnic "devil" might help them spit fire in the right direction, while tea made from a "twig bang" could keep them from being straws in the wind. Our only concern is that the other effect of phosphorus might help breed more of them, but that is a trend which never seems to change, no matter what we do.

— S. DULCAMARA

Fireworks references occur in all sorts of unexpected places. Who would have imagined one in a book about wine? But here it is — from H. Warner Allen's *The Romance of Wine* (New York, 1932), in the chapter headed "Port, the Wine of Philosophy":

These indefatigable people can do nothing without deafening noise. There is a certain savage fascination about the beating of a distant drum on a hot night, but I can find no good word to say for the Portuguese passion for dynamite rockets, abominable instruments of torture. They are simply rockets with one or two sticks of dynamite attached, and the dynamite is supposed to go off in the air with a terrific explosion, but explosions are sometimes premature and sometimes delayed till the stick falls. I am assured that the rocket death-roll in Northern Portugal does not exceed a hundred a year, a mere trifle in these days of motor cars, but I am convinced that the figures must be much larger. When the Portuguese are really enjoying themselves, they sing and dance to a noise resembling that of a heavy bombardment, and in a festival in the mountains at Amarante I was completely deafened by the unceasing roar of about sixty sheepskin drums beaten furiously, broken by violent dynamite explosions.

Mr. Allen seems to have had an aversion to any noise louder than the popping of a champagne cork, and on this point we obviously disagree with him. Do the Portuguese still celebrate the vintage with dynamite rockets? Does anybody know? If so, we at the *Case-Former* would welcome hearing from him.

The recent spate of tell-all books about the British royals have, in general, aroused in us an equanimity bordering upon indifference. Our attention was, however, drawn to the following passage from Stephen Barry's *Royal Service* (1983):

There is one custom the Royal family share that few people know about. Every year when we were on the Royal yacht, we would anchor for the day off the coast near the Queen Mother's tiny Castle of May. This is a very comfortable home in spite of its rather grim medieval look. The gardens were all made ready by the Queen Mother's gardeners for her August visit, and we arrived in time for a very good lunch. Everyone was encouraged to wander through the grounds before tea was served and then back to the yacht by launch before sailing to Aberdeen.

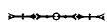
As we steamed away the Queen Mother always sent up big rockets from the turrets of her castle for a dramatic farewell, and her staff would wave big sheets from the battlements. In return, the *Britannia* would send up flares, scorching streaks of light into the sky. Unfortunately, being Scotland, some summers were rainy and foggy so we couldn't see the Queen Mother's fireworks nor she ours. But we could all hear the bangs and crashes as they exploded into the damp sky.

Set as it is in the far north of Scotland, the Castle was too far from anywhere for anyone else to enjoy our firework display. This, therefore, became a very private little



ceremony, and one which signaled the end of the working year and the start of the much anticipated summer holiday.

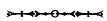
We always thought H.M. the Queen Mother brought a bit of Scottish vigor into the otherwise dull Gaelic tribe that occupies the British throne, and are gratified to hear that she likes big rockets, bangs and crashes. Here's to her!



Regular readers of these pages will recall a notice that appeared under this heading in a previous issue (Vol. III, No. 3, December 1996) regarding a proposal published in the *Journal of Pyrotechnics* advocating the use of phenolphthalein in rocket compositions. As the original author of this proposal never bothered to try it in an actual rocket, basing his predictions only on some sort of computer modelling, it fell to our intrepid correspondent T. Babington Brimstone to put the idea to an empirical test, with results reported in the same issue.

We wish to note, for the record, that phenolphthalein has now been deemed a carcinogen by the FDA, and ordered removed from such patent medicines as Ex-Lax, in which it featured for years as the active ingredient. We are somewhat mystified as to how the FDA determined its carcinogenicity, since it is hard to imagine, in the case of this compound, how laboratory rats could survive the usual regular mega-doses administered in carcinogenicity testing, long enough to contract cancer.

Nevertheless we expect to see a retraction in the *JoP*, anathematizing this substance with all the hysteria mustered by such eminent safety-fakers, and consigning it to exile along with realgar, Paris green, and (*gasp!*) chlorate of potash. It would almost make you want to go out and get some, if it had actually ever worked as a pyrotechnic ingredient.



The following, noted in *The Field* for February, 1998, points out the remarkable variety of uses to which pyrotechnic compositions may be put:

Fuses for Bolting Bears: sulphur, 18 oz.; nitre, 15 oz.; pitch, 6 oz.; resin, 3 oz.; mealed gunpowder, 3 oz.; powdered (*sic*) pitch, and resin, and melt gently over the fire; take off, mix with the coal (*sic*), and when "stiffish" add gunpowder; knead mixture, and make into balls. The quantity makes about four balls for bears. Get a tin tube, and cut it into sections, which makes the stuff handy to carry; but small balls about the size of a pea would do for rabbits. Some add a little cayenne pepper which is an admirable addition. (From *Facts & Useful Hints Relating to Fishing and Shooting*, 1874)

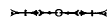
A ball of this composition (here called a "fuse" in the manner of Thomas Kentish) was evidently to have been lighted, and tossed into the lair of the animal, whether bear or rabbit, in order to smoke it out and permit the hunter to give chase.

