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About The Perplex City Sentinel

The Perplex City Sentinel is acknowledged as the newspaper of record of the city. Its award-winning investigative journalism and incisive features make it not only the finest newspaper in the city but also its best-selling daily paper.

The Sentinel was founded in 89AC by the legendary property developer and industrialist Redward Innes. A colourful personality, legend has it that Innes set up the newspaper (then called the Perplex City Sentinel and Working Man's Friend) simply in order to settle a grudge against a business rival, whose Perplex City Vanguard was then the leading paper in the city. Innes ran the paper at a loss for the first 10 years of production, mainly owing to the large-scale puzzle contests he personally bankrolled and successfully put the Vanguard out of business. It was during this period that the Sentinel ran its infamous "Girls of the Academy" series, in a further attempt to boost sales. In 107 the Vanguard and the Sentinel merged, although the Vanguard name was swiftly dropped from the masthead.

After Innes' death in 115, The Sentinel experienced a period of declining sales, and was eventually purchased by the Heathcote Group (which also includes Heathcote Assurance and Heathcote Regional Development Corp) in 137. Heathcote's then director, Ram Zadorin, brought in maverick editor Emmi Hartlin under whose steady hand the paper regained its former prominence, this time on the basis of fine reporting and a dedication to intelligent information, rather than contests and prizes.

Hartlin, who edited the paper from 138 until her retirement in 156, built the tradition of accuracy and detached opinion which endures to this day.

After the short and rather lacklustre editorship of Sabine Wells, whose major contribution to the Sentinel is generally acknowledged to have been her appointment of five different fishing correspondents in a single year, the management board appointed a rather more lively editor: Carl Bauer. Bauer was, of course, fortunate to become editor during the great political scandals of 167, but it cannot be denied that the Sentinel developed its investigative journalism greatly during this period. The Sentinel's investigative work in 174, which led to the resignation of the leader of the City Council and seven deputies, is now the stuff of legend.

The Sentinel has had three previous editors in the current century: Theo Tao whose modernisation of the production process, though painful at the time, secured the paper's future, Veronica Ruiz, famed for her coolness under pressure, who focused the paper more on foreign affairs than had been the case in the past and Armand Levi, who made the leap from journalism to politics in 262, and is now a representative on the City Council.

The Perplex City Sentinel is owned by the Heathcote Group, a subsidiary of CJM Holdings.

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If you are interested in submitting news to the Sentinel, please email news@perplexcitysentinel.com.

The View from Earth column is currently accepting submissions from its Earth readership. Topics that may be covered vary; in general, we give higher consideration to pieces that provide an Earth-centric point of view on the culture and current events in Perplex City, though we will consider other topics, particularly if they are well-written. Articles should be roughly 600 words long. We are more likely to accept articles that are longer than those that are short of that mark.

Please submit completed articles for consideration to news@perplexcitysentinel.com with 'View from Earth' in the subject line. Articles should be submitted as plaintext attachments or should be included in the body of your email. Include the pen name you wish

to use, your Perplexcity.com username, and a photograph of yourself for our artists to work from.

It is preferred if your article is included in the body of your email, rather than as an attachment. View from Earth columnists will receive ten points on the Perplexcity.com leaderboard.

For all other purposes, link to the Sentinel with your key and a customer support representative will help to direct your call.

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Cube Stolen in Deadly Raid

By IONA RODIE

The Receda Cube was stolen from the Academy museum last night in a raid which left one security guard dead. Police chief Eoin Morgan described the theft, which took place during the Annual Academy Ball as “highly organised and technologically sophisticated.” Fran Mendling, 42, was killed with a neuro-suppressant device, making it impossible to pinpoint the time of death.

Academy spokesperson Valerian Reynolds revealed that security cameras and sensors were offline throughout the Ball. She confirmed the thieves reprogrammed portions of the Academy’s security systems, disabling three different forms of security without tripping warning alarms. Academy security personnel discovered the theft at 2am when security guard Mendling failed to check in for her shift change. Police as yet have no suspects and are still questioning ball attendees.

Perplex City Council leader Camryn Scott confirmed today that a police task force will work with Academy experts to find the culprits. She said: “The murderers of Fran Mendling will pay for their crimes. Those who perpetrated this heinous act should know that we will find them, and that we will bring them to justice.”

Sente Kiteway, Master of the Academy, said in a statement today: “As is well-known, the Cube is a unique object, with certain unusual properties. We have full confidence that, using our knowledge of its composition, we will be able to trace it without difficulty, wherever it may be. The Cube is not only an object of great

significance to the city but also a technological wonder in its own right. We are committed to ensuring its safe return.” He was not available for further comment.

Possible motives for the theft remain unclear. A ransom demand is seen as one likely development, as the Cube, whose value is almost incalculable, could not be sold on the open market. John Ha, owner of the Ha Gallery on the Mobius Strip, conjectured that the Cube may have been stolen “to order” for a wealthy collector.

Academy insiders told reporters today that security has been notoriously lax on the night of the winter ball, the high point of the Academy’s social calendar. One high-ranking Academy official who preferred not to be named, remarked: “Security’s a joke on ball night. The Academy focuses all its security on the ball, to make sure no one gatecrashes their exclusive party.” In previous years, the annual ball has been the occasion of various student pranks including the “sofas in the stairwell” incident.

The Receda Cube is an archaeological artifact of unknown origin. It has unusual scientific properties, and has been extensively investigated by the Academy over recent years. Several religious and mystical groups around Perplex City hold the Cube as an object of reverence. It is housed in the Academy museum and has been on public display since 228. The last serious attempt at theft was in late April of 235.

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Receda Cube Recovery Plan Unveiled

By IONA RODIE

Academy Master Sente Kiteway's plans for retrieving the Receda Cube were finally unveiled today. Speaking at a press conference, spokesperson Valerian Reynolds confirmed that Kiteway is releasing a card-based puzzle game on Earth, not unlike some of our own PCAG games, with a point system for prestige and ranking. Some of these cards have now been released to 333 individuals on Earth as a limited-edition preview.

"The objective of this game is threefold," said Reynolds. "First, we need to attract attention to our situation, to better our odds of locating the Cube. Second, we have to inform the people of Earth about ourselves and our culture. Third, we hope that this game will encourage the people of Earth to take a playful approach to the problem, leading to more creative thinking."

Letters from the people of Earth to the Sentinel have betrayed confusion; some Cube-seekers appear now to believe that the Cube is merely a "reward" to be awarded to the searcher who accrues the most points. "Even Sente's most vocal opponents don't seriously believe he knows where it is now, and is somehow concealing it," agreed City Council Leader Camryn Scott. "It's simply unthinkable."

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It remains to be seen, however, whether Sente's players will be able to locate the Cube based on the information released in these

cards and in the increasing number of Perplex City web sites available on Earth. "Why does Sente believe the people on Earth can solve a mystery that has eluded our own police? However much they find out about us from this game, why should we think they'll be able to use that information to find the Cube?" asked City Councilor Kyra Anghanda.

Reynolds was bullish in the face of criticism regarding the shroud of secrecy that the Academy has thrown over the project. "The fact remains that the thief or thieves are still at large in our city," she said. "We do not know to what lengths they may go to subvert our aims; we had to keep our plan secret here in the city until we were ready to reveal it to the people of Earth, and we make no apology for having done so. ... We have had to overcome significant technological barriers, and we have many yet to come," she added.

Reynolds admitted that, even if the Cube should be located, the means to transport it back to Perplex City is not available. "We will rest easier simply knowing it is in a safe place on Earth," she said.

The Receda Cube was stolen from the Academy Museum over a year ago, and subsequently traced to Earth. Master Kiteway has been under significant political and public pressure both to retrieve the Cube, and to release details surrounding his plan to do so.

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Centrifuge Buys KSI

By AMBER MAI-WAN

Security heavyweight Centrifuge Inc. has announced a buyout of its high-end competitor, Key Surety Inc., for PCL2.3 billion in cash and stock. KeySurety does not have a significant market share, but it does have a strong reputation for innovation and reliability in an increasingly important marketplace.

Centrifuge CEO Halima Bourne said, “The technologies Key Surety brings to Centrifuge will help us strengthen both our own market share, and the position of our customers.” Bourne pointed out that Key Surety had been significantly weakened by a decades-long court battle over interoperability standards, and it had desperately needed an infusion of fresh capital to stay solvent. “It came down to this: they really needed our money, and we really needed their R&D team,” Bourne said.

Under the terms of the agreement, Key Surety will remain as an independent but wholly-owned subsidiary of Centrifuge for one year. After that transition period, senior management from both companies will go to the table to find the best way to integrate. No significant job cuts are expected until close to that anniversary

mark.

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Business analyst Thomas Kurima of Dodgson Finance Corp. said the move comes as no surprise. “Centrifuge’s stock has been in a steady decline since the Cube incident last year,” he said. “To recover, they simply had to do something like this.”

But Jane Spelger of consumer advocacy group SafeHouse suggested the plan may be a serious problem for the public. “Most of the terrific advances in security tech we’ve seen in the last five or eight years, have all come because these two companies [are] in tooth-and-claw competition with each other. Now that there is no more competition, the field is likely to become stagnant. ... In this business, stagnant means vulnerable to attack.”

Centrifuge’s stock price has declined nearly 23% in the past year, in some part due to the debacle at the Academy. The Cube was stolen last January, and it is common knowledge that Centrifuge has a number of high-profile contracts for campus security, though of course the details are confidential. The internal Academy investigation is still ongoing, but has not publicly assigned any fault to Centrifuge in the matter.

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Crispy Heaven Closed

By NATASHA VALLIERE

Twenty-three Crispy Heaven locations have been shut down after City inspectors claim to have found serious health and safety violations at a central food preparation plant. Food safety inspector Charles Nebbick stated that the violations included “improper lack of refrigeration for meat products, willful tampering with product expiry dates, and blatant disregard for contaminated conditions.”

Shares for Crispy Heaven dropped nearly seven percent on the news, to PCL153.37. A spokesman for the fast-food chain, Gwyneth St. Paul, promised that the company would begin an immediate investigation. “We take the health of our customers very seriously here at Crispy Heaven,” she said. “It is unclear what has happened here, but we will not rest until we have ensured that all of our products meet our stringent internal safety standards.”

Julio Franklin of prominent law firm Gates, Franklin suggested that citizens who have eaten at Crispy Heaven in recent days be very alert to their health. “If someone [ate at Crispy Heaven and] got sick as a result, that person should be entitled to just compensation under

the law. ... It would only be fair for the company to pay the price for poor food handling.”

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St. Paul pointed out that there are so far no known cases of a customer becoming ill from eating contaminated Crispy Heaven foods. “We are confident that the problem was caught and resolved before any harm could come to the public,” she said. “If we do learn of an injured party, we are confident we could resolve the problem without resorting to ... time-consuming and expensive litigation.”

Before the announcement, Crispy Heaven had been on the rise on the PCX. Fourth-quarter sales were up 32% over same-period last year, due largely to the introduction of the Crispy Crunchers product line, and the high-profile “Take a Bite of Heaven” ad campaign.

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PCAG Ejects Nuru

By CORWIN JONES

Long-time sportsman Jackson Nuru has been ejected from the preliminary round of the City Council Classic, said Classic officials. “We found inconclusive results for Nuru’s drug tests. He is being removed from participation on suspicion of use of cognitive enhancers,” said Paula Ching, Director of Substance Compliance for the PCAG. “We will be conducting second-stage testing on the samples we have in order to more clearly establish what kind of situation we’re looking at.”

Nuru was unavailable for comment, but his publicist did assure the Sentinel: “These allegations are completely false, and we trust that Nuru will be restored to his place in the competition upon appeal.” A hearing on the affair is scheduled for March 28.

Nuru, 38, is only the latest in a string of third-tier players who have been ejected over drug charges. Gina Laskey, 35, was recently disqualified after taking fourth place in the Bitter River Invitational. Germaine Roe, 23, and Viktor Helm, 47, were both ejected from this year’s Games before play even began, upon testing positive for cognitive enhancement markers.

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“Sport is all about natural skill,” said John Kwon, retired five-time winner of the Classic, and one of this year’s panel of judges. “It breaks my heart to see players resort to dangerous cocktails of unproven drugs, just to get a tiny leg up on the next fellow.”

Nuru has been a professional sportsman for fifteen years. Although he has never outright won any major game, he did place fifth in the Conundrum category of the Perplex City Academy Games three years ago. This is commonly regarded as the highest accolade of his career.

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Kiteway Unfit for Office

Editorial/Opinion



Sente Kiteway should be removed from the his post as Master of the Academy immediately. Although his popular standing remains high, the fact is that a valuable artifact, the Receda Cube, was stolen from under Sente's nose last year, and thus far no visible moves toward recovery have taken place. It is high time for this man to be called to account for his lack of action.

Sente has assured the public that some grand plan is just coming into motion, but after nearly a year of this posture, his credibility is wearing thin. Let's recap what we know: The Cube was stolen on ball night, when everybody knows security is weak; Sente at first assured us that the Cube would be simple to track, and after mere weeks changed his tune, telling us that the Cube had been "transported to Earth" -- of course he can't tell us how it got there -- where it can neither be seen nor recovered, and that he was designing a plan to enlist the aid of Earth's native people.

Well, after a year, don't you think that this plan should have come to fruition? For all that we know, it was representatives of this

Earth that stole the Cube in the first place. Why should we trust them? Why does Sente refuse to comment to the public regarding his plan, despite requesting significant funding from the City Council? And why, above all, has this plan taken so long to put together? We've been waiting patiently, Sente, but now our patience is at an end!

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On the other hand, isn't it terribly convenient that the Cube has been "found" in some place that only Academy researchers can vouch even exists, much less currently communicate with? Perhaps this year-long "planning phase" has merely been a stalling tactic, and Sente and his staff are scrambling to design a cover-up.

As the Cube's absence grows longer, the possibility that it is permanently gone looms larger and larger. We have lost an important link to our ancestors, and we are all the poorer for it. What happens if it is never recovered, thanks to Sente's dreadful management? Will children still build with blocks in the future? Will the Cubists survive into another generation?

Even the holidays weren't the same this year, with even orthodox Cubists celebrating only a subdued holy week. Retail sales were merely somber, reflecting the mood of a city with little reason to celebrate.

Sente is wasting our time, our money, and our precious cultural past. Sente's failure has by now touched every aspect of civic life, and it is clearly high time that he get kicked to the curb, where he belongs.

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City Opens Northside

By GARIMA KING



Camryn Scott, Leader of the City Council, announced at a press conference today that the Northside Nature Preserve has been approved for sale to real estate developers. The move comes after a lengthy negotiation between developers, the Office of the Council, and nature conservation groups.

“We believe that opening this area to growth will strengthen the city’s economy, and all of our residents will see the benefits in just a few years,” Scott said in a prepared statement. She went on to say: “This proves yet again that the people of our great city can work together to value and protect our natural resources and our own future at the same time.”

The sale was approved by a close vote on the council, 5-4, with Scott herself casting the deciding vote. An anonymous source within the City Hall said that although the sale itself has been approved, construction can only begin under very strict conditions to limit damage to the area’s native wildlife. The official suggested that under these restrictions, the area can only serve as a bedroom community for the high-priced northern parts of the city.

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Even so, support for the move from the real estate community has been enormous. “It’s going to be a real bidding war,” said Lorelei Park, CEO of Park Realty Corp., a subsidiary of Mobius Development Corp. “There’s been nothing on this scale available for easily seven years now.” She suggested that housing in the Northside Preserve will help to ease demand for housing in the north parts of the city, after a 36-month streak of record-breaking growth.

Sayed Ghobi, 24, a data analyst who works near Northside, expressed relief that the development will move forward. “For a fellow like me, just starting out, there’s no way to make enough cash to afford to live here,” he said. “It’s either a tedious commute every day... [or else I] take a tiny room and barely afford to eat.”

A study conducted by the Office of the Council last year supported his words. It said that the typical 18-to-28-year-old in the city is paying 60% of salary toward housing, a rate far above the 30% most frequently recommended by lenders.

“We’ve been sacrificing the financial future of our youth for the sake of some pretty trees and flowers,” said councilor Roy Yolen. “It’s about time we came to our senses.”

Councilor Ruth Sawyer had previously argued against the move, decrying it as “a short-sighted attempt to increase city revenues after a catastrophically poor holiday buying season.” After Scott’s announcement today, she could not be reached for comment.

The land is currently owned entirely by the city itself, and all monies from the sale will go into the city’s general fund.

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Corolla Jurist Under Misconduct Suspicion

By JEREMY CLARIDGE



Michael Corolla

An unidentified jurist serving for the Michael Corolla murder trial may have compromised the proceedings, sources say. An anonymous informant said that one of the jurists has been under suspicion for some weeks now, and a cautionary audit has revealed suspicious financial transactions.

“I have not heard of these events myself. ... If these allegations are true, then this would be a very grave miscarriage of justice,” said Johann Jacobson, senior legal representative on behalf of Corolla. “If there is evidence the jury has been influenced by outside factors, I would certainly hope the judge would declare a mistrial, and we could start again with a clean slate.”

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Xavier Marron, representing the prosecutor,

said: “These accusations are ridiculous. I’m sure this is a lot of hubbub over nothing.” Marron refused to speculate over any consequences, should the unnamed jurist prove to be guilty of accepting bribes.

No criminal cases have been declared a mistrial in the city since 175 AC, when jurist Latrell Korn was found guilty of reporting secret deliberations to the press for monetary consideration during the Ghona Hesh trial. Korn served ninety days in prison and paid a PCL1,500 fine.

The Corolla trial has been heavily covered by the media, due in large part to the popularity of athlete and murder victim Karen Chondelle. Chondelle and Corolla had shared a flashy whirlwind romance and engagement before she was found dead early last year, on the night before their wedding. Corolla has pleaded innocent.

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Djinn Jr. Reported

By AMBER MAI-WAN

Security experts at Key Surety Inc. have reported finding several keys around the city infected with a worm tentatively dubbed “Son of Djinn.” So far, the infection has been contained, and none of the keys are still in use now.

Security analyst Sarai Khurasani of Key Surety said, “These infections are [probably] a copy-cat effort, and not the initial author. The code is not targeted, and we have no evidence that personal data has been accessed.” She went on to explain that the vulnerability the original Djinn exploited has since been significantly reduced. “We do not expect a repeat of the Djinn phenomenon,” she said. “Risk is really minimal right now.”

Florist Gerard Medeiros, 39, was the owner of one of the infected keys. “I’m just glad I didn’t lose anything crucial,” he said. “Lucky for me the worm didn’t reach my data.”

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Analysts at Key Surety plan to examine the malicious code closely to be sure it does not have any unexpected new components, Khurasani said. She

suggested that all key users should deactivate their keys and bring them in to an authorized technician for service at the first sign of unusual behavior, including any significant loss of function. Worried users can access a simple Key Surety scan at no cost.

The original Djinn worm swept through the Academy last year. Several instances were also found in other large organizations around the city. It caused data and productivity losses estimated at up to PCL750m.

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PCBC Exec to Retire

By ALWHIN COPI

PCBC CEO Jonathan Smart plans to step down later this year, according to a press statement released by the bank late on Friday. According to the official statement: “Jon has had a fantastic tenure and accomplished a lot over the past three decades, but he’s looking forward to passing the reins.”

With the announcement, rumours immediately began to flourish regarding who will be named Smart’s successor. Business analyst Betsy Chenholm of Hinton Bros. suggested that the Board may look to one of the larger brokerage houses in the city for a replacement, rather than promoting internally. “Jamie Pendergast [of Kamps, Barton, Kamps] is certainly is in the running,” she said. “Also Giordana Moore [Senior Managing Director] of the PCX.”

Moore herself, however, disagreed. “The sharp Leck is on Trip Scott,” she said. “He’s been Jon’s right hand for the past six years, and it’s obvious he’s being groomed for the position.” Scott is currently serving as COO at PCBC, and is the seniormost executive at the company who does not have a spot on the Board of Directors.

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Smart did not hold a press conference, but he did issue his own press statement, which read in part: “Although I have loved my time at the top of the PCBC, I feel I have earned a few quiet years with my wife and my library. I have full confidence in [the bank’s] management team.”

Smart has been CEO at PCBC since 258, and has served as a member of the board since 243. Under his guidance, the bank has made significant strides in improving customer satisfaction and advocating open business processes. Although Smart plans to step down as CEO, the company’s press statement indicated he will continue to serve on the Board of Directors.

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Academy Plans Unravel

By IONA RODIE

Anonymous sources reported to the Sentinel that Sente Kiteway's Cube retrieval effort is being delayed further weeks, coinciding with a growing firestorm of accusations and public outrage. "There isn't really much Sente can do," the source said. "In his defence, his team has already suffered a number of devastating setbacks, including equipment failures [and] other unforeseeable problems."

Academy Master Kiteway's long-delayed project has been the subject of increasing scrutiny over the past weeks, as pressure from the City Council grows. "We've given Sente a free hand," said Council member Kyra Anghanda. "He's gotten his budget requests and he's remained relatively unsupervised all this time. ... Where are our results?"

Council Leader Camryn Scott urged patience. "Sente has been dealing with complex matters of internal security," she said. "[In addition,] establishing bidirectional communication with Earth and finding the best avenue for eliciting help from its people is an ambitious and technically difficult task even under ideal circumstances."

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Public confidence in the recovery process is at an all-time low, hitting just 43%, down from a high of 72% in April of last year. Fully 60% of citizens polled support opening the Academy secret plan to the public and introducing oversight from the Office of the Council.

"I will not support public hearings," Scott said. "We knew this was a long-term plan when we committed to it, and we must have faith that we made the right choice." She added that Kiteway would not keep information from the public without just cause. "Remember, we still have not caught the thief or thieves responsible. A large part of Sente's energies are focused on ensuring that the Cube remains safe now and into the future, even if it is not immediately in our hands."

Academy Security Director Henrik Tanner agreed that fortifying campus security has been a top priority over the last year, but would not provide specific comment.

Kiteway did not respond to requests for comment.

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Crime Lower in East Old Town

By PIETRO SALK

Petty crime in the East Old Town district has dropped nearly 15% from last year, according to a report released by the Office of the Council today. Police chief Eoin Morgan heralded the news, saying, “All of the hard work [the police department] has put into cleaning up that district is really paying off.”

The report cites incidents of minor theft as down 18.5%, disturbances of the peace down 9.3%, and minor vandalism such as graffiti down a significant 22.9%. Morgan attributes the change to the organization of civic watch groups and stepped-up patrols during the higher-risk hours, from 11:45 PM to 5:45 AM.

Violent crime, already low, took another 4.4% dip over last year. The improvements were seen primarily in the Caldera Street area, though problems still persist in other parts of the Old Town.

Candace Liebnez, owner of nightspot Complications and vice-president of the Old Town Business Initiative, applauded Morgan’s efforts. “Business is booming because people feel safe to stay out at night,” she said. “It wasn’t that long ago [that] a girl wouldn’t let herself have a

good time [because she was] afraid she might not get home safely. It’s been terrific.”

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Consumer safety groups urged some caution even in the face of these news, however. Mona Rowan of Citizens Fighting Crime said, “Really, this shouldn’t be news to anybody. The East Old Town area has been gentrifying all on its own.” She added: “There is still a need for people to be cautious, in the Old Town and in all areas of the city.”

Rowan suggested people continue taking sensible personal safety measures, such as staying in well-lit areas, informing friends and relatives before venturing out alone at night, and making sure your key is close to hand at all times.

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Kiteway's Role Revisited

Editorial/Opinion

A short time ago, the Sentinel ran an editorial calling on Sente Kiteway to step down as Master of the Academy and admit defeat in the face of his failure to recover the Receda Cube, stolen early last year. Since that time, we have been inundated with support for Sente and his enigmatic Cube retrieval program, and so have chosen to revisit this issue.

First, we must regretfully step back from any implication that the people of Earth are a fabrication on the part of the Academy. It is indubitably true that we have received a wealth of information from Earth over the last several years, and it would be ridiculous to suggest that there are Academics toiling away at creating entire libraries of literature and popular culture in order to satiate our own city's thirst for new and interesting concepts. We never intended our comments to be taken in that fashion.

Indeed, part of the Academy plan involves widening a net of two-way communication with the people of Earth, and in response to our editorial, Master Kiteway himself sent on to us a veritable flood of communication with Earth residents who both offered us aid and

defended the Academy's efforts.

As our readers may already be aware, a version of our own humble Sentinel is being republished on Earth, as part of the Academy's testing of its communications systems. We warmly welcome our Earthly readers, and encourage their input on how to establish a fair and intelligent two-way dialogue between our civilisations.

However, although our editorial may have been a little free on detail, for which we are sorry, we must stand fast to the broad brush of our opinion. The facts remain that the Cube has been missing for over a year; despite numerous arrests and thorough questioning, no culprit has ever been identified; and all of the information offered to us through Academy sources on the investigation and on the retrieval plan have been woefully scant.

Indeed, all we have been offered are hollow reassurances of action and promises for more information at a deadline that gets steadily pushed further and further back. We hate to assume Sente is doing a bad job, but after holding out on faith alone for long months, we have no evidence to support the idea that he is doing a good job. What else are we to do?

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RFD Back to Studio

By *ARLING WILSON*

Perplex City's top-selling band, Roll for Damage, is back in the studio recording a follow-up to their critically acclaimed album *Random Encounter*. Sources close to the band say that the new sound they are producing has a much darker, almost nihilistic feeling, especially as compared to the primal joie de vivre of their recent work.

Celebrity-watcher Phil Benoit suggested the somber, more sophisticated sound is the result of several factors internal to the band. "Alejo [Jackson] just had a high-profile breakup, and by all accounts he is devastated," Benoit explained. "Plus Echo [West] and KT [Keenan Thoreau] are rumored to be fighting a pretty serious battle with substance abuse," he added. "All of these things will inevitably come out in their music."

The band's publicist, Shane Cobalt, confirmed the band is recording. "Our guys are fine, working hard, putting out some sharp tracks," he said. "Alejo admits he is still deeply disappointed in the end of his relationship with Joya, but he and all of the band-members wish that the public could respect their privacy on such personal matters now and into the

future."

Cobalt also said the new album's working title is *Take Initiative*. If the band's typical recording cycle holds true, the album could be available under the Hesh Records label as soon as this autumn.

Benoit, though, was not so certain. "Their friends and studio employees say their new material is positively brilliant, but nobody is sure they can keep it together long enough to see anything hit the streets."

Cheri Lindemann, president of the RFD Fan Club, expressed great enthusiasm for the project. "The band are such great friends, and making music is how they pull themselves through rough times," she said. "[The fans are] all looking forward to what [the band] has to say to us." Lindemann was confident sales of the album would yet again easily exceed the one million mark in its first week of sales.

