

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.

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THE YELLOW PERIL

“How come?” asked Leo, “It’s the best yellow dye we got.”

“Supposed to be too dangerous. Damn near as bad as TNT, extremely toxic, and inhalable,” said the Assistant Director.

“OK, I’ll take care of it.” Click.

Leo, a World War II vet who had shot a lot of TNT and had been shot at by a lot of weapons ranging from 8 to 88 mm, did not hear the Assistant Director start to say that the Chemist would come out and take charge. Instead, Leo walked over to the cabinet, took the little brown bottle of picric acid, dumped the remaining 41 grams slowly into the toilet, and flushed the crystals into the septic tank. His thoughts flew back to the early 50’s when he and some other young refuge biologists had trapped and dyed the plump drake canvasbacks on their communal “headquarters ponds” on the Saskatchewan breeding grounds, and then followed and recorded the movements of the yellow-backed birds for science. He had used it by the kilogram, but that was decades ago. He even dimly recalled buying small bottles of the acid at the local drugstore when he and the other 6th graders sprinkled it on their combs to dye their hair as a school prank.

“H-h-h-he w-w-w-what?” said Ken the Chemist, trembling as he fondled a copy of the recent Emergency Safety Order (EMS) that had been entrusted to him by the Assistant Director. The EMS outlined with terrible forebodings all the horrible properties of picric acid. “My God, he could easily have been killed! Now I have to try and decontaminate the place.”

“Do your best,” said the Assistant Director, his voice suitably grave.

“Yes sir. By the way, I changed the locks on the chemistry laboratory again. Did you know the terrorists have orders to steal any chemical that can be potentially useful to their cause?”

“No, but you could be right,” said the Assistant Director, rolling his eyes and already enjoying the thought of telling the Director about the latest terrorist plot that threatened the Federal Service out in

this remote section of Wyoming.

“Evacuate the laboratory,” said the Chemist. “Leo, I want you to put on this smoke mask and face shield and this bunker gear that I got on loan from the Fire Department. Put your back to the toilet and flush it 50 times.”

“Fuck you,” laughed Leo, his eyes twinkling in mirth. “The dye is gone, you dumb shit. You want me to dig open the septic tank so you can snorkel for any undissolved crystals? I’ve got some fusees in my truck that you can use to light up the bottom.”

Sensing a lack of cooperation and blatant disregard for the strict protocols used to handle Class AAA Schedule 3.7.9.2 hyperexplosive compounds, the Chemist had to settle for five minutes by himself in the toilet with a leaky garden hose. But he took pleasure in the fact that he could now report that his concern for the safety of his fellow workers had forced him to tackle the ticklish job singlehandedly.

The next day was even worse. Another 14 grams of the deadly stuff had been found in a small metal tin in another building. But this time the Chemist’s worst fears were realized... container corrosion! He carefully approached the container again, making sure he did not touch it. Yes, there it was, a telltale rust spot near the lid. The Chemist immediately locked the door of the building and flagged it all around with police tape. A quick phone call to the Assistant Director started the process. The AD immediately called the Director, explained the fearsome situation and got approval. He called the State Bomb Squad.

The heavy truck rolled out of the outskirts of the State Capitol. Fred, Leader of the Bomb Disposal Unit, and Charlie, the Assistant Unit Leader, had never dealt with picric acid before. In fact, this was only their third call to duty. The first had been out in the oil fields, where a rancher had found what remained of the wrapper of a quarter pound of RDX after the prairie dogs had chewed it up. The small charge had been rendered useless five years ago by the wheels of a seismic crew truck. The other incident was the disposal of five 2-inch firecrackers that had been found in the glove compartment of a car full of teenagers last Fourth of July. But, after talk-

ing with the Chemist, Fred and Charlie were apprehensive.

"Got it!" said Fred as he spoke in hushed tones into his specially grounded lapel microphone that relayed the message to Charlie outside the building and also recorded it for later analysis by the Bomb Research Division. Despite the clumsy gloves, Fred manipulated the remotely-controlled tongs and set the deadly canister into the steel mesh bag on the radio-controlled cart.

"Ready with Sandy?" "Yup." said Charlie, standing alongside the 5-ton bomb container with walls of sand that would receive the canister and its sinister contents.

Everything worked with precision. Fred drove the cart out to the truck, then used the special tongs to pick up the canister and deftly set it on the bottom of Sandy. Charlie peered through the bullet-proof window of the truck as he manipulated the controls and gently lowered the ponderous lid and closed Sandy for the trip ahead. The Chemist got on the phone and told Maintenance that the coast was clear and they could tear down the police tape and tell the employees to go back to work.

"Now what shall we do with it?" said Fred.

"Best to not let it leave Federal property," said the Chemist. "Liability in case of an accident."

"Then let's do it in the pit at the dumpground." said Charlie.

"Great idea, Charlie, but what about the media?" said the Assistant Director. "This is certainly worth a story."

"Yeah, give them a call." said the Director.

"You got State Radio on the line, Charlie?"

"Yup."

Because of the heavy bomb suit and lead boots, Fred almost fell over the piles of slightly used typewriters, computers, microscopes, and other laboratory equipment that lay at the bottom of the pit awaiting burial.

He gingerly placed the canister on the back of an old Hasselblad camera that lay lens down in the mud at the bottom of the pit.

"OK, place the charge." said Fred. Now it was Charlie's turn. He carefully placed the capped, one-ounce charge of TNT next to the little can and delicately poured sand over both items. Then, ever so gently, he ran the 10-ft. length of dynamite fuse up to the top of the pit where Fred weighted the end down with a rock.

"Fire in the hole!" cried Fred as he pulled the ignitor ring and the bickford fuse bubbled to life.

What seemed like hours was only 51 minutes to the Unit crew, the Chemist, the Assistant Director, the reporter, and his crew from KSMA-TV, as they watched from the top of a hill about 600 yards away from ground zero. With a SPLUT sound the charge detonated and the TV crew caught the top of the tiny puff of black smoke as it briefly rose from the

pit. Fred missed it with the 1000 mm lens on his armored Nikon, but the Assistant Director thought he might have got it with his handheld wide-angle.

"Wasn't very loud." said the Assistant Director.

"Hey, these guys know what they're doing." said the Chemist. "They had it perfect barricaded."

"Did you get all our names?" said the Director to the reporter.

On the long drive back to the Capitol, Fred said, "Always feels good to save lives, don't it Charlie?" "Yup," said Charlie, as he chest heaved with pride. KSMA aired the disposal project during a special feature called "The Environment... to Protect and Serve" that was picked up and played on some other stations, some out-of-state. Several stations saved the story and were able to tie it into their anti-fireworks material scheduled to be aired during the upcoming Fourth of July.

The Chemist appreciated the \$500 Special Achievement Award he received for his herculean efforts, but absolutely cherished the framed Certificate of Special Achievement that now hung above his desk. His chances for promotion or lateral transfer to a position of higher authority were now greatly enhanced.

The Director and Assistant Director chortled over the incident and the good publicity.

"Sure it cost \$17,457, but it was worth every penny," said the Director. "Really put us on the map."

"Damn right," said the Assistant Director. "No trouble justifying our new budget request now!"

— HORST KNALLKÖRPER

WHEN WE WERE SMALL AND FIRECRACKERS WERE BIG

We came to Los Angeles from New York in September 1945, right at the end of World War II. We were downtown, staying at the Alexandria Hotel while my Father was checking out homes. All the while this footloose 8-year old was busy wandering. I'd go to the corner on Fifth Street and find the nearest trolley island. As I got on the streetcar I'd lightly hold on to an adult's coattail. Thinking I was with him, the conductor always let me ride free.

In my family, fireworks and firecrackers were a tradition. Several generations before me built everything from salutes to the most intricate of shells and ground displays. They had never practiced their art for profit but just for the sheer patriotism, enthusiasm and reward seen in the children's eyes at the giant bursts of their shells. I remember the glowing "Oohs and Ahs" only too well.

Back in the East our celebrations seemed to be the center of activity on the Fourth. My grandfather would start that most fabulous day early. From the round attic window of his home on Front Street,

he's fire his shotgun and the clatter of explosions would begin. We were proud. We were loud. Our Flag was everywhere. He and his brothers built that home with old world craftsmanship before the Civil War. It still stands today, housing a forlorn gaggle of about five families. They've turned it into trash. So goes much of the country.

My father knew many in the fireworks trade. He was born in 1897 and had known, among many others, the Long Island Gruccis. He had passed on some, but by no means all, of his pyrotechnic knowledge to me as a child growing up. My exercises ended when California became one of the most liberal and socialistic states in the union and began enforcing its fireworks laws.

He had ties to China through my grandfather who had aided in the building of some of their railroads. My grandfather had been acquainted with the Dowager Empress and some of her court. Before every Fourth of July and our New Year my older brother and I would receive a wooden box from China containing firecrackers, salutes and some of the most unique Chinese items of the time. I recall one of the many objects called a "Plate Wheel." The brand name was "Phoenix." They were labeled "Two Times" and "Three Times." They must have been the predecessor to the plastic "UFO" of today. With a WHOOSH it would soar wildly, high into the night sky spewing an orange charcoal aura. Suddenly it would quit and begin to fall only to recover and, with another WHOOSH soar even higher, ending with a shower of stars and a large salute. That all ceased in 1949 with the communist takeover. It is said that a true friend made of a Chinese is a friend made *in perpetua*. . . . I know this to be true from my own personal experience.

My father and mother have passed on and who those wonderful Chinese were and what became of them has been lost to me. I kept much of the paper from their contents, but never the wooden boxes. Who knew?