Somewhat along the same lines, in his pioneering pamphlet *Feux d'artifice sifflants* (1888), Amédée Denisse notes the application of pyrotechnic whistles

to fox hunting. He points out that hunters make use of asphyxiating smokes to drive foxes, rabbits, "et autres animaux nuisibles" from their burrows; and when the beast is not asleep it will hasten to escape the suffocating action of the smoke. However, if the deleterious vapors surprise the animal while it is sleeping, it may succumb, asphyxiated in its lair, without profit for the hunter. Here he suggests that a simple whistling serpent will have its use: its piercing noise will awaken the animal, which, terrified, will decamp the more speedily.

Not to omit the vegetable kingdom, we note the following suggestion made by Louis Fieser, inventor of Napalm, in a discussion of its household employments found on p. 201 of his immortal volume *The Scientific Method* (1964):

Napalm gel has a peacetime use: eradication of crabgrass. In late August, when crabgrass begins to bear seeds, mowing is suspended for a few weeks to let the seeds accumulate. A thin Napalm gel is prepared in a glass jar with a screw cap punched with holes. Strands of gel are then laid over the grass, a small section being treated at a time. With an extinguisher in one hand, the operator tosses in a match with the other hand. The ugly seeds are completely destroyed. So is the grass; the lawn is initially black. But roots of the grass are not damaged and the first rain brings out a green, crabgrass-free lawn.



One of the things we actually have to admit reading on the PMS – whoops, make that PML – was a report that the police chief of Madison, Wisconsin, someone called Richard Williams, recently had a mishap with his new Glock semi-auto pistol. It appears that he forgot that he hid it in the oven of his gas stove. Having put a turkey in to roast, his memory was jogged when a round cooked off.

When last we looked the ponderous dunces on the 'Net were debating how this could possibly happen – what was the initiation temperature of pistol primers, smokeless powder, etc. This is less intriguing to us than why the chief put his pistol in the oven to begin with, or why he was so absent-minded as to forget what he had done with it. How is a cop to "protect and serve" the public, when his pistol is in the stove?

We have heard too many contrary anecdotes to have much faith in the proficiency of the average police officer with firearms. There are regular reports in the press of appalling marksmanship, where dozens of rounds have been discharged by cops and crooks alike without a single one having effect. Many accidents have resulted from the unfamiliar mechanics of self-loading pistols, newly issued to policemen used to their old service revolvers. Our correspondent *il dottore* Dulcamara (himself a graceful and accomplished shot at moving targets with everything from .22 to 4-bore) reported two to us that happened within days after the new weapons were issued in his community. One officer managed to put a hole through the door of his squad car, incidentally blow-

ing off one of his fingers, whilst the other wounded himself in the buttock. We have seen a new concealed carry holster advertised that is designed to fit in the waistband of a pair of trousers, just behind the fly. This may lend new credence to Mae West's celebrated greeting line, but we also cringe to contemplate the consequences of its use by policemen. "Not a happy lot," indeed... especially when sung by an *haut-contre*, suffering a condition inalterable by Viagra.

Putting a pistol in the oven, however, represents a new nadir. Part of the explanation may lie in Madison's reputation as a throwback to the 'sixties, a hotbed of the loony and loopy left. Since the office of chief of police is usually a political appointment we might expect that Mr. Williams is a product of that type of thinking. We shouldn't expect a Bill Jordan or a Skeeter Skelton out of Madison.

Readers of the very first issue of *The Case Former*, away back in 1991, may recall our well-beloved and Right Venerable G.C.C. Eduardo Tellerini wrote an article about a youthful experiment in the forced drying of cherry bombs in the oven. At least he *thought* he knew what he was doing... whereas Chief Williams appeared not to have exerted any thought at all.

History repeats itself, the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce.