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Recon Eight Released from Police Custody

By PIETRO SALK

Eight members of a breakaway Cubist cult have been released from police custody today after an extensive investigation turned up no evidence of wrongdoing. The members of the religion, which calls itself the Reconstructionists, have gone to a countryside compound “for meditation and purification after their long ordeal,” Reconstructionist spokesmen say.

The Recon Eight were apprehended in October of last year after an anonymous police informant fingered them as responsible for the theft of the Receda Cube. At the time, Police Lieutenant Camden Ho indicated that the cult had been under observation for some time, and that their religious scriptures include a prophecy that the Receda Cube would someday “be delivered from the faithless hands of the Academics.”

“We thought we had clear evidence that the Reconstructionists had long planned to steal the Cube,” said Police chief Eoin Morgan today. “As it turns out, despite any presence of motive, there is no material proof that they followed through.”

Morgan refused to answer in detail questions regarding the current state of the investigation, citing the need for security, but he did claim that the case is “by no means” at a dead end.

The Eight, whose names have never been released by the police, are allegedly very senior members of the cult. Although the Reconstructionists have spoken to the press on their behalf, the eight themselves have not released a statement on their arrest nor subsequent release.

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Defence Budget Debated

By JOHN CORMORAN

The City Council engaged in a vigorous debate today over future funding of defence operations and infrastructure. The current budget is PCL40 billion, with defence authorities urging increased spending, while fiscal conservatives lobby to cut the budget significantly. It is not yet clear how voting on the council will go.

Commander Isaac Sui spoke before the public hearing. “We live in peaceful times, but vigilance is nonetheless wise,” he said. Sui backed away from any suggestion that Perplex City is subject to any foreign hostilities, but urged the Council to maintain the city’s current excellent security forces. His proposal includes an additional PCL3 billion a year, primarily for research.

In response, Councilor Aashiyana Skye slapped the table and declared, “This budget is an anachronism and a disgrace when there are so many other more pressing calls on our city’s finances.” Skye advocates cutting defence spending 6% every year over the next five years.

Councilor Nathan Earlywine interjected that this budget provides more than municipal defence. “The esteemed Commander Sui here is being too modest. We all know his jurisdiction includes fighting organized crime, illegal drugs, [and other] threats to our metropolitan character and security. ... I’m sure he isn’t playing war games in his office all day with shiny toy soldiers.”

Leader Camryn Scott remained uncharacteristically nonpartisan on the issue, shelving the discussion after allowing only limited debate. “This is an important topic, and we should all take some time to consider the issue,” before the next formal session, she said. One of her top staffers said, on condition of anonymity, that she is re-evaluating some of her positions in time to adjust with the tide of public interest before next year’s election campaign. Historically, Scott has supported requests for defence funding.

Analysts say that the other members of the Council could easily sway either direction, as well, with everyone putting their fingers to the wind to decipher what will bolster re-election chances.

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Crispy Heaven Reopens

By NATASHA VALLIERE

Twenty-three Crispy Heaven locations reopened today after being shut down three weeks ago for health violations. Crispy Heaven's Gwyneth St. Paul read a prepared statement, saying, "We have co-operated with government inspectors to our utmost to ensure the safety and health of all of our customers," and "We will work diligently to be sure nothing of this nature ever happens again."

City food safety inspector Charles Nebbick, who headed the investigation into Crispy Heaven's practices, said that he believed that all former problems had been resolved. "One of the conditions in allowing the chain to reopen is that they submit to surprise inspections of their local restaurants, and their food-processing facilities both here and in the surrounding area," said Nebbick. "They have agreed to shut down again instantly if any fresh problems arise."

Crispy Heaven shares rose on the PCX at the news, up to PCL108.85. The stock has taken a battering in the three weeks the locations have been closed, with even the sites remaining open suffering from negligible sales volume.

Business analyst Derek Underhill of Dodgson Finance Corp. said, "The company's next step is to regain public confidence. Nobody wants to think they're eating a three-week-old piece of chicken." Underhill suggested that the company's diligent work complying with the requirements of inspectors, including suggesting the surprise inspections as a condition for reopening, should go a long way toward repairing any public relations damage it has suffered.

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Crispy Heaven has its work cut out for it, though. Law firm Gates, Franklin has filed a law suit on behalf of seventeen Crispy Heaven customers who claim to have become ill after consuming Crispy Heaven foods. No court date for the case has been set.

The twenty-three Crispy Heaven locations had been closed in late March after inspectors found evidence of poor food handling procedures, including wilful tampering with expiry dates. No criminal charges have been filed.

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Economy Up After Vernal Equinox

By GARIMA KING

A report issued today by the Office of the Council indicates that the economy gained modest improvements last month, spurred in large part by new construction starts. Councilor Ruth Sawyer applauded the news, saying, “This was an absolutely crucial period, after such miserable sales over the holidays. Retail is up, building is up. ... People are ready to spend again.”

Economists both in the Office of the Council and in the private sector had warned that the economy was showing signs of tumbling into recession over the last year, but that today’s report signals a good start at recovery. “This is exactly the kind of boost the city needed,” agreed PCBC economist Troy Belarosa. “All last year, we saw stagnant levels across a wide spectrum of sectors. This is a terrific sign.”

Business analyst Shannon Tuileries of the Perplex City Exchange disagreed, however. “Sure, we’re showing a small improvement over last year,” she said. “But you have to remember, last year was an exceptionally bad year. If you compare to March of 266, we haven’t

even hit [that level] again.”

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Belarosa admitted the economy does have a long way to go. “Nobody is saying we’re out of the woods yet,” he said. “On the other hand, I’m sure even Ms. Tuileries would agree that up is better than back down.”

The report shows that the bulk of the improvement came on Equinox construction starts. Sawyer quipped, “A lucky day for the buildings in the city, not just a lucky day for building in the city!” Consumer spending also grew 7.3% over March of last year, primarily in entertainment. The smallest increases were in electronics, with durable goods actually performing worse than last year.

The PCX was up nearly 4% on the news, the first significant increase since Centrifuge’s announcement that it would purchase Key Surety Inc. a few weeks ago.

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Earthworks Store Opens on Dalia Way

By FOSTER LIDDELL

Earthworks, a new Earth-themed retail store offering high-quality replicas of Earthly merchandise, opened this weekend on Dalia Way. Grand opening crowds were heavy, reflecting the citizenry's high interest in the alternate world.

Merchandise at the megastore includes a wide array of Earth-style goods, such as clothing, traditional bound paper books, toys, and even furniture and other housewares. The store did brisk opening-day business, with lines to enter the store stretching clear down the block.

Lyssa Ling, 27, an Academy reality researcher, stood in line clutching an armload of Earth-style accessories. "I've been in love with Earth style for ages," she laughed. "In my line of work, I practically live over there. This is going to be much easier than having a cobbler work out a shoe pattern for me!"

"This is so exciting," concurred student Oskar Hudson, 19. "I'm picking up a bound special edition of Alice in Wonderland. I've wanted one since I was

a little boy."

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Owner Mitchell Alba, formerly associated with such successful enterprises as the Brain Bender chain of puzzlebars, greeted the waiting customers at the door in person, quizzing them on what they were looking for and directing them to the right department.

Alba was evasive in answering questions about how he selected which items to replicate and stock. "There's a lot of merchandise available on Earth," he said, "but I think almost anything would go over pretty well. ... Earth is so hot right now, the only trick will be keeping it all fresh."

Earthworks is not the first store selling replica Earth goods, of course, but it is the first one to rely on nothing else. Alba has privately funded the store, and has no plans to initiate a public offering.

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Secret Kiteway Plans Leaked to Sentinel

By CHO KAPLAN

The Sentinel has received documents indicating that Sente Kiteway's highly secret plan to retrieve the stolen Receda Cube from Earth may soon come to fruition. The documents, leaked by an anonymous source within the Academy, discuss a plan for Kiteway to address some form of communication to a large audience of Earth inhabitants on Friday, April 22, at 3:00pm in "the London time district."

These documents reveal, among other things, that the Academy, working in conjunction with an Earth-based company, has received tens of thousands of volunteers to aid in the hunt for the Cube. The nature of this volunteer effort is not clear, and no specific information about how the effort will proceed was included in the leaked documents.

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Kiteway and his staff have come under increasing public pressure in recent weeks to show some sort of progress on the Cube retrieval program, for which the Academy received PCL14.8 million in extra funds last summer. Kiteway has never revealed any specific information about the plan, the use for those funds, or the status of his investigation, citing security concerns.

In recent weeks, City Council member Kyra Anghanda has been agitating for an oversight investigation. When informed of the leaked information, she said, "At least we can be reasonably sure that Sente has been doing something with all of this time and money. I won't be satisfied, though, until we know exactly what."

Council Leader Camryn Scott could not be reached for comment. Kiteway's office released a short statement reading, in part, "We would have hoped that public media could have the sensitivity to show some discretion regarding matters where the public interest is at stake. ... As usual, we feel that the nature of our investigation requires absolute secrecy, and are unable to comment specifically on the progress of our project."

The Receda Cube was stolen in mid-January of last year, and subsequently traced to Earth.



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Tokei Receives Permit

By GARIMA KING

Artist Randal Tokei has received approval on a permit from the Office of the Council for his public performance piece in Azad Park later this summer. The new work is entitled “Construction and Destruction.” The performance is expected to begin in early July and continue through mid-August of this year.

According to the permit, over the course of the performance, Tokei will build an elaborate palace of specially treated paper cubes. During the midpoint of the performance, he will burn the palace under the watchful guard of the Perplex City Fire Department. In the final weeks of the show, he will perform a silent vigil as the ash marks left by the blaze are erased by weather.

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In an exclusive interview, the typically very private Tokei told us that the theft of the Receda Cube last year opened his eyes to a new way of looking at the world. “The people of Earth are now cubed, where they never were before, whereas we are now cubeless,” he said. “Doesn’t that just blow you away? I think it’s crucial to our time to come to terms

with what all of this could mean.”

John Ha, owner of the Mobius Strip Ha Gallery, said that art critics are very excited about the go-ahead from the Office of the Council. “This is the first major attempt from a well-known artist to take on the events of last year,” Ha said. “It’s very daring for Tokei to come forward with this statement that so clearly shows a feeling of helplessness and futility.” The Ha Gallery has on offer several of Tokei’s earlier and more permanent works.

Tokei’s career includes winning last year’s prestigious Academy Founder’s Prize for Art for creating an installation in Creation Park entitled “Suncatcher.” The piece includes crystals placed in a brightly painted carbon-fiber clockwork. Over the course of a year, the moving sculpture captures the light of the sun to reflect a pattern that takes exactly one year to repeat. Tokei has publicly said the sculpture contains an enigma, but nobody has yet come forward with a solution.

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Dev in Northside Supported, Poll Finds

By KATE BREWSTER

A Sentinel-conducted poll has found that supporters of the City Council plan to develop the Northside Preserve outnumber opponents by a 6% margin. The poll showed 46% for the development, 40% against, with an unusually high 14% undecided. The poll also found that opponents of the plan are more passionate, with 72% describing themselves as feeling “strongly” or “very strongly” about the measure, compared to only 36% of supporters.

“This just shows that these protesters are in the minority ... a very, very loud minority,” said City Councilor Roy Yolen, who has actively worked for some time to support the measure. “I’m sure in fifteen years’ time, we will all agree this was the right thing to do.”

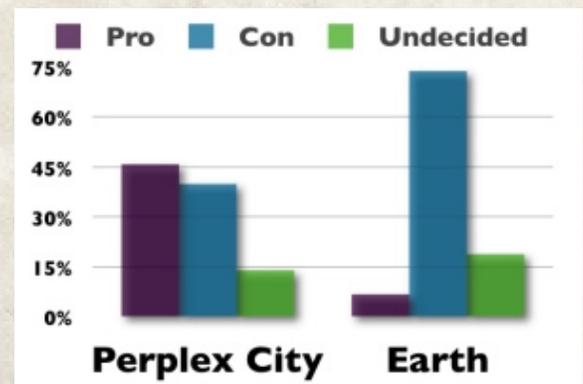
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Citizens on both sides of the issue wrote in following last week’s Polygon Park protest to air their views. Kyle Anderson, one of the organisers of the Northside Protection League, wrote in: “My sympathies go out to Professor Sedgewick and her crowd of like-minded activists. I, too, believe the city does not

need to expand northward. The economy is cyclic, and as surely as it has been going down these last several months, so is it equally sure to rise again in months to come.”

Lorelei Park, CEO of Mobius Development Corp. subsidiary Park Realty Corp., argued for the side of development. “This is not primarily an economic or an environmental issue,” she said. “The city’s population has grown significantly since the last time any new space was opened, and population density has grown even more. If we want to preserve the green oases we maintain in the heart of the city, it must come by bowing to the gentle pressure of outward development now. Simply ignoring this issue will lead to declines in quality of life and more voracious development in the future.”

Council Leader Camryn Scott summed up the situation in political terms: “Regardless of how popular this move is, it’s the best thing for the city,” she said. Northside Development Poll Results



Continued

Poll Results as of April 19

In an interesting coda, the Sentinel's request for opinions unleashed a flood of articulate and forceful correspondence on the matter, almost universally against the development. Only 7% of Earth inhabitants supported the Northside development, with 19% withholding judgement based on insufficient information. A staggering 74% urged the city to reconsider the plan, asking that we in Perplex City learn from the problems of urban sprawl and environmental damage suffered on Earth.

Rob Palmer of Earth cited Hyde Park and Central Park in some Earth cities as an example to follow. "The parks are also used for leisure activities of all kinds for city residents to relax and wind down from the stresses of life. Therefore I feel that any area of nature within a city should continue to be preserved, as much for our sanity as for our health."

John Macek, also of Earth, agreed: "I think one of the largest problems we have over here is the destruction and development of our few remaining wilderness areas. ... I'd hate to see the overdevelopment of any natural place, and I believe that you can find another solution without expanding into the Northside Preserve."

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Hikers Discover More Newguard Ruins

By JEREMY CLARIDGE

A group of hikers have found new ruins in the area southeast of the Newguard Seven Bridges, presumably uncovered by the Mazy River's spring overflow. "We of course haven't had time to really examine the site," said Academy archaeologist Shonda Noonan. "This does suggest, though, that the Newguard settlement spanned more area than we had previously thought. It will be very exciting to take a good look at this and see how many of our assumptions must be changed."

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Hiker Troy Kasote, 47, said that his family was returning on their annual jaunt down the South Span Trail when his 11-year-old daughter, Harmony, wandered further off the trail than usual in search of different kinds of insects to capture for a school project. "When I went to collect her ... we noticed some stonework at right angles," said Kasote, who works for the City Revenue Service. "We of course carefully recorded the location and sent information off to the Academy at once."

Noonan had high praise for Kasote's actions. "It's just magnificent that the whole family left everything untouched and contacted us right away," she said. "We do plan to send a team to examine the spot later this week."

The ruins are reportedly located in a marshy area along the trail, which was submerged much of last week after heavy spring rainfall.

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Joya Pregnant?

By JULIUS LOMAN



Speculation is growing that singer Joya may be pregnant, after she was widely pictured vomiting in trendy eatery Elise's Place last week. The singer has also abruptly cancelled a string of intimate club performances scheduled over the next four weeks, allegedly in preparation for her June wedding to producer Horace Shockley.

"If I were in her situation, I would still feel I owed it to my fans to follow through on my commitments," said rival diva Satine Noir. "It's really disrespectful to the people who have brought her to where she is [to] just drop them like that." Noir has made candid and strongly phrased

statements about Joya and her treatment of both her fans and their shared ex-boyfriend Alejo Jackson on numerous occasions.

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This follows on the heels of this weekend's reported comments by Joya's stylist, Skylar Poplin. Witnesses say the stylist regaled a rapt audience at the Artist's Quarter nightclub Doldrums with how he had to let out the seams in some of her hallmark garments, and was seriously contemplating a change to looser, more flowing garb.

Sentinel medical advisor Dr. Stuart Ivanovitch agreed that weight gain and public vomiting could be a sign of early pregnancy. "It's easy to jump to conclusions," said Ivanovitch. "Really, though, she could just be suffering from nerves. We all know she has had a very difficult few months."

Joya's personal physician, Dr. Ian Copeland, denied requests for interviews, stating simply, "Joya's health is not a matter for public attention at this time."

Joya's publicist said she had not heard about the incident and could not comment.

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Earth Column to Debut in Sentinel

Opinion/Editorial

We at the Sentinel have been surprised and impressed in recent weeks with the spirited, engaging flood of email that has come to us from Earth via the Academy. Earth readers of our External Edition, we have found, are an educated, carefully-considered group. They have been large in spirit in pledging their aid to the return of the Receda Cube, and thoughtful in addressing the problems confronting us here at home. This became particularly evident in the aftermath of the Northside Preserve protest several days ago.

Though we in Perplex City have long studied the people of Earth, it appears that we, too, now bear scrutiny. Seeing ourselves through the eyes of another culture and its people has proven to be a fascinating experience for the staff of the Sentinel, and it is one we would like to share with our entire readership.

We would, therefore, like to debut a new column, "The View from Earth." This is a place for our Earth-dwelling readership to make their voices heard on our pages. The topics to be covered may range far afield, from the status of the hunt for the Receda Cube, to the problems our worlds have in common, perhaps even including

some pointed social commentary. We deeply believe that both the people of Perplex City and of Earth will benefit.

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Submission Guidelines

We will select one column a week to run on our front page. Submissions should be submitted to news@perplexcitysentinel.com, with "View from Earth" in the subject line. We humbly suggest that columns be comparable in length to our regular news articles. Please submit only completed pieces, as we are unable to consider individual queries.

We regret that we have no way to compensate columnists from Earth aside from some small personal glory, but hope to be able to offer some other form of reward in the future.

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Five of Cups Owner Found Dead

By PIETRO SALK

Police say Five of Cups owner Bernardo Holyoke, 53, was found dead in his bar late yesterday morning, in what police officials suspect was a bungled robbery. The crime is an unexpected setback for the police, who have recently been making headway into reducing crime in the long-problematic Old Town district.

Police Detective Helena Frye says they were called into the bar by an employee at around 10:00am. The employee, who wished not to be identified, said that he was entering the bar to begin preparing for lunchtime business and found Holyoke's body in the back office. "There was evidence of a bit of a struggle, and it is clear that the intruder or intruders ransacked the establishment looking for ... cash or possibly drugs."

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Frye declined to give detailed specifics regarding Holyoke's means of death, but did say it was "definitely a murder, no doubt at all." She added that the bar's till had been completely emptied, but that it was difficult to tell if anything else had

been taken.

"At this point, we are trying to locate and question everyone who was at the bar late last night," Frye said. "We suspect that the murderer was a patron who simply did not leave, because the establishment's alarm system appears to have never been armed [last night]."

Anyone who believes they may have information relating to the crime is urged to contact the Perplex City Police Department.

Holyoke has been the owner of the Five of Cups for twelve years. Neighboring business owner Linda Bonham described him as a "real stand-up guy, you always knew he had your back." Holyoke is survived by his estranged wife, Jessica Holyoke, 57. The pair had no children.

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Wheel Season to Begin

By ANTONY CLAPHAM

The professional Wheel season begins tonight with the Nomads playing the Daemons at the much-combatted Triple Wheel Stadium. PWA Commissioner Nonna Gordon announced that despite the law suit filed last year, the season will begin as scheduled.

“We think we have an exciting year ahead of us, and I’m sure we can yet come to a reasonable accommodation that works for us and for our neighborhood,” Gordon said at a press conference. “We understand how the Quadrant side [inhabitants] may be a little put out with us, but we really are working hard on their behalf.”

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To that end, Gordon presented a plan to implement noise-cancellation devices around the perimeter of the stadium. Under the projected schedule, the devices will be deployed mid-season, probably toward early July.

Quadrant Street Association President Orville Price said that these measures are too little, too late. “For years, we have been requesting that the stadium deploy a plan such as this one,” he said. “We all

know the PWA has deep pockets, and they didn’t do this before because they didn’t have to. It’s only under the threat of a lawsuit that they’re finally coming to the table to talk it over. ... It’s just a disgusting attitude toward the neighborhood.”

Meanwhile, wheel fans just want the game to go on. A long line of enthusiasts waited out the chilly, drizzling April day for opening-day tickets. Groups of Nomads and Daemons fans joked side-by-side about the shortcoming of their respective teams. (The Daemons are favored this year.)

The lawsuit is a class action on behalf of the residents of the Quadrant Street district, and seeks damages for the stadium’s repeated disregard for citywide noise ordinances and encouragement of “rowdy behavior.”

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Board of Education Assesses Reforms

By ROLAND GERBERA

Officials at the Board of Education have conducted a preliminary assessment of the Skills for Learning program, the contentious initiative the Board passed last year. “Despite some resistance from teachers’ groups, it appears in these early results that children in the program are doing significantly better in unaided tests for reading and arithmetic,” said Board Member Charles Fisher. “We are still cautious in this trial period, but our analysis shows that we are seeing some successes.”

Fisher declined to give specific numbers, stating that the full data would be available when the report was issued, expected later this month.

The Teachers’ Association of Perplex City issues a statement calling the guidelines “ridiculously strict,” and suggesting that any gains in performance over more traditional methods of teaching are fleeting. “You need to track these children over the course of their entire school careers to get a true picture of how this will play out,” said TAPC representative Hannah Ikeda. “The fact is, kids need to learn to work with these tools to have successful careers over the long term.”

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Teacher Lee Wilson agreed. “I consider it a big part of my job as a teacher to pay attention to the needs of my students. It’s an absolute

outrage to tie my hands and tell me what I can and can’t do in response to those needs.”

Fisher replied to these criticisms: “That’s preposterous. ... If a child truly needs a particular tool to learn, his or her parents can request a waiver under our framework to provide anything necessary. It’s ludicrous to measure the program by how well it works for exceptional cases, rather than for the wide majority of typical students.” The Board of Education plans to deploy the program in another 200 classrooms this fall.

Yvette Lawson of the parents’ group Education Counts declined to conduct a full interview. “Our parents are bitterly divided over this issue, and it would be inappropriate for us to comment one way or the other,” she said.

The Skills for Learning program, which is currently deployed in a limited number of classrooms on a pilot basis, includes curricula and strict guidelines limiting use of high-tech tools in the classroom for children under the age of eight. Opponents say the program is unrealistic in a technological world, but its advocates suggest that children who learn to read, write, and think critically in their early years without the aid of computing devices perform better on a broad range of metrics.

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Kiteway Cheapens Honour of Leitmarks

Opinion/Editorial



The Sentinel's investigative reporters have recently discovered that an Earth-dwelling rabble of ad hoc Cube-hunters may be issued with a Leitmark. This is yet another slap in the face to Perplex City, our shining metropolis by the sea; yet again, Sente Kiteway is treading on our history and traditions with careless shoes.

For those who are perhaps a little rusty on their modern history, Leitmarks are the discreet, formal awards for achievement in the Perplex City Academy Games. Leitmarks are awarded, not solely to winners, but to competitors who have most stretched their personal boundaries over the course of a competition. A Leitmark worn on your sleeve is a quiet, humble way of showing pride in yourself and in your city.

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In ancient times, Leitmarks were awarded for

cunning tactics during the heat of combat, battle-winning strategy, or on rare occasions even for personal valour. Certain secret societies and religious groups have also produced their own Leitmarks, the better to recognise one another discreetly in a public forum.

A Leitmark is something to be proud of. Something to place in a silk-lined box for your grandchildren to treasure. Something to include in your life's list of grand accomplishments. It is certainly not something to award to foreigners who have proved neither their worth nor their intellects. Let this not be taken for xenophobia; the people of Perplex City would be glad to honour true achievement, but achievement has been notably lacking in Sente's Cube-retrieval efforts.

It is high time for the City Council to call Sente to account for his actions. The loss of the Receda Cube and his black-box "retrieval" project have already shown a stunning lack of regard for City cultural history and resources. Now, he even cheapens the noble Leitmark, turning it into a mere trinket for a body of dilettante puzzle-solvers. This rampage of devaluing that which we hold priceless simply must not be allowed to continue.

If Camryn Scott and her cronies on the City Council will not pull Sente sharply to heel, then we will all know exactly where they stand; and never forget, dear readers, election season is coming up soon.

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Alejo Arrested

By JULIUS LOMAN

Alejo Jackson, the frontman for critically acclaimed band Roll for Damage, was arrested last night for assault, public drunkenness, and disturbing the peace. Police records say that he entered the restaurant Conundra at approximately 12:30am.

According to the police account, the singer took a place at the bar, and shortly thereafter confronted Ian Petreson, 32, resulting in a fist fight. Both men were arrested and subsequently treated for minor injuries.

Eyewitness accounts claim that Jackson appeared already intoxicated when he arrived on the scene. "Alejo was very belligerent," said Georgi Nichols, 23, who was dining at Conundra at the time. "It was like he was simply spoiling for a fight. ... I've never seen anything like it, he's always seemed so pleasant in interviews."

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A woman at the scene, who refused to give her name, claimed that Petreson was making loud comments speculating on whether Jackson's former girlfriend, the popular vocalist Joya, might be pregnant, and who the father might be if she were.

"Obviously Alejo took offence," she said. "It's a very personal subject, and it looked to me like [Petreson] was trying to tip his wheel."

The restaurant suffered some property damage, but the management does not plan to close it during repairs. Police said that both Jackson and Petreson will almost certainly be released on bail sometime today.

Jackson's publicist, Shane Cobalt, declined to comment on the incident, on the grounds that he was not yet familiar with the details of the situation.

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Historic Notes Surface

By GARIMA KING

A rare notebook belonging to a minor scholar in the early days of the Academy has surfaced. Hyacinth Daniels, 84, says she came across the notebook while sorting through her mother's belongings. The notebook had been locked in a linen chest for easily 50 years, she said.

“My mother had always said that our family were Academy scholars, clear back to the beginning,” said Daniels. “I suppose now I’ve got my hands on an iota of proof!”

Duncan Racine, the Director of Academy History at the Academy Museum, said that Daniels was in preliminary talks regarding terms by which the Museum could study the notebook. “This is just a terrific find,” said Academy Fellow Sanjean Adamek, himself a descendant of a legendary Academician. “We have only a very limited collection from these early days of the Academy in the Academy Library. We are hoping that the owner will allow us to study the notebook. ... It could afford us an excellent glimpse into the daily workings of a student’s life back then.”

Even if the Academy does obtain the notebook for study, however, don’t expect to see it at the Museum nor the Library yourself anytime soon. “This notebook would likely not be on display,” warned Racine. “What with its age, this is a very, very fragile document.”

The scholar to whom the notebook belonged, Ellen Poor, studied at the Academy for several years circa 250BC. City records of the day are unclear on timing, but it is evident she left her studies to open a tea house sometime around 246BC.

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Zeller Declares Corolla Mistrial

By JEREMY CLARIDGE

Judge Alice Zeller has declared the widely-reported Michael Corolla murder trial a mistrial, in a stunning twist after the case had already gone to the jury for deliberations. “The evidence that [jury member] David Kona has been accepting financial remuneration in exchange for trying to sway the case toward a conviction has been overwhelming,” Zeller wrote in a formal statement.

