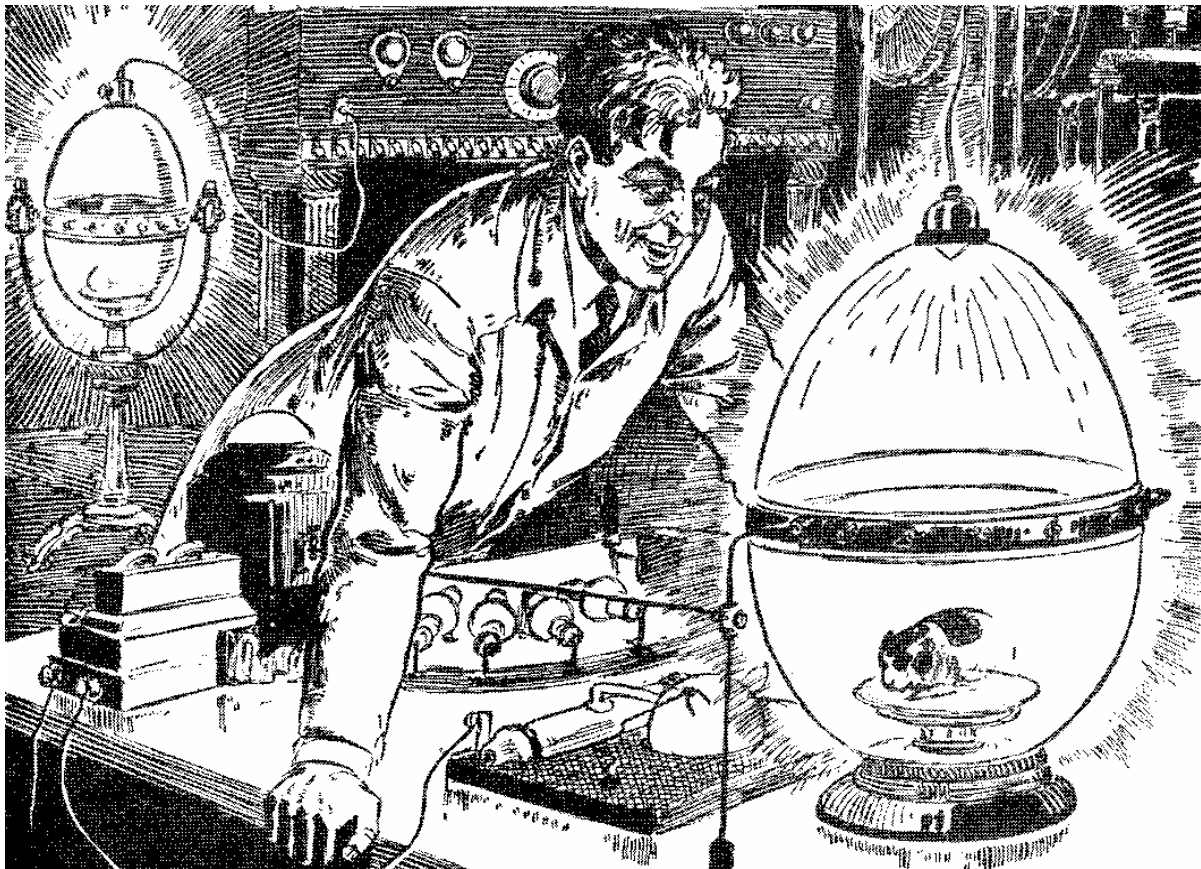


CORRUSCATING CONUNDRUMS!



ASK MR. GUESS-IT-ALL!

As submitted by R. Graeme Cameron, official spin-doctor for Mr. Guess-It-All, well-known acolyte of Mr. Science, his mentor. (To contact The Graeme with questions to submit or comments on the answers, write: < rgraeme@shaw.ca >)

Ask Mr. Guess-It-All humbly offers these feeble revelations in tribute to the legendary Mr. Science and his hard-working Social Secretary Al Betz for their magnificent attempts to enlighten mankind as to the true nature of the nature of truth and sundry other matters of equally threatening import.

The columns included in this issue first appeared in the pages of *BCSFazine* (the clubzine of the British Columbia Science Fiction Association), *WCSFazine* (the promozine for VCON, the annual Science Fiction convention sponsored by the West Coast Science Fiction Association), *The Space Cadet Gazette* (the perzine of The Graeme), and *The Ask Mr. Guess-It-All Livejournal* (available at < <http://mr-guess-it-all.livejournal.com> >). See < www.efanzines.com > for the three zines.