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## POLITICALLY INCORRECT FIREWORKS - WESTERN STYLE

The decision to hold the 1998 P.G.I. convention in Gillette, Wyoming causes mixed feelings in this author and he offers no predictions as to whether it will turn out well or not. On the plus side, it is rather close to home, there is plenty of room, and there are fewer safety-fakers than in most other places we know. But there are drawbacks, too, in this bleak part of the state where August temperatures are commonly in the nineties. What would be called "wind" in Iowa or Michigan is barely a breeze on the sagebrush flats, and while summer is not the peak season, real wind can hit anytime. Gillette is not a big city with thousands of hotel rooms, and if there is a very large attendance some people will be driving seventy miles or more *each way*. With all these things to consider, we fear that one special cracker pack design will not be enough to commemorate the event. Drawing inspiration from the work of Paolo da Giro, we propose the following:

1) *Football and Cheap Booze Brand* celebrates the cultural atmosphere of the state. These crackers are just common and noisy, but the paper is specially treated to leave a lingering aroma of stale beer. Ten percent of the proceeds go to the state university, and the crackers are finished in nauseating yellow and brown, the school colors.

2) *East Coast Thinkin' Brand* and *California Dreamin' Brand* are remarkably similar and might be made by

the same people. Both are finished in pale pink paper which is imprinted with tiny leftist slogans such as "Support Gay Rights" and "Ban Mountain Lion Hunting". Imported to the state in large quantities, they are especially popular among schoolteachers and elected officials.

3) *Dude Ranch Disaster Brand* conforms to Class "C" rules, but the crackers have extra long fuses and are weighted with sand to make it easier to toss them under passing horses. The label advocates responsible use, which means that any loud or pushy tourist under seventy is fair game.

4) *Drunken Indian Brand* is self-explanatory. It is only fair to mention that the abuse of *cheap* booze mentioned above does not always apply here. In an alley in Lander, which borders a reservation and is known for its wild weekends, the author once found an empty bottle labeled 12-year-old Dalmore! In keeping with another well-earned stereotype, this brand is a long way from Class "C".

5) *Gender-Bender Brand* is more "politically correct" than "incorrect", but is a must in the state which first established women's suffrage. Historians still debate the reasons behind this experiment, but it was partly due to laws requiring a certain number of *voters* (not just residents) for statehood, and it was also meant to attract more young women to this remote territory. In those more innocent times many people argued that the character of politics could be improved by including ladies, who would also have a civilizing influence on rowdy cowboys and miners. The men still behave as badly as ever, while the women now hang out in bars and use profanity.

The cutting edge of this social revolution is celebrated in these special children's packs. The "His" label features a small boy with a sparkler practicing his dance routine, while "Hers" has a girl in an army helmet blowing up anthills. Contents are unisex, the crackers being assorted denim blue and military camouflage. Children who save a hundred pack labels may redeem them for an earring or a pair of pink sweat pants.

6) *Pasture Poodle Poison Puffers* look like ordinary colored smoke balls. With toxic baits outlawed on public lands, and the "dogs" increasingly wary about shooting, it can be difficult to control their spread. Just the thing to keep the kiddies occupied, available in thallium green, ten-eighty tan, strychnine white, arsenical yellow, and mercury-vapor grey.

The wide open spaces allow plenty of rockets:

1) *Dances with Wolves* is made especially for Yellowstone Park, in honor of the federal reintroduction program. A high-pitched whistle is followed by a sharp report which simulates rifle fire. If these don't scare the wolves, they may at least disperse the bighorn sheep before the wolves get all the lambs.

2) *Goose Buster*. Wyoming has a great variety of wildlife, but the barren landscape and hordes of out-of-state hunters keep the game nervous. This Class "B" rocket is tipped with an ounce charge of nitro-

mannite surrounded by half a pound of number 2 shot, and offers one means of bagging the high ones.  
 3) *Jackalope JATO Units* can help in climbing steep mountains, or in outrunning the highway patrol long enough to turn off the road and hide.  
 4) *Purification by Fire* is a Chinese rocket with a long delay and a heavy heading of zirconium streamers. These should start enough grassfires to take out some of the sagebrush, and with any luck a few trailer courts and some of the tackier roadside tourist traps.  
 5) *Wind Warrior* rockets feature an end-burning design, giving a steady thrust for a relatively long time. They have no heading and are equipped with soft rubber nose cones. When launched properly these will struggle feebly upwind, almost parallel to the ground, until *brennschluss*. Then the object of the game is to catch them as they blow back. To allow for different countries and seasons, they should be made in 60, 80 and 100 m.p.h. strengths.



## THE PATTERSONSONG OF THE SHYSTER AND THE EXPERT

from THE KOSANKO, Act I, Sc. 3

(Air: "Vilana, che sa tu far")

*Shyster:* Expert, what know you how to do?

*Expert:* I know how to bend what's true,  
 To tailor what I write and say  
 To fit the whim of him who'll pay  
 My fee so full and ample.

*Shyster:* Give me a sample.

*Expert:* Big bombs go high and farther drift,  
 Than little ones without much lift.  
 Problem's worse if there's a breeze -  
 Now pay my thousand dollars please.