The case had been halted in early April to investigate allegations of jury misconduct; Kona, 45, was only today named. This is the first time since 175 AC that a criminal case in the city has been declared a mistrial. In that case, jurist Latrell Korn was convicted for reporting jury deliberations to the press for personal profit in the historic Ghona Hesh trial. Korn served ninety days in prison and paid a PCL1,500 fine. If Kona is convicted of misconduct, he could serve up to one year in prison and pay up to PCL30,000 in fines.

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Police Chief Eoin Morgan spoke out on the case today, saying that Kona has been taken into custody, and that a

full investigation has been launched to determine how many people are involved. “We will not allow anybody to stand in the way of the fair and unbiased execution of a trial,” Morgan said. “Interference with the justice system is intolerable. We’re going to do everything in our power to get to the bottom of this.”

Johann Jacobson, who represented Corolla in the trial, applauded Zeller’s decision. “We see this as a vindication of our case. If there is a conspiracy to see Michael convicted, clearly this is support for the idea that he has been the subject of an elaborate conspiracy. ... Michael has maintained his innocence from the start, and we hope now the press and public will step back and allow him to grieve in peace.”

The proceedings are not yet over, however. Zeller indicated that a fresh trial of the case will likely be placed on the docket as early as August, though it is possible that a grand jury will be reconvened to examine the case in light of the attempt to influence the case’s outcome. Corolla has been on trial for the murder of his fiancée, celebrity Karen Chondelle, who was found dead early last year on the night before their wedding.

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Study Shows Games Year Aids Careers

By ALWHIN COPI

A study by the Perplex City Academy shows that students who take a games year make 8% more salary at their first jobs, and a stunning 22% more after ten years, even after adjusting for any variance in academic achievement. PCAG Chairman Robert Zhi-hui found the results unsurprising. “We find that the best and brightest really are the students most dedicated to the games,” he said. “Employers recognise that drive toward innovation and reward it.”

Employment lawyer Yasmin Olivette pointed to a darker perspective. “This is the starkest portrait of employment bias I’ve seen in years,” she said. “It’s like a little club. All of the boys and girls who took a games year are unfairly considered over their peers who choose to go directly to the workplace.”

Sienna Greenlawn, 24, currently a puzzle-setter in the PCAG organisation, indicated that Olivette’s logic was a big part of her decision to participate in the games year. “It just seems like the sharp thing to do,” she said. “Was I worried that foregoing the games might hurt

my chances of getting a great job after school? Yes, absolutely.”

Zhi-hui vehemently disagreed with Olivette’s stance. “Students in the games year get a broad exposure to skills and significant responsibility. ... These graduate students do some really hard work as puzzle-setters, judges, events and project manager,” he said. “These bright young men and women build confidence beyond their years. It’s really no wonder at all that this early chance to prove yourself keeps bearing rewards throughout your career.”

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The study focused on the income and position of nearly a thousand Academy graduates with otherwise similar academic achievements. The study also found that students who take the games year are more likely to gravitate toward high-stress and high-visibility roles. Those who remain within the Academy are more likely to become adjunct or full Fellows.

The so-called games year is an option for Academy students to spend a year seconded to the largely student-run PCAG organisation.

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View from Earth: Celebrity Culture

By HANNAH SAKS



Reading the External Edition of the Perplex City Sentinel over the past few weeks has made me realise that our societies are strikingly similar in many ways, some of which are not entirely favourable. Articles on singers like Joya and her possible pregnancy draw remarkable parallels with stories that fill many newspapers here on Earth.

Our world seems increasingly more concerned with the lives and loves of so-called celebrities than the more important issues that affect us all. Although it does not seem that the citizens of Perplex City are quite so concerned with which celebrity is dating whom, how long is it before these articles start to become more commonplace in your newspapers?

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In our society we are plagued with scandalous headlines announcing break-ups of marriages and pop groups and

our youth look at women who have married rich sportsmen as role models. As newspapers and TV become more and more obsessed with these celebrities, so the common public become more and more obsessed with becoming a celebrity themselves. Thus, the creation of reality television has allowed almost anyone to turn into a celebrity for five minutes, until the rest of the public becomes bored with them and look for a new idol.

Of course, just like in Perplex City, there are many citizens of Earth who are intelligent and not so caught up in this obsession, but I write this article as a warning to you, the readers of the Sentinel -- although it is OK to admire singers, etc., you may want to think about whether or not it's really so important to know about every aspect of their lives because you may find that one day your news outlets no longer cover the issues that really matter, just the latest news on the state of a celebrity's marriage.

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Holyoke Housed Stolen Academy Equipment

By PIETRO SALK

Police officials have found high-tech equipment apparently stolen from the Academy on the premises of the Five of Cups bar in the Old Town. The items were discovered during the investigation of the recent murder of the bar's owner, Bernardo Holyoke.

Police Detective Helen Frye said that the goods were found in Holyoke's flat, located upstairs from the bar. "They were concealed behind a false back in a closet and screened from scanning equipment by an EM baffler," she said. "Someone was very serious about keeping these items secret." She said that interviews with the bar's former employees and frequent patrons has already begun.

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Frye indicated that the equipment is primarily very expensive high-tech gear, some still with their Academy seal and identification numbers. Among the items are an array of jury-rigged equipment which she said could be used to jam keys, security systems, or driverless vehicles. "Going by the evidence, I'd say our Mr.

Holyoke was up to a lot of no good," Frye said. "This does open up another whole avenue of investigation for us in the murder, though, so we hope to make more progress on the case soon."

Academy Security Henrik Tanner confirmed that the Academy were aware that the items had been stolen. "We have already been conducting an internal investigation into these breaches of security, and feel we have made significant progress in strengthening our protection against this kind of crime. We will be working closely with the city police department to get to the heart of this," he said in a written statement.

Police are searching for Holyoke's estranged wife, Jessica, whom they wish to question. Anyone who knows her whereabouts is encouraged to contact the police.

Holyoke was found dead in his Old Town bar in late April. No suspects have been arrested.

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Coralhouse Dies at 108

By JEREMY CLARIDGE



Former Academy Senior Fellow Ruth Coralhouse died in her Ascendancy Point flat last night at the age of 108. Coralhouse was the Senior Fellow of the Social Sciences department, where she pioneered early work on Earth anthropology based on some of the earliest comprehensive Earth communications. She retired from that position in 250.

Together with her husband, renowned reality researcher Horatio Flynn, Coralhouse developed the first compelling model of convergent development, now widely called CF Theory. Coralhouse herself described the theory as “The way two arrows shot from different archers can yet strike the same target.” The pair were jointly awarded the Ikonnikov Prize for their work in 234 and again in 239.

“The pair of them really shaped our understanding of Earth and how their societies relate to our own,” said Professor Margaret Wildwood, the current Senior Fellow of the Academy’s Social Sciences Department. “I studied under Professor Coralhouse myself for many years. She was a wonderful, warm person, as well as a tremendous mind. ... Even in her last days, she remained very interested in our latest work. She will be missed by all of us very deeply.”

Academy Master Sente Kiteway released a brief statement reading, “Ruth was a magnificent human being and a pearl beyond value to our community. Without her, I feel the world is poorer by far.”

Coralhouse was the heiress to a considerable fortune left to her by her father, Antony Coralhouse, who had invested heavily in the first large-scale key networks in the city. Flynn passed away fourteen years ago, at age 94. She is survived by a son, October Flynn, and his three children, Julius, Camilla, and Marcus.

Coralhouse made arrangements for her own cremation and a private family-only funeral, to be held on Friday, May 13. Public memorial services will be held on the Academy’s Great Lawn on Saturday, May 14, at 2:30pm.

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Belle Saps Will to Live

By ARLING WILSON

For months, there has been anticipatory buzz surrounding the performance of the classic “Absalom and Tavant” at the Majestic Theatre. Never before has anticipatory buzz been so completely, horrifyingly wrong. It is the most abysmal waste of time and energy that I have ever had the tragic duty to endure, in all my seventeen years with the Sentinel. One actually felt embarrassed on behalf of the cast and crew for bearing witness to this astonishing act of artistic malfeasance. The director should be rounded up and marched sideways off the Diamond Span for actually going through with opening night.

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First we must address the rightfully famous actor Andrew Norman. One expects great things from Mr. Norman, particularly after his dazzling work in “Yonder,” “A Cool Season,” and “The Reflecting Pool.” I would adore to say that he lived up to his prior achievements, or even that he phoned in a mediocre performance as Graham; but either statement would be a flat lie. To say he was derivative of the late, lamented Itza Coronada would be an insult to all of the great performers who have paid homage to her over the years. An original performer might have been forgiven this arrogance. A humble performer might have been forgiven this lack of inspiration. As it was, the performance was a monument to creative incompetence.

The ensemble timing, so critical to this piece, was so wooden that it could have been predicted with a stopwatch. I have seen scenes from this

show performed by grammar school children with more dynamic and reactive timing, and with more passionate delivery.

Perhaps most distressingly, the popular chanteuse Aurora Belle, said to be a fine actress, played the role of Carmela. Ms. Belle seemed far more interested in displaying her costly and obvious personal charms, and not in maintaining a pretense that she can, in fact, act. Ms. Belle indulged in a stupendous number of vacuous pauses, during which one can only hope that she was receiving assistance with her forgotten lines. The alternative, that her brain simply ceased to function during the show from time to time, causes one to simply shudder with horror.

Lighting, set design, costuming, blocking? If one were generous, one could call it trite. If one were honest, one would call it soul-deadening.

The one bright spot during this almost indescribably tedious evening was the generously long intermission, which coupled with a well-stocked wet bar in the lobby was the only feeble ray of light that gave one the will to continue to live until the show was blessedly over.

If you somehow feel you must see this magnificent string of failures with your own eyes, the show is running every Wednesday through Friday at 8pm, with 2pm and 7pm performances on Saturday and Sunday. Hurry, it won't be playing long.

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Iona Interviews... Aiko Entrescore

By IONA RODIE

Aiko Entrescore welcomes me into her cluttered studio with a wave and a smile: “Stay right there,” she says, “I’ll show you how to get through in a moment.” The instructions are certainly necessary - the floor of the studio is littered with pieces of glass and metal, some evidently half-finished sculptures, others possibly simply bits of debris. As I watch, Aiko prowls round an object on a plinth in the centre of the studio - it’s a sphere. Or is it? As Entrescore works, clouds of colour flicker across the surface of the object. For a moment it seems to become a face, then a slowly-blinking eye, then a revolving umbrella. Is it even a sphere at all? At times it seems oval or even rectangular.

This ambiguity is central to Entrescore’s work, as she explains when we finally manage to sit down in a somewhat-less-cluttered part of the studio. “I believe that all things are interconnected, you know, on a deep level. This table, my hand, Ascendancy Point, Captins House, even the Earth - there’s a one-ness to everything. That’s what I’m trying to show with my work, that everything has parts of everything else in it, you know? My work is an attempt to answer the

riddle of everything we see in front of us.”

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Entrescore’s answers to that “riddle” have certainly brought her a great deal of attention. A protegee of the acclaimed sculptor Randal Tokei, she has been widely exhibited across the city. Her kinetic sculptures, with their moving parts, subtly changing forms and even, in some cases, the ability to communicate with keys, have won her praise from many quarters. The Sentinel’s arts correspondent called Entrescore’s most recent major exhibition, last year at the Academy Museum, “moving, powerful and constantly surprising.” It was, of course, that exhibition which won her a certain amount of notoriety. It was on display on the night the Cube itself was stolen.

“Yeah, that was so silly!” Entrescore comments. “My sculptures had electronic components; the idea was that if you walked past them with your key tuned in to an audio channel, you’d think you heard whispering voices. It was cool - spooky, you know?” Those electronic components brought Entrescore under suspicion from police, though, when the Cube went missing. The sculptures were torn to pieces, in the search for components which might have been used to disable the Academy’s security systems, or even to eavesdrop. Was Entrescore

Continued

upset by the damage to her work? “Sure, of course. To see my work ripped apart like that was devastating. And they kept on interviewing me, questioning all the time. But,” she spreads her hands wide, “you move on, you know? You make new work and you leave the old behind.”

And Entrescore has done just that. Not only does she have a new exhibition opening at the Restructure Gallery next month, but she’s also joined the elite team of puzzle scribes working on Academy Master Kiteway’s “Cube retrieval programme”. At my mention of the scribe team, she breaks into a broad smile. “Oh that’s so much fun! I spend so much time working by myself that it’s great to be working in a team - Sente’s really brought together an incredibly diverse group of people, with such a range of skills ... it’s a pleasure to spend time with them. And what a fantastic project to be working on - communicating with a different world!” And how has she taken to the puzzle form? “Well, of course I was trained at the Academy, so puzzles are part of how I think. I’ve loved the freedom we have at the Academy - I think you’ll see the puzzles becoming an even more integral part of my work.”

Certainly from what I saw in her studio, Entrescore’s work hasn’t lost any of its edge. Some of the pieces have a definite resemblance to the Cube which, she says, is deliberate. “The loss of such an important artefact has implications

on all levels of our society. It draws us together, and my work is a response to that.” Several open-framed structures suggest places where missing objects may once have been and loss, too, has become an important theme in her recent work. As Entrescore comments: “the job of the artist is to challenge, to startle, but also to show us what we ourselves are thinking - that is what makes art long-lasting and significant. If it speaks to the emotions, the objects, that connect us all together.” Given the popularity of her work, Entrescore certainly seems to be achieving that aim.

Aiko Entrescore’s new exhibition entitled *All Things* opens at the Restructure Gallery on June 4 and runs for three months.

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View from Earth: Currency Speculation

By DAVID ABIES-ALBA



Having read Sente's recent letter to the local rabble of Cube seekers, offering a prize of PCL2,000,000 for finding the Cube, I have a few observations about the nature of currency exchange which I feel obligated to share.

The notion of 'exchange' is a particularly tricky issue if there is in fact no expedient (or even protracted) way to transfer between Perplex City and Earth. The economics of trading with an entity that is totally physically removed from oneself and all conceivable intermediate trading partners is something that needs careful consideration. The only good or service of any value that it seems feasible to transfer between Perplex City and Earth is information. This brings up the rather complex notion of how information can be objectively valued such that equivalent amounts can be traded. (Perhaps I'll apply to study the economics of an Earth-Perplex City trading relationship at the

Academy ... the idea of this fascinates me.)

A further thought and its implications: Given the issue described above, this calls into question how the Perplex City Leck could ever be reasonably valued against Earth currencies and vice-versa. Again, since the only currently transferable good or service is information, the equivalencies suggested in Sente's letter must have been arrived at upon that basis.

There is the potential for basing an exchange rate on the tentative notion that some means of transferring matter to/from Perplex City will be found at some point. But, such a valuation would be very dependent on progress in scientific studies to achieve such a transfer of matter, and the valuation of the Leck against Earth currencies could be extremely volatile when considering the highs and lows encountered in the progress of research. Presumably, Earth corporations or banks may extend to Perplex City a line of credit based purely on the notion that a means of transfer will eventually be found, and Perplex City will eventually be able to pay back the liability. Alternatively, a very progressive corporation might accept payment in information ... such as Mind Candy.

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This actually is a somewhat ingenious notion that makes the card business make some sense. If Perplex City's only commodity that can be traded with Earth

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is information (specifically puzzles, a good which the Cube-seeking rabble does value), then they provide puzzles to Mind Candy (who in turn extend to Perplex City a certain amount of credit in incurring production costs, etc. for the distribution of the puzzles). Mind Candy then sells the information/puzzles for Earth currency to the Cube-seekers, and splits the proceeds with Perplex City by retaining some portion of the profit for themselves, and using some of it to advance Sente's cause of locating the Cube, which will hopefully lead to the Cube being located ... and then, this most precious piece of information (the location of the Cube) can then be traded back to Perplex City, resulting in a fruitful two-way exchange of information, with some middleman-type profit accruing to Mind Candy, and widespread enjoyment for puzzle solvers occurring along the way.

In any case, whether the valuation of the Leck is based on the relative value of information flowing between Perplex City and Earth, or the speculative notion that at some point matter will move back and forth as well, it's worth remembering that changes in circumstances that impact the information market or the likelihood of a matter-transfer scientific breakthrough could result in tremendous volatility in the exchange rates. For that reason, I suspect that valuing the prize for locating the Cube at PCL2,000,000 (rather than in terms of some quantity of

an Earth currency) is not good practice. While Perplex City might be willing to place a fixed value on information about the location of the Cube, the other factors described above could conceivably change the exchange rate substantially (in either direction ... possibly to the great benefit or detriment of their partners, Mind Candy, who will pay the prize out of funds collected from the sale of puzzle cards, a quantity valued in Earth currency).

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View from Earth: Urban Boundaries

By RON LENZI



Recently, I read the article regarding the development of the Northside Preserve and the subsequent poll stating 74% of Earth inhabitants were against it. As a resident of Earth, it is

my opinion the confinement of “urban sprawl” is merely a lesson in futility; a ‘stay of execution’ for natural areas.

We’re inhabitants of the planet we live on. We use the land. If need arises, I do not see any solution other than to use more land to continue our expansion.

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Populations increase. When they do, those people require places to live, work and shop. If we are not allowed to expand outward, or take up park areas within cities, the only other option I see is to expand upward. This, however, proves far more effort than worth.

On Earth, while we can build structures over a thousand feet tall, the cost and danger of erecting such buildings everywhere is not feasible. Air conditioning, electricity, water, waste removal, and travel through the structure would become a bigger social and financial problem if more of these “live/work” towers were constructed. Far less would be saved erecting these structures than taking over more land for outward expansion.

I am pleased to see a large number of Perplex City citizens agree with the new development. Parks and other open land areas can exist outside of the city, and people can visit them if they are looking for that type of recreation. The comfort and smooth operation of the city must be put first, with preservation of land taking a back seat to progress.

The View from Earth column is currently accepting submissions from its Earth readership. Please submit completed articles for consideration to news@perplexcitysentinel.com. Please include the pen name you wish to use and a photograph of yourself for our artists to work from.

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Coralhouse Bequest Shocks Academy

By JEREMY CLARIDGE

Recently deceased Ruth Coralhouse has left a clause in her will for a PCL45 million bequest jointly to the Academy and the Centre for Reality Research. The grant comes with a specific goal -- the money must be used to develop a method for transporting physical matter between Perplex City and Earth, with the aim that her ashes be transported to Greece and scattered over the Mediterranean Ocean on Earth.

Academy representative Valerian Reynolds expressed dismay over the request. "We do of course appreciate the generosity that has led to this," she said. "But we are unsure how to proceed. The Academy does have a policy of refusing to be guided by conditions attached to gifts of money."

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Coralhouse's grandson and executor of her will, J. Randal Flynn, defended his grandmother's plans. "There's been speculation they're working on this sort of matter transportation already," he said. "They surely must be, in order to return

the Cube to its place in the Museum."

CRR researcher Gordon Caius expressed the same dismay as Reynolds, though for different reasons. "Who knows if this is even safe to do?" he asked. "There's a huge risk from disease and parasites on the biological level, even assuming we could open any sort of portal without some sort of physics-driven catastrophe."

Reynolds suggested that the matter may be put before a private ethics review board at the Academy. "This is some very murky water," she said, "And no sum is enough for us to mar the Academy's sterling reputation for integrity and self-sufficiency."

Coralhouse's will also specified, "Until that happy day when my remains can be sent to those fascinating lands I never could visit in my living days, I would like my ashes to be kept in a replica Grecian urn in a Greek-style temple on the Great Lawn."

Groundbreaking Earthologist Coralhouse passed away last week at the age of 108. She had been Senior Fellow of the Social Sciences department at the Academy until she stepped down in 250.

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New 'The Lab' Announced

By GAVIN CREWEL

The producers of the hit reality show, The Lab, have announced that the new season is to begin on June 24 in a special location north of the city. The exact date and location of the show have been under intense speculation for the past months from fans and media watchers, partly due to the extraordinary events of last season.

While the line-up of contestants has yet to be revealed, sources from the production company Fraction Media indicate that among the usual assortment of scientists, doctors and humanities students is a PCAG finalist. If true, this would be the first time a senior PCAG player has participated in The Lab and is sure to bring in a whole new audience. It is also rumoured that the weekly puzzle challenges will play a greater role in the show this year in response to accusations of dumbing down, and also involve more audience participation.

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Evan Boch, the winner of last year's season, commented, "The producers will surely try and keep tighter control of the show this year -- they definitely don't want any more surprises like the speedboat fiasco, or the cheating scandal. I'm not sure how that'll pan out, but I'm very happy that they're placing greater emphasis on the puzzles." Evan will be covering the new season of The Lab exclusively for the Sentinel.

Now into its eighth season, The Lab has continually evolved, starting from a risky pilot that was condemned by academics and

social commentators alike for appealing to the lowest common denominator, to one of Perplex City's most watched shows.

While The Lab has changed its format through the years, its core concept has remained the same -- twelve researchers are confined in a lab complex for months to conduct research, under constant threat of weekly eviction if they fail at puzzle challenges, or if their research is deemed too poor by guest professors from the University (and recently, the Academy). Tensions often run high in The Lab as the producers make contestants compete for equipment, space and a share of the weekly budget, and the constant pressure to achieve often results in outstanding research and blazing on-screen romances.

In related news, at a recent media conference the producers of The Lab mentioned they were considering their legal options after discovering that Earth 'television' companies had apparently copied their reality show concept.

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Joya Collapses, Rushed to Phuah Hospital

By JULIUS LOMAN

Popular singer Joya was rushed to Phuah Hospital late last night and immediately accepted into inpatient care. Reports indicate that Joya was at a performance of the critically panned “Absalom and Tavent.” During the intermission, she fell into a faint and could not be revived. Her doctor says that she is lucid and in stable condition now, and should be released from the hospital by the end of the week.

“Joya has been pushing herself very hard lately,” said her personal physician, Dr. Ian Copeland. “She was out enjoying an evening of theatre, and simply collapsed. We have her under supervision now, and expect she will be fine, provided she gives herself time to recover.”

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This medical emergency is only adding fuel to the burning speculation that Joya might be pregnant. “Let’s face it, Joya cancelled all of her upcoming shows not long ago, so what does she have to get exhausted over?” said fan club president Naomi Woods. “Of course we all have

suspicions about what’s going on in her personal life, and we hope she knows she has our love and support, no matter what she’s going through right now.”

Hospital staff, speaking under condition of anonymity, have said that Roll for Damage singer Alejo Jackson arrived at the hospital shortly after Joya and was ushered up to her room immediately. “He looks awful,” said one witness. “It’s obvious to everybody here that he’s very worried about her. He hasn’t left her side for a single moment since he’s been here.”

Public reactions to Joya’s collapse have been mixed. Rival singer Satine Noir stated it was an attention-getting ploy to get more press. Theatre reviewer Arling Wilson offered the tongue-in-cheek suggestion that it was all an act to get out of the obligation to see the second half of “Absalom and Tavent.”

Joya’s fiance and producer, Horace Shockley, was reportedly not at the hospital and could not be reached for comment.

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Holyoke's Wife Found

By JEREMY CLARIDGE



The missing wife of slain barkeep Bernardo Holyoke has been located by police living in a Reconstructionist compound, officials say. According to police Detective Helena Frye, Jessica Holyoke has informally changed her name to “Kostka” and sworn a vow to forego all material affairs and live a life of pure spirituality.

“Given the complicated relationship between the government and the Reconstructionists, we’re really at a loss for how to proceed,” Frye admitted today. “We would very much like to question Kostka about any knowledge she might have regarding her late husband’s illegal activities. ... Clearly we can’t compel her to talk to us.”

Frye added that the police ultimately traced Holyoke to the countryside complex by tracing an elaborate funds transfer, through which all of her personal assets were handed over to the

Reconstructionist organisation.

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Police are still hoping that they can find a means to speak with Holyoke regarding her estranged husband Bernardo Holyoke, who was murdered in his Old Town establishment, the Five of Cups, a few weeks ago. Frye indicated that since that time, the police have unravelled a tangled skein of theft, fraud, and high-tech crime, and are hoping that Holyoke may have information that would allow them to catch some big fish in the underworld.

A Reconstructionist spokesman, who refused to identify himself, had this to say: “Kostka is with us and with the Cube now. She has been cleansed of the sins and memories of her prior life, and can be of no more help to the secular and Academic order than could a newborn babe.” He refused to elaborate on his statement.

Police Lieutenant Camden Ho, the department’s expert on the Reconstructionist cult, indicated that he was not surprised at the connection. “In the aftermath of the Cube theft, we’ve found a number of Cube-based religions have their fingers in all sorts of illegal pies.” Eight high-profile Reconstructionist leaders were imprisoned on conspiracy charges. The Recon Eight, as they were popularly known, were kept in jail for several months without bail, but ultimately released after the case against them fell apart.

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Next-Gen Keys Susceptible to Djinn

By AMBER MAI-WAN

A secret report leaked to the Sentinel by a source at Centrifuge indicates that the next-generation key hardware unveiled with great pomp last week is not immune to Djinn-style attacks; in fact, the keys are more susceptible.

“It’s like the Djinn designer knew exactly how our tech would develop,” marveled analyst Cora Llewellyn, of independent technology consulting firm TechNow, after the Sentinel showed her the report. “If this report is accurate, then the virus’ creator was about five steps ahead of the bleeding edge.”

According to the report, the original Djinn, which was never fully reverse-engineered, used a particular vulnerability in modern key hardware, called Magic Lamp, to infiltrate and attack. But previously unknown components of Djinn also include code to attack next-generation keys in which the old Magic Lamp vulnerability has been closed.

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Llewellyn explained: “The designer knew

exactly how the first-wave Djinn worked and how it could be prevented. But the worm appears to have been written with those preventative measures in mind; it makes some very smart guesses about how we’d try to fix it, and what new vulnerabilities this would uncover as development progressed.” The report estimates that, by exploiting this new flaw, this virus can cause the same amount of damage as the first Djinn, but in about a fifth the time frame.

Centrifuge denied that the report was accurate, but indicated that it has delayed the launch of its much-anticipated Key Extension series due to manufacturing hiccups.

The Djinn worm swept through the Academy and some other large city institutions last year, causing data and productivity losses of up to PCL750m.

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‘Earth Artefacts’ Fraudulent

By IONA RODIE

Police have arrested six people on charges of fraudulent commerce. The individuals, who have not yet been identified, allegedly created replica Earth artefacts and sold them in an underworld market as genuine Earth items stolen from the Academy, sometimes for up to a hundred times the cost of materials.

Police detective Julia Albright said that the gang took in an estimated PCL19 million from unsuspecting collectors over the course of a year. “The business of forged Earth artefacts is still booming, of course,” she said. “Hopefully taking out this lot will start to frighten away some of the other sharps in on this game.”