Fireworks, other than safe and sane, were soon outlawed in California. However, no one paid any attention to these "unenforceable" laws. Firecrackers and fireworks remained an American tradition. Fireworks of all kinds could still be found in the San Fernando Valley, Burbank, Culver City and most of the beach areas. Chinatown was another place you could buy *anything!*

Which brings me back to another one of the days jumping on the trolley. I was riding down L.A.'s Broadway and to my surprise, on the left, I saw Chinatown. I jumped up on a chair and pulled the cord for the next stop as fast as I could.

For a kid walking through the gates of China into this foreboding place, it could be a little scary. I soon came across some friendly Chinese boys about my age; a couple were a little older. Eventually I

told them about my windfall from China every year... *our wooden boxes.*

They said they had firecrackers too and led me through some narrow, winding alleys to the rear of the Chinatown facade. In the back were many, what appeared to be, small sheds and shacks. L.A.'s Chinatown had been set up in the early thirties when the original had been leveled to make way for the grand Los Angeles Union Station.

We came to a fort that the kids had built; as most kids did then, on the edge of an empty lot. Once inside they opened a crate. It flowed with firecrackers of all descriptions. If I only knew then what I know now. I picked through and found a few packs of my favorite brand, "Zebra". As I was picking, the bottom of the crate revealed an unopened brick. We opened it and through the glassine I could see that the crackers were the same as my "Zebras" only a little larger. The flowers around each cracker were inset with the same rectangular box, but containing different names. This was a 40/40 brick of "7 Star" brand, "Each cracker bears a name: Tojo, Hitler, or Mussolini." World War II had just ended and was still a big thing in the minds of us kids. Luckily the Chinese were on our side. I had some of my birthday savings in my pocket so I managed to buy the "7 Star" brick and some "Zebras". I still have the large label and some of the pack labels. Now I needed a way to smuggle them back to the Alexandria Hotel where my brother and I shared a room.

I put the firecrackers in a shopping bag, got some flowers and placed them on top just in case I ran into anyone. On the trolley I thought everyone was a G-Man. I knew I'd be arrested. Later my brother said he wouldn't squeal if I shared with him. It took *all* the courage of a boy less than ten *not* to light any at the hotel. Later, I gave the flowers to my mother. She never guessed what they covered.

Soon we were in our house and the new kid on the block was the immediate hero. What else with forty packs of 1-11/16" "7 Stars" and those incredible 1-5/8" "Zebras"? I couldn't wait to get to the nearest anthill. *God, they were loud! Goodbye Hitler and Mussolini!*

On New Year's Eve my Father lit some and mused that "They were the best little crackers he'd ever seen." He wanted to know where we got them. "Well Dad, you get on the Broadway trolley and... Just then my brother jammed me in the ribs. *Let's blow up Tojo!*

There are many more bygone stories of yesterdays. Maybe with my non-identical twin brother Knallkörper, we can come up with more in the future. I hope Eduardo Tellerini might someday read them too.

— GUGLIELMO COLPO DOPPIO

PLUMBING WITH GUNPOWDER III

*As a dog returneth to his vomit,
so a fool returneth to his folly.*

—PROVERBS xxvj:11

When I answered the telephone, it was Ernst. "Milano," he said, "you haven't been doing any writing for the *Case-Former* lately. Why don't you write up that plumbing with gunpowder story you told us a while ago? That was a classic!"

I agreed – but first a bit of information for some of you:

Tower Crane: the tall crane you see used to put up buildings; very common on some skylines.

Headache ball: the crane has two hoisting lines: the light-duty single strand or whipline needs a weight to pull it down; the ball supplies that. The headache part is self-explanatory.

Kerry Karlin: a composite of two real people for whom Milano had the displeasure of working. Both were short, fat, and ugly. One was missing an arm, both were missing brains.

Filthy Phil and Rotten Roger: two real ironworkers. They didn't do the deed in the story – but they would have. Nah, they would have done worse.

The setting: a construction site. It was somewhere out east, I think – Newark, New Jersey? Anyway, I put it there.

The story: told to me at a job site years ago. True? You tell me. Funny? God yes! Wish I could'a been there. Actually, I wish I could'a done it.

oooo oooo oooo oooo

Kerry Karlin squinted as he focused his binoculars on the twenty-fourth floor of the building, not a true building yet, but a mass of orange-red structural steel rising above the skyline of Newark, New Jersey. "Damn ironheads," he muttered out of the side of his mouth that didn't have the cheap cigar.

Karlin hated ironworkers more than any of the building trades that worked construction. They were always taunting him to get his fat ass out on the iron if he knew so damn much, always teasing him about not being able to see his feet to walk a beam. Yet every day when the crew came down two at a time riding the headache ball of the tower crane, there was Karlin, pointing at somebody and screaming, "Listen you, I pay you to connect iron, not to take a two-cigarette break on the twentieth floor – next time, and you're through – got it!" Kerry liked the feeling of authority he had over other men, men who were in every way his better, especially physically.

As the job progressed, a few ironworkers were sent down the road by Kerry. The rest of the crew assumed Kerry had a spy or snitch, and kind of tried to keep looking busy even when there was a lull in the job.

One day, two of the "diamonds in the rough" on the crew, Rotten Roger and Filthy Phil, were looking down from an upper floor when Roger noticed a small glimmer or reflection from the shadows by the Satellite toilet next to Kerry's trailer. "Phil, let's move over to the other end of the building, quick!" They did so, putting them out of sight of the trailer and Satellite. Roger signalled the crane whipline and got on the headache ball, and had the crane swing him around, over, and behind the trailer. What he saw was Kerry's "spy," or rather the way that Kerry was standing in the shadow of the Satellite, with his binoculars. "So dat's how dat dogface bastard knows everything." The crane operator returned Roger to his place by Phil. "Phil," he said, "I found the spy. We never could see him with the sun in our eyes. But he tipped his hand today. Now what can we do about dat?" Just as Roger finished his sentence, the noon whistle sounded.

As the crew enjoyed lunch sitting around and socializing, the end of lunch was signalled, as it was each day, by Kerry, who walked out of his trailer regularly at twenty after twelve, and entered his private Satellite. At 12:31 every day, he would exit, and if anyone was still in sight, Kerry usually screamed, "Hey shithead, d'you need an engraved invitation to go to work?" The second time, you got an engraved pink slip. As the men returned to their work, Roger had an idea (unusual for Roger). When they were up about twenty stories, Roger said to Phil, "Every day dat fat slob is in dat Satellite at the same time. He does it to get an extra five or ten minutes out of us. I think I know how to fix his fat butt. Phil, you still got some of those M-80's you was throwing off the building on dat last job you got fired from?" Roger looked at Phil, who had an evil twinkle in his eye and a grin like the Cheshire cat. "Tomorrow," Phil slowly said, "to-mor-row. . ."

Tomorrow isn't supposed to come, but for our three characters, it did. At lunch Phil and Roger walked back to the building early. Out of sight of the trailer, Roger sat on the headache ball, while Phil watched the door of the trailer. Kerry, not to be outdone by his two antagonists, was punctual as ever. He slowly walked to the Satellite. As he opened the door, Phil signalled the crane, and Roger screwed the M-80 into a large nut, his cigarette at the ready as he made a circular descent on the headache ball. Kerry meanwhile was doing his thing, his pants and polka-dot boxers down at his ankles. As Roger was positioned above the Satellite, he lit the fuse and dropped the weighted M-80 down the plastic vent pipe.

As Kerry heard the splash, Roger was whisked away by the crane. The resulting explosion was deafening to Kerry's ears. His body lurched forward as an automatic reaction to the sudden shock. Through the door he went, pants down, his quivering backside besplattered with excrement, sodden paper, and

the green sanitation fluid from the Satellite's reservoir. The rest of the crew played its part. A cheer went up as Kerry picked himself up, hitched up his drawers, stumbled to his car and drove away, to the sound of laughter and catcalls from the men.

The next day, a new "head push" or superintendent showed up on the job, introduced himself, and the work progressed thereafter at a better pace than before. Several weeks passed in complete happiness for the workers, but the new guy, who was a leader of men, was sent to another bigger and more important job. Kerry returned and was quite meek for several days, but his old ways surfaced once again.

Kerry had barrier cones and tapes put up around his Satellite, ten feet on each side. Every morning a laborer would wet the ground and rake the area with parallel lines. Kerry figured this could get footprints if they tried it again. He made false runs to the Satellite, jumped out seconds after entering, and ran around the back side, looking for somebody. His spying was now more blatant, meant to irritate the crew by bird-dogging them openly with his new, more powerful binoculars.

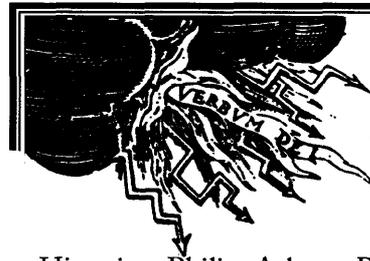
As weeks passed, Kerry's guard began to drop and he played fewer Satellite games. Soon Kerry was back to his old routine, then back to his old self. He couldn't help himself, it was his nature; he was that way from the seed.

Kerry was up to his old tricks. A few shouting sessions, and a couple of guys sent down the road. Finally, his full evil self was in control. He figured he had fired the guy who got him. With total confidence, at a quarter past noon he entered the Satellite and looked at his watch when he sat down, planning to exit at exactly 12:25.

He was about to learn the true meaning of the word *vendetta*. The acrimony in Phil and Roger wasn't so easily sated by one small blast. Just as a soldier gets careless at the front and finds the sniper's bullet, Kerry had more M-80's with his name on them. The next blast was already planned, three M-80's taped together with a bolt for weight.