*Chorus:* *Posta, posta pur tantara, de pur susso*  
*Alza la gamba. Exaudi nos.*  
*Kyrie eleison.*

## SATURDAY AT THE WESTERN WINTER BLAST

(Air: "If any wench Venus' girdle wear," *The Beggar's Opera*)

Cold and raw Lake Hav-a-su was, At the winter fireworks party,  
 The sun at its height was completely obscur'd, And by night it was raining right smartly: As  
 I was a-stepping outside of Shugrue's, I tripped in a brimming-full gutter; The  
 fireworks there were as wet as I was, and the best they could do was just sputter.

Cold and raw Lake Havasu was,  
 At the winter fireworks party,  
 The sun at its height was completely obscur'd,  
 And by night it was raining right smartly:

As I was a-stepping outside of Shugrue's,  
 I tripped in a brimming-full gutter;  
 The fireworks there were as wet as I was,  
 and the best they could do was just sputter.

To whom it may concern: If any of the writing contained herein should allude to any similarities regarding your personality, lifestyle, or mannerisms, and should they offend thee in any possible way...chances are you picked up the wrong piece of pyrotechnic literature. The Case-Former is built upon parodies, goofs, and ingenuity in writing. Naturally, if any of these blasts pertain to you - you really need not continue.

The Case Former is a byproduct of the I.:O.:O.:J.:., a non-profit, non-existent, non-nothin'! organization. Some say it is the National Lampoon of pyrotechny, and the Mad magazine of the pyrotechnic underground.\*

With this in mind I regard it as my privilege to present...

## NEWS FROM THE *Grapevine*

An ongoing department spinning tales of deceit, debauchery, devious deeds, double dealing, and doings in our pyrotechnic midst. We join our author in mid-thought as he touches on some touchy subjects that have touched us here, in the Grapevine.

Well now, let's see... whom could we roast this issue? There's always Krookshankee and Wheeze. I don't think an issue of the Case-Former would be in order without devoting a few blasts to these master con-artists. It's almost a tradition! Hmmm...who's been a bad boy since last issue?

Oh. There are the two prime examples of what living on the left coast will produce, who we'll get to later, but first I'll address a couple of hemorrhoids we have out here in the Empire State. New York's own Mayor Ghouliani imposed a task force headed by Al "the Pig" Pignatano. This group of "piss on your parade" police made life in the pyrotechnically plentiful East Coast absolutely unnerving, tapping phones, stalking people, pinching everything that moved! By mid-June last year I myself was ready for Prozac. These people should die from slow asshole cancer on public access television. Over 288 people were arrested in New York City alone. That was on last July 4th - with no relief in sight this year!

### 👍 Cheers & Jeers 👍

👍 Cheers to Don Rowe and the Ohio Hot Shots for their incredible contribution to the Muskegon convention in 1996 - their product input is always a welcomed and highly anticipated attraction. Likewise we recall Rozzi's demo at the 1995 convention in Stevens Point. It's great to know there is still good American product available to captivate an audience even when it is mostly comprised of pyro groupies who think Chinese shells are the end. We look forward to the Rozzi public display at this year's PGI Convention!

👍 Jeers to R\*\* D\*\*\*\* for making a complete pompous ass of himself, joining the ranks of such current P.A.'s

\* This is a profound disappointment to its editors, who firmly believed they were writing in the style of Varro's *Satyra Menippeæ* and the character sketches of La Bruyère.

as Blombo, Krookshankee, and the Weasel himself. Where else but a Western Weeniethon would you find such a bloated scoundrel? Picking a fight with one of our own Rocket Men is not a nice way to make friends. We were surprised that his target bothered to come back this year. R.D., maybe you should look to your San Diego neighbors who lately left the planet for Comet Hale-Bopp... Then there's Wob Peever and his Snot Sheet...

👍 Cheers to Ken Nixon for again providing his electrical/computer expertise at various functions. His work speaks for itself and is second to none. He is one of a few good people to come out of California and we appreciate his continued support of pyrotechnic artistry.

### Grapevine Brain Teaser

There's been much upset amongst the net-wits recently that they can't legally continue to expropriate the name or initials of the Pyrotechnics Guild International without permission. Let's help them find a new name. Take one word from column "A", one from column "B", and a third from column "C":

A	B	C	
Patronizing	Gadabouts	Incorporated	}
Pathological	Gadflies	Imbeciles	
Pompous	Gaffes	Inbreeders	
Passé	Gallivanter	Ideologues	
Packaged	Gamey-smelling	Idiots	
Padded	Ganglings	Ignominics	
Paganizing	Gapers	Ignoramuses	
Palaverous	Gargoyles	Imitators	
Pathetic	Gatecrashers	Indecencies	
Propagandizing	Groupies	Insupportables	
Phony	Grubbers	Investivists	

### Q & A regarding Convention Food

1. Q: What's that on your plate?  
A: Well, it's either a piece of chicken or a well basted loafer.
2. Q: What's that mark on the side of your drumstick?  
A: It looks like the spot where the farmer kicked it.
3. Q: Was that iced tea?  
A: It smelled like cesspool extract.
4. Q: Can you make a sentence with the word isthmus in it?  
A: Isthmus be one tough chicken!
5. Q: How many forks did you break?  
A: I lost track after four.