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“It’s terrible to see people so taken advantage of,” agreed Academy spokesman Valerian Reynolds. “On behalf of the entire Academy, let me state clearly and for the record: there is absolutely no means to transport items to or from Earth at this time, and the Academy does not have any genuine Earth artefacts in our possession whatsoever.”

The gang specialised in clothing, bound

paper books, and cheap non-functioning electronics. Albright said that an Old Town warehouse full of the goods was impounded, and will probably be destroyed.

June Hannigan, proprietor of an upscale Earth-replica shop, said that the items were poorly constructed and easy for the trained eye to see through. “If there weren’t such a mania surrounding the Earth and its many cultures right now, nobody would be fooled by these things,” she said. “Right now, people are blinded by the possibility of being able to touch something from such a different world than ours, so their critical thinking faculties are completely disengaged.”

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View from Earth: Dependence on Keys

By BRIAN ENIGMA



There is an inherent danger in relying too heavily on technology in everyday life. Here in The Sentinel's external edition, as well as a handful of other sources, we are painted a picture of a world dependent upon the ubiquitous "Key" and the

various services it provides. I am not implying that technology is bad or evil--I am a gadget freak myself--just that everyone should be cautious before relying too heavily on a single device.

Single multipurpose gadgets similar to your "Keys" are not currently available on Earth. In general, people carry around a wallet for holding money, identification, and magnetic cards allowing access to remotely stored money. Small pieces of notched metal, typically carried on a loop of wire, are also carried around--our version of a "key," used in mechanical locks with designs originating in the 1700's, if you can believe it! Not all locks are mechanical, of course--some use combinations, magnetic cards, radio frequencies, or fingerprints. Often, we carry portable telephones for communication--the majority of which only allow talking and simple text messages. There are also those of us who carry around portable music players and laptop computers.

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At least when carrying around several specialize devices there is not a single point of failure. Surely, this seems archaic and quaint from your point of view. "Everyone carries around that much stuff? Can't they just build everything into their phone and just carry that around?" Recognize that while we do not quite possess the technology for an everything-in-one gadget, our history with such things shows us that they break at inopportune times. Earth has this nicely wrapped up in a saying called Murphy's Law: if anything can go wrong, it will.

Taking Murphy's Law into account, we see in your "Keys" devices that, if accidentally dropped and broken or intentionally scrambled by criminals, prevent you from starting your car, paying for lunch, listening to your favorite song, or even calling a locksmith to give you entry into your own house! Might it be better to instead have separate tools, each with a specialized purpose? Eventually I will lose my wallet because such things happen. Separate devices mean I still have a phone with which I can call a friend to bring money as well as the ability to call various businesses for replacement cards. Situations like this cannot be unique to Earth, can they?

Academic pursuits that are idealistic and lofty are admittedly fun, but you also have to ensure high-tech gadgets born from such research are hardened against the circumstances of everyday life. Great similarities exist between our two worlds and many people here look up to yours as being more advanced, but I have to wonder. Eventually you have to stop searching for secret messages in every little bit of printed text and ensure people's everyday technology is reliable and robust with viable alternatives if things go haywire.

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Hospital Begins Renovation

By LUCAS VOORHIES

Ng General Hospital has officially begun construction on revamping and modernising its infectious pathogen unit. The plan includes enlarging and upgrading vaccine production facilities, creating a separate triage area for potentially contagious patients, and adding a 200-bed quarantine zone. The PCL78-million renovation, which is funded by Council-provided money, is expected to be completed by August.

“This is a great day for the city,” said hospital spokesman Georgi Stanislav. “As medical science has advanced, we’ve become too passive about the possibility of new and emergent illnesses, and let down our guard. This improved unit will help to identify and contain a surprise epidemic before it can spread too far.”

Critics of the plan, such as Carrie Lopez of Citizens for Fiscal Frugality, believe the construction is a waste of money. “Modern science has given us a number of tools for quickly suppressing and eliminating a wide range of bacterial and viral infections. ... This ridiculous construction is just a way for the hospital to build public relations and for the medical industries to line their coffers a

little more.”

City Council member Nathan Earlywine defended the disbursement. “After last year, I don’t think anyone can take our city’s health for granted,” he said. “Complacency in the face of danger is just not the spirit of our great city.”

The hospital’s improvements were planned by the board after a surprise virus swept the city in early 267, leaving hospital facilities overwhelmed. During that epidemic, over 8,000 individuals became sick, and at least 20 died. It was the first time in nearly 20 years that an infectious pathogen caught city health authorities unprepared. “We want to be in a position to avoid that kind of nasty shock,” said Stanislav. “We have the tools to prevent this kind of crisis, and there is absolutely no reason we should not bring them to bear.”

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Champaign Accepted into Competition

By ALWHIN COPI



The uproar over prodigy athlete Myra Champaign has reached a new pinnacle, with a specially convened committee of PCAG officials judging in favour of allowing her to compete. “This is a proud day for us,” said Champaign’s father, Klaus Lowrie. “Our girl is well within the rules, and it would be a shame for her to not be allowed to live up to her potential.”

Myra Champaign, 14, is the eighth youngest player ever admitted into PCAG competition. She handily outmatched her opponents in trials, and is widely recognised as being one of the best young players on the scene since Serena Duncan’s debut eight years ago. Typically, the PCAG would allow her to play based solely on her performance in her tryouts.

Opponents do point to a darker side of the picture, though. “Myra may be a sweet girl, but she is absolutely the product of enhancement.” said Jonas Sawgrass, of the Alliance for Clean Players, an anti-drug group. “We are going to fight her admission tooth and claw. We don’t have anything against her personally ... [but] allowing her changes the level of the playing field for everybody else.”

The controversy revolves around what cognitive enhancement fundamentally is, how long the effects are, and whether simply ceasing consumption of a pharmaceutical can be said to negate all of the effects of that substance in the body. It is now widely known that when Champaign was a small child, she suffered from cognitive and developmental disorders, which were treated with a range of experimental enhancement medications.

“For Myra, the drugs simply allowed her to live up to the potential she had all along,” said Lowrie. “When her treatment stopped, she was ten years old, and at that time she was perfectly typical for her peer group. It was only after she went off the enhancers that she started to take these intellectual leaps above and beyond her classmates.”

For now, PCAG officials seem to agree with that stance. Champaign begins competitive play during the June holiday exhibition matches. The ACP will not be content to let the matter rest. “We plan to protest every one of her matches,” said Sawgrass. “We don’t mind that [Champaign] had these drugs when she needed them, but it is unfair to everybody else to allow her to play now. We just want to keep the sport fair and natural.”

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Iona Interviews... Henrik Tanner

By IONA RODIE



Henrik Tanner, embattled head of security for the Academy, greets me in his office with what can only be described as a weary smile. His desk is piled high with papers and books; the side table, too, looks in danger of collapse. I notice, among the memos and project reports, a well-thumbed copy of Sente Kiteway's Cryptological formulations for key security functions, surely required reading for all the Academy's security personnel?

"Yes," Tanner replies briskly, "it's a classic in the field. Most of us do own a copy."

But it can't be easy, working as head of security for a man whose own background lies in cutting-edge security technology?

Tanner smiles: "In some ways, it makes everything a lot simpler. Unlike most CEOs, Sente actually understands the difficulties and dilemmas every security team must face. He

knows about the trade-off -- the more secure to outsiders, the less easily accessible to insiders. It's good to work for someone who understands that; makes the job easier."

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That must be particularly welcome, as Henrik Tanner's job hasn't been easy over the past 18 months. Since the Receda Cube was stolen early last year, the Academy's security department has come under increased scrutiny both internally and in the public eye. Tanner, who had been in position for less than a year when the Cube vanished, has faced calls for his resignation or dismissal. Like Master Kiteway, though, he's remained firm in the face of criticism. He's typically bullish when I ask if Academy security has been below par.

"There's no such thing as a perfect security system." He sits forward, fixing me with a slightly pop-eyed stare. "No. Such. Thing. Any system that has been created by people can be broken by people. That's just a fact of security. Our job is to make it as difficult as possible within the constraints of realism and budget."

But surely the fact that the Cube was stolen means that the security just wasn't tight enough?

Tanner sighs. "Obviously I can't discuss the specifics of the museum's security system. It's highly confidential information. Like every other aspect of Academy security, museum security is subject to annual review. Within the plans as they were set up at the time, our systems were as good as they could have been."

Tanner may not want to discuss the specifics of Academy security, but other senior Academy

Continued members don't feel the same. Museum security analysis reports were leaked to the Sentinel in August 267, prompting angry accusations and denials among the Senior Fellows Council and the Adjunct Committee. They showed that a team of four people, two of whom had specialised skills in hardware and software, could have taken advantage of the limitations of the Museum's security systems to perpetrate the break-in. Although this theory has been condemned as mere speculation by Academy authorities, it remains the best-guess theory for the method by which the Cube was stolen.

The report also showed that the Museum had been relying on a rather antiquated heat-sensing mechanism, along with encrypted electronic "k-locks." These are extremely specialised areas requiring unique expertise to break, but nonetheless each is known to have weaknesses. Wasn't that foolhardy? One presumes the systems have now been updated?

"Let's just say that no one's going to be getting in that way again." Tanner frowns and refuses to be drawn further.

And what of the future? Head of Security has not traditionally been a high-profile role in the Academy, but the media attention on the Cube has put Tanner firmly in the spotlight. With the regular press-briefings and interviews over the past few months, he's rapidly transforming into something of a media professional. Has he considered leaving the Academy to trade on his new-found fame?

Tanner laughs. "What? Write a book? Present some series on new developments in tech? I've had the odd offer, but no, I don't think it's really me. When we retrieve the Cube, and I know we will, I'll be quite happy to slip back behind the scenes."

Is he really sure about that? How can he possibly know that the Cube isn't lost forever?

"I know Sente," he replies. "That man has a will of iron. There's no way he's not going to get it back. What Sente says, happens."

And that, it seems, is where the Academy's Head of Security places his trust.

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Earlywine Visits Schools

By CORINNE HATHAWAY



Council member Nathan Earlywine has begun his campaign for Leader of the City Council in an unusual place -- grammar schools. "I want to go out and actually see how the education system is and is not working," he said, "and the only people who can truly tell me that are the students."

So far, Earlywine has visited five schools in three days. During each visit, Earlywine has himself taught a civics lesson, describing the ideals of freedom and responsibility that have shaped the city's government. He explained how his own experience interacting with the Council during his games year at the Academy formed his early political aspirations. His lecture concludes: "I just wanted to help make my city a better place to live, and you can help, too."

He has so far followed this lesson with an hour-long "City Meeting," where he encourages the students to share their ideas on improving the city and particularly the school system. Topics covered have ranged from school operating hours, the way after-school activities are organized, and the controversial role of technology in education. He has even taken suggestions on how to fight the illicit drug trade and foster more trade with other regions of the world.

"This is a very shrewd move," said political analyst Paula Coldwell. "Parents will feel warmly toward him for taking such a direct interest in their children, and it very much underlines how ... his hand-on management style is different from [Council Leader Camryn] Scott's rather remote delegatory style."

Scott herself could not be reached for comment on her opponent's campaign, but her spokesman, Kyle McForrester, pointed out that the election is still a very long way off. "Right now, Camryn is very busy doing the work of the government, which the citizens of Perplex City are paying her to do," she said. "It's much too early to start playing at politics."

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View from Earth: Surprise Solidarity

By CARYATID



Personally speaking, I'm surprised by the level of interest in finding the Receda Cube on Earth. I can however empathise with the questioning of some Perplexians of our ability to help. I agree, at first it does seem somewhat ludicrous; a huge and eclectic group of people, brought together with one common goal -- to retrieve an object and return it to people never even heard of before.

I was lucky enough to join the masses of people on earth ready to look for the Cube early and have viewed our growing ranks with both surprise and elation. As one of the younger people attempting to help the retrieval effort, I have often trouble balancing outside requirements and doing my best to help in the quest as best I can. However, one of the best things about our group is the community atmosphere. If one person needs to catch up, others will willingly paraphrase all that has been missed to make sure everyone

is up to date. More and more people are welcomed into our ranks daily and we have resources to help them, many of our number updating databases regularly and with dedication.

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Earth can be stereotypically seen as a place where physical achievements far outrank the mental and where people would far rather watch a game of sport than work out mental problems, whereas those whose talents lie more in the intellectual regions can be ostracised or disregarded because of that. Recently though, as I have been going about my daily life, I've been hearing whispers.

People are spreading the word of the Receda Cube and Perplex City. Each day more and more people know and are logging online to find out more. They genuinely want to help. This behaviour is not, although it may seem so, an attempt to endear ourselves to you. In fact, I'm more surprised than anything at the sheer goodwill that so many people have for you.

I would be less surprised if people had immediately noted our differences and acted upon them, building walls between us and making the situation far more difficult than it is at present. Such walls have been built before on Earth through lack of understanding. And yet, word of the missing Receda Cube has spread like a fever from person to person. We come from all backgrounds, all races, and

Continued

all religions. We all work together on solving puzzles. We laugh together. We weep tears of pure frustration together. We stay up into the small hours, together. And then we start it all again.

Whilst many of you may dismiss us as “an Earth-dwelling rabble of ad hoc Cube-hunters” (and I know that not all of you think that of us) you may want to consider and then treasure the affinity that many citizens of earth feel for Perplexians, despite the somewhat fractured affinity that is often returned. You could do far worse.

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Council Report: Flooding Harmed Crops

By NATASHA VALLIERE

This year's unusually heavy spring rainfall caused significant damage to grain crops, causing the City Council concerns about a run on prices for wheat, corn, and barley-based products through next year. "We are considering the agricultural situation to see what course of action causes the least disruption to the populace," said Council member Kyra Anghanda. The expected harvest could be as little as 70% of an average year, with wheat suffering the biggest losses.

A source from the Office of the Council has indicated that the city is negotiating with several of its neighbours to temporarily institute grain imports, though the move is by no means universally popular. The city has not imported food on a meaningful scale at any point in the modern age, excluding import of exotic fruits and vegetables which fare poorly in the local climate.

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The Perplex City Farm and Agricultural Consortium, which represents farmers throughout the region, has already begun

to lobby against the imports. "If we do import grain this year, this means that we will make even less for our share of the crop. Bad enough that nature is against us, why should the prices be, as well? ... It's just not fair," said Raphael Klein, a spokesman for the organisation. "Not only that, but it would be awful to break the city's historic standard for self-sufficiency. This is a very bad precedent to set."

Anghanda did admit that the city is in negotiations, but declined to give specifics due to the sensitive nature of the discussions. She did defend the move, however: "The Council has to work toward the greatest good, and so we have to decide if it's in the best interests of the city to let the farmers make a good profit this year, or to let even the poorest citizens continue to afford basic sustenance."

She also indicated that the Office of the Council is currently analysing several tariff plans for grain imports that could keep prices overall from shooting skyward, while still allowing local agricultural concerns to make ends meet for this year. "We are only working toward whatever is best for all of the city," Anghanda said.

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Holiday Fun Schedule

As the city gears up for celebrating the onset of summer, it can be difficult to keep track of all of the exciting activities and events taking place. Following is the City's annual guide to this year's major holiday activities, to help plan your own holiday. Direct your key to any event you are interested in for more specific information.

Academy Cube Hunt

The Academy has reinstited its annual Cube Hunt on the Great Lawn this year. Children under 13 may search the lawn for brightly-coloured replica cubes concealed throughout the lawn, with prizes and refreshments for all. June 14. Begins at 10am and continues through the day.

Solstice Gambol

This annual ramble around the 120-mile perimeter of the city is described by its participants as "exhilarating and exhausting." The route will go down through Catbite this year, then loop around the city through the forests to the north. Bring your own camping equipment. This year, the Gambol begins at Alchemy Beach on June 11 at 9am.

Strawberry Festival

Delicious spring fun at the Artists' Quarter! The Strawberry Festival and street fair will run from June 11 clear through to June 21. The festival includes dancing, music, and of course dozens of strawberry dishes for sale by local vendors. Arts and crafts will be on display. Children are welcome.

Country Carnival

White Cow Farm, Dancing Fields Farm, and HarvestWay have joined forces to put on a traditional country carnival, June 15 through June 30. Traditional dances will be taught, and competition will be held in quilting, herding, riding, and cooking. Winners of last year's crafting competitions will be on display.

Old Town History Days

See the way our forefathers lived with this re-enactment of the Old Town as it once was. Locals dress up as ancient Academicians, with beer flowing and pie baking at nearly every street corner. Tournaments in chess and backgammon will be held.

Continued **Beach Carnival**

Following the Spring Gambol this year is a week-long carnival at Alchemy Beach, June 13 through 21. The highlight will be the June 21 artists' competition, where each artist is challenged to make the best and most interesting work of art constructed solely from objects found upon the beach that morning. Food, dancing, and games will be available.

PCAG Exhibition Matches

This year, the PCAG Exhibition matches will be held in an open-air venue at Polygon Park. Tickets must be purchased for each match in advance.

Concert in the Park

The City Council is sponsoring a series of evening concerts in Azad Park. This year, performers include Roll for Damage, the PCSO, and Jam One. No tickets are required, but seating is on a first-come basis, as available.

Balloon Release

On Solstice Day, there will be a silent balloon release at Creation Park. In past years, these biodegradable balloons have been found as far as 500 miles away! This year, the balloons will be filled with wildflower seeds and small paper slips with messages of hope and peace written by city schoolchildren. Ceremony scheduled for dawn.

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PCBC Heir-Apparent for CEO Post Chosen

By ALWHIN COPI

PCBC has formally announced that when CEO Jonathan Smart steps down this fall, his replacement will be Walter Cove-Houghton, who has served as CTO of the PCBC for the last four years. Spokesman Cory Clary explained at the press briefing, “The PCBC feels that in these times of increasing reliance on technology, it is best for our CEO to be a person who really understands the intersection of finance and technology.”

Senior Managing Director Giordana Moore of the PCX, who had been considered a front runner for the post, said the appointment was a bold and risky move for the venerable organisation. “Clearly the PCBC is trying to position itself for the future,” she said. “We all know Walter has a great understanding of tech, especially the security needs of key and encryption tech, but I’m not so certain he has the best vertical grasp of the banking industry itself. ... We’ll have to wait and see how this plays out.”

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Trip Scott, COO of the PCBC, also

considered a short-list contender for the CEO job, said that he thought the move was an excellent choice. “Look, I could have pulled hard and had that job, but it wouldn’t have been the best thing for the bank,” he said, in an unusually candid interview. “It’s clear that our society has been undergoing some heavy innovation, and the bank has not been keeping up as well as it should. ... I’m too conservative at heart to make the hard decisions we need to keep the PCBC on top. Walter is the man who can do it, and I’m behind him one hundred percent.”

According to Clary, the bank will begin a 90-day transition period, with Smart officially stepping down in September. “Of course, he will remain available to the bank as a valuable knowledge asset, and he will be remaining on the board,” Clary said.

Before joining the PCBC, Cove-Houghton was president of his own security firm, Cove-Houghton Consulting, founded in 248. He sold the consulting firm to his sister, Rose Cove-Houghton, upon leaving.

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View from Earth: Prodigal Prodigy

By VLAD 'FIREFOX' DUMITRU



Thriving black market, cognitive enhancers and illegal stimulants, corruption at the highest level, a world tearing asunder? -- it almost sounds like a movie tag-line, but you are all living it.

Initially I as well as others scoffed (and rightly so) at the idea that our two societies are even remotely similar. You all not only prized but encouraged intelligence in all aspects of your life. Where the prowess of the mind is more treasured than that of the body. War, crime, hunger, poverty, disease, all of these things we see absent from your society. There is no prejudice or racial disharmony between your citizens, your higher technology is made available to all, and it would seem that this is the perfect world. But we have a saying here on Earth: appearances can be deceiving.

Of late, more and more of the articles in the Sentinel point out to the layer beneath this seemingly tranquil society of prosperity.

Beneath this surface a battle for the core values and future of your society is being fought. Drugs, murder and intrigue. Now you're starting to talk our language. We Earthlings prize power above all things. And any means by which to achieve this power, will be exhausted. Our history is drowned by the blood of our forefathers, shed in battle.

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At this very moment on Earth, there are countries at war, soldiers officially fighting for freedom, unofficially fighting to stay alive. Drugs, the illegal narcotics trade has plagued the major and minor nations of Earth for decades now. And whilst our drugs are in general cognitive dis-enhancers, causing severe health problems and an addictive dependency to all users, they are as detrimental to our society as your drugs are to yours. Crime and murder, as well as the black market for all rare goods is the undercurrent which many of us choose to ignore day to day. We cover ourselves in the blanket of ignorance, and look further within our own personal lives, lest we see the world as it truly is around us. Television, media, and lies now go hand in hand. I hope you can clearly see how our situations are drawing closer to the same common point. We had a point of divergence sometime in our past, where our shared histories took different paths.

Maybe that point is coming again, and our futures are soon to be intertwined.

Continued

Prime example, the most recent article “Champaign Accepted into Competition” by Alwhin Copi, hits closer to home than many of you would suspect. Whilst drug cheats in all forms of Earth sports are highly unwelcome to say the least, the moral implications of children and sport enhancing drugs has also been a quandary in our society. Too many young children, wanting to follow in their idols footsteps or gain access to a better education through their sporting merits, look at drugs as an easy alternative. What is even sadder is that often it is with their parent’s approval or guidance that they take these steps. But there again rises another similarity, which it would seem plagues all of humanity, where-ever it may call home: the need to succeed, at all costs.

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Northside Preserve Development Killed

By GARIMA KING

An anonymous group of private investors calling themselves the Nature Trust have entered into a deal with the city to purchase the newly rezoned areas of the Northside Nature Preserve for an undisclosed amount, with the intention of holding the land to keep it free from development. Camryn Scott, Leader of the City Council, stated at a press conference that the offer was nearly double that of the next-highest group of developers.

“Given how much these citizens of conscience were willing to sacrifice in order to prevent this development, we on the Council entered private debates about whether to allow the development plan to be circumvented in this fashion. ... At the end of the day, we did vote six to three to allow this sale to proceed,” Scott said.

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A press release from Nature’s Trust indicated that the group came together and pooled funds specifically in order to “keep

the land wild and safe from encroaching urbanisation.” The statement also said, “We should never be expanding into new wild areas when there are entire blocks of homes and businesses standing empty in the Old Town. This area, with its dazzling views of Catbite, should be premium real estate, and we encourage the Office of the Council to formulate a plan to renew this area with the proceeds from the sale of the Northside wildlands.”

Although Scott would not give specific information regarding the conditions of the sale, “part of the deal includes the Office of the Council spending additional funds on trying to gentrify some of the decayed areas of Old Town, yes,” agreed Scott.

Lorelei Park, CEO of Park Realty Corp., a subsidiary of Mobius Development Corp., claimed that the deal will prove to be a huge mistake in coming years. “The city is just crying out for new space,” she said. “If we can’t come up with new places to build very soon, then businesses will start to leave Perplex City for outlying areas. It’s a real mistake, a terrible mistake.”

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Holiday Sombre for Pious

By CORINNE HATHAWAY

Despite bustling retail activity and an overall feeling of relief at the arrival of summer, the upcoming holiday will be marked by sombre reflection and meditation by some of the more religious groups in the city. “Of course Solstice is supposed to be a joyous time ... but under the circumstances, we only have the enthusiasm for a muted celebration,” said Sister Golda Flynn of the Brotherhood of the Six.

The reason for this subdued mood: The still-missing Receda Cube, stolen from the Academy nearly a year and a half ago. Flynn explained, “Our typical celebrations obviously revolve around meditating upon the properties of the Cube and communing with its essence.

... I would not call our current situation a metaphysical crisis, no, but it is certainly more difficult to try to commune with an object you know has somehow slipped into another world.”

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Even some less observant citizens told the Sentinel they are planning on downplaying the holiday this year. “All of the holidays, they’re all about

gifts and parties now,” said 67-year-old Hunter Jurgensen. “Well, pish to that. I’m doing the Gambol with my grandkids and relying on traditional games and fun. Family, that’s what the holidays are about.”

Nonetheless, the majority of the city seems to be forging on through the holidays without giving the Cube a second thought. Even the annual Cube Hunt on the Academy grounds, considered by many to be a too-macabre reminder of the events surrounding the Cube’s mysterious disappearance, has been reinstated this year. “Children don’t understand that the hunt could be seen as some kind of terrible joke,” said Academy representative Valerian Reynolds. “They just see the hunt in their books and remember it from past year, or hear about it from older children, and they want to play too. ... It may be a little painful for adults, but it would be unfair to the children to continue to cancel it.”

As for Sister Flynn, even she agreed, with a sigh, that the city must go on, with the Cube or without it. “That doesn’t mean I’ll have the same joy in my heart as years past, mind you,” she warned.

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Entrescore Arrested for Receda Cube Theft

By PIETRO SALK

Academy puzzle scribe Aiko Entrescore has been arrested in connection with the theft of the Receda Cube. In an unexpected twist, it appears that Entrescore, who has been working as part of the special puzzle design team assembled to recover the Cube, was part of a Reconstructionist conspiracy.

Entrescore was taken into police custody yesterday afternoon, after evidence came to light linking her to the Reconstructionist splinter cult. After initial denials, police chief Eoin Morgan confirmed that Entrescore is being questioned about her involvement with the Reconstructionists. “We received information via [Master of the Academy] Sente Kiteway leading us to suspect that Aiko Entrescore has high-level contacts within this organisation,” Morgan said. “When confronted with this information, both Entrescore and the Reconstructionist leaders confirmed its accuracy.”

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Morgan added that “it appears that our initial lead to the Reconstructionists was correct all along,” referring to the prior arrest and subsequent release of eight high-ranking members of the religious group. He also pointed out that Entrescore had been under suspicion independently, much earlier in the investigation. “We examined her art exhibit, which was showing the night of the theft ...

with inconclusive results,” he said. “Now that we have both opportunity and motive, we have to pursue this avenue as far as it will take us.”

Morgan refused to enter into discussion regarding the original source of the accusation against Entrescore. However, an anonymous police source has informed the Sentinel that Kiteway had himself received a tip-off from an Earth individual who claims to belong to a military group, the “255th UNSC Marine Battalion.” The Sentinel has been unable to verify the existence of this organisation. It is unclear at this time how an individual on Earth might have obtained the information.

Entrescore is denying the allegations. Her legal representative, Nialla Stewart, has issued a statement reading, in part, “Aiko is guilty of nothing more than exercising her religious freedom. While it is true that she is a member of the Reconstructionist religion, it is absolutely false that she had anything to do with the theft of the Receda Cube. We are sure that Aiko’s innocence will be unshakeably proven.”

Sente Kiteway issued this statement: “It was with a heavy heart that I received these allegations against a member of my staff; in the circumstances I of course had no choice but to hand them over to the proper authorities. I am as shocked and appalled as anybody by the idea that Aiko Entrescore could have been responsible for this awful act. I sincerely hope that these accusations prove untrue once they have been adequately investigated.”