Mr. PQ of Coquitlam, B.C., asks:
DOES THE METHANE RECENTLY FOUND IN THE MARTIAN ATMOSPHERE PROVE THERE'S LIFE ON MARS?

Mr. GUESS-IT-ALL: Scientists claim the methane is a product of either bacteria deep beneath the Martian surface or of volcanic activity at roughly the same depth. This very convenient theorizing on the part of said scientists will require decades of government grants and increasingly sophisticated space probes to prove or disprove, thus providing employment for generations of scientists.

However, the origin of the methane has nothing to do with whatever is or is not happening beneath the Martian surface. The methane in question originates on Earth. Specifically, our Canadian muskeg is now defrosting because of global warming, and as a result is releasing methane in prodigious quantity in the form of supersonic jets ejecting the methane so far beyond the pull of Earth's gravity that the gravity of Mars sucks it down into the Martian atmosphere.

If we could but harness these jets we could safely travel to Mars by balloon. This requires, of course, divers government grants to determine the level of feasibility. I have already sent in my application.

Ms. BB, formally of Bellingham, WA, asks:
ARE THERE ANY ADVANTAGES TO THE PHENOMENON OF GLOBAL WARMING?

MR. GUESS-IT-ALL: Absolutely! The Canadian methane we are currently saturating the Martian atmosphere with is wiping out all the squelchy squiddy horrors resident on the surface and is in fact sterilizing the entire planet, rendering it perfectly safe for our use once global warming has wiped out all life on Earth. The trick is to migrate before we die. Timing is critical.

Mr. NHF of Fraser Mills, B.C., asks:
SCIENTISTS SAY THE RED GIANT BETELGEUSE HAS SHRUNK 15% THE LAST COUPLE OF YEARS. IS THIS A PROBLEM?

Mr. GUESS-IT-ALL: No. Scientists forgot to mention it is merely a symptom of Newton's 13th law of the conservation of matter: "As the universe expands, everything within it shrinks." Nothing to worry about.

As a point of interest, it's only about 40 years ago the Earth had shrunk enough to make Globalization economically feasible, with all the resultant collapse of cultural identity and economic chaos we have come to expect as a matter of course.

Consequently the Obama administration is funding NASA to develop the technology to mine the atmospheres of Jupiter and Saturn of 17 trillion tons of Nitrogen to be injected into the centre of the Earth to swell it back to a pre-globalization diameter and render routine contact between nations impossible, thus allowing every country to become self-sufficient and culturally unique once again.

It should be noted that the proposal by the previous Bush Administration to save the taxpayer some money by utilizing the cheaper alternative of mining Hydrogen from the atmospheres of the gas giants and injecting THAT into the molten core of the Earth was rejected by NASA on the grounds it was not necessary to swell the Earth THAT fast since the resultant expanding-debris field would probably destroy the Moon as well. The Republicans are still chuffed about this.

Ms. KN, formally of Ulan Bator, Mongolia, asks:
DO CAMEL SPIDERS EAT CAMELS?

MR. GUESS-IT-ALL: Absolutely not! Camel Spiders ARE camels! Or rather, the larval form of same which herd owners tattoo with their mark before releasing into the wild to free-range and bulk up to a size adequate to transform the creatures into the ungainly but useful beast we all know and prefer not to meet.

Hence the famous Bedouin saying: "Do NOT step on a Camel Spider lest you bring blood feud down upon your family for generation unto generation."

Mr. TW, of Toronto Ontario, asks:
WHY DO STARS TWINKLE?

MR. GUESS-IT-ALL: God has the ability to turn stars on and off as if he were flicking a near-infinite number of cosmic light switches. He does this when he is bored. Note that he has been doing it continuously throughout recorded history. This is a bad sign. We better shape up and meet his expectations. Lest he shut off the lights forever.

Mr. SF, of Burnaby, B.C., asks:
WHAT CAUSES THOSE OCCASIONAL IMPACT SCARS ON JUPITER?