These questions were overheard from various conversations at the past few PGI Banquets. No, I wasn't eavesdropping... it was just hard not to pick up on these comments due to the fact that we were eating in a commercial barn/warehouse stacked on top of each other like four cellblocks.

Of course the talk last year was about the concession stand at the shoot site, where every meal came with a free case of dyspepsia.

— MIGALUCC



# Lyra Pyrobursesca

Big bombs, small bombs, great guns and little ones!  
Put him in a pillory!  
Rack him with artillery!

— W.S. GILBERT, *The Grand Duke*

*Tragicomædia Musico-Pyrobolica:*

## THE FINAL SCENE OF "THE KOSANKO" or DEUS (& DIABOLUS) EX MACHINA.

After the fervent prayer of the fireworks men for the abatement of their persecution in the previous scene – there is a sudden effulgence of vari-colored tableau fires; and, to sweet instrumental music, SAINT BARBARA, patroness of pyrotechnists, accompanied by angels, descends to the stage surrounded by the implements of her martyrdom – stacks of ATF, DOT, and NFPA regulations. On her head is a golden crown, the points of which are shaped like skyrocket headings, and she is draped with a sash of Chinese crackers over her dark blue robe set with gold stars. She sings (*soprano aria*) to a heartfelt, hymnlike melody:

SAINT            Fireworks  
BARBARA:        make bright the night;  
                  Illuminate  
                  us by their light  
                  Our souls exalt,  
                  our hearts incite  
                  To joyful  
                  celebration.  
  
                  Safety quacks  
                  impose their might  
                  To spoil our fun,  
                  and vent their spite.  
                  We must confront  
                  their schemes and fight  
                  To stop their  
                  regulation.  
  
                  Here's a Wheeze  
                  that's mighty slight;  
                  His publication  
                  fly-by-night;  
                  Subscribers this  
                  did not delight –  
                  Condemn'd his  
                  reputation.  
  
                  Whitewater  
                  barrators in sight,  
                  Themselves with sham  
                  degrees bedight,  
                  The devil take  
                  this lot tonight,  
                  To just  
                  incineration!

Lycopodium pipes and stage fog. Flash pots announce the arrival of MALACODA, a senior demon attired as a 13th century *podesta*, and his retinue of 12 imps, clad as tipstuffs. They bear pitchforks, grappling hooks, and buckets of boiling tar. MALACODA is clearly flustered and announces (*recitativo secco*):

MALACODA:    Who the Hell called us,  
                  And why have they hauled us,  
                  Away from our comfy old *bolgia*?  
                  We're the Eighth Circle's best,  
                  We give sinners no rest,  
                  Anybody in Hell could ha' told ya.  
                  Barbariccia, call the roll!

BARBARICCIA, clad as a sergeant, emits a loud flatulence<sup>1</sup>. The IMPS, who have previously been engaging in Three Stooges slapstick, recognize this as a call to order and fall in line. As the name of each is read, he sticks out his tongue in salute.

BARBARICCIA: Alichino!  
                  Cagnazzo!  
                  Calcabrina!  
                  Draghinazzo!  
                  Farfarello!  
                  Graffiacane!  
                  Libicocco!  
                  Malebranche!  
                  Rubicante!  
                  Scarmiglione!  
                  All present and accounted for, Most  
                  Abysmal!

MALACODA turns, and seeing SAINT BARBARA, backs off together with IMPS. Though an adversary of Heaven, he must pay proper respect. (*Recit.*)

<sup>1</sup>Cf. *Inf.*, XXI *ad fin.*,

Ma prima avea ciascun la lingua stretta  
Coi denti, verso lorduca, per cenno;  
Ed elli avea del cul fatto trombetta.

Also Aristophanes, *Nubes*, 165: "σαλπιγξ ὁ πρωκτὸς ἐστίν."

MALACODA: Scusa, signora.  
– Ma le diavole gentiluomini  
Nel lengua dantesca proclame le  
loro fulmini.

(*Bass aria*, to great fanfare)

Tuonerà tra mille turbini  
la mia destra potentissima  
con sentenza rigidissima  
scaglierà saetta, e fulmini.  
Di cieco carcere  
nel sen profondo  
al rai del mondo  
si celi il misero!  
E se mai risero  
le sue follie  
or dalle mie  
ire vendicatrici impari a piangere!