As before, Roger was descending in an ever-downward spiral, and the bomb went down the vent. Kerry heard the splash. Moving quicker than he'd ever moved, he turned around, pushed the lid down, and held it with all his considerable weight. The M-80's wracked the Satellite with an ear-splitting roar. The force of the displaced incompressible water shoved the vent out of the privy along with an erupting column of green liquid waste. The portion that hit the lid cracked it in two and inundated Kerry's chest and face. His body reacted, jerking backward and through the door. As he picked himself up from the dirt where he had fallen, covered with filth, and walked to his car to drive away forever, the last things he heard were the catcalls of the jeering crew - "Whattsa matter, Karlin, too many beans for lunch?"

— MILANO GIANSLAVI



Fulminations

*Tuonerà tra mille turbini
la mia destra potentissima;
con sentenza rigidissima
scaglierà saette, e fulmini.*

Historian Philip Ashton Rollins records that a favorite spectator sport amongst cowboys in the old Southwest was to pit two tarantulas against each other in an old soup tureen. The modern version of this pastime is the CNN program, "Crossfire." One recent episode observed by your scribe had as combatants James Carville, President Clinton's one-time publicist and now ostensibly independent attack-dog, and C. Boyden Gray, the Bush administration's White House legal counsel, seconded by the show regulars, Geraldine Ferraro and Patrick Buchanan. The subject was President Clinton's legal woes, recently deepened by the Supreme Court's 9-0 decision that Paula Corbin Jones's sexual harassment lawsuit against the President would not have to wait until he left office. Mr. Carville, if not a madman, convincingly impersonates one; in contrast to his old boss, who is merely a sociopath, or convincingly impersonates one. Carville's usual over-the-top performance completely steamrolled the hapless Gray, and was unrivalled for pugnacity even by the redoubtable Pat Buchanan. At the end, however, everybody grinned for the camera and shook hands. Whatever differences may exist amongst such people, they are all, after all, in the service of the higher flackery, *var. Washingtonensis*, and they differ mainly over whether to shear or skin the sheep.

If Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr, or George Canning and Viscount Castlereagh were to be brought to life in the late twentieth century, they would probably appear on "Crossfire," exchange insult and innuendo for half-an-hour, at the end of the session put on *faux* congeniality, and the next day go back to the serio-comic character assassination competition that has become the norm of modern politics. Theirs may have been the era of tragedy, but ours is the era of farce. The demise of the duel is the sort of thing that prompts effusions of self-congratulation on the part of social critics, about how much more enlightened and humane we are than our ancestors - as they like to do, when not engaging in self-flagellation about how awful, racist, sexist, homophobic, classist, ageist, etc., we are.

When duelling was a current practice it was hard to find a contemporary moralist or churchman who had anything good to say about it. Yet it persisted for centuries because of the instinct that some personal disputes required a means of resolution that was clean and irrevocable, rather than being allowed to continue in perennial recrimination and torment for the parties involved. The virtues of the duel are more apparent in our day of debased politics and

coarse manners than they were in the last century, with its comparative gentility and courtesy; just as the value of capital punishment is more apparent in our day of crime and amorality than it was in the more honest and placid world of our grandparents. Both the duel and the gallows provided checks, insufficiently esteemed until they ceased to exist¹, against the baser passions of human nature.

The particular application of the duel was to issues that surpassed ordinary political or business disagreement, and touched upon personal character and honor – in other words, to the precise controversies with which modern politics seems always entangled, but has no effective way of contending. Contrast the historical and contemporary examples.

Andrew Jackson, in the summer of 1791, married Rachel Robards (*née* Donelson), both being under the impression that she had been divorced from Col. Lewis Robards by an act of the Virginia legislature in 1790. In fact that legislature had only passed an act enabling the case to be tried by a jury (there being no regular law of divorce in Virginia at the time). The court did not grant the divorce until 1793, communications then being very slow, and upon learning of this the Jacksons were compelled to remarry in January of 1794. Although the Jacksons enjoyed a loving and faithful marriage until Rachel died in 1828, periodically, Jackson's political opponents tried to besmirch his reputation by suggesting that his wife was a bigamist, and both of them were adulterers. Jackson ended the political usefulness of such charges quite effectively by challenging and shooting any man who dared make them.

Consider now the Paula Jones affair. If Clinton goes to trial, he will face embarrassment regardless of who ultimately prevails; if he settles, it will be seen as a tacit confession. Undoubtedly Jones's backers and attorneys are motivated by a desire to discredit President Clinton and make money. Even so, if he did what the lady says he did, he is guilty not least of gross lewdness, but of a bizarre lack of judgment that is disturbing to contemplate in the commander-in-chief of a nuclear superpower. Modern society affords Clinton no way to extricate himself creditably from the horns of this dilemma.

Likewise, the ongoing travail of the armed services over its members who have followed the example of their commander-in-chief in randification, can come to no satisfactory end that both punishes those who have abused their positions and upholds the dignity and morale of the corps. In the past, military forces accepted duelling as a means of addressing such conflict, and within strict rules it was encouraged. An

officer whose conduct was unbecoming, if challenged by the one he had offended, had either to fight or resign his commission. The duel thus ensured a respect amongst ranking officers for the proprieties limiting their command over subordinates. Even in Britain, where high military rank went hand-in-hand with aristocratic pedigree and wealth, neither rank nor social status exempted them from the rigid alternatives of fighting or disgrace. Cases were numerous of senior commanders, knights and peers of the realm, facing obscure junior officers; e.g. the duel of the Earl of Cardigan with Captain Tuckett. In Germany and France duels between military officers enjoyed official sanction well into this century.

We think it would be all to the good if the duel, suitably regulated² as it was in the day of Joe Manton, could be resurrected amongst our public figures. Instead of appearing on "Crossfire" to exchange jibes, a process with no satisfying conclusion, how much more purifying and healthy it would be if they exchanged *real crossfire*, and ventilated their differences by ventilating each other. A perforated politico here, a shot shyster there, they'd none of 'em be missed – they'd none of 'em be missed. In fact, a few such, judiciously planted, might positively beautify the political landscape. Legislatures could get back to their real business of applying political principles to practice, and civil courts to adjudicating mundane cases about contracts and estates.

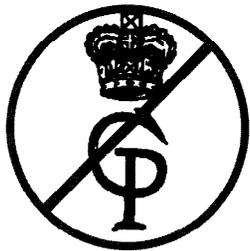
It will be recalled that, to the end, the *code duello* specified single-shot, smoothbore, muzzle-loading pistols. We envision that this ancient precedent be rigorously maintained, on the soundest grounds. First, it levels the playing field, offering a sporting chance and even the possibility that both parties may survive. Second, the persistence of old customs characterizes those functions in which a society reposes the profoundest importance. It is for this reason that we preserve the ceremonies and vestments of the church, the academic dress of graduation exercises, the robes worn by judges and advocates, the snuff boxes and blotting sand replenished daily in the Senate chamber – all to the end that a suitable *gravitas* and decorum might prevail in such solemn loci.

Our attention is especially directed to the *technical* benefits that would arise from such a revival. We can only assume that if political survival depended upon it, the fortunes now spent on pollsters and spin doctors might be redeployed in the purchase of the best grade of black powder. There would be a renaissance in its manufacture, and its quality level might again rise to that maintained in the last century. This alone would make the effort worth while, and a goal we trust would have appreciable incidental benefit to our readers. ¶

— GASSILASCA JAPE

¹ Readers who are inclined to quibble that capital punishment is still provided by statute should reflect that only 246 persons have been executed in the past 20 years; in that same time there have been over 400,000 homicides, most of them technically capital crimes. Even condemned felons stand more chance of dying of old age than as clientele of the executioner.

² That is, not by a government agency, but by the old-fashioned manly virtues of courage, loyalty, honor, and honesty – admittedly a tall order at the end of the twentieth century!



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And leads Men into Pools and Ditches...*

— S. BUTLER, *Hudibras*

It seems mere weeks ago that the aroma of thawing pig's manure wafted through the old homestead, heralding the sun's increasing warmth. The carrion crows returned to their nest in the venerable Dutch elm; one morning, as if by magic, a charming circle of fly agarics erupted about its base. Down by the abandoned privy, the first tender shoots of aconite poked up their heads to greet the crimson dawn, and on the rotten stump next the stagnant pool, a myriad baby slugs have hatched. Kudzu gaily festoons the toxic waste dump, whilst the haunting cries of the bloated shitepoke ("*sue, sue, sue*") and cheeky bustard ("*i-cheet, so-what, so-what*") may be heard through the stinging nettles. Ere long, the Jimsonweed will be blossoming.

In short, spring has sprung, and the sap is rising in Cyberland as in the rest of the world. In keeping with our theme of decomposing organic matter, this edition of "Way Off the Internet" brings you a redolent thread from some of its learned posters, as well as a (self) important announcement from one of our most prominent cyber-personalities. *Bon appetit* – after this, you'll need it!