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Champaign Leaves Match in Tears

By ALWHIN COPI

Controversial PCAG competitor Myra Champaign left her debut match in tears after eking out a victory from rival Mikhail Terpening in a close riddles match. Protesters bought out a block of tickets from the holiday exhibition match, and jeered the 14-year-old athlete during her rounds.

Myra started out strong in the first bout of the match, but lost her focus and began to cry after the protesters began chanting and booing. There was a brief scuffle with police as some of the protesters were removed from their seats.

Four people, including Jonas Sawgrass of the anti-drug group Alliance for Clean Players, were arrested for refusing to leave the match peacefully upon request. Another nine were ejected from the audience and left gracefully.

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Officials allowed a short break for Champaign to recover her composure. During that period, she scored the points that allowed her to win the game; but

in the last round, fresh protests began, though no additional ejections were made. Terpening pressed his advantage, pushing the game to nearly a tie. Champaign broke down again in the last minutes of the match, leaving the stage in tears as soon as the bell rang.

Champaign's father, Klaus Lowrie, expressed anger over the treatment of his daughter in her first match. "I don't care how you stand on drugs and neural enhancement, the fact is that Myra is just a child. Other young players have been treated with care and respect, and Myra deserves the same."

Robert Zhi-Hui, Chairman of the PCAG, was outraged that any citizen could treat an athlete with such profound disrespect. "We at the PCAG acknowledge that there was some controversy surrounding Myra and the circumstances around her entry," he said. "We have considered this issue very carefully, and have weighed in with our final decision. We absolutely expect this decision to be honoured. We will support Myra with the same depth and intensity as we would any one of our legitimate players. ... Myra is as much a legitimate player as is Serena Duncan or Ryan Cahill."

No comments were available from the Alliance for Clean Players.

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View from Earth: Defending Earth

By JAMIE FISHSLIM



Several articles have appeared in the Perplex City Sentinel recently, criticising Earth societies for their preoccupation with salacious celebrity gossip and vacuous pop culture. While I feel this tendency to worship fame, physical form and wealth is to be discouraged,

it is hardly new. Most important for Earth people and Perplexians alike, is to realise that this an incidental feature, like a trick of the light and cannot serve to define the full range and scope of our culture and history. Remember: to believe the lies is to make them true.

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It is quite clear that Perplexians believe in puzzle-solving as a skill to be cherished and nurtured. Indeed, it seems the residents of Perplex City hold puzzles in particular regard, to the extent that it becomes a way of life, or accepted principle of living. Your

art, music, history and culture, even your means of pursuing scientific endeavour is curious enquiry stretched over a logical frame; aka puzzle-solving. Intellect, it appears, is respected. The best puzzle-solvers are held with high regard in positions of power. You would be forgiven then, for having a low opinion of Earth society and culture, when even our own people write to your publication to bemoan our general disinterest in intellect and cognitive skill. You may well ask, what else can you base a society on, if not logic and reason?

Su Doku

Well, perhaps Earth can claim to hold a candle to the Perplexian's desire for puzzles after all. And in so doing, maybe appreciate in your esteem. A puzzle called Su Doku is gripping our nation. This deceptively simple yet furiously addictive game began at the back of the Times newspaper and now appears on many front pages as a major selling point. Every daily newspaper has introduced Su Doku because it all but guarantees high circulation.

The action takes place on a 9x9 grid of squares, the total 81 squares being subdivided into nine 3x3 boxes. There is only one rule: every row, column and 3x3 box must contain the numbers 1-9. Straightforward? Yes. There's no maths involved; all the skills you need are logic, reason and patience, all in good supply. Simple? No. The puzzle can be of varying difficulty depending on how many numbers the setter includes in the start grid - at least a few are required for the player to make any inferences about the missing numbers. Puzzles with many letters offered

Continued

initially are quite simple and can often be completed in five or ten minutes. Some of the hardest puzzles however, can take many hours in a day to complete, if indeed they are ever solved.

The word is puzzle and it is spreading

The Independent newspaper has now launched the first Su Duko national championships - after completing a set amount of puzzles, players enter a regional heat progressing to the finals if they are quick and sharp enough. The word is puzzle and it is spreading. Maybe our societies are not so different after all. Perhaps, Perplexians, when you are bored of multi-language crosswords and giant, unfathomable art-puzzles, access our internet and try your hand at a grid or two. But make sure they are the hard ones, eh?

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Entrescore Freed

By PIETRO SALK



Academy puzzle scribe and Reconstructionist disciple Aiko Entrescore has been released from police custody after a judge ruled that the new evidence of her ties to the religious group did not provide sufficient new illumination into the case. “The Receda Cube is obviously an item of huge intrinsic value,” said Judge Erik Hornblair. “Any one of the millions of people in the greater Perplex City region could be attributed some motive or another for taking it.” He pointed out that Entrescore, and in particular her technological art exhibit, have already been thoroughly investigated by police over the last year and a half.

Police chief Eoin Morgan admitted after initially putting off the media that police may have been a bit hasty in arresting Aiko. He insisted, however, that “the whole situation is still ridiculously suspicious,” and indicated that Entrescore may be under continued police observation for some time to come.

Entrescore herself gave a brief press statement upon her release. “I hope that the people of the city continue to respect my religious freedom, as well as the idea that everyone can express their faith in different ways,” she said. “While it is true that I have always felt the Cube belongs in other hands than those at the Academy, I also believe strongly in the rule of law, and would only work toward the Cube’s freedom within the framework constructed by our society.”

Entrescore indicated that she would be spending some time recuperating from her surprise arrest in the Reconstructionists’ countryside compound.

It is not yet clear whether she will be returning to her work at the Academy’s Cube retrieval team. Sente Kiteway, Master of the Academy, indicated that she would be welcome should she choose to return, though of course her work would undergo more stringent observation that it had in the past. Kiteway pointed out that as a person of deep personal faith, Entrescore must feel the loss of the Cube more profoundly than a more secularly inclined individual. “It would be logical for our Aiko to be particularly motivated to bring the Cube home to our world,” he said.

Aiko Entrescore was arrested last week after Kiteway received evidence, allegedly from an Earth military source, indicating that Entrescore was a member of the Reconstructionist splinter cult, and forwarded that information on to police.

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Mobius Strip Support Structure Damaged

By FOSTER LIDDELL

A city-mandated annual inspection of the Mobius Strip has turned up cracks in some of the undersea support structures, leading some consumer advocacy groups to fear for the overall safety of the Strip. MDC spokesmen maintain the structure is perfectly sound.

Guy Willamette of the public interest group Civic Safety Watch expressed horror at the finding. "Erosion at the base of the Mobius Strip can result in nothing but tragedy," he said. Willamette suggested that, if left unchecked, the Strip could slide under the water, costing tens of thousands of lives. "MDC simply has to look into this problem and correct it before it's too late," he said.

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Bob Mwalme, a senior engineer at MDC, indicated that the company has no plans to look into the cracks for signs of more serious underlying structural damage.

"It's just unconscionable that the MDC are ignoring this issue without even

conducting their own engineer's report," fumed Bullets owner Tamara Grady. "If people are afraid for the safety of the Strip, they won't come and they won't spend. ... making a token effort at least to investigate could go a long way toward appeasing public opinion."

Mwalme protested that the cracks are no cause for public alarm. "The structure was designed to withstand the force of the ocean, tremors, and near-apocalyptic weather," he said. These newly-found cracks are "simply expected wear from the seasonal, temperature-related expansion and contraction of the construction materials."

The inspection is part of the Strip's annual due diligence, an integral part of the original construction deal wherein the City Council waived a number of local ordinances to allow the sea-based structure to be built.

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Joya Skips Nuptials

By JULIUS LOMAN

Pop singer Joya has stunned family, friends, fans, and presumably also her fiancé when she simply failed to show up at her Solstice Day wedding ceremony. “Horace is absolutely in shock, we all are,” said best man Colin Blackmooreland. “None of us here knew this was coming.”

Joya’s publicist, Callie Newell, who was also attending the wedding, said that she received an urgent message on her key just when Joya was supposed to make her appearance. “[The message] was primarily personal and for me,” Newell said. “But Joya did want to publicly state that she is in no danger, and she has retired to a secluded residence to consider her life and plan out her next steps. ... She very much apologises for any ill will her actions may have caused.”

Witnesses say that when it became clear that Joya was not on the premises, Joya’s producer and intended husband, Horace Shockley, took a swing at guest Alejo Jackson, mumbling that Joya’s absence was “all [his] fault.” Shockley was restrained by the wedding party without further incident, and it appears that nobody was injured.

Neither Shockley nor Jackson were available for comment.

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Joya’s motives were unclear, and Joya herself could not be located. An anonymous source claiming to be a close friend of the singer’s suggested that if Joya is, in fact, pregnant, as recent speculation would have it, then that could be reason for her seemingly sudden case of cold feet. “To even a casual observer, it’s as plain as water is wet that she has no real affection for that pompous jerk, Horace,” the source said. “I think she realised she couldn’t carry through with this sham of a wedding. Good for her, I say.”

Fan club president Naomi Woods expressed deep surprise at the news. “I am sure that Joya has very good reasons for her actions, and all will be explained when the time is right,” she said.

According to guests, the wedding was scheduled for dusk in the Ascendancy Point atrium. The foiled nuptials had a star-studded guest list, including such luminaries as Randal Tokei, Shia Cowrie, Yuri Forrester, and Mark Ata.

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Names of Six 'The Lab' Contestants Leaked

By GAVIN CREWEL

In a shocking revelation, six of the twelve contestants on The Lab have been leaked by show insiders. With only two days left until the start of the eighth season, this upset in an otherwise flawless publicity campaign will be sure to irk Fraction Media, producers of the highly popular show.

The six contestants revealed are:

* Kevin Alten, a proteomics graduate student from Marmalejo College

* Torin Cornforth, a history undergraduate from Perplex City University

* Ryman Gardner, senior PCAG player and visiting fellow at the Academy

* Louise Haydock, a neuroscientist from Perplex City University

* Shakti Sekand, epidemiology researcher at Marmalejo College

* Kalli Shepuse, a theoretical physicist at the Rose Institute

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Perhaps the most interesting labmate to be revealed is Ryman Gardner. Gardner will be the first senior PCAG player to enter the Lab, and will bring a degree of celebrity to the show, as well as changing its social dynamics as the other labmates respond to his considerable threat in the frequent puzzle activities and the nomination phase. While Gardner has never won the PCAG tournament -- and some commentators have suggested that at 38, he is

unlikely to be a serious contender for the title in future -- he remains a potent force and a respected player, as evidenced by his status at the Academy.

"It's hard to tell how Gardner will influence the game," said Evan Boch, the Sentinel's chief Lab correspondent and last season's winner. "I know that if he'd been in last year, the other labmates would've been seriously worried and perhaps would've moved to nominate him out as soon as possible. However, Gardner is sure to be aware of this and he'll probably try to establish a power base of his own early on, without looking too threatening."

The exact origination of the leak is unknown, but the document obtained by the Sentinel and passed to thousands of fans via key has been digitally signed by the relevant staff at Fraction and its authenticity is unquestionable. Fraction Media has declined to comment on the leak at the time of publication.

All twelve of the contestants are currently staying at an undisclosed location where all communication links with the outside world have been cut, to avoid any possible influence on the audience of the show before it begins. Perplex City will have its first glimpse of the labmates in action when they enter the eighth Lab at 7pm Friday evening.

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Salk Briefly Emerges from Sudden Coma

By JEREMY CLARIDGE



Sentinel reporter Pietro Salk emerged from his coma for several hours yesterday, only to collapse again after spending hours working feverishly on his key. Salk's wife, Sylvia Salk, had found him collapsed in their office upon returning home Monday evening.

She has been unavailable for comment, but according to the account written on her family web site, she "had brought in dinner from Calla's, as usual. But when I came home, the door was open and there Pietro was, in his office, gasping for air." According to the site, Pietro Salk's key detected his distress and summoned emergency services, who arrived shortly.

"Looking at [Salk's] brain patterns over the last three days, ... it looks like

he simply burned out like a candle," said neurologist Dr. Lillian Anderson. She said, with the family's permission, that the potential for Salk to make any sort of recovery is very low, and that even his lower brain functions appear to be deteriorating rapidly. "I'd be very surprised to see him survive a week, at this rate," Anderson said.

According to Anderson, Salk was in a sort of fugue state during his brief respite from coma. Salk interacted only with his key, responding to almost no stimulus outside of that. "The only way to rouse him was to try to take the key away, and then he became like some sort of wild beast," said Anderson. "He clearly had not made any sort of substantive recovery."

Sentinel medical advisor Dr. Stuart Ivanovitch said that this kind of pathology is rare, but not unprecedented. "The medical establishment has seen this sort of last-ditch neural activity before, but it isn't often that it makes any sort of sense," he said.

Doctors have not offered any guesses as to what precipitated Salk's neurological crisis, saying only that it was a private matter, and that only the patient's family could decide whether or not to reveal that information.

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View from Earth: Reality Gaming

By SIMON DOUGLAS



Simon DouglasAs an Earth inhabitant, I have watched with interest as the search for the Cube has expanded. Without doubt the methods of recruitment used by Sente and the Academy are proving to be successful on Earth, with an ever expanding group of

game players becoming involved. It is exactly this point that is of the most interest; that is, the metamorphosis of what is a real-life crisis in Perplex City into a game on Earth. This capitalises on the growing Earth market for the ARG or Alternate Reality Games, in which a collection of web sites, newspaper adverts and even telephone numbers provides a link to a “not of the Earth” or “not of the time” reality.

These games have in the past drawn in Earth players mostly with the aim of marketing products, but the use of Perplex City as an “alternate reality” is a departure from this, providing a truly exciting new gaming experience here on Earth. While this may appear to trivialise the “real-life” problems being experienced by Perplexians, that is by turning them into a game on Earth, it may also be the best way to utilise Earth resources to find the cube.

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An important aspect of the playing of ARGs

is the collaborative nature of the enterprise. These games tend to be enjoyed by an on-line community of players, with the collective intellectual effort being used to solve puzzles of a complexity which would take a single person many times longer. The Earth puzzle-solvers have created a sort of virtual “Academy” at which they can share their puzzle skills and knowledge in a community of like minds. As yet this community remains virtual, though perhaps in the future a model on the lines of the Perplex City one can be developed.

One of the most important factors in the design and development of these games is the consistency of the reality to be explored. It is tremendously important that there is a sense of reality about the alternate world or else the Earth players will fail to become so enmeshed and involved in the game.

The beauty of Sente’s plan is that the alternate reality of Perplex City cannot fail to be congruent and consistent, not to mention enormous in scope and complexity, because this is the reality of the Perplexian world. This has created a great amount of media interest, resulting in an increasing number of players and thus a greater chance of the cube being located here on Earth. Despite the criticisms of some of the Sentinel’s correspondents, a “view from Earth” would be that this may have been a particular stroke of genius on behalf of the Master of the Academy.

The View from Earth column is currently accepting submissions from its Earth readership. Please submit completed articles for consideration to news@perplexcitysentinel.com. Please include the pen name you wish to use and a photograph of yourself for our artists to work from.

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Key Developer Axed

By CHO KAPLAN



Gregory Dempsey

In a move widely predicted by industry analysts, Gregory Dempsey, the head of the next-gen key research team at Centrifuge, has been asked to step down. Centrifuge released a written statement saying that the move is “purely an internal matter.”

Dempsey’s forced resignation is almost certainly the result of fatal security flaws in the planned next-gen key technology Centrifuge was trumpeting just a few short weeks ago. Numerous reports leaked to the Sentinel and other news outlets have

indicated that the keys are susceptible to a previously-unknown aspect of the Djinn virus, which has never been fully analysed.

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Dempsey himself appeared at a press conference, calling his dismissal “ill-considered and unfair.” He said that the possibility of pursuing a lawsuit is very much on his mind. “[The company] is using me as a scapegoat for more serious enterprise-wide problems,” Dempsey said. “This is an injustice to me and to my fine team of developers.”

The office of Centrifuge CEO Halima Bourne did not return calls. The company has not officially confirmed reports that the next-gen key technology planned for release this summer is problematic.

Jane Spelger of consumer advocacy group SafeHouse approved of the move, saying that cleaning house was a necessary first step in regaining the public’s trust. “Clearly the research team hasn’t been ensuring adequate security, from all of these reports we’re hearing. ... Releasing this generation of keys now would border on criminal negligence.”

Centrifuge shares jumped a much-needed 6.4% on the PCX at the news.

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Coralhouse Denied

By JEREMY CLARIDGE

A specially-convened Academy ethics review board has ruled to reject the late Ruth Coralhouse's PCL45 million joint bequest to the Academy and Centre for Reality Research. Academy representative Valerian Reynolds said that accepting the gift would "create the perception of impropriety" and perhaps unduly influence the future direction of Academy research.

The grant had come under scrutiny because of the specific conditions laid out in Coralhouse's will. She had required that the money be used to develop a method for transporting physical objects between Perplex City and Earth, and that her ashes be subsequently transported to Earth.

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J. Randal Flynn, executor of the estate and Coralhouse's grandson, expressed profound disappointment in the board's decision. "It's ridiculous for the Academy to reject money to aid it in the pursuit of an avenue of research we all know they surely must be travelling now, even if the Academy will not formally admit it," he said. "My grandmother's final wishes

are being summarily rejected on some absurd, meaningless technicality."

Reynolds did state, however, that the board had not refused all of Coralhouse's requests. "Should the technology to transport material to Earth be developed, the board plans to review [Coralhouse's additional] request to have her ashes sent over." Before the move could be considered, though, the board insisted that it must be demonstrated that such a thing would be safe for inhabitants in both worlds.

The board did agree with Coralhouse's request to have an urn containing her ashes be placed in a small Greek-style temple on the Great Lawn of Academy grounds, with her estate of course bearing the cost of design and construction.

Flynn said this concession was small comfort, given that it was intended to be only a way station for his grandmother's remains.

Coralhouse passed away in May at the age of 108. During her tenure as Senior Fellow of the Social Sciences department at the Academy, she helped to shape the growing subject of Earthology and has been widely recognised as one of the greatest thinkers in the field.

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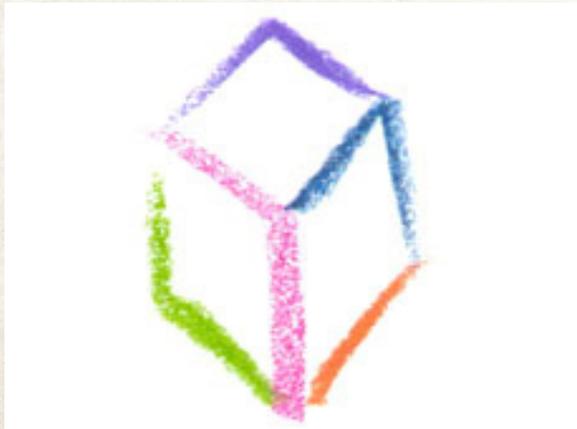
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Brotherhood Supports Urban Renewal

By NATASHA VALLIERE



In the wake of the sale of the Northside Nature Preserve to the anonymous environmental group Nature's Trust, the City Council has resumed the seemingly endless discussion of urban renewal in the Old Town. Wednesday, the Council heard testimony from Sisters April and Golda Flynnnt, representatives of the Brotherhood of the Six, in support of beginning a comprehensive reconstruction campaign as soon as possible.

Sister April Flynnnt testified that there is no religious reason not to build in the Old Town. "The aversion to building in this area is just baseless superstition," she said. "It is the Cube's will to build, and to build to last. These rows of abandoned ramshackle hovels must be razed, and true construction erected in its place."

Unsurprisingly, Sister Golda Flynnnt concurred. "Gyvann himself said 'When one stone is set upon another, there I will dwell among you.' It is our duty as people of faith to take back this area." The support for development is

considered a surprise by many, because the Brotherhood has long kept silent on the topic of construction in the Old Town.

"I think everyone here knows we want to encourage development in the Old Town," said Council Leader Camryn Scott. "The question is, how do we approach it?" She spoke at length about the proposals of years past, which have included tax incentives, public works efforts, improved infrastructure, and a public education campaign debunking the idea that the Old Town is simply bad luck. "Arguably our biggest obstacle is public will, and that is something we simply must overcome," Scott concluded.

City Council member Aben Henniker was the sole dissenting voice. "The Old Town area has resisted attempts to revitalise it again and again over the last hundred years," he said. "Crime goes down, but it always goes back up. Buildings are constructed, and then abandoned again as the rest of the area fails to change. This is clearly a losing battle."

This question comes at a time of increasing pressure from property developers and citizens on the council. Housing prices have been steadily increasing in recent years, leading some to fear that the best and brightest young talent will leave the city for outlying areas. The Council had settled on opening the Northside to development as the answer, but this move precipitated vocal protests. It appears that the Nature's Trust group who have purchased those development rights do not intend to build at all.

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View from Earth: Caring for Health

By MIMA DIXON



As a woman who has become disabled through disease, I am particularly interested in the glimpses of health as seen through your pages. It appears that you are far in advance of us in this area. A world with a cure for cancer, a

way to either slow up or stop arthritis, and a longevity we only dream of.

To take a six-week sabbatical and have full confidence of a cure for leukaemia as City Councilor Roy Yolen did is inconceivable and, although we are making breakthroughs almost daily in the field, cancer on Earth is a very serious disease. People spend years battling it, using very toxic drugs, and with no certainty of a cure.

The numbers of people on Earth that are crippled by arthritis are astounding, some at a young age, and many elderly. In poorer countries (known here as the Third World), it is a killer, as people are prevented from working, and cannot buy food. What we would give to know what the 'Stand Up Tall' public health initiative actually involves. Treating people at risk and stopping it starting is beyond our reach.

Your medical facilities are also it seems in top shape, with renovations being planned to the infectious pathogen unit of Ng General for a 200 bed quarantine zone, something that

could not be conceived of even in our richest countries. In the UK, where I live, there is a central health system, and care is free, but poor management, and intermittent funding have led to chaos, and the quality of care is patchy at best. Beds are at a premium, with few available, and many being blocked with elderly patients who are unable to go home as care is not available. In America, arguably the richest nation, patients pay for care, so if the standard heart-reconstruction undergone by Raymund Geltman were available, several life-times of debt would follow.

Not surprisingly with the quality of care, your lifespan seems to be longer than ours. The only natural death so far reported in the Sentinel is Ruth Coralhouse who died at 108. You expressed no surprise at her age, unlike us - we were astonished by this. Currently the oldest man alive is 113, and the greatest ever life span is 120 years.

It seems though from the coma of Pietro Salk that not everything is solvable. From other articles we learn that accidental deaths cannot be prevented or reversed, and we gather from one of our correspondents that flu is still an issue.

We on Earth can only look forward in hope to healthcare as good as yours, available to all that need it, when they need it.

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KT Shocker: 'I'm a Reconstructionist'

By ARLING WILSON



In a surprise weekend press conference, Roll for Damage bassist Keenan Thoreau has publicly admitted that he is a Reconstructionist. "I come forward today to make a stand for my beliefs," he said. He claimed the move was prompted by the recent dismissal of former Perplex City Sentinel advertising manager Ryan Klein, who was fired shortly after the Sentinel learned he is a Reconstructionist.

"This is a chance to correct a tremendous injustice," he said. "Ryan is a victim of

unfounded prejudice against those of the Reconstructionist faith. I want all of you in this fine city to examine your conscience, and tell the Sentinel exactly what you think about their actions."

Klein appeared at the conference, and gave a short speech thanking KT for his support. "All I want is to live as I was before," he said.

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The rest of the band appeared at the conference as well. "We have known all along about KT's beliefs," said singer Alejo Jackson. "We've quite honestly never felt it is the public's business, and so we agreed to keep the secret." Despite the brave front, the members of the band did look subdued, leading to speculation about how united the band members were in making the announcement at all.

Helix Hesh of Hesh Records dismissed suggestions that the news could hurt the band's sales and popularity. He remarked that the move was a surprise to him, but that it does not change his plans for producing and marketing the band's next album, *Take Initiative*, due out September 1. "The band is popular because of their sound. I think the city is really above this antiquated, this petty religious infighting, and the album will be just fine," he said.

Cheri Lindemann, the president of the band's fan club, could not be reached for

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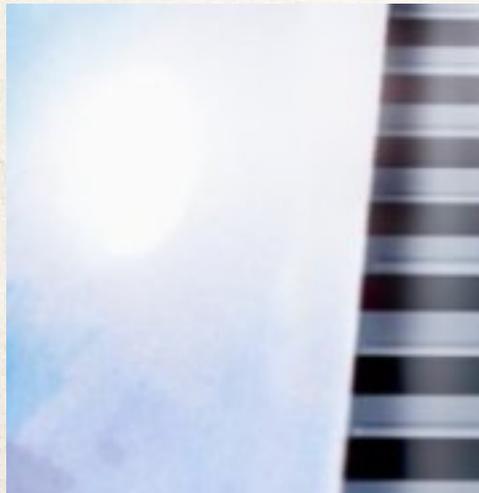
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Ascendancy Point Riddled with Problems

By GARIMA KING



In the run-up to Ascendancy Point's massive gala tenth anniversary celebration, some of the building's team of property managers have quietly admitted to embarrassing infrastructure problems that could turn the night into a disaster. "[These problems have] the potential to destroy the Point's reputation," said an anonymous source in the building's engineering department. "Upper management are really sweating it."

The gala party will take place next month, occupying most of the Point's public areas. Management plans to use the event both to cement the structure's reputation as a prestigious address and to woo prosperous citizens who currently reside elsewhere. Serious problems with the building's internal systems during the party would make the whole celebration backfire.

"Just imagine if all of these dignitaries couldn't find a working washroom all night,"

the anonymous source told the Sentinel.

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When asked about these infrastructure problems, the Point's communication director, Jules Northerlie, insisted there is nothing unusual going on. "All buildings will have ... certain maintenance issues as they age," he said. He declined to offer examples of maintenance issues that are an inevitable result of aging.

The residents' association was surprised at the information provided to the Sentinel. "We've been aware of ... problems," said association vice-president Charlene Reckson. "Nobody has told us how deep they were. We may have to start asking some really hard questions of the building management." When the Point was built in 259, it was heralded as the most technologically advanced structure of its day. Apart from its impressive height and environmentally sound ethic, the Point boasted responsive and intelligent systems for security, climate control, resource distribution, and maintenance, all tied into a central neural structure. One of the first-year leasing brochures called the technology "the invisible heartbeat of a dream."

In recent months, though, it has become clear that this advanced system is riddled with bugs and maintainability problems. "Problems in one system are coming out into others in some really strange ways," said the source. "I think the original designers never realistically considered the kinds of problems [one might reasonably] run into, and so one unexpected overload can cause aberrant behaviour in another system completely."