(*Recit.*, pointing his muckfork at THE  
KOSANKO and his toady, WHEEZE)

Ogn'uom v'è barratier<sup>2</sup>,  
come li consiglieri di Sta. Zita,  
Del “no,” per li denar,  
vi si fa “ita.”

IMPS seize and bind the culprits in chains and douse them with boiling tar. In the ensuing pandemonium, more Three Stooges slapstick follows with the recitative dialogue:

SCARMIGLIONE: O Malacoda, vuo che 'l tocchi  
(waves fork in sul groppone?  
at KOSANKO)

MALACODA: Si, fa che lil' accochi!

GRAFFIACANE, O Rubicante, fa che tu li metti  
LIBICOCCO *et al.*: Li unghione a dosso si che tu lo  
(*pointing to* scuoi!  
WHEEZE)

KOSANKO No!  
AND WHEEZE: Oh woe!  
Please don't take us below!  
What will it take?  
Your while we'll make  
It worth, we swear it's so!  
May  
Today  
We souls to you betray?  
We'll make a deal  
On pyros squeal  
If you'll just let us stay!

*Excuse me, ma'am.*

– *But all demons polite,*  
*In Dantesque fashion their fulminations*  
*indite.*

*I shall thunder, amidst a thousand-fold whirlwind*  
*My right hand most powerful I rear,*  
*With frightful judgment most severe,*  
*To throw lightning and thunder at those who've*  
*sinned.*

*In the nethermost pit, you'll be assured*  
*Far from the light of the world*  
*The miserable caitiff shall be hurled*  
*Into an oubliette, and there immured.*  
*And if at his follies, whate'er the reason why,*  
*He once laughed, than shall I by*  
*My avenging wrath, give him good cause to cry!*

*Like Lucca's aldermen,*  
*these are barrators,*  
*I say: Their “nay,” for cash,*  
*becomes a “yea.”*

*Hey, Malacoda, do you want me to stick*  
*This one in his fat arse?*

*Yes, and make it hurt – you know the trick!*

*Rubicante, in this one's backside*  
*Now sink your claws, and flay his sorry hide!*

*Continued on page 20*

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<sup>2</sup>The proper place in Hell for “expert witnesses” is the Fifth Bolgia of the Eighth Circle, where the “barrators” or profiteers from litigation, who for pay give agreeable testimony, are. They could also go, further down, with the “false witnesses” but for Dante's use of the precise term:

A quella terra ch'i ho ben fornita  
Ogn'uom v'e barratier, fuor che Bonturo,  
Del “no,” per li denar, vi si fa “ita.” (*Inf.* XXI, 40-42)

Their punishment is to be drowned in boiling pitch and when they stick their heads up above it, to be held down with pitchforks and bale hooks, “like meat being boiled.” *Consiglieri di Santa Zita* refers to the aldermen of Lucca, almost as notoriously corrupt a bunch as those of Chicago.

IMPS chorus: S'abruca lo cattivo! S'arroste!  
(with full Fra le dure catene  
orchestra) del temerario ardir paghi le pene!

*The caitiff toast! Then let him roast!  
And in the heaviest chains  
For his impudence let him bear the pains!*

MALACODA and IMPS dance around their prisoners, rapping their pitchfork handles on the stage to the rhythm of a barbaric melody.

KOSANKO, So now we're going to Hell  
WHEEZE: Say, wouldn't it be swell  
(duet in echo) If you went there as well?  
Damn you all!

*Exeunt* MALACODA, IMPS, KOSANKO, WHEEZE, downward. There is a distinct smell of brimstone.

SAINT (Recit.)  
BARBARA: Parlan ancor li angeli e sante  
Nelle parole del divin' poeta Dante.  
(sop. aria)  
Deh, mi dite,  
se gioite  
dentro l'alma al par di me?  
Anco in Ciel le stelle tremule  
vezzosette ogn'ora danzano  
ma per questo non avanzano  
il mio cor, di cui son' emule.

*Likewise above, from humble cherub to Virgin Mary,  
Do we speak in the verse of Alighieri.*

*Pray, tell me, does your soul with common voice,  
Join mine, and in this result rejoice?*

*The twinkling stars in Heaven dance  
Most charmingly in its vast expanse  
But not so much so as does my heart  
At this deliverance of pyrotechny's art.*

SAINT BARBARA, PYROTECHNISTS, AND  
ANGEL'S CHORUS:

Thus happy and free  
We fugeys should be  
Our rockets and bombshells to fire;  
We do know enough  
That thus off the cuff  
We can do it sans consequence dire.

*Chorus:* Thus happy and free  
*I fugisti* should be  
Their rockets and bombshells to fire;  
They do know their stuff  
And that's quite enough;  
Pay no heed to the safety-fake liar.