— PASQUINO DEI FUGISTI

* * * * *

From kewlkid "twistdmind" <twistdmind@aol.com>
Newsgroups: rectum.pyrotechwits
Subject: Makin piss powder
Date: Mon, 13 Jan 1997 10:10.01 -0500

high; i am in highscool and plan to go to collage next year and want to remembur how to make black powder from piss to impress my friends in the chemistry lab when i need to do a project for grades and teacher stuff but kant remembur just how to do it liek the instruksions i saw posted hear aboute a year ago, cuold sombody help me pleeze and i know some of the crap invoveded but the recipee i just forgot totally and the number of chemicles i think but im not shur is like - shugar=12 parts, coke=15parts, amownia(you don't drink it tho) is =9 parts and match heads about 1 box of them crushed up with a hamar to fine grane and added to the piss onece you have made some about 3 gallons in the bowel according to my buddy who saiz this is the best and cheepish way to get out sulfer for the job. so you see we added some to the recipee on our own, oh yea the charcole to is i think about a lunch bag full of krushed briketts.

hear is what i remembur on makin the crap as far as i can tel it shuld work fine cuz me and my buddy made some each 1 of us and together but tell me if im all screwd up or sumpthin or weered out over the stuff cuz i want to do it rite and be like some of the people here who no their stuff aboute chemistree and crap like that)

you need to get theez howsehold things to make it>

- a good size metal bowel for yurin aboute 5 galons size.
- a cup of shugar and some soda pop.
- a cup or 2 of amonia to dizolv the sulfer with.
- one box book maches for the heads that give yuo the sulfer.
- charcole briketts like the 1's you use for grilling food.
- a kichin straner like you use for vegtibulls.
- a coleman stove for baking the sluge and boyling piss.

1> drink plenty of good strong cofee and coke and mowntan dew like five ours before you start makin the stuff and keep drinking so yule have plenty of niter for the powder. you can even con- vinse your' girl frend to do some for this projek, actuilly this is good becuz i red it in some book aboute womam making it for war time, but anyhow you must do about 3 galons of raw pee total before you start the other stuff.

2> crush up a pile of charcole briketts to fill up a gallon worth of space with a malet to fine grane sized like what you get if you used flower for baking cookeys and bred.

3> cut off a hole box of match heads and mash them to bits with a nice hammar. place the pul- vurized powder in a straner over a bowel and poor the amonia over them to remove the sulfer as you smoosh the mass with your fist to get it all off and leeve the match paper behind. then add the goo to you're piss supply rite away and mix it up good witha spoon.

now your reddy to start the job.

4. now that you have plenty of hot piss mix you shuld boil it down to sluge outside on the stove becuzze the stuff stinks like crap, and you will have a thicker goo to work with from this mess. Its like making old fashin mapol shugar the way they do it up north cuntry. poor this crap onto a large cooky shet and let dry in sunshine for 3 weeks till the poochy looks like salt on top and weerd soy sand underneeth, its nice.

4b; now you need to scrape of the niter salt witch also contanes the sulfer fule you got before so be carfull not to scrape to hard or bangO you will find yurself smoking reel fast like my buddy did 1 day. he forgot to be slow and KAWOOSHEE he was lit up like a sigar smoke clowd altho he only got miner burns only, anyway be careful about it you cant be to careful now days with all the bad news and naybors watching out actuilly the nay-

bors called the cops and we had to qwit it for a wile.

5> ok its time to all all the ingreedyints and make a nice poweder for well like M80s and stuff like that, rockits to and even you can make fireworks like the pros say here altho i am not shure about the powder yuo wold use to get them up in the ski i herd it dont work well.

6: first crush up all the piss salt that has the sulfer so bee reel careful not to blow up by using a nice rolling pin for making peetza on a opended up paper shoping bag. After that you can add the wite piss powder to the black charcole powder and mix by hand so you wownt get it to lite up and burn the crap outa you're house or your par- ints place cuz that would suck. oh yea i almost forgot to mension that you shuld wate until some- body posts here with the rite recipiee parts or it wont work very nice as me and my buddy tride it until it workted but we waystid much to much powder and now weh'r out of it-dam.

hope that is rite and pleeze no flames cuz i dont like tham and it hurts when peepel get mad at you cuz you want to help evrybody in the world. i wnat to help you and not hurt anybody and i thot this would be fun beesides, so rite to the grupe and post it hear.

"twisted"

* * * * *

From Bill "Penis Rocket" Crocket
<illpenis@cisco.com>
Newsgroups: rectum.pyrotechwits
Subject RE: Makin piss powder
Date: Wed, 15 Jan 1997 13:11:37 -0500

In article "Makin piss powder" dated Mon, 13 Jan 1997 10:10:01 twistdmind@aol.com wrote ;

>4b; now you need to scrape of the niter salt
>witch also contanes the sulfer fule you got before
>so be carfull not to scrape to hard or bango

I think your problem is you were making fules, and not fuel...that would lead to the mind going blankity blank blank

penile

* * * * *

From slymeone@chu.chum.libbo.edu (Slyme guy the quiet one)
Newsgroups: rec.pyrotechwits
Subject: Makin piss powder
Date: Wed, 15 Jan 1997 01:48:46 GMT

In article "Makin piss powder" dated Mon, 13 Jan 1997 10:10:01 twistdmind@aol.com wrote ;

>high, i am in highschool and plan to go to collage
>next year and want to remembur how to make
>black powder from piss to impress my friends in
>the chemistry lab when i need to do a project
>for grades and ..SNIP..

The process to yield potassium requires, first, digestion of the uric acid by bacteria to urea, then ammonia, and then the ammonia (as ammonium ion) to nitrate ion, as well as the substitution of potassium ions for the sodium. Then the KNO₃ has to be separated from everything else, usually by recrystallization through the photosynthesis of micro-organisms during exothermic sublimation of the urea ions under a controlled REDOX reaction for optimal out put phase delimiting with minimum gas production, hence the need to incorporate a vacuum controlled thermal chamber.

It's a prolonged and smelly process that was necessary to gunpowder manufacture and production of nitric acid prior to about 1870, but it's been replaced by mining of nitrates from deposits similar to salt licks, except for a few people keeping the knowledge of how to do the job alive such as the fairly good article by twistdmind@aol.com, with some slight modifications he may be leading the pack in this new area of pyrotechny.

SLy

* * * * *

From Gillilag "Chips" Westbound
<gillchips@cyber.geeks.com>
Newsgroups: rectum.pyrotechwits
Subject RE: Makin piss powder
Date: 20 Jan 1997 03:13:24 -0800

Most any stockyard, dairy farm, poultry or egg farm should be able to supply you with all the urine you need. While the raw urine might work you might be better off redirecting your experiments toward the ground... the urine has been accumulating on.

So an interesting question is "is the 'composted agriurinate' carried at most garden centers closer or further away from KNO₃ than 'fresh piss'?"

Gilli

* * * * *

From Ben "Wright" Dover <bendo@mit.edu>
Newsgroups: rectum.pyrotechwits
Subject RE: Makin piss powder
Date: Thu, 16 Jan 1997 18:19:37 -0500

Hey SLy! While we're on the topic of useful things to be gotten from urine; I was just browsing through this really fascinating site about alchemy at <http://www.netwits.com/alchemy>. It's really nice.

They claim to have over 30 megs of "information on alchemy in all its facets." It's full of netwit alchemical writings and transcriptions thereof along with a healthy dose of cybersynthesis. Anyway, this is one document chronicled a certain Wally Wad-Wanger's adventures in "PeePeeNiter" production. The procedure calls for "Urine well fermented in a Tub following a well orchestrated red wine induced golden shower party, then it's exposed to the outside air for seven Weeks until its taste becomes sweet like candy." The practitioner of the art, then "incorporates" an unspecified ammount of soy juice and charcoal dust into his vat of piss poochy and heats this treat in a retort oven such that the refined material dissolves in cane sugar thereby rendering a pure workable niter that's compatible with all black powder formulae. Excellent for indoor pyro favors too.

I am anxious to try the mix myself, with KNO₃ becoming quite a scarce commodity around this part of the country. Hey, who needs K-Power anymore anyway? with fun formulae like this - we can all share our resources.

* * * * *

From Tin Pidgeon <tinp@ucal.bezerkley.edu>
Newsgroups: rectum.pyrotechwits
Subject RE: Makin piss powder
Date: Fri, 17 Jan 1997 10:10:10 -0500

Hey Ben, SLy and Gilli

Speaking of capitalizing on human waste-products, I think the time has come for me to announce the new book which is in the final printing stages at this time and is scheduled for release in two weeks.

I'll be accepting orders immediately and shipping to members of this News-Group on a first-cum first-serve basis. Ten exciting chapters written by well known Cyber freaks who articulate your favorite subjects with eloquence.

The Art and Science of Cyberpyrotechny
by Tin (Mann Alota Bs) Pidgeon
1st Edition
Cybergeek & Pullit Publishing Co., NY

Ch1 - Getting started in Cyber-Pyro: This chapter is devoted to the newbie in cyberpyroland and covers such as; netwitetiquette, geekenvy, using and abusing the Merck and Knowing and understanding your Cyber Mentors.

Ch2 - The world according to Theoretical Chemistry: X-Spurtly written by one of our own -SLy- "The SLimy One" for your edification. Read and Heed this chapter if you plan on becoming somebody in Cyberland.

Ch3 - Capitalizing on the University Hierarchy and public resources; This is a must do - must have chapter for those in our institutions of higher learning who wish to advance their images and reach for the stars, if you will, while gaining access to a myriad of government and publicly funded computer resources for entertainment purposes. Written by yours truly.

Ch4 - Cyber Indoctrination & the List Servers: This chapter is an extremely detailed overview of the various electronic mailing systems and those few highly revered ICONS who run them. Another must read philosophical tool that will propel you into stardom in cyberpyrophia.

Ch5 - The evils of Chlorate; Learn the don'ts and the evil traditions being promoted in cyberworld by the non-PC people and why they want to kill you. This chapter includes several real life dramas by a host of old characters on the Net who advocate the use of these extremely dangerous chemicals. You will come away feeling refreshed knowing that the Cyberchemists care about your health enough to guide you through the sea of cyberiniquity.