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Tremor Recorded on Ocean Floor

By JEREMY CLARIDGE

Geologists at Perplex City University indicated that they recorded the strongest-ever tremor felt in the region last night at around 3:40 am. The epicentre of the quake was roughly 800 kilometres to the south-east of Perplex City, registering 509 Brigham-Horne units. “The tremor was just barely strong enough to be felt in the city itself,” said University geologist Meredith Woolsy, “but we did experience some high waters as a result.”

Woolsy further said that the shaking was mild enough that most city residents probably were not disturbed from their sleep. “If you were up and about, you perhaps lost a bit of balance,” Woolsy said. According to the Office of the Council, no damage to city structures has been reported; Woolsy insists the likelihood of finding such damage is quite low.

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Workers at the Portside Docks indicated that they did observe particularly rough waters during the early hours of the morning. Fortunately, the quake-related waves approached during low tide, so no unusual flooding appears to have resulted.

“The city was lucky on a lot of counts,” said Woolsy. As a result of the quake, one city resident, Johanna Lowell, 54, a gardener, lost her balance on her way back home from enjoying an evening out and suffered from a badly sprained ankle, as well as some other minor injuries. Even Lowell herself counts the damage as light. “It could have been the drink as much as the tremor,” she joked. Lowell’s was the only quake-related injury reported.

Geologists have long known that that area of the sea floor contains an elaborate network of faults, but it is rare for activity to register more than 180 Brigham-Horne units. This quake is the largest on record for the area, and the first tremor of any size to be recorded in the region since 262.

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Mind Candy Flounders

Opinion/Editorial

It has been long, long weeks since the announcement of Master of the Academy Sente Kiteway's secretive Cube retrieval plan, following long, long months of mystery. Now that happy day has come and gone, and so we demand to know: Where is this plan now? Why has nothing more happened?

Earth sources tell us that the puzzle cards, keystone to Sente's attention-getting campaign, have simply not appeared in stores. How can Sente's plan possibly be working if it is not actually in action? In short: It can't.

We at the Sentinel have investigated the situation, and have found that the blame lies, surprisingly, not directly with Kiteway himself, but with Mind Candy, the ridiculously inept Earth-based contractors he has hired to dirty their hands in doing his bidding.

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A leaked missive from Mind Candy indicated that the fault lies with enigmatic "printer delays," and that the cards are, indeed, forthcoming; but these excuses ring hollow to our ears. The document

also suggested that the first cards should be available on July 13. We have no reason to believe this as anything beyond further dissembling.

It is clear that if Mind Candy were serious about fulfilling their end of their contract with the Academy, then they would have taken more serious measures to avoid and circumvent such "printing problems," as feeble an excuse for internal failures as we at the Sentinel have ever heard.

The blame, of course, must inevitably come back to Kiteway. For it was he who chose Mind Candy as his Earth representatives, to execute his retrieval plan. It has become clear to the editorial staff of the Sentinel, over these last months, that the people of Earth are largely well-intentioned, and as a whole more intelligent and insightful than the state of their society might lead one to believe. How, then, is it possible that Kiteway chose the most hebetudinous incompetents available to serve as his hands and eyes on Earth?

The Cube retrieval effort should be removed from Kiteway's hands once and for all, because he has made it absurdly clear that he is not capable of making sharp decisions in the matter, but only of stalling for time. The Receda Cube and the hopes of our city should not have to rely on such fragile and ignoble motivations.

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View from Earth: Tragedy and Hope

By ROBPAL



It has been an extremely eventful week here on Earth, with three great examples of resilience by our people, which I hope will convey how much we are willing to endure to find The Cube and return it to Perplex City.

Firstly, a series of musical spectaculars resounded across Earth on Saturday in a bid to raise awareness of the extreme poverty and plight of our fellow Earthlings in Africa. The people in Africa are dying at a rate of 50,000 per day due to lack of money to pay for medicine. There is also a problem of corruption in some of the countries that make up the continent of Africa, which means that not all aid gets through to the right people. Eight leaders from Earth's richest states are meeting to try and agree a strategy to help alleviate this terrible situation by increasing aid, cancelling African debt and allowing free trade between African nations and the rest

of Earth. Saturday's concerts around the world drew in audiences of three billion people through various mediums. Aside from raising awareness of the issues mentioned above, the huge numbers of people watching were sending a message to the eight world leaders to listen to those who they represent and give the African people the help they so desperately need.

The second event was a huge victory for UK residents, particularly those who reside in London. Every four years, all the world's top sports men and women come together to compete in many different sporting disciplines. We call this the Olympic Games, and it is not merely a sporting competition, but a celebration of Earth's diversity of cultures and races. After many years of campaigning and several failed attempts, London was one of the final five candidates to be voted on by the International Olympic Committee. The announcement that London had won the bid was met with celebrations all over the country, as this will mean a large regeneration to the East end of London as well as better sporting facilities being built throughout the country to enable the children of today to be the athletes of the year 2012 London Olympics. This was a hard fought battle, but our determination and belief won the day.

Unfortunately the third example is not such an upbeat story. On 7th July at ten minutes to nine in the morning, several bombs exploded in central London killing several people and injuring many more. This was an act of terrorism by extremists

Continued

acting in the name of their Islamic religion; however, this is not the typical activity for followers of the Islam faith, most of whom are peaceful. This was a terrible tragedy, although despite the circumstances, the emergency services were second to none in their response. Even those caught up in the blasts were able to remain relatively calm in amongst the chaos that ensued around them. The over-riding feeling of the UK people is one of defiance. We will not succumb to the fear of terrorism and will continue to go about our daily lives. Unfortunately for some, they have lost family and friends in the atrocity, and continuing as normal will not be as easy for them.

I hope that you can see from these three examples that the people of Earth are very good at coming together in all circumstances to overcome adversities. And it is this resilience that we will be calling upon in our search for the Receda Cube, no matter how long it takes or what we have to overcome.

We at the Sentinel are shocked by this news of terrorism in London, and our hearts go out to those who have been affected by it. Please know that we are thinking of you. We find ourselves more impressed each day with the strength of will and determination of all of the residents of Earth to shape their world into a better place.

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Kohler: Earth Idioms Invading Perplex City

By FOSTER LIDDELL



Ernestine Kohler

In her new book, 'Earth is a Noun' author and Marmalejo College sociologist Ernestine Kohler examines the profound effect that Earth culture has had on language, fashion, and societal norms over the last few decades. "It's like the city early on made a value judgement that all things of Earth were desirable, without a more logical review regarding how this would negatively change our own world," Kohler wrote in the preface of the book.

One group she sees particularly under bombardment are the under-30 crowd. "These children have been exposed to Earth culture their entire lives," she said in an interview

with the Sentinel. "Their knowledge regarding the traditions and values [of Perplex City] is simply miniscule." She pointed to a growing economic reliance on the solstice holidays as gift-giving events. "This is a very Earth-driven change," Kohler said. Traditionally, these holidays are a time for small hand-made or silly gifts, and not the retail blow-out we see today.

Kohler also points to the way today's youth parrot Earth slang and idioms rather than inventing their own. "We all know our true culture puts a tremendous value on creativity and innovation," she said. "That makes it even more a tragedy that our children are enslaved by the power of words from another world, and their natural tendencies have been thoroughly inhibited."

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The book lampoons the final result of this parroting, from fads such as keys modified to look like Earth tech, to the hunger for traditional Earth media, to the phenomenal popularity of such Earth-replica stores as Earthworks or Hannigan's. Kohler suggests that the city might strongly benefit from ceasing all study of the Earth and mothballing all of the body of research performed upon Earth-related topics.

The book is Kohler's first venture into the hot topic of Earthology. Her previous works, including 'Faces of the Cube: The Silent Voices of Secular Cubism,' have primarily addressed the influence of religion on the people and institutions of Perplex City.

'Earth is a Noun' is available from Seaside Press with a recommended retail price of PCL180.

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Ikonnikoff Tragedy Memorial Planted

By JARED CHERRYWOOD

Nine trees were planted at the periphery of the Diamond Span in memorial to the nine who lost their lives in a series of freak accidents last year while hiking in Catbite. Relatives of the nine victims of the so-called Ikonnikoff tragedy each spoke shortly about their memories of the victims, and publicly absolved Ikonnikoff Outdoor Adventures of any blame.

“I speak on behalf of all of the families when I say that those who have been encouraging us to file a lawsuit have nothing but base greed in their hearts,” said Cecilia Hu, the mother of Frances and Jordan Hu, both only 19 when they were killed in the fire last August. “Even Trip Ikonnikoff himself lost his son in this awful accident. It would be a failure of justice to attack him in the courts when he should be grieving alongside us.”

John Wisdom, father to victim James Wisdom, 20, concurred. In his own speech, he added that “we can only draw one lesson from this, to live each day deeply, because fate is so terrible and unknowable.”

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The nine dead, all students, were participating in a week-long camping tour run by Ikonnikoff Outdoor Adventures. A sudden lightning storm brewed on the last day of the trip, and a nearby lightning strike simultaneously disabled the group’s keys and started a forest fire. The group set off emergency flares, but were overwhelmed by smoke before rescuers had an opportunity to respond. The fire subsequently took nearly a week to extinguish.

The trees are planted in a circle at the edge of the Diamond Span, surrounding a granite memorial and lookout point detailing the events of the tragedy. A lantern has been placed in the centre of the circle to serve as a symbolic eternal flame.

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RFD Awarded City Star

By ROLAND GERBERA

The City Council awarded the City Star leitmark to Roll for Damage last night for their work promoting youth participation in civic discourse. The ceremony and banquet last night were attended by the band and their entourage, members of the city council, and leaders of an array of youth groups.

Council leader Camryn Scott gave the leitmark to each bandmember in turn, remarking at the end of the ceremony that she felt “touched by greatness.” She quipped, “Anyone can grow up to be on the city council, there have been hundreds of us. [But] in the history of our city, no three individuals have ever before done what Roll for Damage has.”

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Bassist Keenan Thoreau spoke when the award was given, thanking the city for the recognition. “This is just an amazing honour,” he said. “I love this city with all my heart, and I’m profoundly grateful we’ve had this opportunity to give something back.”

Roll for Damage have been active in recent years in highlighting the

importance of involvement in public life to young adults approaching voting age. One of their early hits, “Make a Stand,” is commonly believed to be about the perils of apathy in democratic life. Their forthcoming album, *Take Initiative*, is rumoured to further the band’s attempts to induce greater political involvement in their fan base.

Notably in attendance was singer Alejo Jackson’s current flame, Aurora Belle. The pair were practically inseparable, and some attendees felt their affectionate behavior was inappropriate for such a public venue. “She was practically climbing down his throat,” complained one witness. “Just no sense of decency, none at all.”

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Goran out of Games

By ALWHIN COPI

PCAG veteran Bryce Goran was knocked out of the competition late yesterday afternoon by controversial player Myra Champaign, following a string of lacklustre performances in recent weeks. Champaign's 7-3 victory over Goran has sealed her reputation as a player worth respect, despite her competition in a field of far older and more experienced gamesmen.

Goran is the first major player eliminated from the games this year, and several noted games observers expressed deep surprise that it came as early in the year as it has. "Typically, you don't see a sharp player [like Goran] accrue enough of a point deficit [to be eliminated] until October or November," said Chase Delaney, an Academy student-referee. "Even then, for a player of Bryce's status, it's just plain bad luck."

Goran himself spoke to the press briefly after the match, expressing his "deep disappointment" in himself and in his performance. "We all know I'm capable of better play than this," he said. "I guess I'm just off my game this year."

Sports analysts suggest that Goran's personal life has impaired his concentration, as in recent weeks he has even lost to competitors such as Lance Rudolph and Charlotte Chao, both of whom he had been heavily favoured to defeat. A source close to Goran indicated that he recently separated from his long-time partner, and that Goran has suffered insomnia and loss of appetite as a result. "It's almost for the best," said the source. "Now that he's out of the games, maybe Bryce can get a little chemical assistance and start to feel better in time for next year's play."

Until this year, Goran has enjoyed a steady climb in his individual ranking over the past six years. Last year, he finished fifteenth overall, his best performance to date. His elimination so early this year, however, has clearly set a low point in his career.

Several opponents of Champaign's admission into the PCAG railed against the young player anew following the news, pointing to Goran's loss as a sign that "enhanced" players will surely push out "clean" players. PCAG chairman Robert Zhi-Hui has dismissed these claims as nonsense.

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View from Earth: Puzzling History

By MATILDA AKAMA



Earth-based puzzles have had an interesting evolution over the years. Early puzzles were communicated on by word of mouth and seen as a leisurely way to pass the time. Later,

codes and ciphers were developed to send secret messages, often during political conflict and wartime. Breaking these codes provided many people with the ultimate challenge in puzzle solving, as well as a career. One of the most famous events in Earth's history was unlocking the secrets of ancient Egyptian writing on the Rosetta Stone in 1799.

Different types of puzzles were invented around this time. The Chinese were playing with Tangrams -- seven geometrical pieces which could be made into various shapes. Jigsaw puzzles go back to the 1760s when European mapmakers pasted maps onto wood and cut them into small pieces. In the early 19th Century the first crossword appeared, and since then has been a regular feature of many newspapers around the world.

During the World War, the UK government even hired new cryptography recruits via a crossword competition. These cryptographers were instrumental in deciphering the enemies' messages and winning the war. However, because their work was classified top secret they are only now getting the credit they deserve.

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Who could forget the Rubik's cube, a craze that swept around playgrounds in 1982 and sold over 100 million? Many resorted to peeling the coloured stickers off and cheating!

As computers became affordable, computer games grew in popularity and special consoles were developed for the sole use of game playing, such as the Playstation and Xbox. Many of the games were based on puzzle solving, and today's technology has allowed spectacular special effects and almost life-like graphics. They have not been without criticism, including concerns from parents that the level of violence is too realistic, and that they encourage anti-social behavior and a lack of exercise. On the plus side researchers have found regular gamers have increased spatial perception and concentration skills. Players may also improve their hand-eye coordination and problem-solving abilities.

Recently there has been a trend towards cocooning and all things retro are back in fashion. Playing board games and classic

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80s computer-based games, such as Space Invaders and Pac Man, are seeing a renewed interest.

In the last few years, there has been an underground of new games based on mixed media known as Alternative Reality Gaming (ARGs). The neat thing about ARGs is the breadth and variety of puzzles intertwined with creative storytelling. It is almost impossible to solve one by-oneself and encourages the use of the internet to search for answers, research new topic areas and collaborate with others to find the elusive, and sometimes obscure, answers.

Even in the last few months, Sudoku from Japan has had a phenomenal growth in popularity and is the latest “in thing.” Although for many, you either love it or loath it, but one thing is for sure, puzzle solving is here to stay.

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Sober Scrutiny of Sente's Schemes

Opinion/Editorial



While most news outlets are busy trumpeting the achievement and success of Master of the Academy Sente Kiteway's alliance with Earth-based Mind Candy, we at the Sentinel prefer to take a step back and evaluate the situation a bit more dispassionately. We must now ask ourselves: Is this victory?

For those among us who have not been able to stomach news regarding Kiteway or the Receda Cube, long stolen and presumed lost somewhere upon the Earth these past months, let us briefly outline the retrieval plan and its painful journey to adolescence. The purpose of this plan is to create interest in and incentive for

the people of Earth to find the Receda Cube and return it to its rightful place at the Academy, or, failing that, to a safe authority on Earth.

To that end, Kiteway has assembled an eclectic team of puzzle scribes (to put it generously) and commissioned a series of puzzle cards. These cards are to be designed primarily in Perplex City, but all will be physically produced on Earth. The intent of these cards is to rally Earth attention around the cause of the missing Cube and engage as many people as possible in the effort to locate it. As further motivation, Kiteway is offering a generous monetary reward to anyone who finds and returns the Receda Cube.

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Kiteway has formed some sort of contractual agreement for this puzzle-card production with Earth-based games company Mind Candy, though the details of this agreement are jealously guarded. The Sentinel staff have some profound misgivings regarding the motivations and capabilities of this lot, especially given that Kiteway has been remarkably close-mouthed regarding how he located and evaluated them, but that is the topic for another column entirely.

We at the Sentinel must regretfully admit that we have underestimated both Kiteway and Mind Candy. From the moment we heard of the Receda Cube

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retrieval program, we had it pegged as a misbegotten chimera of a scheme, contrived in order to cover the tracks of the guilty, and fated to suffer an ignominious death. In this, we were at least partly wrong.

It is true, then, that Kiteway has been successful in breathing life into his ill-conceived plan. Puzzle cards are available for sale. By most accounts, Earth people are increasingly interested both in our city and our plight.

But this brings us back to larger and more meaningful questions. Will this plan succeed? The Sentinel has little confidence in the ability of Kiteway or his lackeys on Earth, given the ridiculous amount of time that it has taken for these allies to get as far as they have. There is little evidence yet that all of Kiteway's machinations to date have furthered the end we must keep in sight, that of returning the precious Receda Cube to our people. We must express deep and sincere doubt that the path Kiteway has chosen will lead to success. The City Council has thus far declined to enact piercing oversight on Kiteway and his administration of the retrieval efforts, but if this course of bumbling and partly-considered action continues much longer, we feel that even Camryn Scott will see the wisdom of evaluating alternative options.

Never forget: Perplex City is watching you, Sente.

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Levenay Tell-All Book Finds Publisher

By CORINNE HATHAWAY

The great, lamented Isabella Levenay may have left us, but her empire lives on -- that is, unless her warring heirs tear her legacy apart in their squabble for a share of the stake. In the latest news in the Levenay saga, her nephew, Isador Levenay, has penned a kiss-and-tell exposé of the inner workings of the company and its dysfunctional family. The book is expected out from White & Olson in a few months' time.

The Sentinel was sent an advance copy of the manuscript under the condition that no excerpts could be printed. The book paints Isabella herself as a draconian perfectionist who was cold to her family, her children as weak and surrounded by sycophants, unable to make independent decisions, and reveals the petty and often cruel interactions between all of the family members in the years since Isabella's death, as each heir has fought for greater control of the enterprise -- and that's just the first few chapters.

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In response to the news, Levenay's current

CEO and Isabella's son, Oscar Levenay, was simply furious. "Isador has no right to be telling tales in this way," he said. "This is nothing but an act of jealousy and greed. How would he know what went on between my mother and my siblings? He wasn't there. ... I assure you my mother was a very loving and warm individual." Oscar Levenay indicated that he is going to be pursuing legal avenues to prevent full release of the book on the grounds that it is libellous and untrue.

Isador Levenay declined to be interviewed at this time, but said that he would be happy to speak in depth after the release of the book as a part of its promotional effort.

Haute designer Isabella Levenay began her business as a modest couturier in the Artist's Quarter in early 203. By the time of her death in 265, her brand had become one of the most recognised in Perplex City, and offered merchandise ranging from clothing, handbags, and accessories, to even home furnishings, beauty products, and a highly-regarded chain of retreat spas. The Levenay corporate empire is estimated to be worth PCL7.2 billion, though it is impossible to precisely calculate the true worth of the privately-held company.

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Sentinel Opens Contest for Free Advertising

Special Announcement

The Sentinel has been publishing its External Edition on Earth for four months now, and to celebrate this unprecedented achievement, we would like to reward our loyal Earth readership. From now until 19 August, the Sentinel will accept submissions from Earth readers to run as absolutely free adverts.

These submissions can advertise the cause of your choice -- an Earth business, a web site, or a charity you support; create whatever is meaningful to you. We ask only that the art and language of your submissions be free of copyright concerns and be in commonly-regarded good taste.

Submissions should be image-only, no embedded sound or animation, please. They must take the form of one of our existing adverts, and should be submitted as 72-dpi JPG, GIF or PNG images. Sizes are as follows:

*Wide banner adverts are 468 x 60 pixels
Skyscraper adverts are 160 x 600 pixels
Square adverts are 250 x 250 pixels*

Please submit the material to contest@perplexcitysentinel.com with the image or images attached. In the body of your email, please indicate what URL you would like the adverts to link to, if any. If you would like to propose material corresponding to multiple projects or businesses, please send separate email for each advertiser.

All adverts will be reviewed by a committee comprising elements of the editorial and advertising teams of the Sentinel, and the best several will be notified and given free rotation on the Sentinel's External Edition. If you have any questions regarding the submission or review process, please write to contest@perplexcitysentinel.com.

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View from Earth: Culture Clash

By SEEJ ENGINE



A recent Sentinel article discussed the new book by Ernestine Kohler, 'Earth is a Noun,' and detailed Kohler's concerns that traditional Perplex City culture is being overwhelmed by trends, fashions and idioms from Earth as a result of your culture's detailed study of ours.

This is not an alien phenomenon to societies on Earth. There is constant cross-pollination of ideas, slang, techniques and more. This process has been taking place since before our history records began; the uniquely human capability for complex language has allowed our civilisations to grow and develop far beyond those of any other species on our planet. Some even argue that developing such abilities is tied into the evolution of larger and more elaborate brains capable of abstract thought and reasoning.

Throughout our history civilisations have looked to their neighbours to adapt parts of their society and make it their own, be this building pyramids or launching spacecraft. Exposure to other cultures in this manner brought an understanding and appreciation of traditions which initially seemed strange and unusual. Those lucky enough to see these alternatives to the traditions they grew up with were able to decide whether they preferred the unconventional choice and altered their lives accordingly. This process has allowed memes such as the Scientific Method or Mathematical Proof to propagate, as well as allowing language to evolve, adapt and change.

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Unfortunately, whilst many people feel instinctively compelled to seek out and embrace new ideas in this way, a few seem terrified to accept change as a normal part of the continued development of a civilisation. In the U.S.A. in the 19th century, one of the main causes for the civil war was the reluctance of many people to accept that black people had an equal place in society to white people. China has only recently begun re-opening its borders to Western influence, though such influence always inevitably crept in, and as a result the people of China had to suffer the oppression of having their links with the outside world forcibly severed.

Even right now in the U.K. many people seem to view American popular culture with fear and trepidation, and have similar

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concerns to Kohler that such an influence on young people can only be negative, despite a lack of evidence to support such a view.

As history has taught us several times over, the truly strong and enlightened civilisations are those that are prepared to assimilate new ideas and place them alongside their existing beliefs. Trying to prevent contact with anyone 'outside' is an unworkable, insular response to something that is probably not going to do any harm to a society. I appreciate Kohler's concerns, but I suggest that a much more successful approach to the young Perplexian's lack of knowledge of their own traditions is simply to educate them more clearly about their own world and to make them aware of the reasons to be proud of their culture. That way, perhaps Earth and Perplex City can both benefit from sustained contact with each other.

The View from Earth column is currently accepting submissions from its Earth readership. Please submit completed articles for consideration to news@perplexcitysentinel.com. Please include the pen name you wish to use and a photograph of yourself for our artists to work from.

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Ascendancy Shamed

By GARIMA KING

Attendees at the Point Music Festival over the weekend suffered from sweltering heat in the most embarrassing so far of Ascendancy Point's infrastructure failures. "It must have been a full four degrees too hot," said music fan and festival attendee Scott Gambon, 53. "We didn't feel so much as a breeze [all night]. We think the air conditioning system was simply off-line during the festival."

Jules Northerlie, the Point's communications director, admitted that there were some environmental problems during the Point Music Festival, but that they have been overstated. "We agree that it is terrible that some of our patrons were a little uncomfortable during the festival, but let's put this matter into perspective. It's not like anybody suffered from heat stroke," she said.

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Organisers of the festival declined to formally comment, but Gambon said that he complained after the event and was informed that the venue contract is being very carefully examined to see if the Point was in violation of its agreement. "I think all of us should get at least credit

for some of the drinks we had to buy," said Gambon. "You never saw lines like at that bar Saturday night."

The humiliating climate control failure comes as no shock after recent revelations that Ascendancy Point is suffering massive problems with its environmental, security, and business systems. An anonymous source on the building's maintenance staff has indicated that the concert's climate control problems are linked to corruption in a database containing business data. "It's an outrage how poorly planned these systems are," said the source. "There's no such thing as a single bug in one system [in Ascendancy Point] because everything is so completely tied together."

These problems are rumoured to be under heavy investigation by the building management, who allegedly hope to repair the situation well ahead of Ascendancy Point's gala tenth anniversary celebration next month. The gala event is intended to kick off several months of publicity events, but the effect of several months of publicity disasters -- such as the music festival -- could seriously damage the building's reputation as the pinnacle of stylish living.

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Incidence of Twins Rising, Study Finds

By LUCAS VOORHIES

A routine analysis of last year's births made a surprising discovery: the incidence of twin births in Perplex City has been steadily rising over the last several months, and is now nearly 8% above the baseline rate of two years ago.

The discovery was made when researchers at Ng General Hospital were preparing a baseline report of the outcomes for all births at the hospital in the preceding 12 months to determine how intrauterine medical procedures impact quality of life for the mother and child through the first year.

"At first we thought we must have hit on a statistical fluke. Then we requested data from the city's other hospitals and found the result was consistent across the whole region," said researcher Dr. Ron Jardin. "Obviously this wasn't what we were planning on studying, but we're planning to look into this right away."

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Dr. Jane Oberweiss, team lead for the study, said that even when factors such

as average maternal age and assisted reproductive methods are taken into account, there is still a meaningful rise in twins. "We're at a loss to explain it," Oberweiss said. "We had thought this was a fairly static value, and to see such a sharp change in a short period of time is really quite surprising."

Double the Love, an organisation that provides support and advice to new parents of multiple births, indicated that membership has risen modestly in recent years, though statistics were not readily available. "We thought it was just a successful outreach program," remarked Zachary Owens, the organisation's president.

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Youth March Protests City Housing Policies

By WILHELMINA BEST

A group comprising students and entry-level workers marched on City Hall this week in protest of council policies that, they say, encourage housing prices to spiral out of control and are forcing young people to move out of the city. The group, Youth for Fair Housing, said that around 350 individuals participated in the march, but that nearly 20,000 had signed the petition they delivered to the Office of the Council.

“I love this city and I can’t imagine living anywhere else,” said YFH spokesman Colin Applebalm, “[But] I know that as soon as I finish out my games year at the Academy and become ineligible for student housing, I’m going to have to move out to one of the suburbs. ... There is simply no place in the heart of the city where you can afford to live when you’re just starting out.”

Council member Nathan Earlywine met with the group during the march and gave a short speech indicating that he is sympathetic to the problem. He reminded the rally that the Northside development plan had been intended to alleviate these

specific issues, before it was derailed by a group of anonymous environmentalists, who purchased the land with the intent of leaving it wild.

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“The council is working hard to protect your interests,” Earlywine told the gathered protestors. “We are examining different strategies, including incentives for housing owners and tax credits for early-life renters, to make it possible for more of our youth to stay in our city.” He promised to push Council Leader Camryn Scott to hold an open-air discussion of the issue to consider any creative methods that the public might have to offer.