MR. GUESS-IT-ALL: Scientists think Jupiter's intense gravity sucks in asteroids and comets that might otherwise hit Earth, and every time this happens the object plunging into Jupiter's upper atmosphere leaves an impact 'scar' in the Jovian cloud tops. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The so-called 'impact scars' are in fact EXPULSION SCARS. The Jovians want to wipe out all life on Earth and periodically launch enormous projectiles which disrupt Jupiter's cloud system in their wake. Fortunately for us, they can't see what their aiming at because the cloud system is so incredibly thick and dense (much like the Jovians themselves in fact) that their attacks have proven unsuccessful.

Why do the Jovians want to exterminate us? Apparently they monitored our TV transmissions for decades and were particularly fond of Walter Cronkite's CBS newscasts. Seems they've never forgiven us for forcing Walter to retire. Ghod help us if the Jovians are currently monitoring CNN or FOX news, as this could lead to an increase in the launch rate. Sooner or later they're bound to get lucky and wipe us out. Blame American television.

B.C. of North Carolina, USA, asks:

IS IT TRUE THAT CELL-PHONE TOWERS ARE REALLY GIGANTIC PERISCOPES CONNECTED TO SECRET UNDERGROUND INSTALLATIONS OCCUPIED BY SPACE ALIENS?

MR. GUESS-IT-ALL: Absolutely! Though I fear you are under the impression that the aliens in question use these periscopes to spy on us. Nothing could be further from the truth. The aliens are, in fact, totally unaware of the existence of these periscopes. Assorted human intelligence agencies constructed these devices to enable mankind to spy on the aliens!

In other words, the periscopes point down, not up. I trust this is clear.

By the way, electronic surveillance footage of the alien subterranean activity has proven rather unexpectedly revealing, not to say shocking, and has been released to the public via the Playboy channel. Check your local listings.

B.C. of North Carolina, USA, also asks:

IT SEEMS THAT METHANE FUMES FROM WASHINGTON D.C. ARE A BIGGER PROBLEM THAN COW FLATULENCE COULD EVER BE. HOW COME?

MR. GUESS-IT-ALL: You have in your coy way hinted at the truth. The whole story about cow flatulence was put out by the Reagan administration to prevent the public from learning the facts about the source of hot air in Washington, a truth so hideous it could topple the government!

Originally, yes, hot air emerged from just the mouths of Senators and Congressmen as per the natural

functioning of such creatures. But then President Reagan grew tired of listening to voiced criticism from said lesser beings and secretly authorized the CIA to experiment with human/cow DNA combinations in an effort to mutate the Senators and Congressmen into something more docile and tractable, not to mention dumber. The experiments were a resounding success!

However, there was one unexpected result. Now, in addition to the hot air flowing from the mouths of politicians, veritable jets of warm methane are being expelled from, shall it be said, the opposite orifice located in the nether regions.

As a consequence, while the intelligence of politicians did drop noticeably, they have, on the other hand, gained in reputation for eloquence and sheer virtuosity in oratory. Reagan found this very annoying. Hence the cover-up story spread by his administration.

M84 asks:

YOU SIR, ARE AWESOME!!!! NICE TO FIND SOME CLEAR PERSPECTIVE.

MR. GUESS-IT-ALL: I'm afraid I don't quite understand your questions, perhaps because of the way you worded them. However, I'll take a shot at them anyway.

The answer to your first question is: "Yes I am."

The answer to your second question is: "The utter clarity of my trenchant logic is above reproach, I agree."

The above written in all humbleness (at such level as I am capable of, that is).

B.C. of North Carolina, USA, asks:

YOU ONCE REVEALED THE CIA HAS BEEN EXPERIMENTING WITH GENETIC SPLICING TO PRODUCE HYBRID COWS/POLITICIANS. DOES THIS MEAN THE VICTIMS OF CATTLE MUTILATIONS AREN'T CATTLE AT ALL, BUT RATHER POLITICIANS GETTING WHAT THEY DESERVE?

MR. GUESS-IT-ALL: Wishful thinking I'm afraid. These incidents represent an effort to improve cattle breeds by removing certain organs of a purely political nature (to judge by how often they are exposed in both Washington and the tabloids). Unfortunately 'purified' cattle are not viable as they are hopelessly tainted by their politician genes and tend to die when asked to lead a righteous bovine life even though the offending organs have been removed. Sad, really.

On the bright side, the organs in question are easily converted into Soylent Green, albeit possessing a vile taste. Discerning gourmands prefer fly maggot bread. Much more palatable than anything made out of politicians, but that goes without saying.