Ch6 - The complete Film Canister Shell; An award winning treatise on this highly promoted practice written in plain English by the premiere theorist in this field. Dr. Ben Dover will guide you through this fascinating field and prepare you for crown dialog on the subject in cyberpyroland. You will advance rapidly through this chapter to become "one of the pros" in no time.

Ch7 - Black Powder from Piss: The title is fairly self explanatory, however, there are a number of new techniques in development that have not yet been released to public domain and can be found in this exhaustive study. Probably one of the "hottest" topics in cyberpyro today...if you dare!

Ch8 - CyberPyroSynthesis: The transformation of your lame incompetent self into a Professional Cyber Freak with all the trimmings. This topic is well executed in true form by those who are well versed in the discipline and from whom you will take instruction. Truly a win-win chapter for the hearty.

Ch9 - Winning the Flame War: No seasoned CyberPyroFreak traverses through the front-lines without a flame fighting toolbox of tricks, and you too can acquire the warewithall to conquer your adversaries on the Net. This chapter covers all the requirements and introduces you to the vast assortment of underhanded tricks that will get you through to emerge squeaky clean.

Ch10 - Mastering CyberPyroLand: A true winner will transcend from the old ways of the past into

this new and exciting field, and this chapter explains it all. You will come away from this study with a new character that we call "The Child Without" and an advanced self esteem that will shock even your closest colleagues. You will become very familiar with our goals as CyberPyros X-spurts while mastering our number one virtue "Success is in an Image." The casual Web surfer will yield to your power and revere your words with astounding regularity. You will transform into a NetWit with astonishing speed at a level that will go unrivaled for decades to cum. ¶

New Best Seller!

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of Peregrine Pinchbeck, Ph.D.,
Pyrotechnician*



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the Internet

by Smobias Tollet, A.B.,
C.D.E., F.G.H., etc.

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—M. JACKSON

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THE SEEDS OF DISASTER (ANOTHER TALE OF MISSPENT YOUTH)

It should be obvious to one and all that smoking near pyrotechnic devices presents an unacceptable hazard. And yet, if one gets away with a dangerous practice long enough, the horrifying becomes routine. Ask Evel Knievel, or trapeze artists that perform without a net – or maybe those guys that try to traverse Niagara Falls (slowly I turn, step by step, inch by inch) while tightrope-walking.

And so it wasn't unusual so see Louis Heinold at the kitchen table, assembling an Estes Saturn V while smoking a joint. I'd brought a 6-pack of Bud and knocked on the door, smelling the smoke before he opened it. What sat upon Mrs. Heinold's kitchen table was most impressive. The Estes Saturn V must have been designed by someone as stoned as Louis was that day. Powered by a cluster of five C-series engines on the lower stage and three for the second stage, it was an impressive rocket indeed. And Louis had grown bored with sending rockets up, only to watch them drift down by parachute into trees, onto highways, power lines, and so forth. After I taught Louis how to make flash powder, his rockets never again came down in one piece – a warhead substituted for the parachute.

This time Lou had added a new twist. Curious about the abilities of air defense and air traffic control radars, he had laboriously sheared a good portion of a roll of heavy aluminum foil to surround his warhead, the idea being to fill a portion of the sky with chaff. This, hopefully, would send back confusing data, or jam the radars, perhaps creating a UFO scare, causing a mid-air collision, or, for all he knew, scrambling the bombers at Westover Air Force Base. With a lot of luck, he could start World War III, he mused eagerly through those bloodshot, glassy eyes.

Louis had given up with the tedious, unreliable, Mickey-Mouse electrical firing systems. Now he used an ingenious complex of quickmatch that always fired the engines close to simultaneously.

Back in those days we didn't much bother to clean our marijuana; it was full of seeds as we smoked it, and they usually exploded, burning holes where their remnants landed. It was really tough on one's wardrobe.

I guess we weren't terribly surprised when a seed exploded in our joint, but we watched it, as if in slow motion, bounce its way across the table toward the motor assemblies. It happened too fast, and we were too slow to do anything but follow that darling little seed with our eyes. I had time to dart a glance at Louis, who wore a sad, resigned look. He probably would have appeared so upon noticing a trouser leg getting caught in a threshing machine.

The little seed hopped one final time and found the exposed match. I considered my options: run out the door? No, not enough time. I saw that Louis

was already lurching for the fused motors, and saw that he hadn't a prayer of pulling them apart in time. I opted for diving under the kitchen table, and as I did so I heard the fuses spitting and the motors roaring to life in that small kitchen.

I covered my head and listened to the drum solo of all those motors ricocheting around the kitchen. I wondered vaguely what they were hitting until one bashed me in the ribs, instantly followed by one on the butt. I'd left an ear exposed, which was creamed next. Louis could be heard howling and thrashing somewhere up there in the *mêlée*. Glass breaking, heavy impacts, and that monstrous hiss were all else that could be heard.

I knew that the thrust duration of those engines was 3.5 seconds, so in theory, taking the second stage into consideration, it would all be over in 7.0 seconds. I took one last punch on the shoulder before things began to quiet down. But there was the warhead to consider too, wasn't there? For all I knew, it could be sputtering away, a foot from my head.

I chanced a glance around, just in time to see Louis toss it into his mother's aquarium, no doubt hoping to extinguish it. Bad move. It sank, its fuse bubbling doom, and again I crouched under the table, only to be soaked and deafened a moment later as the aquarium blew.

All I caught was a slash of glass across the calf. I looked up in time to see the truncated torso of the little diver that had bobbed up and down in the aquarium, bouncing to the floor.

Coughing, I stood up, eyes burning in the thick, acrid, white smoke. The sight of Louis astonished me, covered in aluminum foil as he knelt like a monk at prayer. He groaned and stood up, removing his hands from his head. A ghastly welt was forming right between his eyes on his forehead. It grew as I watched in awe, at the rate of Jiffy Pop, into enormity.

The kitchen was not damaged – it was ruined. One motor had hammered its way into the cupboard where the fancy eating stuff was kept. It acted as a bull in a China shop, and fragments of heirlooms were all that remained.

The cabinetry was gouged, splintered, with propellant burns abundant. Tropical fish flopped around on the soaked carpet. A motor had got out the front window, and to Louis's chagrin, had cracked his car's windshield. Another punched through the ceiling, wisps of smoke still puffing forth. It had been a very busy ten seconds. The motors had bashed us badly, and I wondered how many times they had bounced around that kitchen. Certainly many dozens, perhaps hundreds of impacts, had gashed the wallpaper, broken and singed everything, and two had flown out the windows.

I looked at Lou, who was fingering a rising bump on his jaw. He reached a finger into his mouth, worked it for a few moments, and spat a bloody

tooth into his hand. He sighed, looked around, and started giggling. Well, what else could you do? It was infectious, and soon I was chuckling too. Lou looked at his tooth, grinned at me, and when I saw the gap where it had been, I too was giggling helplessly. Lou pointed at my head, still grinning, and I reached up to feel the knot over my right ear. It was beyond belief that part of my head could be way out there. It had pushed my hair into a fuzzy ball. This too brought gales of hysterics from us both. I handed Lou a Bud, cracked one myself, and we tried to think of a lie that could explain this. The only thing we would do was try to minimize the destruction. We had time for that. Perhaps Lou and I were the pioneers of an overworked technique, particularly popular in the Clinton administration, known as damage control.

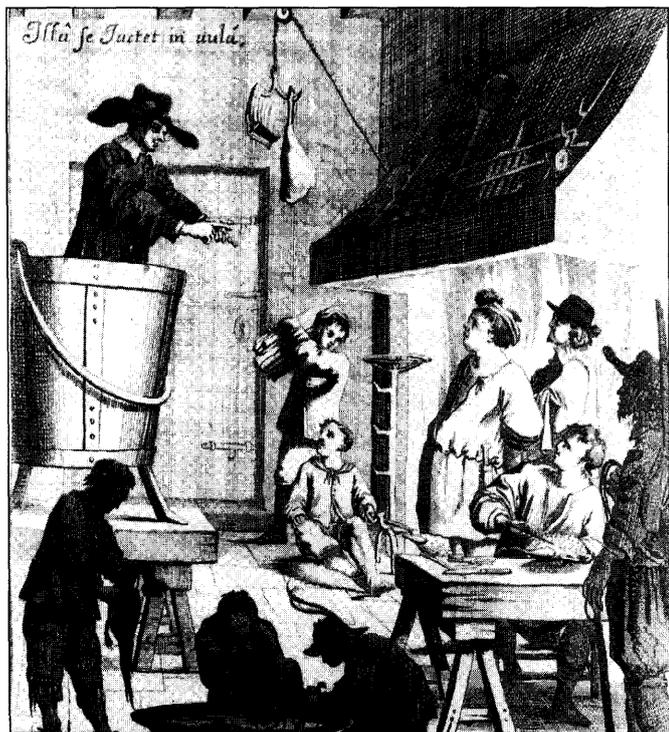
Out came the spackle, plastic wood, circular saws, paint cans, etc. We even went to the tropical fish store with a baggie full of dead fish, and although horrified, the clerk duplicated these remnants of the carnage with live fish as best she could, as well as a new aquarium and little diver.

The clerk finally had to ask, "What happened to those fish?"

Lou paused pensively before replying, "Depth charge."

It was difficult work restoring the kitchen, because although artists at wrecking things, we weren't such hot carpenters. Still, it was passable workmanship if you didn't look too closely. The china cabinet could be explained by the dog, which we hated anyway.