Police reported that the crowd was impassioned but peaceable, and no arrests were necessary.

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PCBC Heir Questioned

By ALWHIN COPI

Rumours are flying that the PCBC board of directors are increasingly dissatisfied with Walter Cove-Houghton, soon to step up to the CEO spot. Cove-Houghton will be replacing current long-time CEO Jonathan Smart, who is stepping down in September.

Some sources indicate that the board is showing an unsurprising resistance to change, and that nothing Cove-Houghton does could affect his reception. “The board are all friends with Jonathan, they spend evenings out playing poker and planning the future of the bank,” said board member Jeanine Price. “We all know that Walter heralds a new day. ... We really need the skills and perspective he is bringing, so what we see now are just growing pains. We’ll all get over it,” she said.

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But other sources close to the board disagreed, if off the record. “To be perfectly frank, Walter can be very abrasive,” said one anonymous source. “It’s true he’s ushering in needed changes, but he doesn’t have [Smart’s] way of smoothing the ruffled feathers while he’s

getting the wheels spinning.”

PCBC spokesman Cory Clary denied that there is any behind-the-scenes drama. He told reporters that the board has been “really positive” about Cove-Houghton’s selection as the next CEO. “The board knows that Mr. Smart is staying in a position of influence, and that is more than enough to retain the confidence of all of the board, our investors, and of course our customers.”

Although Jonathan Smart is formally stepping down as CEO, he will be remaining on the PCBC board indefinitely.

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View from Earth: Privacy or Paranoia?

By COOKSTER



Cookster The recent bombings in London will be sure to add further fuel to the privacy vs. security debate that currently dominates the over-dinner conversation of middle-England; no more so than

in our government's current predilection for identity cards. The concept of carrying such a card is both foreign and frightening to many of this country's citizens, and some have denounced the idea before hearing either the case for or against.

With biometric data the latest theme being touted as a way of fraud-prevention, many feel that too much information being held on the cards infringes on our civil rights, and would allow many people to access personal details without the card holder knowing. Our government believes the scheme is the way forward in the fight against terrorism, although how it could have prevented atrocities such as the ones we witnessed in London is a point that

its champions will have to fight hard to prove in order to win over its critics.

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The debate is sure to rage on far beyond the eventual date of implementation, should it come, but in the meantime I believe we can learn much from Perplexians and your unquestioned acceptance of Keys. While they are much more sophisticated and integral to life than any ID card introduced on Earth would be, I believe the concerns over privacy must ring true in some ears.

You, as Perplexians, must surely worry at times that the carrying of such an important yet personal piece of kit, required to access such everyday items as a city newspaper, would be allowing organisations everywhere to collate data about you; building up information for reasons as inconsequential as advertising, or perhaps even more sinister means?

I cannot believe that the paranoia that infuses itself in the minds of Earth citizens at the mention of identity cards did not present itself in some form when Keys were introduced into your society. The adoption of such a technology here would be unheard of at the moment, especially when such tools as the relatively inferior internet are still eschewed by some for the fear that prying eyes may come wandering into their homes.

Of course, we on Earth still know little of

Continued

how and when Keys became part of your lives and it seems that even the more reclusive cultures in your civilisation have accepted their usage, be it not in the conventional way that most of you use them. It is this blind acceptance of Keys that makes me wonder: Are we the ones who need to cast aside our cynicism and learn to trust and adopt new technologies as do the Perplexians, or are you the ones who need to see through the naivety of your culture and realise the dangers that holding keys present to you both as individuals and as a society?

The View from Earth column is currently accepting submissions from its Earth readership. Please submit completed articles for consideration to news@perplexcitysentinel.com. Please include the pen name you wish to use and a photograph of yourself for our artists to work from.

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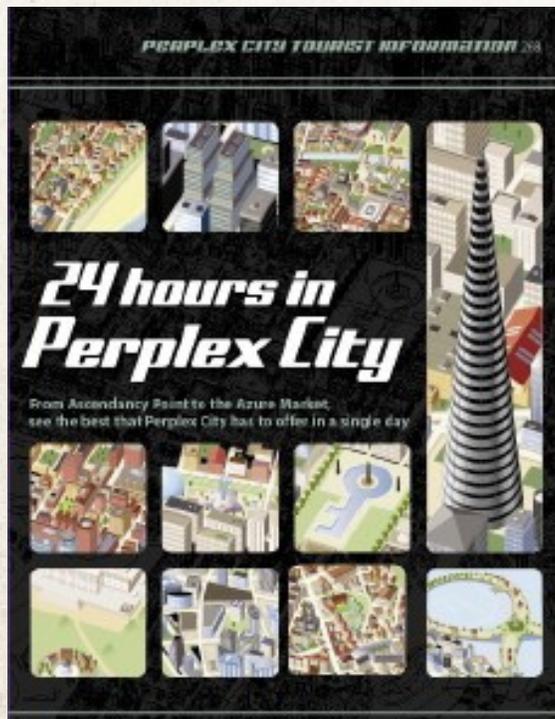
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The Perplex City Tourist Guide



There's more to Perplex City than Ascendancy Point! That's why the Sentinel is pleased to present our brand-new tour guide, 24 Hours in Perplex City. We've put together this fast-paced schedule to help you budget your time most effectively and hit all of the must-see spots.

With this short guide, you'll know where to eat, where to party, and where to expand your horizons -- just like a local. Even if you live in Perplex City, the guide may show you how to better enjoy your

home town.

If you're in the city for a more leisurely visit, this guide is an excellent launch pad for helping you decide where to spend more time. Also check our City Calendar, below, for seasonal events.

Calendar of Events

The Perplex City Tourist Guide is produced in conjunction with the Perplex City Tourist Information Centre and designed by the Open Design Agency. Please visit the Tourist Information Centre at 181 Villier Court (near Meadow Road subway station) for more guides and maps.

This calendar lists some of the upcoming events in Perplex City.

July 29 - Aug. 6

Craft Fair. Works from artists of all styles and in all media are on display at this juried craft festival. Admittance is free. Runs from noon to 9pm every day.

Aug. 5 - 8

Alchymical Celebration. This evening event in the Old Town showcases all of the old-fashioned flash and glamour from the birth of chemistry. Fireworks, refreshments. Admittance is free. Runs from dusk until midnight.

Continued

Aug. 27 - September 26

Apple Festival. Venture out to the farm country for apple-picking, sugared doughnuts, and traditional rural entertainment. Horse-drawn wagons, corn mazes, hot cider. Call the week before for specific hours and pricing.

Sept. 1 - 4.

Annual Pyramid Tournament. Come and test your skill against all comers in the city-wide annual pyramid tournament! Starts at 10am at Euler's Disc. Register to play 24 hours in advance. PCL18 to enter, free to watch.

Sept. 10

Field Day. Test your muscles against your fellow citizens in this rivalry of sheer animal prowess. Foot races, jumping, hurling. Begins at 8am. Free to enter, admission PCL30.

Sept. 9 - 19

Midnight on the Strip. This romantic midnight music festival is sure to generate memories you'll treasure for years to come. Enjoy the music and catch midnight sales on the Strip, or rent a gondola and enjoy the city skyline from a quiet distance. Midnight to 6am.

Oct. 8

Dance Auditions. Open auditions for the Perplex City Dance Company. Auditions open for public viewing, though seating is limited on a first-come basis. Would-be dancers sign up with the company in advance. Runs from 1pm until all dancers have auditioned.

Oct. 24 - 28

Science Festival. See what the brightest amateur minds in science have discovered in this year's festival. Hours from 10am to 4pm every day.

Nov. 5

Community Chorus. Join other singers for the annual community performance of Fei's Discovery, Parts 1-3. No prior experience in singing is required, just bring your sense of majesty! Be sure to arrive at the Hausam Auditorium by 7pm. Seating is limited.

Nov. 12

Puzzle Designers Summit. Puzzle architects of all levels of skill and experience are invited to this PCAG-supported summit on the state of puzzle design. Meet the superstars behind this year's PCAG matches. 9am to 4pm.

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Woman Rescues Family Capsized in Open Sea

By KATE BREWSTER



Juliet Romanova

Twenty-three-year-old Juliet Romanova was a true hero on Sunday when she saved the lives of a family of five who ran into serious peril during a marine outing, authorities say. “We were out sailing and my mum and dad let me have a go at running the ship,” said 14-year-old Harold Davies. “I’d done it plenty of times [and in] rougher water, but this time we capsized.”

Randall and Christina Davies, 50 and 52 respectively, were on their family craft, the Seabreeze with their three children: Lucia, 17; Harold, 14; and Frances, 9. The ship immediately recognised when it began to take in water, and sent out a distress signal, but they were too far at sea for a rescue ship to reach them in time.

“They must have been a solid five hours out,” said Mariners Rescue Corps volunteer Chloe Reubens. “The family is very lucky that there was anybody nearby at all.”

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Randall Davies said that he believes the ship’s wind and motion sensors must have become faulty to allow the craft to tip as it did. “This sort of thing happens, I suppose, but we’re still a little bit in shock,” he said. “I feel very lucky today.”

Romanova’s boat caught the distress signal and she was able to locate the family in under fifteen minutes. “It was really frightening,” she said. “All I could see was the tip of the white sail, and these pale faces bobbing in the water.” In a further twist, Romanova’s boat, the Wind of Fortune, only has seating capacity for four individuals at once. To carry all six individuals safely to land, Romanova and the older two Davies took turns swimming behind the craft, allowing the three children to remain on board with two adults at all times.

“I didn’t do anything exceptional, so I’m no hero. ... I’m just glad I was there to help,” said Romanova. “Lucky for everyone, I suppose.”

The group were intercepted by a rescue ship on their way toward land, and all six individuals were examined by a doctor, though no medical intervention was deemed necessary. The Mariners Rescue Corps said that they plan to locate the sunken craft and analyse its mechanics, in order to report any discovered faults to the manufacturer.

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Whipsmart Swamped

By CORINNE HATHAWAY

An unexpected spike in summer demand for ice cream has Whipsmart struggling to increase its production. “This is really unprecedented,” said Whipsmart spokesman Donnie Munsey. “There aren’t many ways to increase the volume of ice cream we make without hurting our quality, and compromising our quality is something we are completely unwilling to do.”

Consumers have already felt the effects. “I went to Whipsmart last week and they were all out of Monkey Puzzle,” said Wednesday Howe, 11, screwing her face into a grimace. “They didn’t have Vanilla or Quantum Cherry, either. I had to settle for Rummy Descartes!”

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Munsey admitted that there have been widespread shortages of popular flavours, but said that Whipsmart is committed to maintaining its pricing rather than taking advantage of high demand in order to turn a higher profit. “We value our customers too much for that,” Munsey said. “In a month or two, demand will drop, and everyone will remember how we reacted to this. We prefer to never leave a bad

taste in anyone’s mouth.”

Whipsmart shares popped up another 2% today, adding up to a whopping 37% gain in share price since early May. Analysts suggest, though, that Whipsmart would do well to increase the size of its dairy herd over the winter to avoid similar problems next year.

Dodgson Finance analyst Andrew Juniper said that “everybody loves it when [a company] can’t meet demand,” for one season, but that if it happens subsequently, shareholders begin to seriously question company management.

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PCAG Championship Season Opens

By CORWIN JONES



Robert Zhi-Hui

The formal PCAG championship season began quietly this week, with a low-key opening ceremony officiated by the reigning champion, Serena Duncan. The early matches were held primarily between players on the lower rungs of the leaderboard. Although championship play has now begun, the gala event officially welcoming the tournament to the city will be held on Saturday.

PCAG Chairman Robert Zhi-Hui said that the Saturday event will feature music and dance performances from senior Academy students, and that all living former PCAG champions are expected to be in attendance. Tickets have been sold out for nearly six months.

The championship schedule shows that the more high-profile matches are also expected to begin over the weekend, presumably to encourage higher attendance numbers. Most notably, Ryan Cahill's first match of the year will be at the gala event on Saturday. Cahill, the 267 champion, has exercised his prerogative to participate in championship play without going through the qualifying rounds.

The city is already gearing up for the months-long championship tournament, with retailers stocking fresh merchandise and consumers paying steep lecks for tickets to the hottest matches.

This season has already held its share of surprises, with top player Bryce Goran failing to qualify for the championship season after accruing a significant point deficit through July. Young Myra Champaign, though, has solidly reached a midboard position, despite the often-criticised decision to let her into play. Championship favourites for the year include Serena Duncan, and Gabriella Petel, who have both demonstrated finesse and versatility in their qualifying matches.

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Restaurants Embrace Earth Cuisine

By FOSTER LIDDELL

As the city's enthusiasm for all things Earth-related reaches unheralded heights, restaurants are starting to cash in with speciality dishes concocted to replicate the varied tastes of Earth. Prominent restaurant critic Wayne Cordoba said that the interest in Earth cuisine is a fairly new development. "Fashion is one thing, it's very disposable. But what people choose to eat, that is a very intimate decision," he said. "Our people are only now becoming ready for that kind of familiarity with Earth. ... Before now it would have been very uncomfortable."

Hot curry enchiladas are the highlight in the Mobius Strip bar Mexi's Place, which serves traditional South American dishes. The enchiladas are spicy and creamy alike, swimming in a brightly-coloured hot sauce. The bar offers a free meal to anyone who can eat an entire dish of their hottest rendition. "Nobody's done it yet," boasted the owner, Maxwell Ayala.

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Authentic American pemmican is an

increasingly popular snack food sold, especially among students, who often stay up to all hours. This high-energy snack consists of dried meat and fruit pressed into durable bars. Pemmican bars were first introduced in the Bridge Restaurant earlier in the year, but their popularity is making inroads in even the trendy Dalia Way shopping district.

Even haute hotspot Conundra has bowed to popular pressure and introduced Earth-style hot dogs, consisting of a heavily spiced beef sausage on a soft baguette, with such traditional Earth toppings as fermented cabbage (also called kimchee), mustard sauce, and tomato paste. "For a true taste of Earth, we create even the condiments in-house," said chef Heidi Halawa. "We have gone to extreme measures to ensure that our Earth-inspired dishes are absolutely authentic."

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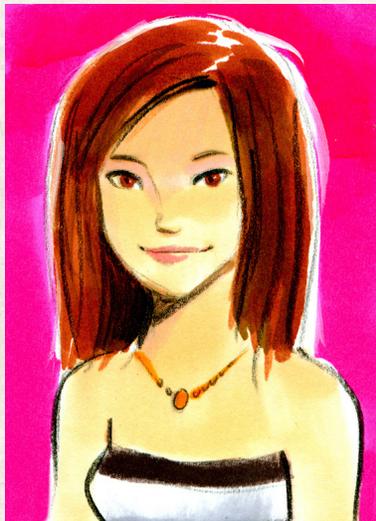
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Serena Takes Lead in Beginning Rounds of Championship Play

By CORWIN JONES



Serena Duncan

PCAG sweetheart Serena Duncan has taken a commanding lead in the first week of championship play, reinforcing her position as the widely-acknowledged favourite to win again this year. Her victories included a resounding 5-2 performance against Ryan Cahill, who foundered in the final three rounds despite a strong start.

Duncan said that she feels confident about the upcoming season. “I feel like I’m really hitting my stride for the year,” she told reporters in a post-match conference. “Ryan is a formidable opponent, to be sure. I don’t doubt I’ll have a tougher time next time.”

Some sport analysts have suggested that Cahill would have put in a stronger showing if he had participated in the qualifiers as a warm-up measure, instead of accepting the champion’s invitation given as a courtesy to all past winners. Cahill himself spoke after the match, saying that he was “of course unhappy” about the result. He warned, though, that “the season is quite long, and it would be foolish to extrapolate the course of the whole year from the first match.”

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The Duncan-Cahill face-off, the highlight of the opening gala, was one of the first high-profile matches of the season. The results of other notable weekend matches included Myra Champaign’s 4-3 win over Franz Lambert; Georgi Shepherd’s 4-3 win over Lucius Jorgensen; and Jack Fleury’s surprise 6-1 victory over Gabriella Petel.

The coming week will see Mikhail Terpening vs. Kevin Hamlet, Ethan Roanoke vs. Janice Termigant, and Klaus Johnson vs. Jeannie Murrow,

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Sentinel Bombarded

By WILHELMINA BEST

The offices of the Sentinel were swamped with protesters on Monday in the continuing furore over former advertising manager Ryan Klein's dismissal, which he alleges was motivated by religious intolerance. Monday's rally is just the latest in a string of protest rallies and other actions advocating Klein's immediate reinstatement.

Police estimate the protesters numbered over three hundred, some wearing cube-shaped helmets or brandishing cube-shaped placards. Klein did not attend the rally, and when contacted, expressed some surprise. "I'm touched [that] so many people are thinking of me," he said. He declined to answer questions addressing whether he is planning legal action.

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Sentinel publisher Lauren Grove has dismissed the claims of religious prejudice as ridiculous. Meanwhile, anonymous sources claim that she is under pressure from the board of CJM Holdings -- the Sentinel's parent company -- to provide a full accounting of the reasons that Klein was sacked. "The directorate is furious,"

said one source. "This is going to get rather nasty before it's done."

Other recent acts of protest on Klein's behalf have included thousands of letters to the editor, smaller rallies, and timed floods of the newspaper's communications infrastructure. Grove says she intends to neither address the protesters directly nor to reinstate Klein.

Ryan Klein was dismissed from his post at the Sentinel in mid-June, allegedly after the paper's senior management learned that he is a member of the Reconstructionist splinter cult.

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Holyoke Case Closed

By JEREMY CLARIDGE

The police department today announced that it is closing its investigation into the murder of Old Town entrepreneur Bernardo Holyoke. Holyoke was found dead in the bar he owned, the Five of Cups, in late April of this year.

Police Detective Helen Frye said that the police had followed through on every lead they could dig up, but that no further evidence as to the identity of the murderer had been found. “Of course we’ll reopen the file if fresh evidence should turn up, but for now, we’ve run out of resources,” she said.

She added that the department truly regretted its failure to produce results in the case. “Unfortunately, even the best forensic work has its limits. Ultimately, all of our leads just evaporated,” she said. According to Frye, no witnesses gave testimony leading to suspects, and hard electronic forms of evidence at the scene were either damaged or nonexistent.

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One of the case’s most promising leads, concealed equipment alleged to be stolen from the Academy, has turned out to be

more innocent than originally believed. Frye said that the items stolen from the Academy were simply automobile parts, and that some pieces were in fact obtained lawfully through a mechanical design class Holyoke had attended at the Academy in recent years. The other items were easily-obtained boards and motors one could find at most hardware retailers.

“We have discovered some information and made a few arrests,” related to what appears to be a small-time fencing operation Holyoke was running out of his establishment, Frye said. But Holyoke was in no way the spotlight into the city’s underworld that police had been hoping.

The police still have not been able to contact Holyoke’s estranged wife, Kostka (formerly Jessica), who now resides in a Reconstructionist compound. “It looks like Kostka and Holyoke had not had regular contact for months before his death,” Frye said. “We no longer believe she could give us helpful testimony.”

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Ontame Pushes Classics

By ROLAND GERBERA

Ontame Games has debuted a new upscale line of classic games in response to reviving interest in these traditional forms of play. The line, dubbed ‘Ontame Eternals,’ is expected to hit store shelves sometime in September, and includes such perennials as chess, pyramid, and cobblestones.

The games company has enjoyed a renewed interest in board, card and marble games over the last few years, as more and more people are looking for alternatives to electronic and interactive gaming. “This is a nice way to connect with your close friends and family,” said company spokesman Leonard Basem. “A lot of folks are looking for ways to get the most out of a quiet evening at home.”

Advertisement

Analyst Jackson Carrick agreed that a lot of the non-electronic children’s toys and games have been selling to older markets. “This is a smart move, giving adults what they want,” he said. “The trend is definitely away from the electronic and toward ownership of single-purpose items. These will be status items. These could be heirlooms.”

Carrick also suggested that Ontame can only benefit by diversifying away from its extensive holdings in modern key and computer-based puzzles and interactive games. “This will never be their flagship product, but it helps to strengthen the position of the company overall,” he said.

The new games are crafted out of luxe materials such as natural wood, stone, and sea glass. The company plans to make custom variants available on demand, for an additional fee.

Ontame Games was trading slightly up on the PCX to PCL202.38 after the announcement.

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View From Earth: Mixed-Up Meals

By VINCENT 'KALT' MALLEY AND PFC. PETER WALKER



Vincent 'Kalt' Malley and PFC. Peter WalkerThe Sentinel readership from Earth tuned in recently, likely wearing expressions of shock or bemusement, to the Sentinel article "Restaurants Embrace Earth Cuisine." An Earth reader may have reacted first in horror and surprise to the recipes mentioned, then wondered how well the altered recipes actually work - for example, substituting Korean kimchee for German sauerkraut as a hot-dog topping.

Many people on Earth would find such a combination distasteful at first, especially considering the strong aroma of kimchee - as Brian Enigma once said, "When opening a jar of kimchee, make sure you're surrounded by people who a] really like you or b] really hate you, as anyone in the middle ground will quickly gravitate towards the latter group."

It might likewise be said of certain other Earth dishes, such as haggis (a Scottish dish, composed of a sheep's stomach which has been thoroughly cleaned, which is then stuffed with offal [also thoroughly cleaned] and boiled slowly, and is often served with mashed turnips, often called 'neeps').

Still, there is merit in learning how to prepare gourmet foods the way they are culturally made. Though the Perplexian take on Earth cuisine may be altered, for better or worse, Earth readers would like to teach Perplex City how to prepare their favourite dishes. Let us give you a few examples, gathered from our friends around the globe:

Konamouse's Macaroni and Cheese

Ingredients:

- 1/4 cup (60g) butter
- 1/4 cup (60g) flour
- 2 cups (240mL) milk
- 1 teaspoon (5g) salt
- 2 cups (480g) elbow macaroni, cooked
- 2 cups (480g) shredded cheddar cheese

Cooking Instructions:

1. Mix together butter, flour, milk & salt

Continued

over low heat (do not let milk get too hot) to make a white sauce.

2. Add 1 1/2 cup (360g) shredded cheddar cheese; stir until melted.

3. In 2 quart (1.8L) casserole, place 1 cup (240g) cooked elbow macaroni, cover with half of the cheese sauce, then repeat. Top with remaining 1/2 c shredded cheese.

4. Bake at 350 degrees Fahrenheit (175 degrees Celsius) for 25 minutes.

Walker's Sparerib Roast

Ingredients:

2 pounds (1kg) beef spareribs
1 cup (240mL) barbecue sauce
Hot pepper sauce to taste (optional)

Cooking instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 450 degrees Fahrenheit (230 degrees Celsius)

2. If using hot pepper sauce, combine the barbecue sauce with the hot pepper sauce.

3. Using a spoon or pastry brush, apply the barbecue sauce to the spareribs and place them on a wire rack in a deep

roasting pan.

4. Place spareribs in oven. Cook 36-40 minutes, removing halfway through to turn and apply more barbecue sauce.

Note: The time provided above will ensure that the ribs are rare. Cook longer if you prefer medium or well-done.

Reason's Beans On Toast

Ingredients:

1 tin Heinz beans
2 slices of bread
Grated cheese (optional; Cheddar is recommended)
Worcestershire sauce (optional)
Whatever spices are lurking in the cupboard (essential)

Cooking instructions:

1. Heat the beans in a saucepan over medium heat.

2. While the beans are warming, toast the bread.

3. Add spices to the heated beans (Reason recommends chili powder); mix well

4. Place toast on plate; pour beans over toast.

Continued

5. Top with grated cheese and Worcestershire sauce, if desired.

(Reason also adds this disclaimer: “If planning to meet with important people - Dr Sente Kiteway, Michiko Clark, Eoin Morgan, or your girlfriend’s parents - do not consume this dish prior to the meeting, as unfortunate flatulent side effects may occur.”)

The places where these dishes are made are often thousands of kilometres separated from each other. This lends to keeping certain flavors and certain types of ingredients to certain, specific types of meals, which is why the Sentinel readers from Earth were mostly surprised by the use of kimchee on a hot dog, and curry on an enchilada. However, if it works, and it works well, the Perplexian take on old Earth recipes may be able to offer improvements to all our dining lifestyles.

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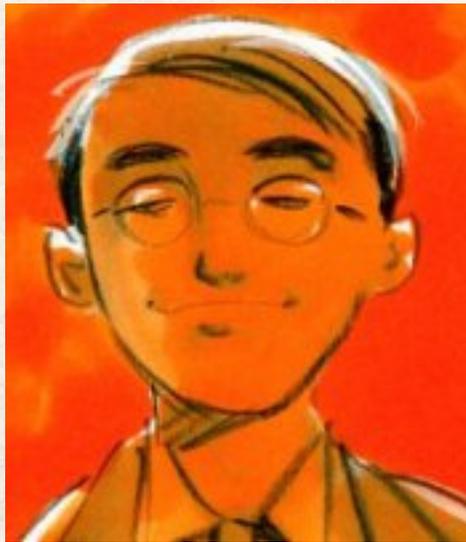
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Restructure Robbed, Security Chief Wanted

By CHO KAPLAN



Julian Guthries

The Restructure Gallery lost at least PCL120 million of stock in a daring Saturday night heist. Among the missing items is the famous Fiona Rincente painting, “Hands of Nature,” as well as significant collections by modern artists Nina Waterbury and Alex Ramirez. Police are searching for Julian Guthries, the art gallery’s director of security, in connection with the theft.

Police chief Eoin Morgan said that the building’s security systems are being reviewed by department specialists, but that the nature of the theft looks very much like an inside job. “The security systems appear fully functional, and nothing was disabled,” Morgan told reporters. “In fact, whoever did this had the cheek to set the alarm systems to active again on the way out.”

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Morgan said the evidence indicates that a team of gallery employees with high-level security access began to clean out the gallery starting minutes after closing time Saturday night. “It looks like the thieves hand-picked the most high-value items they could pack into a vehicle,” he said. Morgan believes it is unlikely that the culprits are still in Perplex City borders.

Vianne Powell, owner of the Restructure Gallery, said that she is “devastated by this betrayal.” She said that the thieves picked a time when the gallery had a much larger-than-normal stock of high-value artwork, in preparation for a number of upcoming private auctions.

John Ha of the Ha Gallery expressed deep sympathy over Vianne Powell’s situation. “In the business, we all know any security situation is only as good as your personnel,” he said. “This could happen to anybody. ... Julian had a stellar record until now.” He indicated that he hoped to be receiving a list of the specific artworks stolen within the week, in order to alert the police if any of them should be offered for sale.

Anyone with information on the theft, or on the whereabouts of Julian Guthries, Laurie Hobarton, or Oskar Deegan should alert the police immediately.

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Sentinel Publisher Summarily Dismissed

By WILHELMINA BEST

Sentinel publisher Lauren Grove was sacked late Monday afternoon following a morning meeting of the board of parent company CJM Holdings. The move is apparently over Grove's dismissal of former advertising manager Ryan Klein, who was himself sacked in mid-June after the paper's management learned that he is a member of the Reconstructionist Cubist cult.