Ms. F.M. of Duck Lake Post, Manitoba, asks:
WHY IS IT, WHENEVER I SORT AND FOLD MY FRESH LAUNDRY, I INVARIABLY COME UP ONE SOCK SHORT?

MR. GUESS-IT-ALL: The short answer is that dryers eat socks. What is not generally understood is precisely how the socks are consumed. In point of fact the dryers tumble clothes together to reduce socks (via the effects of heat and friction) to more easily digestible lint. Fortunately, dryers have small stomachs and require, on average, but a single sock per load.

Originally all dryers were wild, and they use to roam suburban areas in packs pulling down socks from clothes lines when no one was looking. Then the nuclear industry discovered the incredible possibilities of lint (far more valuable than heavy water) and this led to the domestication of dryers. Lint traps were installed to collect the lint (leaving but motes of lint for the dryer itself) and the vast and expensive garbage recycling industry was established overnight, not to recycle garbage (which is simply thrown away) but to separate out the lint. In sum, without your ritual sock sacrifice, there would be no nuclear weapons.

It should be noted that dryers are very frustrated on their now meager diet. The lack of nutrition is leading to all sorts of disorders and problems, hence the frequent grinding noises and breakdowns. Even worse, dryers have evolved to consume meat. Reaching in to pull items out is safe, as dryers want something more nutritious than your hand. But never stick your head inside a dryer. The last thing you will ever see will be the saliva condensing on the inside of the drum.

B.C. of North Carolina, USA, asks:
IN LIGHT OF THE ABOVE EXPOSE RE FREE-RANGING CLOTHES DRYERS, CAN YOU EXPLAIN THE INSIDIOUS NATURE OF LAUNDROMATS? ARE THESE COLONIZATION EFFORTS, OR SOMETHING ELSE EQUALLY NEFARIOUS?

MR. GUESS-IT-ALL: I'm afraid you're letting your imagination run wild. Laundromats are actually very beneficial. Simply put, they are government sponsored stud farms for the breeding of lint producing organisms (lint being important to the nuclear industry). The benefit of these farms is that humans may wash their clothes in relative safety because the 'machines' have something

else on their mind rather than their usual voracious appetite for raw meat. Nevertheless, still not a good idea to tempt them by leaving any part of your anatomy inside their maw for more than a few seconds.

Oddly enough, it is the dryers which are the female of the species. How they mate with the washers is not known, since their metabolism is governed by quantum mechanics and the very act of observing them renders the act null. But the result is well documented, and is an excellent example of adaptive evolution. The miracle of birth is quite subtle.

The dryer produces short strings of eggs which resemble a length of lint and weigh about the same. In the normal course of affairs, the egg-lint sticks to clothing and hangs on till the wearer passes upwind of a wooded area. The lint is programmed to release its grip while simultaneously glinting in the sunlight. This catches the eye of the carrier, who flicks the lint off the clothing and into the air, the wind blowing it gently into the branches of a tree where it nestles for safety during its initial growth spurt. Eventually, of course, younglings band together in fast roving packs, which is why you should never go for a walk in the woods unless you are armed with at least a dozen anti-tank rockets.

In a way anti-static strips are somewhat akin to a contraceptive, because it draws ALL the lint, including the 'egg-lint', into the lint trap for collection and industrial processing. This effectively prevents the creation of marauding packs of washers and dryers encroaching on built-up urban areas. A darn good idea I say, since otherwise thousands of lives might be at risk each and every day.

This is why, in Canada at least, a fine of \$10,000 is imposed on anyone caught NOT using an anti-static strip when utilizing a dryer. Be warned.

Mr. L.C., of Parry Sound, Ontario, asks:
WHAT IS DARK MATTER?

MR. GUESS-IT-ALL: Scientists say Dark Matter is an invisible and undetectable substance comprising the bulk of physical material and gravitational influence in the universe. The latter claim is true, but as for the first part... HAH! Complete nonsense! Dark Matter is HIGHLY visible and EASILY detectable with the naked eye! Why do you think the night sky is so DARK? If it weren't for the sheer amount of Dark Matter floating around in outer space the night sky would be a solid blaze of starlight nearly as brilliant as the daytime sky! If it weren't for Dark Matter we wouldn't be able to get any sleep AT ALL unless we burrowed deep underground. Thank Ghu for Dark Matter!

So what IS Dark Matter anyway? Simple. All stars are made of billions and billions of tons of gravity-

compressed coal and as they burn they shed unbelievably copious amounts of coal ash which is blown hither and thither by the pressure of starlight.