Lucky for us it was that Mrs. Heinold was in Florida. It was the only thing that saved us, giving us time to make repairs.



Regular staff meeting at the JOURNAL OF
PYROTECHNIC FARTS AND SAUSAGES.

Yet nobody gets away such an atrocity completely unscathed. Ask the Clintons. We still couldn't account for one of the rocket engines, though we looked high and low for it.

Wouldn't you know it was Mrs. Heinold who found it? It had apparently scooted through the hallway and into the den. When she went to turn on a reading lamp made from a ceramic Buddha, she found an Estes C-6-5 engine protruding from the Buddha's broken belly. When confronted with this, all Louis could do was shrug, giggle, and grin that gap-toothed grin.

— EDUARDO TELLERINI



THE LITERARY FRONT

Habent sua fata libelli.

—TERENTIANUS MAURUS

It is rare that the *Case Former* staff finds a work of literature for which it can make an honest-Injun recommendation, and for this reason this column has not been a regular feature of these pages. Once in a great while – including many years ago – something worth while comes along of which we feel an urgent need to inform our readers. This issue's candidate is a book called *Dynamite Stories*, written way back in 1916. It has been around all along, just waiting to be discovered by our readers.

The name Maxim may remind people, if it reminds them of anything, of a fancy and expensive restaurant in Paris, and its numerous imitators. Those more historically inclined may recall Sir Hiram Stevens Maxim (1840-1916), an American-born British subject who invented, among other things, the Maxim silencer and the Maxim machine gun. But Sir Hiram had a brother, Hudson (1853-1927), who also had the family interest in things that went bang, and was indeed a considerable inventor himself, and proprietor of various explosives and munitions interests. It was he who wrote *Dynamite Stories*, a medley of factual information about explosives and, let us say, "human interest" stories about their often unexpected intersection with people in all walks of life.

We won't spoil it for you further, giving everything away – but will tell you that, among others, the book contains what has to be the original of many stories we have heard concerning the dog that retrieved a stick of dynamite with a lit, capped fuse. There is a remarkably cold-blooded account, "The Forgotten Bit of Fulminate," about the author's loss of his left hand to the eponymous article.

"A spark from the ignited piece entered my left hand between my fingers, igniting the piece there, with the result that my hand was blown off to the wrist, and the next thing that I saw was the bare end of the wrist-

bone. My face and clothes were bespattered with flesh and filled with slivers of bone... The following day, my thumb was found on top of a building a couple of hundred feet away, with a sinew attached to which had been pulled out from the elbow."

The following paragraphs relate a harrowing journey by horse and wagon, railroad, and on foot, to see a doctor; and conclude, several days later, with the sardonic comment of Maxim's young woman stenographer - "You, too, have become a shorthand writer."

Another tale, "Discharging Pat," recounts the carelessness of an Irish laborer at a dynamite factory, whose conduct prompted the foreman to march forthwith to the superintendent's office to demand his discharge. The colloquy was interrupted by an horrendous blast and breaking of glass, followed by Pat's booted foot landing on the office floor - as "(t)he superintendent dryly remarked, 'Evidently, Pat is already discharged!'" In "Lines to a Lady," Maxim tells of having picked up a package of fulminate detonators at Fort Lafayette and travelling home with them on a trolley car (well before the advent of the D.O.T.):

"No sooner had I comfortably seated myself in the car than a huge, determined, militant-looking woman entered, brushing a few small men aside. Seeing all the seats occupied except the space where the package was, she turned and hurled herself backward and downward. Her movements were so quick that I had barely time to throw my left arm firmly under her, and, although I am unusually strong, I had all I could do to support her enormous bulk..."

Maxim rescued his package in the nick of time, and, waxing poetical, composed and wrote on a notebook sheet the following verse, which, when he arrived at his street, he "handed... to Her Militancy":

"Dear Madam, I'm an anarchist,
That package was a bomb,
I'm on my way
Someone to slay,
And this is really true —
I didn't want to waste that bomb
On just the likes of you."

"Weary Willie's Discomfiture," a story about a tramp burgling a house, who took refuge up the chimney as the owners arrived home, comes to its inexorable conclusion when the "ingenious Yankee neighbor" advises them to clean the chimney by throwing several pounds of gunpowder into the open fire, which, flashing, would blow the soot out of the chimney. "Sir Fredrick's Bonfire" is a tale told on an eminent authority of the time, Sir Frederick's Abel. "A Pick-aninny's Treasure Trove," doubtless, deserves to be prized for its politically incorrect title alone, while "The Turkey that Went to Bed" departs from the

theme of explosives, if not of explosions, to detail Maxim's first patented invention, a pressure cooker which "blew up... (t)he kitchen windows were blown out, the door ripped off its hinges, and the stove demolished."

Our favorite story, however, is "When the Wash Vanished," about a wag who decided to nitrate a handkerchief and send it to the Chinese laundry with the rest of his wash. Arriving at the laundry he was greeted by the proprietor, whose arm was in a sling, as if nothing had happened... and only upon putting on his laundered underwear did he discover the Chinaman's revenge.

Brief, laconic, and mostly tinged with *schadenfreude*, it is hard to imagine these anecdotes finding a publisher in these days of "sensitivity" and bleeding hearts worn on sleeves. They are reminiscent of the short stories of Ambrose Bierce, Mark Twain, and H.L. Mencken, Maxim's contemporaries in those more rugged and bracingly vigorous times. We found our copy one year at the P.G.I. flea market table of one of our well-known vendors of photocopied archival literature. Keep your eyes out and you may find your own copy. ¶

— ERNST PFANTODT

DROPPINGS

Pyrotechny's again been assaulted
By a poseur titularly vaulted
Who without expertise
Produced a treatise
that leaves this reviewer revolted.

Of matters he claims understanding
He's not had so much as a hand in
But with this opportunist
That's just what the tune is
His ignorance notwithstanding.

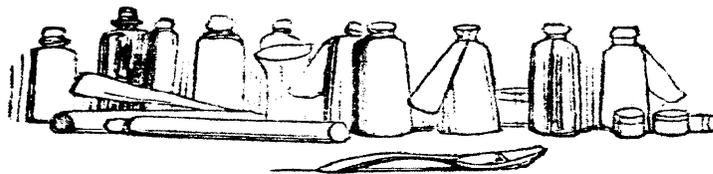
It takes a dose of skull duggery
And equal proportions of puffery
To take work of others
And slap on your covers
To sell to pyrotech wanna-be's.

But honor is just not an option
To the intellectual co-option
Of an artform besieged
By P-fucking-h-D's
Whose aim for our craft is adoption.

It is doubtful my life will endure
Till the day when the expert *du jour*
Makes proof in the skies
As to why he is wise
And his words are worth more than manure! ¶

— LANCE VÆRCK

Galinitropyromedica



It has come to our attention that certain persons (the predictable ones, really) have chosen to regard this column as an elaborately contrived platform for making political jibes. Even some of our own members approach it primarily as humor, and are then disappointed when it is not so uproarious as some of the other features in our journal. We wish to remind both groups that all of our recommendations and case histories come from official reference texts of the regular medical profession. If anything we have erred on the side of caution by using only the standard dispensaries, and only those remedies which have been proven by extensive use over long periods of time. When we can bollix a bureaucrat or shock a safety-faker, it is clearly the icing on the cake, but we needn't stretch the truth in order to do so. For example, the story of the clerk who attempted suicide by swallowing potassium chlorate and sulphur was taken verbatim from Gould and Pyle's classic *Anomalies and Curiosities of Medicine*, originally published in 1896. In general our favorite works run from the mid-Victorian period up to the first World War, with a few secondary sources as late as the second World War. This means after medicine had become relatively scientific, but before vested interests, socialism, and extreme trendiness ruined it beyond repair. From that time came most of the really valuable developments, such as antiseptic surgery, vaccines, antitoxins, and I.V. fluid therapy; these things no longer grab headlines but are still responsible for most of a doctor's value and for most of the impact of "modern" medicine on poor foreign countries. When our nation was new there was a tendency to treat almost every disease with phlebotomy or large doses of mercury — it is a shame we could not have stayed at a happy medium between that and today's government-funded, lawsuit-happy circus, but ours is not the age of responsibility or self-restraint. Most of the old inorganic drugs are all but forgotten, and this column is one of the few published forums which provides an opportunity to discuss some of them. The botanical drugs have undergone a great revival, but unfortunately this has been associated with left-wing or counterculture groups, which understandably cause suspicion in more conservative people. Many of the herb promoters endorse highly dubious practices such as "aromatherapy", or recommend herb teas without any suggestion that the dosage matters, or

even claim that these products are not drugs and don't have side effects. The typical physician assumes (falsely) that such drugs are not effective, while he proudly practices "scientific" medicine by giving mood-altering drugs to small children who don't like school, or eighty-dollar fashion antibiotics to welfare bums with the sniffles. If there were any sense in the world, Echinacea and blood-root, as well as calomel and Fowler's solution would once again be listed in the pharmacopœia, while C.A.T. scanners and "Ceclor" would be considered alternative medicine, to be used only in a few cases where nothing else has worked, and where the patient or a private charity can afford them.