Without quackish contrivance  
or plastic appliance  
let us shoot as we always have done;

Our knowledge is free  
from sham doctor's degree<sup>3</sup>  
let us just do our work and have fun.

*Chorus:* Without quackish contrivance  
or Kosanko's connivance  
let them shoot as they always have done

Their knowledge them frees  
from the thrall of the Wheeze;  
Now we can all have some fun!

*Exeunt* SAINT BARBARA and ANGELS (upwards, amidst stage mines and shells, of virginal silvery-white);  
*Exeunt* PYROTECHNISTS (stage left or right, amidst rejoicing).

CURTAIN

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Varro, *Sat. Menipp.*: "Philosophastris licentiantur in artibus, artem qui non habent."



(CONTINUED from inside front cover)

and goes out of its way personally to belittle (unlike the Flipper we don't split our infinitives) those people and their positions. An officer of the P.G.I., seeking opportunity to rebut accusations made (among others) against him, was curtly denied, told that access to the list was by approval, and he was not approved. All of this is carried on under the cover of a public web site that contains noble-sounding expressions about the free interchange of ideas! Hypocrisy is indeed the tribute vice pays to virtue.

Well do we recall when the practices of mass mailings containing character assassinations and political pot-stirring began in the Guild. It was in 1990 that "The Friends of the P.G.I." first made their appearance, and in a sort of response that our Order was founded; not as a political counterpoise, but as a sort of comfortable exile to which the creative and accomplished in pyrotechnic craftsmanship, and those sympathetic to them, might flee to enjoy each other's fellowship, in the event our beloved Guild should fall to these self-serving schemers.

Far be it from us to lecture our Companions, or belabor what they already well know about our Order and its purposes. These were stated long ago, by our Right Venerable Companion Bianco Gasolini, in Vol. I, No. 1 of the *Case Former*, back in 1991. His article, "Fama et Confessio Fraternalitatis," was deliberately so entitled to allude to another famous fraternity, which its founders called a "ludibrium," "jocus severus," and "lusus serius" – namely, a game, a severe jest, and serious playfulness.

If The Flipper wants to set himself up as the John Birch Society attacking the imagined conspiracies of the Bavarian Illuminati, the Trilateral Commission, or the Bilderbergers; or the Rev'd. Pat Robertson attacking the poor suffering Freemasons, he is welcome to cast himself in such a rôle. We happily accept the position of his target. He is placing himself in enviable company. The whole situation reminds us of the wisdom of Umberto Eco:

"This is parody's mission: it must never be afraid of going too far. If its aim is true, it simply heralds what others will later produce, unblushing, with impassive and assertive gravity."\*

Companions – be assured. Our Order will continue to conduct its Manifestations and we shall continue to enjoy our fraternal conviviality, unspoiled by the presence of the unclubbable. Further, the *Case Former* will *not* make any political endorsements for

P.G.I. office. It never has done so, and there is no intention to change. Most of the people running for P.G.I. office are our friends, and those we don't know as such have done nothing to offend us. We do have some concerns about the expectations of certain supporters of some candidates, but no candidate has himself given us much cause for concern.

We shall continue to celebrate the accomplishments of the creative, the learned, and the fraternal. At the same time we do not intend to spare the ongoing targets of our satire:

- Pretentious humbugs who suppose their cow-college credentials entitle them to precedence over people whose practical competence in pyrotechny has been obtained by long experience, and is on display in the sky for everyone to see;
- Unfraternal people who would betray the trust of their fellows and engage in meretricious legal activity against the firework trade;
- Petty martinets who compensate for the insignificant tedium of their workaday lives by coming to a fireworks convention, and there obtaining a position of minor authority, in which they proceed to gratify their pitiful egos by trampling, jackbooted, upon the pleasure of those who are their superiors in intellect, artistry, and breeding;
- Entrepreneurians who scheme to convert the function of a voluntary and non-profit organization, which should be held in the highest stewardship, to their private aggrandizement and enrichment – think of those who have been responsible for past P.G.I. conventions that lost money, if you want to know what we mean;
- Frauds, charlatans, the bogus and the empty;
- The humorless, malicious, and the joyless.

We won't name names. If the dunce cap or the jackboots fit, wear them!

Great is the truth, and it shall prevail; and when it does, that light, which is truth, will banish the o'ershadowing gloom, and bring to naught the clandestine power of the hypocrite; that strength, which is truth, will elevate what is wise, and beautiful, to its wonted place; and all will be well. Then will our labors have achieved their fruit, and perhaps then, we shall lay down our pen.

Your affectionate and fraternal servitor,  
— PASQUINO

\* *Misreadings*, trans. by William Weaver, 1993: Harcourt Brace & Co.