Eventually the ever-growing volume of Dark Matter will blot out all starlight, and even the moonlight, so that we will find it very easy to fall asleep in the resulting perfect darkness. Sadly however, long before this happens our Sun will use up its stockpile of coal and blink out, becoming cold and dark, thus ending all life on Earth more or less instantly. Current estimates give us another ten years or so.

**Mr. M.C., of Chute-aux-Outardes, Quebec, asks:
DID NERO REALLY FIDDLE WHILE ROME
BURNED?**

MR. GUESS-IT-ALL: Of course not! The fiddle hadn't been invented yet. Everyone knows that!

But what few people realize is that, in addition to the lyre and the water organ, Nero played Sicilian bagpipes on occasion. (In fact the Romans are believed to have introduced bagpipes to the Picts in Scotland, long before the Scots themselves arrived.) Suetonius or Tacitus or one of that fast crowd mention this peculiarity of Nero in their writings, so it is an historically attested fact.

What kind of music did Nero play? A recently discovered bit of papyrus, found in an ancient trash heap in Egypt, lists the titles of a number of tunes composed by Nero himself! Most are for the bass lyre, but no less than four were written for bagpipes and for the singers accompanying Nero as he played. Alas, the lyrics were part of the remainder of the manuscript, lost to time and the desert sands, but the surviving titles are certainly suggestive of both topic and tune.

They are: 'Bonny Prince Germanicus', 'The March of the Claudian Men', 'Speed Bonny Trireme', and, most popular in the day, 'My Catamite lies over the Ocean'.

**Mrs. L.B. of Little Smoky, Alberta, asks:
WHO FIRST MEASURED THE SPEED OF LIGHT?**

MR. GUESS-IT-ALL: The Danish Astronomer Ole Roemer in the year in 1676 A.D. His methodology had to do with calculating the difference in time between eclipses of Jovian moons when they actually occurred in comparison to when they were observed by astronomers on Earth, taking into account the varying distances between the Earth and Jupiter due to orbital mechanics and whether or not it was overcast in Paris that night. Or something. Anyway, he came within 25% of the correct figure, not a bad result for one of the earliest known government research grants.

What is not generally realized is that he was also the first to calculate the speed of dark. At first he utilized sunsets in his experimentation, but became frustrated over the variable nature of this phenomenon. He then hit upon the idea of descending into a deep cave with a lit candle and observing what happened when he snuffed out the flame. After one thousand tests whose results were identical, he published his famous Rules of Roemer which assured him instant and lasting fame. They are:

- 1) - Where there is light, there is no dark.
- 2) - If you remove the light, everything goes dark.
- 3) - The speed of dark, in the absence of light, is instantaneous.
- 4) - Dark is faster than light, therefore a superior phenomenon.
- 5) - It's damn near fricking impossible to feel your way out of a cave in the absence of light.

For the above rules Ole Roemer continues to be honoured by astronomers and spelunkers everywhere.

**Ms. B.S. of Thief River Falls, Minnesota, asks:
HOW OLD IS THE UNIVERSE?**

MR GUESS-IT-ALL: Astronomers believe about 14.5 billion years, 13.5 billion, or 15 billion, give or take. Whereas certain religions believe the universe came into being about 1400 B.C. Or is it 14,000 B.C.? Mr. Guess-It-All doesn't know. Mr. Guess-It-All doesn't care. Why? Because he knows the truth, and the truth is rather different from what everyone else believes.

In reality, our universe was created when Mr. Guess-It-All was conceived, well nigh 59 years ago. And the universe will wink out of existence whenever Mr. Guess-it-all passes on. So you young'uns better live it up while you can.

**Mr. C.B.Y. of Camooweal, Australia, asks:
WHY ARE POLITICIANS SO PETTY AND MEAN-
SPIRITED?**

MR. GUESS-IT-ALL: Science is completely unable to answer this complex and disturbing question. In part because it's a very difficult conundrum to resolve, but mainly because governments, for some mysterious reason known only to themselves, consistently reject all applications for government grants to research the issue.

Mr. Guess-It-All maintains several competing and conflicting theories but is unable to decide whether politicians are minor demons sent to plague us, or simply parasites from another planet, or something else utterly unimaginable beyond even his ken.