Gums, resins, and balsams are a fascinating study which can only be touched upon in this column. A great many which we cannot even mention have been used in varnishes, cements, and the like, and some of these could undoubtedly be employed as pyrotechnic fuels or binders. Also there are dozens of the traditional plant drugs which depend on pharmacologically active resins, but of course these also contain cellulose, starches, tannins, and many other substances as well. Only the purified resins themselves are likely to be useful in fireworks. The chemistry of these materials is complicated and often obscure, and the terminology is sometimes used in a rather sloppy manner: in general one hears the word "gum" applied to any sticky material which oozes from a tree. Shellac is sometimes called "gum lac", but it, like red gum and gum copal, is more properly termed a resin. Opium is a dried latex and would not really fit either category, even if it were obtainable at a reasonable cost. *Oleoresins*, as one would expect, contain volatile oils in addition to resins; common examples are those of ginger root and capsicum pepper. *Tars*, properly speaking, are produced by destructive distillation and include pine tar, coal tar, and juniper tar, the latter sometimes called "oil of cade". None of these show a great deal of promise as pyrotechnic fuels, but we mention them because the word "tar" is applied by the laity to asphalt. This is, of course, a good fuel in cast propellants, while the powdered natural asphaltum is occasionally used in colored stars. Pine tar, however, has long had a traditional use in pyrotechny in the preparation of tarred string, that handy adjunct in so many applications. A traditional Italian receipt calls for a mix-

ture of equal parts of *catrame* (Stockholm tar, the *pix liquida* of the dispensaries) and *pece greca* (colophony resin) to be melted together; then a small amount of olive oil is added to the mixture and it is poured into cold water to congeal. Afterwards the preparation is drained of water and kneaded into masses of convenient size for rubbing onto string. This material bears some resemblance to the pharmacopœial *emplastrum picis*. In its stead, roofing tar of suitable consistency may be substituted.

True gums are complex carbohydrates which contain glucosidal acids; they dissolve or swell in water to produce an adhesive mucilage. Unlike resins, balsams and such, gums do not dissolve in alcohol or ether. They have little physiological effect, although some in large quantities act as bulk-forming laxatives. They are extensively used as excipients for preparations ranging from throat lozenges to oil-in-water emulsions. The arch-member of this group is Gum Arabic (Acacia), but Senegal, Sterculia (karaya), and Tragacanth are also important. Gum Arabic generally produces a stickier star composition than dextrin, and is infrequently used. However, there are a few compositions, including the Italian "Pampanino" with its coarse granular aluminum, where the gum seems to give a superior result. For these it is worth knowing that Senegal is very similar to Arabic. Tragacanth, which produces a very viscous mucilage in small percentages, has been used in slurry mixtures for sparklers and match heads.

Balsams, although rarely if ever employed in fireworks, have a distinguished medical history. They are defined by Youngken's *Textbook of Pharmacognosy* as "mixtures of resins with cinnamic or benzoic acid or both and generally a volatile oil". Most balsams are thick, syrupy liquids, although a few such as Tolu balsam are plastic solids at room temperature. Their physical properties make them unsuitable for stars, but in small percentages they might prove very useful in torches. Copaiba balsam, one of the few which does not have a pleasant odor, was once a favorite treatment for gonorrhœa and other infections of the urinary tract. When taken internally its volatile oil component is absorbed into the circulation, then eliminated mostly by the kidneys. Tolu has some value in coughs, while its delightful bouquet, like spicy vanilla, makes small amounts useful in candies and perfumes. Storax or styrax has rarely been used alone, but along with benzoin, aloe and Tolu it makes compound tincture of benzoin. Used externally, as well as in the popular steam inhalation for bronchitis, Tr. Benz. Comp. must be one of the oldest medicines in continuous use. In the Middle Ages it was known as Balsamum Equitas Sancti Victorias, although whether it can withstand the siege of the infidels in Clinton's administration is anybody's guess. Peruvian balsam, with a pleasant odor resembling that of Tolu but a consistency like molasses, is useful in a variety of skin conditions, especially sluggish ulcerations

and wounds which refuse to heal. It may be applied as a simple alcoholic solution, but the most versatile preparation is an ointment of 10% to 20% strength. To keep it from separating, the balsam should first be triturated with castor oil before adding the ointment base. Where a less greasy base is desired, the balsam mixes well with simple unmedicated hand cream. The author has enjoyed good results from these mixtures in both people and animals. One case was a middle-aged man with an indolent leg ulcer, a nasty patch of raw flesh more than four inches across. He had spent months with different doctors in the area — one would prescribe a corticosteroid combination with no result, so the next would come up with another steroid cream of the same class. If the use of anti-inflammatory drugs where the problem is one of *not enough* inflammation seems strange, it is because most younger doctors are simply lost without steroids; they use these or antibiotics in almost every routine ill. Finally, after a \$600 biopsy test which solved nothing, they told him the condition was stress-related, but still did not assign it a name or reduce its severity. He tried 20% Peruvian balsam cream, and in one week the area was almost completely covered with new skin. Since then it has waxed and waned, suggesting that there may be some underlying circulatory problem which also needs treatment, but he always goes back to the balsam for the best results. It boggles the mind to think how much needless suffering occurs, and how much money is wasted every day, when doctors don't use old enough technology.

Thus far we have only conducted one test using *Balsamum Peruvianum* as a fuel, but it showed a certain amount of promise. When chlorate of potash is well mixed with the balsam, in a ratio of 82:18, the consistency approaches that of modeling clay. Approximately 3-1/2 ounces of this composition was placed in a gap between two hard granite rocks, each about one foot thick and two feet wide. An automobile hubcap was placed on top of the rocks; neither it nor the rocks actually touched the mixture. Initiated with a standard #6 cap, the mixture made a jolly bang and launched a mangled hubcap well into the air. It did not have the sharp "crack" of a true high explosive; the performance was more like that of a good cannon cracker without the need for a casing. Inspection revealed that one rock was broken almost all the way across, and the other also showed serious damage. Undoubtedly slight modifications could improve the performance. Meanwhile, in such an age, there is something inspirational about a fragrant herbal wound dressing which doubles as a plastic explosive.

Resins are insoluble in water but soluble in alcohol, ether, chloroform or fixed oils. They have lower melting points than most fuels, but at room temperature many are brittle enough to be reduced to fine powders. Medicinal value of the usual firework

fuels is minor, but many of the resins known as medicines would be potentially useful in pyrotechny. Indeed some of these *were* recorded in the older firework literature, including benzoin, mastic, and asafœtida. Others are far too expensive for routine use, but might nonetheless be found at a surplus chemical dealer or an old store basement.

In the costly group are a number of resins which act as powerful purgatives. Podophyllin, already mentioned in our last column as wart remover, is most likely to be found in a modern pharmacy. Others with similar properties include jalap resin, scammony, elaterin, and gamboge. The latter has a brilliant golden-yellow color and was used, along with other resins, in the varnishes of the old Cremona violins. All the members of this group are potentially dangerous; and must be used in small doses, combined with other drugs to moderate their effects. One must distinguish between the simple powdered root, which is powerful enough, and the extracted resin, which is much more so. Asafœtida, an oleo-gum-resin named for its rank garlicky odor, is one of the old remedies often singled out for ridicule by the progressives. Most of its effect probably *was* psychological when it was used to treat hysterical women, or hung around the neck in little bags to ward off infection. However, it was considered an effective antispasmodic in horses as well as humans; the old veterinarians were anything but trendy, and horses don't read health articles, so there may be something to it. In past centuries it was sometimes added to firework compositions to produce an acrid, nauseating smoke.

Guaiac, from the lignum vitae wood which makes such fine mallets, is another resin which could be useful in color compositions were its cost not so prohibitive. It is known to most modern practitioners as a test for occult blood, but it has also been given internally in a variety of disorders, especially rheumatism. The author cannot vouch for its efficacy, but the worst side effects to be expected are increased perspiration and a mild laxative effect. Usual doses were 5 to 30 grains of the resin itself, or one-half to one fluidrachm of the ammoniated tincture. Don't worry about the "childproof" caps, as nobody who isn't really sick will want a second taste.

Shellac has little or no physiological effect in modest doses, but has been used for coating tablets. Pine rosin, so useful in blue stars, has been employed as a diuretic for livestock — especially horses, whose kidneys may be sensitive to more irritant drugs like oil of juniper. In human medicine it is confined to external use in plasters and the stiff ointments called cerates.

Benzoin, a balsamic resin, has a peculiar, pleasant aroma which is difficult to describe. Both the simple and compound tincture are still widely sold for wound dressings and steam inhalations. Benzoinated lard is mildly antiseptic by itself and makes a good base for more complicated ointments. Benzoin itself can be bought as a rather coarse tan-colored pow-

der; because the resin component is somewhat soft and sticky it tends to agglomerate into larger lumps over time. It *has* been used in firework compositions, and its tackiness and moderate burning speed might make it a good secondary fuel in compositions containing large amounts of powdered metal. Benzoin is of course the original source of benzoic acid, the salts of which have become so popular in fireworks. Soluble salts, like those of sodium and ammonia, are quickly absorbed into the bloodstream. The benzoic acid is then excreted by the kidneys as hippuric acid, which acidifies alkaline urine and also acts as an antiseptic in the urinary tract. Adequate serum levels of benzoic acid also increase and partially disinfect bronchial secretions, and can lower fevers. The usual dose of sodium benzoate is five or ten grains, but as much as sixty grains at a time can be given with little effect on the digestion, circulatory or nervous system.