## MORE SYMPATHETIC DETONATIONS

*News Notes From All Around*

### ORNITHOLOGICAL NOTES FROM WHEEZANISTAN

(cf. *Case-Former*, Vol. III, No. 3, p. 24)

Observers of the local fauna have been distressed to discover the recrudescence of a species everyone hoped was extinct. The jumping jackbooted judi-bird is, apparently, back with a vengeance. The female of the species, more easily spotted, is known for her raucous cries and her practice of upsetting the habitat, and maliciously destroying the peace and quiet of other species. The male, dull-colored by contrast, and more elusive, makes his presence known mainly by his loathesome and joyless croak.

Both sexes prefer a diet of carrion when available, but when this is lacking, make do with seeds and other morsels extracted from various droppings they find on the forest floor. The presence of these birds may readily be detected by their baleful and dolorous calls, and by the mess they ordinarily leave behind.

The species is thought to live in an odd symbiosis with the bloated shitepoke and the cheeky bustard, a belief recent observations tend to confirm.

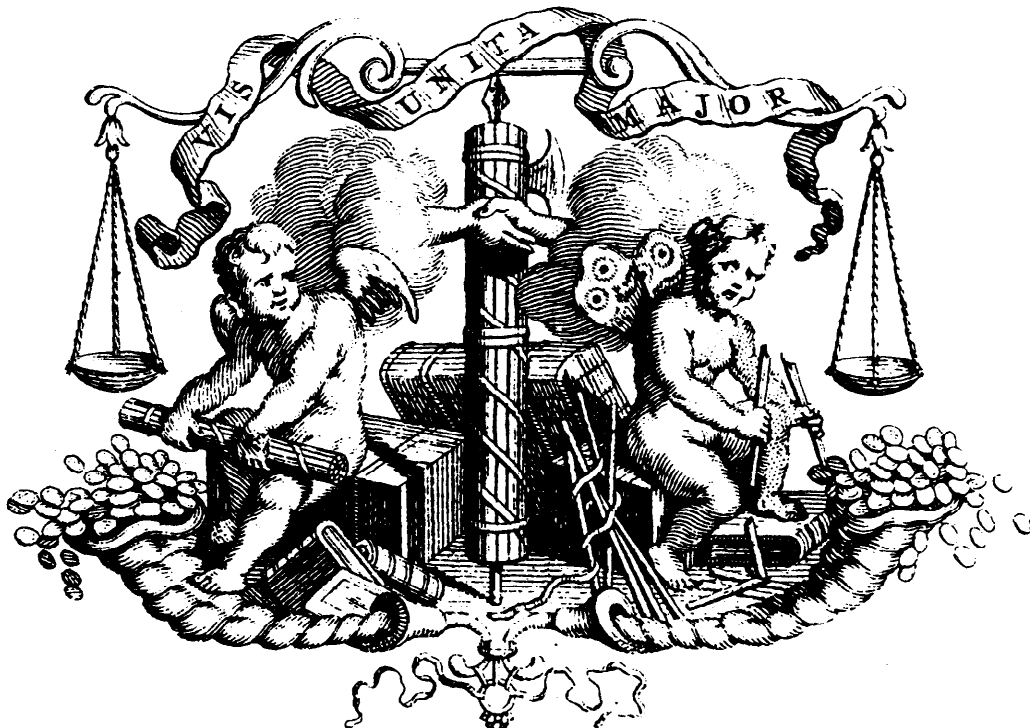
Officials of the Urpee Seed Company of Liberal, Kansas, announced that they are introducing a new

plant, the spiny tomato. Known as the "Ravin' B," this variety is early-growing and bears abundant sour fruit. Of indeterminate sex, the plant shows the kinship of *Solanum lycopersicum* to *Datura stramonium* by the vicious thorns on its berries, though company spokesmen deny that it is even mildly hallucinogenic, and assert that it is just a garden-variety vegetable.

In a recent issue of the journal *Epidemiology*, French researcher Serge Renaud reported he has found a 30% lower than expected risk of death in men who drank two or three glasses of wine a day. In the interest of the health and well-being of our Companions, the *Case-Former* is pleased to take advantage of Prof. Renaud's work by publishing, in consultation with the distinguished Chirurgeon-General of our Order, the following recommendation from Matt of the Mint:

*Fill ev'ry glass,  
For wine inspires us,  
and fires us  
with Courage,  
Love and Joy!*

Complete scores of *THE KOSANKO*, with all melodies and thorough-bass realized in the most fashionable mode, may be had of P. Attaignant & Cie., Paris; Tallis, Byrd & Co., Ltd., London; J. T. de Bry GmbH of Oppenheim, and many other reputable music publishers, upon application.



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The original compilation of *The Case Former* is produced July 2004 in co-operation with The International Order of Old John ( I. O. O. J. ) The Society For the Defense of Tradition in Pyrotechny.