Some historians have dared suggest that a number of now defunct civilizations, perhaps all of them, perished overnight when the truth emerged and the resulting crisis of faith drove citizens into an insane frenzy of denial resulting in the complete destruction of civilization as they knew it.

For this reason modern philosophers believe we are better off not knowing the answer to your question.

Mrs. G.B.N. of Grunthal, Manitoba, asks:
GIVEN THE LATEST HEADLINES I HAVE BECOME TOTALLY DISILLUSIONED WITH THE HUMAN RACE. ARE WE WORTHLESS?

MR. GUESS-IT-ALL: Absolutely not! We are highly prized by all sentient species throughout the universe. Both individually and collectively we shall always be popular, greatly admired, much sought after, and very expensive to purchase. It seems we are considered quite the delicacy.

Mr. C.G. of Yellow Tavern, Virginia, asks:
WHY DID PRESIDENT OBAMA CANCEL THE CONSTELLATION LUNAR MISSION PROGRAM?

MR. GUESS-IT-ALL: Not because of cost. He cancelled the program because of something secret CIA lunar orbiters – looking for the missing secret CIA landers – discovered while studying the lunar surface.

Turns out it is fortunate the Apollo astronauts landed and carried out their excursions during the long lunar day.

Had they been present during the long lunar night, they would have discovered that billions of craters – ranging in size from micro-craters to vast pits hundreds of miles across – are in fact temporarily sealed entrances to burrows containing the vacuum-breathers which inhabit the Moon. At nightfall the craters pop open and the surface swarms with life actively seeking mates and food. As sunrise approaches they retreat into their lairs, sealing the entrances behind them.

Lunar creatures come in all shapes and sizes and can loosely be divided into herbivores, omnivores, and carnivores just like the natural order of things on Earth. Herbivores feed on cosmic rays caught in the regolith, the omnivores feed on same as well as on the smaller herbivores, and the carnivores eat any and every vore they can find.

When one considers the huge size of certain lunar craters, one can readily appreciate the extraordinary bulk of the largest predators. This is why establishing a lunar colony is a VERY bad idea!

Now you know why the Obama administration is unmoved by China's declared intention to establish a Lunar base in the not too distant future. Once night falls, the base builders are doomed.

Of course, the countless craters found on other moons and many planets in the Solar system mean we can't go there either. It seems mankind is fated NOT to explore the Solar System.

And the few craters known to exist on earth? Apparently the creatures within are dormant, possibly in hibernation. The important thing is to remember the U.S. Government says not to worry. All is under control. You have Obama's word on this.

Mrs. R.Y. of Melvin, Texas, asks:
IS IT TRUE COLUMBUS DISCOVERED AMERICA?

MR. GUESS-IT-ALL: The Americas were originally discovered by Asians crossing the Bearing Sea in prehistoric times. But if you are talking about who came first in the modern period, and if by America you mean what is now called the United States of America, the answer is no, Columbus did NOT discover America. He discovered the Caribbean and South America. Canada was discovered by the Vikings. And the United States of America was discovered by the ancient Egyptians.

We know the Egyptians were first because the names of several of their colonies survived the vicissitudes of history. Take for example the town of Memphis in Florida, or Thebes in Illinois. Not to mention eleven towns named Carthage, or seven after Sparta, or five after Rome; all of which prove the Egyptian colonists were joined by numerous other classical civilizations over time.

Sadly, though many of these colonies flourished, they were eventually overrun and destroyed by the local barbarians, i.e. Native Americans. Yet the names of these ancient foundations lingered on in folklore, to be resurrected by the early Spanish and English colonists when they chose the ruined cities as the sites of their new establishments (it being easier to construct new buildings from recycled materials rather than go to the expense of starting from scratch).

Even sadder, all physical evidence of the original colonies has been dismantled and no longer exists, but some of the more spectacular buildings survived long enough, albeit in ruinous condition, to influence the architects of the newly emerged independent USA, as witness the magnificent edifices erected in Washington, such as the Capital, the Lincoln monument, the Washington monument, and so on. Thus it can truthfully be said that the legacy of the ancient founders of the United States of America continues even to this day.

Ms. S.C. of Eckville, Alberta, asks:

RECENTLY SCIENTISTS PROVED DARK ENERGY IS ACCELERATING THE EXPANSION OF THE UNIVERSE. WHAT IS DARK ENERGY AND WHY IS IT DOING THIS?