Myrrh, despite its exotic aura, costs only a little more than benzoin or shellac, if as much as the shellac from some pyrotechnic suppliers. Its appearance is similar, an orange-brown powder of medium fineness, but it has a heavy, spicy bouquet of the sort associated with Oriental incense. A complex oleo-gum-resin, its quality varies depending on whether it was obtained in Somalia or Yemen, and how much of the oil it contains. Taken internally, it increases the appetite and the digestive secretions, and reduces the griping caused by many purgatives such as aloes. It is said to stimulate the uterus, but by itself is not potent enough to be hazardous in pregnancy. White's *Materia Medica and Therapeutics* of 1902 says that it increases production of white blood cells; if this is consistent it would account for some of myrrh's ancient reputation in infectious disease. Certainly it has general antiseptic properties, and is especially useful in mouthwashes and gargles. The tincture, a simple 20% solution in grain alcohol, is a good application for cold or canker sores. The author has only begun to experiment with myrrh in pyrotechny, but can report that with chlorate of baryta it gives a fine color and a moderately slow burning rate, suitable for lances or pillbox stars. ¶

— SCOPPIETTO DULCAMARA, *I.O.O.J.*,
B.M., B.Ch., B. Pharm., P.G.I., etc.

A PASQUILL

On seeing K*** K*** enwrap't in mutual bloviation
with C*** W*** at the W*** W*** B***



Hos brevitās sensus fecit conjugere binos.

Malignant folly now unites these blocks,
Like two Wall Street jobbers merging
watered stocks.

— EPISTEMON EPISTEMOFF



TELLERINI'S CULINARY CORNER



Science is a collection of successful recipes.

— PAUL VALÉRY

As Mr. Tellerini has been injured in an accident (not with fireworks), and is presently unable to write his columns, we of the medical staff have undertaken to write one for him — and we hope he finds it apropos. The following simple but flavorful dish has long been popular with the author's family; the original source has been forgotten, but it can't be more than fifty years old. Obviously its theme is that ingredients from diverse cultures, which are generally not used in the same dishes, can harmonize surprisingly well. Unfortunately whoever invented it gave it the awful name of United Nations Chicken Casserole — enough to make us cringe every time we ate it. But we could see no copyright notice, and as anyone seriously interested in pyrotechny knows, this is an age of petty plagiarism, so we simply changed the name. It tastes far better as...

WHITE MAN'S BURDEN CASSEROLE

Cut two frying chickens in serving sized pieces.

Dissolve three chicken bouillon cubes in five cups of hot water; add one teaspoonful of salt and bring to a boil. Then stir in two cups of instant rice and simmer, covered, for 25 minutes. A footnote to the recipe states that 2/3 cup of long grain rice may be used; this would of course require more cooking time.

When the rice is done add four ounces of mushrooms — canned ones are acceptable but lightly cooked fresh ones would be preferable. Season with a dash of nutmeg, a tablespoonful of curry powder, and a tablespoonful of parsley.

Place the mixture in a shallow casserole dish or cake pan, and spread to an even depth. Arrange the chicken pieces on top and sprinkle them with paprika. Finally, bake uncovered at 350° for an hour and a quarter.

Numerous variations spring to mind. Today it is hard to find good chickens which have been properly bled, but almost any gallinaceous bird from the ringneck pheasant (China) to the chukar partridge (Afghanistan) would be worth a try. Even though India is already represented by the curry powder, peahen would be a great temptation, and with our new improved name, Guinea fowl or African sand grouse would be most appropriate of all. Shiitake mushrooms (Japan) and Chanterelles (France) have more flavor than the mundane *Agaricus bisporus* found in most grocery stores. If picking your own, remember that some of the *Coprinus* species (shaggy manes and inky caps) behave like the drug "Antabuse", and are thus completely unacceptable at Grand Manifestations.

The choice of wine to accompany this recipe should be the same as for any good poultry dish, bearing in mind that it must have enough character to assert itself alongside nutmeg, curry and paprika. We do not hold with the simpleminded notion of serving white wine merely because the meat is white. Many of the artist types and other fashionables responsible for the modern white wine craze are, as Imbibo would say, no-account and candy-assed. The great chefs such as Escoffier generally served claret with chicken or with gamebirds; the English gentry did likewise, and often went as far as rich red Burgundy with pheasants which had been hung. Obviously if one is serving shrimp before the W.M.B., champagne or white Burgundy would be a good accompaniment to both, but otherwise we recommend something made from Cabernet Sauvignon. Don't risk your Ch. Lafite or Ch. Latour until you have already tried the casserole with one of the lesser French classified growths. Considering the revised theme of the recipe, it would be hard to beat a bold South African red.

When savoring this dish it may help to contemplate sea breezes on the Spice Islands, safaris for kudu and lion, or dancing houris in gossamer veils. Try *not* to think about what has become of your own culture, or where your taxes are going.

*The ports ye shall not enter — the roads
ye shall not tread —
Go make them with your living, and
mark them with your dead.*

— S. DULCAMARA



Lyra Pyroburlesca

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

— W.S. GILBERT, *The Grand Duke*



THE PYRO FARTS & SAUSAGES RAG

(Air: "A Soldier and a Sailor,"

The Beggar's Opera, on facing page.)

A Charlatan and Cheater,
A Safety-faking Bleater,
A Canuck bureaucratic
(To Freedom most traumatic),
Together did conspire,
Together did conspire.

The Charlatan reneg'd, Sir,
And so the Canuck leagued, Sir,
Together with Kosanko,
For whom we have to thank, O!
These friv'lous lawsuits dire,
These friv'lous lawsuits dire.

To start a pyro Journal,
More stale than any urinal,
To bolster up their status,
As touch'd with the afflatus
Of fireworks expertise,
Of fireworks expertise!

There, rockets made of Physick,
And other things as quizzick,
Twixt safety-fake outrages,
Do grace the Xeroxed pages,
Of this great imposture.
Of this great imposture.

But how to make a Shell, Sir,
Cold it will be in Hell, Sir,
Or anything of Use, Sir,
That won't our Art abuse, Sir,
Before you therein find,
Before you therein find.

They fill it with their maunderings,
And intellectual wanderings,
To point to when they witness,
However really witless,
Their testimony be,
Their testimony be.

Now, business may be slow, Sir,
Another steals your shows, Sir,
The I.R.S. your purse, Sir,
The D.O.T. still worse, Sir,
The A.T.F. your fate,
The A.T.F. your fate.

All this is but mere plucking,
You'll get a *really serious* fucking,
When th' Expert's hand is fee'd, Sir,
In Court he'll do the deed, Sir,
And steal your whole Estate,
And steal your whole Estate!



THE PATTERSONG OF THE BURNT MAIDEN AND THE AMBULANCE CHASER

[from THE KOSANKO, Act I, sc. 2]

Burnt maiden: My pinkie has a little burn,
Amb. chaser: A million dollars it will turn!
B.M.: But is it worth such deep concern?
A.C.: Listen, lass, and you will learn!
The defendant will reduced be to
eating mustard sandwiches,
After paying the outrageously
excessive damages,
That the Jury will return!
And how shall I afford your fee?
A.C.: We'll take it on contingency!
B.M.: That's how I'll afford your fee!
A.C.: We'll take it on contingency!
B.M.: You'll take it on contingency!
A.C.: And that's how you'll afford our fee!

B.M.: What shall we do to make our case?
A.C.: We'll advertise in Cyberspace!
B.M.: There find a man who'll lie apace,
A.C.: An Expert Witness – one so base,
His well-remunerated and profound
dissimulation,
Will move the Jury to a state of
righteous indignation,
That's how we your case will ace!
But how shall I afford his fee?
A.C.: He'll take it on contingency!

B.M.: That's how I'll afford his fee!
A.C.: He'll take it on contingency!
B.M.: He'll take it on contingency!
A.C.: And that's how you'll afford his fee!

— BEN TROVATO

THE PYRO FARTS & SAUSAGES RAG

(Air: "A Soldier and a Sailor," *The Beggar's Opera*)

A char-la-tan and Chea-ter, a safe - ty fak - ing Bleat-er, a
Can-uck bur-eau - cra - tic (to Free-dom most trau-ma-tic), To - geth-er did con-
spire, To - geth - er did con - spire, The Char - la
tan re - neg'd, Sir, And so the Can-uck leagued, Sir, To - geth - er
with Ko - sanko, for whom we have to thank, O! These frivo-lous lawsuits
dire, These frivolous law - suits dire.

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From: A mysterious anonymous secret unknown discreet ghost-writing phantom.

Regarding: Wob Peever, A.K.A. "Peevis the Butthead."

He don't wike us vewey much. He shuwd stay home and enjoy wots of west and wewaxation. I understand there's wots of wildewife where he's fwom and things move a wittle swower around there. Hahahaha. He dont wike wate aftergwow sandwiches with wilted cheese and wettuce with bawoney and sawami. He can't stand hot headed hippies with wubber wimmed gwasses. No... he shuwd definitwy stay where he is, where all the peopwe awe about as sharp as a sack of wet mice. They do things nice and swoe. He did wite a book once. Wots of wittle pictures with inaccurate desquiptions. Wots of swoe peopwe with pyretackas and two kids who wost all their mawbles and were hit in the pace wif bomatoes. In the future... pwease don't feed the weasel... pet your wittle monkee instead!

— Submitted by CASTILLO MALDITO

Brings lots of weasel repellent. Rumor is, the master magician of disappearing products is planning on making an encore performance in Amana. Hold on to your wallets, lock your doors and windows. Hide your goods and plug your ears.

Cause Chuckie Weasel's coming to town.
He's getting guys pissed, naming *his* price.
His wife manufactures body lice.
Chuckie Weasel's coming to town.

His kid is really creepy,
They beat him with a rake.
The target was his pointy head,
But they missed it by mistake.

So... you better not shout,
You better not cry,
Expert witnesses ought to fry,
Cause Chuckie Weasel's coming to town.

Well... that's all for now. Let's wait and see who gets out of line at the Convention in Amana. It's sure going to be real interesting. Until next time...
salute!

— MIGALUCC

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