MR. GUESS-IT-ALL: Dark energy is rogue energy or energy gone bad. It willfully refuses to be utilized for useful purposes. It is pushing against the fabric of the universe because it is trying to get away from us. Dark energy is nasty stuff. We are well rid of it.

Mrs. L.Z. Of Oswaldtwistle, England, asks:
WHY DO BIRDS MOLT?

MR. GUESS-IT-ALL: Birds originally were sleek, elegant creatures with flawless skin. Then, about four thousand years ago, a hitherto insignificant mite evolved into the 'feather mite' which now cruelly infests every living bird, anchored painfully deep in the skin via sharp and pointed quills. No wonder birds are always squawking!

Birds 'molt' because of the reproduction cycle of the 'feather mites'. These horrible parasites always die and drop off after they have mated and laid their eggs on the skin of the hapless avians.

As an aside, 'feather dusters' were invented by desperate chicken herders seeking a means of sweeping the molted birds clear of eggs, not realizing the eggs were too firmly embedded for the feather dusting to do any good. Nature can be so cruel.

Mr. G.B. of Bruce Station, Ontario, asks:

WHY DOES THE IMMENSELY EXPENSIVE LARGE HADRON COLLIDER IN SWITZERLAND KEEP SHUTTING DOWN? IS IT POORLY DESIGNED AND SUBJECT TO BREAKDOWN?

MR. GUESS-IT-ALL: No. Though delicate, it is extremely well built and requires only a modest amount of preventive maintenance.

The primary reason it is idle more often than not is the lack of Hadrons to experiment on. You can't study the collision of Hadrons if you don't have any. And the trouble is, Hadrons are extremely hard to come by.

Granted, Hadrons are plentiful, but only in outer space. As we all know, individual Hadrons are Black Hole eggs, and streams of Hadrons expelled from egg-laying Black Holes are referred to as 'cosmic rays'. Unfortunately for Swiss physicists the ozone layer in the upper atmosphere destroys cosmic rays, and until recently it was impossible to collect them.

Fortunately technology has now advanced to the point where it is easy to harvest Hadrons. One simply deploys enormous swarms of nano-gnats armed with nano-butterfly nets in the extreme upper atmosphere above the ozone layer. However difficulties remain no matter how bountiful the harvest because the nano-gnats are no bigger than your average molecule and the task of flying captured Hadrons back to Switzerland is often spoiled by high winds which tend to disperse them. Nevertheless, given sufficient time, the required mass of Hadrons are collected and the Large Hadron Collider can be put into operation. This happens once a year on average.

Hadrons are then accelerated in the collider through vast clouds of shredded sandpaper. The resulting friction-derived heat warms the Black Hole eggs and causes them to hatch, a process in which the baby Black Hole emerges from its confines courtesy of an infinitely tiny pore in the shell, leaving the egg, or Hadron, completely intact albeit empty. At this point Hadrons must immediately be accelerated to even more fantastic speeds (in hopes of achieving a collision) because, once shed, Hadrons exist for only one millionth of a second before they are ingested by the hungry baby Black Holes.

To date, none of the scientists have been able to shift the acceleration lever fast enough to initiate the acceleration before it is too late. Even more frustrating for their morale, scientists apart from the project predict that, even if successful, the experimental collision of two Hadrons will accomplish nothing worthwhile. The two Hadrons will merely merge into a single Hadron with the mass of two normal Hadrons, becoming what is known as a SUS, or 'Singularly Useless Singularity', which would itself be quickly consumed by the nearest baby Black Hole. All in all many observers have come to believe the entire project is a waste of time and money.

On the other hand, the new proposal to build TWO Large Hadron Colliders and smash THEM together looks far more promising, if somewhat technologically intimidating a prospect. Funds are pending.

Mrs. A.J.S. of Pontoon Beach, Missouri, asks:
WHO INVENTED THE AUTOMOBILE?

MR. GUESS-IT-ALL: Otto Frick of Mobile, Alabama, round about 1864. It was a remarkably advanced vehicle, featuring four wheel drive, four speed transmission, and even a primitive GPS system. That he is not today considered a genius has to do with the fact he was under the impression he was designing and building a military submarine. When he drove it off the end of a dock to attack a Union warship blockading the harbour of Confederate Mobile, both he and his invention sank without a trace. To this day Southerners are so mortified by the whole incident that they refuse to search for whatever remains of Otto Frick and his folly.

However, the disaster was witnessed by a certain Mr. Hunley, who by coincidence had recently invented a rather impractical horseless carriage. On seeing Mr. Frick plunge into Mobile Bay, it suddenly occurred to Hunley that his own invention, a fifty-nine foot long wheel-less hermetically sealed vehicle powered by a hand-cranked propeller, while absolutely useless as a land transport (as numerous experiments had proven beyond doubt), might conceivably function as a submarine.

Only a week later, the C.S.A.S. Hunley (as the horseless carriage was now christened) successfully sank the Union warship Housatonic off the coast of South Carolina, only to sink with all hands before it could return to base. Tragic.

Very recently the Hunley was recovered and is now undergoing restoration. Many consider it an absolute outrage that its conservators refuse to acknowledge it was purpose built as a horseless carriage, claiming instead that it was meant to be a submarine from the very outset of its design. This is a gross distortion of history.

On the other hand, it is a very happy fact that certain manufacturers, seeking a modern public image with which to enter the new century, in 1901 chose to rename their product (the horseless carriage) after the late, lamented Otto Frick of Mobile, Alabama, calling it 'the automobile'. A fitting tribute.

Ms. A.E. of Oldmeldrum, Scotland asks:
IS IT TRUE THE ORANGE DWARF STAR GLIESE 710 IS INTENT ON DESTROYING THE EARTH?

MR. GUESS-IT-ALL: Not exactly. All that has happened is that Professor Vadim Bobylev of the Pulkovo observatory in St. Petersburg, Russia, has determined that the star in question, currently some 63 light years away, is moving toward us at 14 kilometres per second and will zoom by at a distance of 9.5 light years about 1.5 million years from now.

Unfortunately this means Gliese 710 will be passing through the Oort cloud, the belt of frozen comets orbiting the sun far beyond the furthest planet, and the resulting gravitation perturbations of its passage will knock millions of comets out of orbit and send them hurtling toward the sun, many crossing our orbit with the consequent risk of the Earth being struck by, not just one, but perhaps hundreds or even thousands of comets. Envision multiple, multiple Tunguska events (if you know what I mean).

Fortunately, long before this happens global warming will transform our atmosphere into one as dense and hot as that of Venus. Comets won't stand a chance of

surviving entry long enough to influence surface conditions. And no doubt our descendants will have evolved by then to flourish in said conditions (hot enough to melt metal, crushing pressure, sulfuric acid rain, etc.) and not even notice what is happening in the upper atmosphere. So you needn't worry. The orange dwarf star Gliese 710 will have zero effect on the fate of the Human Race. I guarantee it.

Mr. B.X. of Squa Pan, Maine, asks:
DO PLANTS FEEL? THINK? COMMUNICATE?

MR. GUESS-IT-ALL: Unfortunately the answer to all three questions is yes. These psychotic bastards, depending on species, are always fantasizing about getting pollinated, or murdering the innocent creatures (ants, birds, squirrels, etc.) which dwell on them, or spreading their seeds far and wide in order to dominate the Earth. Some individual trees are so sick and twisted they deliberately stop sucking in ground water with their roots so that they dry up, spontaneously combust, and start horrific forest fires. Other trees deliberately collapse on to buildings and cars in order to crush the humans within. Imagine the depraved nature of a mind capable of initiating such evil action!

Not to mention Venus Flytraps, Skunk Cabbage, Poison Ivy and innumerable other nasty plants exhibiting a truly depraved and malignant life style, except to say that their thoughts are dark and morbid beyond your capacity to conceive.

The truth is that plants are the most aggressive, paranoid, murderous, disgusting creatures on the planet, and it is a fortunate miracle that humanity lacks the senses to monitor their chemical conversations as we might well go mad listening in.

Equally fortunate it is that Mr. Guess-It-All survived his brief foray into the realm of telepathic communication with the sordid kingdom of plants. The machinery and instruments involved, even their very blueprints, have been carefully and meticulously destroyed. Mankind will never be able to repeat his mistake. The Human Race will remain sane.

By the way, Mr. Guess-It-All recommends you be careful when gardening. Very careful. Especially around Rutabagas.

MR. GUESS-IT-ALL SAYS: If you enjoyed reading the results of my ongoing research, please feel free to send letters of comment with suggestions, impressions, opinions and questions to my Spin Doctor so that they may be incorporated in the next issue.

Send your missives to < rgraeme@shaw.ca >