CJM board member Uther Borland said that the decision had become inevitable. "Grove had opened the paper to an unacceptable degree of liability. ... But even beyond that, her performance in guiding the paper in fresh and innovative directions has been stone-poor." He indicated that the paper would be undergoing some significant restructuring on the board's direction in the coming weeks and months.

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Morale among the staff appears to have risen following the news. Current acting advertising manager Tanika Rogers said

that she would gladly step down to her previous position in order to allow Klein to return. "The important thing is that justice is done here," she said.

Editor-in-chief Michiko Clark will be acting publisher of the paper until a replacement can be found, though she said she "would prefer not to stay on the spot for terribly long." She said that she has already been briefed by the CJM Holdings directorate, and that she will likely announce some significant changes to the paper under their auspices in the coming week.

It is expected that Klein will be reinstated in his position sometime this week, provided he accepts the Sentinel's fresh employment offer. Klein himself told the Sentinel that he is "surprised and relieved" that his ordeal is nearly over, and added that he is "eagerly looking forward" to receiving a letter of intent from the paper.

Grove was escorted from the premises immediately following her meeting with the directorate of CJM Holdings, and could not be reached for comment.

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Art Thieves Caught

By JEREMY CLARIDGE

Seven former museum security staff who are suspected of stealing PCL122.8 million in irreplaceable art from the Restructure Gallery last weekend have been captured at the end of their three-thousand-mile flight to Allerdun. Police chief Eoin Morgan indicated that the thieves have already been released into Perplex City custody.

Morgan added that a cursory inventory has shown nearly all of the missing artworks in the possession of the suspects. He said that as soon as the police make a complete inventory, the goods will be returned to the hands of Restructure Gallery owner Vianne Powell.

Powell expressed tremendous relief at the news. "I would like to thank our law enforcement agents, who have tirelessly worked to resolve this matter. ... This has been the longest week of my life," she said. Powell said that the gallery would be remaining closed for business indefinitely, until she could personally review the security systems and make significant staffing changes. "Sadly, there is no electronic system in the world that could have prevented this kind of treachery," Powell said.

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Details of the heist are still sketchy, but it appears that former gallery security chief Julian Guthries had, over the course of several months, infiltrated the existing security team with a hand-selected crew in on his plan. Police say that the night of the theft, only Guthries' henchmen were at work, and their combination of clearances allowed them access to every piece on the gallery. "It was a perfectly designed and executed plan," said Morgan. "Quite sharp, really."

John Ha, the owner of the Ha Gallery, said that Guthries had a reputation for being the very best in the art world. "I would have hired him myself," he said.

The captured suspects include Julian Guthries and Laurie Hobarton, but the identities of the other five in the gang have not yet been confirmed by police.

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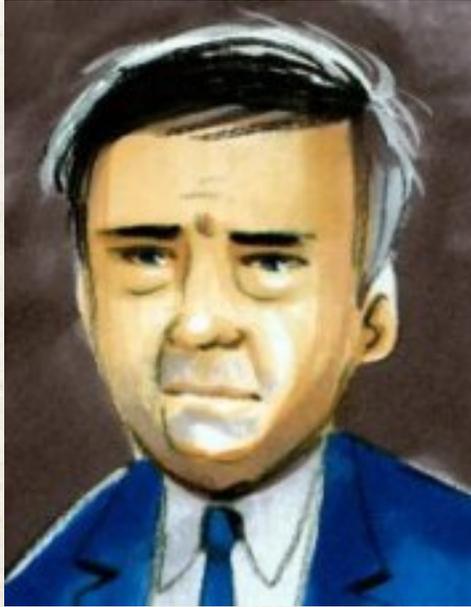
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Ayano Accuses Boss

By ALWHIN COPI



Rupert Ayano

Former Comprendo Finance accounts analyst Rupert Ayano has pointed the finger at his supervisor, Frida Lorne, as an accomplice in his illegal funds. Observers say that Ayano had been having an affair with Lorne, and had not incriminated her to the police out of loyalty; but after his sentencing, it “became clear to him that she wasn’t going to lovingly wait for his freedom,” according to Sharon Broward, one of his legal representatives.

Ayano now says that many of his illicit expenses were extravagant gifts for Lorne, and were made with her knowledge and encouragement. He also says that the bonuses and benefits he received had all been given her sign-off ahead of time. He had not deceived her regarding his eligibility, he claims; rather, she knowingly provided him with the funds as a show of affection.

Ayano has provided the police with an extract (thesentinel/public_access) of activity from his expense account that he claims most particularly prove his allegations against Lorne. The extract includes transactions over last year’s winter holidays, when Ayano says the pair splurged on a mini-vacation in the city.

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Lorne herself has said that Ayano’s accusation is “baseless and ridiculous,” and that she will be retaining legal advice. She refused to answer more specific questions, such as whether she did, in fact, go on holiday with Ayano last winter.

Police has said that they will be taking the new information “very seriously.” Police detective Tom Rice also acknowledged that the information on the relationship between Ayano and Lorne was not new to police, and that Ayano’s testimony could be helpful in establishing a case in “an angle we were already measuring.”

Ayano was convicted of fraudulently receiving over PCL800,000 in forged expense reimbursements and inappropriately obtained bonuses and benefits. His sentence is to serve five years in prison; he must also repay Comprendo Finance for every leck stolen, plus an additional PCL150,000 in punitive fines.

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Sentinel Changes Publishing Schedule

By KATE BREWSTER

In one of many changes expected in the wake of the sudden dismissal of former Sentinel publisher Lauren Grove, the Sentinel has re-negotiated the terms of its publishing agreement with the Centre for Reality Research, which allows the transmission of the external edition to an Earth readership. The paper will now publish only twice a week, rather than every weekday.

Sentinel acting publisher Michiko Clark admitted that the relationship between the paper and the CRR has been “often a bit tense.” Under the terms of the original agreement, the Sentinel had been given a certain amount of data they were allowed to transmit every day, a necessary measure given the limited nature of communication with Earth. Under the new agreement, the Sentinel will be allowed to push through a similar amount of data, but in larger bursts.

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According to a CRR employee who wished to remain anonymous, the staff at the CRR had become increasingly

frustrated with “newsies underfoot” nearly every day of the week. “The process has become simply too disruptive to our regular work,” the source commented. The source said that the Sentinel had negotiated hard to try to send over a larger amount of news per week, but that the CRR would not permit it. “Maybe in the future, when the data stream has grown fatter,” the source suggested, “but certainly not now.”

Another anonymous source within the Academy suggested that the change might be by way of punishing the Sentinel for its oft-critical coverage of Academy master Sente Kiteway, particularly in his handling the effort to retrieve the Receda Cube from Earth. “The crowd at the CRR is very loyal to Master Kiteway. ... I’m sure the two groups just rub each other the wrong way,” said the source.

Other Earth-related changes Clark has in the works involve encouraging more Perplexian businesses to advertise in the external edition, and sending over more editions of the famous “Iona Interviews” weekly feature

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View from Earth: Future Relations

By LT ENDER

Assuming that Sente's plan is fully successful in the retrieval of the Receda



Cube from Earth, where does that leave Earth-Perplex City relations? We are already able to freely trade information and communicate, and if the Cube found its way to Earth only shortly after

its disappearance, then timely transfer of physical matter must be possible. With your natural desire for knowledge, shown clearly in the Academy, it seems highly unlikely that our cultures would close all contact with each other after retrieval of the cube. (Although you have the real choice in this matter, as you found us.)

Will we someday see Perplexians exploring Washington D.C. on an "Earth-side" visit, or an Earth embassy somewhere near the Academy? I hope so. The interaction already caused by Sente's project has been very positive, even though it comes at a somewhat tense moment brought on the urgency of finding the Cube. It seems that all is proceeding well for two civilisations that just met.

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My only concern is of Earth polluting Perplex City. Crime does not seem to be a problem for you (the Cube aside), health care is at a level unheard of on Earth, and we have seen no mention of poverty, or war. Your public has a healthy culture based on intellectual tasks, not pop idols. While we can see that it is not perfect, it appears far more utopian than the current situation on Earth. While most of us are peaceful fair-minded citizens, there are some that see multiple malicious possibilities in a relatively innocent Perplex City. If there were a gateway of sorts linking Earth to Perplex City, how could we insure your and our safety?

However, perhaps this is too egocentric. No doubt your superior technology has found solutions to dealing with evil. Maybe your key system is the answer. I am sure that time will show us a solution. In the meantime, I can't wait to see the view from Ascendancy Point.

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Councilman Gaffe Brews Storm

By GARIMA KING



Councilman Roy Yolen

City council member Roy Yolen spurred a furious uproar Tuesday afternoon when he suggested that the best way to approach urban renewal in the Old Town would be to “burn the whole place to the ground.”

Davida Guardino, a citizen of the Old Town, took great umbrage with Yolen’s remarks. “That old bat showed absolutely no sensitivity to the people who live here in the Old Town, or the history and value that this part of the city offers,” she said. “The Old Town is the heritage of our people.”

Guardino’s point was amplified by Lara Coppertun, president of the Old Town chapter of the Perplex City Historical Society: “The Old Town is a crucial piece of living history,”

she said. “We can never understand where we are as a people until we’ve fully explored and understood everything that happened here.” Coppertun said that Yolen’s statements were distasteful and showed a clear lack of respect for the city’s rich history.

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Council member Kyra Anghanda added a political flavour to the outcry. “I am appalled at Roy’s inconsiderate statement,” she told reporters. “Surely our elected government officials should be mature enough to keep the level of discourse above this kind of ridiculous hyperbole.”

The question of urban renewal has remained the City Council’s primary focus in recent weeks, following the failed attempt to open the Northside Nature Preserve for new housing development. A group of private investors purchased the development rights for that land for an undisclosed -- but allegedly princely -- sum, leaving the council with a wheelbarrow of lecks and no path to roll it down. Yolen’s comment came toward the end of a five-hour meeting discussing the successes and failures of similar attempts over the last hundred years.

Yolen’s press representative, Oliver Powell, has said that the statement was “an ill-considered expression of frustration” regarding the difficult task of encouraging fresh growth in the Old Town. “Councilman Yolen profusely apologises for anyone who may have inappropriately taken this comment to heart.”

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Iona Interviews... Aurora Belle

By IONA RODIE

Aurora Belle, the legendary beauty who captured the hearts of the city at 15 years old, surprises me by her lack of self-assurance at 23. When she greets me at the door to her suite on the Strip, she is barefoot and seems puzzled to find me there. The atmosphere of her apartment is quieter and much more intimate than one might expect. No publicist is present, no entourage, nobody arranging her glossy tresses. Just her and the whisper of the ocean through floor-to-ceiling windows.

Her living room is decorated in shades of blue: smooth, watered fabrics and painted wood to complement the ocean view. The surroundings are free of media; no screens or interfaces intrude on the living space. Central to the room is a carved driftwood puzzle box.

“It’s an authentic Randal Tokei,” Belle enthuses. “It’s beautiful, isn’t it? And it’s supposed to have a piece of poetry inside. I haven’t solved it yet,” she smiles ruefully. Belle may feel unsure of her intellect, but it’s her charisma and her astonishing vocal talent that have endeared her to the public. Her first album, *Undone*, swept her to fame with its blend of warm ballads and upbeat numbers with an approachable, unsophisticated

edge. Since then, her loyal fan base has made her one of the city’s leading recording artists, even though the critics have sometimes been less than kind. So have the emotional rewards matched the financial ones?

“Well, sometimes yes, and sometimes no. Public life can be very difficult.” Aurora looks at her hands and bites her lip. “Once you’re just a bit famous, you become an easy target. I should probably have a thicker skin, but it’s easy to get your feelings hurt when so many people are saying nasty things about you. I’ve had my days of feeling pretty low about it.”

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The criticism has been particularly telling of late, too, with reviewers bombing her run in ‘Absalom and Tavent’ and her new album, alike. Jokes about how bad those two performances are have led to mutterings that Aurora’s career peaked at 17, when she discontinued her association with music pioneer Thaddeus Cordova in order to pursue her own creative vision. Does all of the negative publicity now make her yearn for those younger, simpler days?

“It was much easier when I was younger, and working with Master Cordova. It was almost like my voice was just an instrument he played. Nobody criticises Dorian Franke’s piano, you know?” She

Continued

frowns and hugs her arms closer around her waist. "It was very limiting, too. Very hard. Master Cordova is not always a... nice person. I had to learn to stop listening to my own artistic vision back then. I'm more free now, and I know my fans understand what I'm trying to say. I just wish the critics could be more understanding of me and what I'm trying to get across to them."

Indeed, the critics have not been understanding of her fresh creative vision. Each of the three albums she has put forth over the last five years have been considered worse than the last. Reviewer Arling Wilson has publicly begged her to leave music, to prevent her from "poisoning the public consciousness of our culture." Despite the critical barbs though, sales of her albums have kept a steady pace and she maintains her appeal in the teenage market, perhaps partly because of those very public conflicts with her mentor.

Of course, most people are more interested in Aurora's personal life now than in her career. When Aurora talks about her new beau, Alejo Jackson, her face glows with undeniable rapture. "It's definitely true love," she says. "I've never been with anyone who's made me feel so special before."

The rumour mill is heavy with talk regarding the notoriously hard-living Roll for Damage singer and his previous

relationship with rival singer Joya. So, her fans and his both want to know: are she and Alejo planning a future together? And with Alejo's ex-girlfriend Joya pregnant, does Aurora feel insecure about her relationship?

Aurora smiles, coy. "We're so very much in love. He is definitely the only one for me, I'm positively sure. I think before long, we'll be married and have a house full of little boys and girls." She leans forward, conspiratorial: "We're going to record a few duets, as well. Isn't that the most romantic thing you've ever heard? He never, ever recorded a song with Joya."

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View From Earth: Impersonal Connection

By OLIVER KEERS



Here on Earth, many of us seek to help you with your plight. We work together as we realise the importance of retrieving the Receda Cube. Not only does this act help the people of Perplex

City rescue their priceless artefact, but it also brings our two cultures closer together. However, so far, the Earth based branch of the Cube Retrieval Team have only been able to communicate indirectly, through the internet or other means.

We have met in the past. In the early days of our communications, many of us met Dinah at Abbey Road. Those who were not able to be present could have viewed it on a webcam (a device for recording moving visual images and then broadcasting the images over the internet) or seen photos on online blogs. However, it has been several months since this liaison, and many more people have since agreed to help you find the Cube.

I feel that having a festival where members of the Earth Cube Retrieval Team can meet with others would only help relations. People would get along better with both the people of Perplex City and each other. This would promote greater awareness of your plight, while enabling people who are already helping to co-operate in a more open fashion. This could only encourage people to work harder, and as more of a community, towards the common goal of finding the Receda Cube.

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It is for these reasons that I extend an open invitation to the people of Earth. CubeFest is a celebration of both Perplex City and the unity between our two societies. This will be the first festival of unity between our two cultures. CubeFest will be held in London, on Saturday September 10 this year, hopefully it will continue for many years to come.

We do realise that many people may wish to attend, but may be unable to, due to location. It is for this reason that we have organised a live webcast of the event. This will be available on the Earth internet, and I am certain that the people of Perplex City may view it if they so wish.

I also beseech the people of Perplex City to think of the people of Earth on that day. It would be a symbol of unity if Sente, or someone similarly versed in Earth culture, could deliver a speech about Earth, during your Field Day.

Continued

I implore the people of Earth to come to this Festival. It will build the unity between our two cultures; and we will try to make it enjoyable as well! It doesn't matter if you have helped from the start of Project Syzygy, or if you were recently seduced by the cards. We want as many people as possible to attend.

For further information, contact me at CubeFest@hotmail.com. I look forward to seeing many of you there.

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Commuters Delayed

By KATE BREWSTER

The Amber subway line was shut down for nearly an hour late Friday afternoon due to a mechanical malfunction, delaying thousands of travellers between Amandier and Trellis Gate. Subway spokesman Elizabeth Fowler explained that a signal failure at Quadrant Park led to an automatic shutdown of the subway system in adjacent stations for safety reasons.

“We’re very sorry that so many people were inconvenienced,” said Fowler. She noted that the subway’s contingency plans went into effect nearly immediately, and above-ground transportation between the three affected stations was provided during the shutdown.

Tempers ran high as many commuters were delayed over 15 minutes, and queues quickly became very long for the supplemental transit buses. “Is this the best modern technology can get us?” snapped one resident, who gave his name only as Chester. He said that if a simple mechanical failure could cause an entire station to be closed, then the subway system should be looking into capital upgrades of its fail-over systems. “Unacceptable, just unacceptable,” he

said.

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As an apology, the subway authority has announced that all rides will be free of charge next Friday. “We can’t give people their time back,” Fowler said, “but we can show that we truly regret the situation.” She added that of the over 10 million journeys taken by subway riders every day, roughly 99.3% arrive on time.

In other travel-related news, the subway authority confirmed today that the cost of a ride anywhere in the city will remain at 10 lecks for at least the next three years. This is in line with the agreement hammered out with the city council last winter to keep public transit affordable.

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Archaeology Breakthrough: Buried Land Art Found

By JARED CHERRYWOOD



Archaeologist Ivy Vishnavi

A group of archaeologists from Besley-Mazy College have discovered a new work of ancient land art on the plains south of Catbite. “This is just incredible,” said the team’s leader, Ivy Vishnavi. “This is the most beautifully intact example of pre-Hausam art I’ve ever seen.” The work is so well preserved, she said, in part because the entire image had been buried under several feet of earth,

protecting it from erosion.

“We were examining this area closely because there was evidence that a craft-producing village had been around here someplace,” she said. “We thought we would find some artefacts, perhaps a graveyard. We never expected this!” The team had been using an array of subterranean imaging devices to try to locate the village itself, and stumbled upon a layer of pigmented stone, instead.

“We’ve known that there have been works of geographic art throughout these plains, but many of them were exposed to weather and poorly preserved,” Vishnavi explained. She said that the new piece, which the team has dubbed Stone Woman #5, shows a strong resemblance to similar works located in the mountains of Tanraga, as well. Stone Woman #5 has the same puzzle-based design as other works, though the puzzle has not yet been deciphered.

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Academy senior fellow Margaret Wildwood, who heads the social sciences department, said that she was excited by the team’s discovery. “Close examination of the area could give us a wealth of forensic data to draw on,” she said. “We have an opportunity to learn so much more about the era.” She said she plans to offer her services to the team, if

Continued

desired, to try to crack the puzzle.

Aside from the obvious puzzle, though, the bigger mystery is why the work had been buried. “We obviously don’t know why this particular piece was concealed,” Vishnavi said. “The design appears to match that of early religious temples found from this time period, and we are theorising that the artists deemed it too holy for human eyes and covered it over as an act of reverence.”

Academy senior fellow Sanjean Adamek was also enthusiastic at hearing about the find. “This kind of discovery will help us get closer to understanding the evolution of the culture of art,” he said. He explained that early works of art were all of a spiritual nature. Given that, the integration of early puzzle design was introduced as a way of veiling the “central mysteries” of early religion. “You see a lot of cubic design, a lot of right angles in this era,” Adamek said. “This was fascinating to early peoples, because the right angle is not a naturally-occurring shape.”

There are no plans to excavate the design now, Vishnavi said, because that could allow the elements to damage the structure. It is possible, though, that the team will construct a replica nearby for visitors to appreciate.

More modern artists such as Aisha Mpongo and Randal Tokei have created

works inspired by the ancient practice, though more limited in scale, and with more sophisticated puzzle elements.

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Iona Interviews... Anja Marlowe

By IONA RODIE

Anja Marlowe, the new curator of the Academy Museum, has a determined jaw and the tense body language of somebody who is used to getting her way, easy or not. She welcomes me into her office with an air of reluctance; her gaze flicks to the clock as she reminds me that we have only 20 minutes for this interview, between other appointments.

Notoriously driven and ambitious, Marlowe has become an increasingly influential name in the museum world in recent years. She has always been an advocate for challenging museum-goers to wrestle with difficult and even painful subjects. Her first mark at the Maitland Museum was the infamous “Tribal Bonds, Tribal Blood” exhibit, wherein she gathered together a compelling case that the ancient nomadic peoples of the plains participated in ritual infanticide, particularly in times of famine. So, does she plan something similarly shocking for her first exhibition as head of the Academy Museum?

Marlowe smiles at the question. “I think I can guarantee causing something of a stir, yes. There are, after all, many elements of the city’s past which we are in no hurry

to examine. I see it as my job to force that examination -- to turn the city’s head toward those things it has turned away from and hold its eyes open.”

Would she care to specify? Or to comment on the rumours that have been rife since her appointment that she intends to address the most difficult element of the city’s past -- the war?

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“Nothing is set in stone yet, of course.” Marlowe raises an eyebrow. “I was only appointed very recently, after all, and my predecessor left me with a number of commitments to fulfill. ... But it’s no secret that I have an interest in that period of history. My name is Anja, after all. And I have a personal connection to those people. Our family tradition holds that one of my great-great-and-on-grandmothers was captured and forced into marriage with a military officer. The city has still failed to lay to rest the ghosts of Ilja and Anja.”

Marlowe refers to the ghost-children from the fable, wandering the world alone but for each other. The story first makes an appearance in 35BC, and anthropologists have suggested that they were a resonant image of their time. Marlowe, though, considers them an icon of the city’s guilty conscience.

“Why is it,” she asks, “that the war is still

Continued

such a flammable topic? Why isn't it a part of open dialogue in the city, part of our culture and our educational system?" Marlowe's face tightens into a frown. "Looking directly at the truth and seeing it's ugly, well, that can hurt. The city has this image of its reason-driven, wise ancestors, and the truth is nowhere near that clean. It's easier to just avoid ever talking about it."

Indeed, the city has never participated in any open discussion on the war. In academia, broaching the topic has oft been considered a career-ender. The last serious attempt to address the war was by Academy fellow Roger Portson in 247, when he began railing for more than a dry list of dates and names in textbooks for college-aged students. Portson was forced into retirement within the year and shunned from public life up to the day he died. Does Marlowe fear for the future of her own career, planning such a controversial exhibit?

She smiles wryly. "I don't think I've said that I'm planning such an exhibit, have I? And even if I did so, it would still have to be approved by the Board of Trustees. But I think you can rest assured that I won't let a little controversy stand in my way."

Indeed, Marlowe's career has never shied away from controversial areas. She left the Maitland for the Academy Museum in 253, where she served

as special anthropological consultant until her promotion to the top spot last week. During her tenure at the Academy Museum, she has secured her reputation for being a maverick unafraid to address uncomfortable subjects, designing exhibits ranging from corruption in the early City Council to historical mistreatment of the intellectually impaired. Since her appointment, even the faint rumours that she might plan to create an exhibition dealing with the war have drawn furious criticism from cultural pundits and civic groups. Marlowe seems to be neither surprised nor worried by these outbursts.

She nods slowly. "I guess some people think a museum is just a collection of old and interesting things to look at," she says. "I think it's important, though, to use these old and interesting things to try to understand what they mean about the world they come from. Even if it isn't nice. Especially if it isn't nice."

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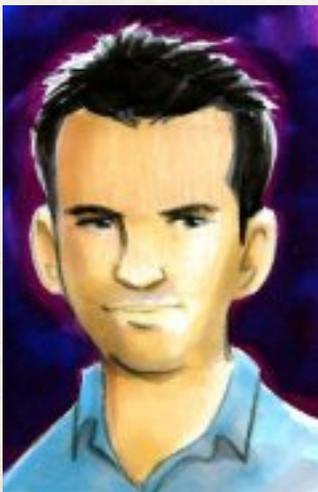
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View from Earth: Islington, Trellis, MC

By STEPHEN CASEY



Typically, one of Earth's most enduring games has been somewhere between mystery and legend. Although its recent resurgence can be traced to a popular British radio programme,

its origins are one of its most confusing conundrums. I am of course talking of Mornington Crescent.

Soon after discovering the existence of the game in Perplex City I began to notice some parallels in the game's known history and comparable dates in the Perplex City calendar. I began to wonder if there was a more direct relationship than some of the other Earth inspired pastimes and cultural imports. In fact, I had a sneaking suspicion that it was one of the few examples of reverse influence, where Earth has received an export from Perplex City rather than the other way around.

Amazement quickly mounted as the evidence began to build for this theory. Even without a great deal of knowledge of the exact history of the Perplex City version, or how it has interacted with the history of Perplex City, I discovered significant dates in Perplex City history that have their parallels in the history and development of the game inspired by the London underground. Let us start at the beginning.

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Jumbled though its history is, most Mornington Crescent academics agree on one part of the game's illustrious history; that is that it was invented by a small group of individuals in 1737 (AC 0). It's a hotly disputed point, not least because the London underground itself was only opened in 1863 (AC 126) and the titular station was only opened in 1907 (AC 170), but the fact that Perplex City's modern era began in that same year may go some way to explaining this academic conundrum. I postulate that that is also the year that Earth communications became bidirectional, unbeknownst even to people of Perplex City.

Obviously my research is hampered by the lack of a free flow of information to Earth, despite this I speculate that 1910 (173 AC), the 700th anniversary of the founding of the Perplex City Academy and a year of great public puzzle playing, the British Duke of Ellington was contacted by unknown Perplexians and the modern game of Mornington Crescent was

Continued

born. The Ellington Rules, adopted as the first official set by the International Mornington Crescent Society (IMCS), now form the basis of the modern game.

Knowledge of and interest in Mornington Crescent in recent years is easily attributed to "I'm Sorry I Haven't a Clue," a radio series broadcast on the BBC radio service. I find it difficult to believe that details of the game published in "Intricate Designs" by Professor Sanjean Adamek could not have somehow leaked to Earth, and so redoubled previous interest in the game. In addition to that and suggesting more than mere coincidence, the year of publishing was also the last time a Receda Cube theft was attempted!

Encompassing all of the available information is a mammoth task. Above are only some of the details that stand out the most. However, I speculate that we Earthlings inherited the great game of Mornington Crescent from the Perplexians, and indeed that more information about the history of Earth/Perplex City may be hidden in the intricate relationship that was formed between the two civilizations as a result of this simple game.

The View from Earth column is currently accepting submissions from its Earth readership. Please submit completed articles for consideration to news@perplexcitysentinel.com with 'View from Earth' in the subject line. Please include

the pen name you wish to use and a photograph of yourself for our artists to work from.

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KSI Lands PCL18M Contract with City

By AMBER MAI-WAN

Key Surety, Inc. has announced a PCL18 million agreement with the Office of the Council to perform a complete review of all information security systems and assess the need to upgrade or alter them. KSI spokesman Howard Angleburn said that while the office's primary and sensitive systems have been secure for years, many minor systems have been neglected as a low priority.

Under the terms of the agreement, KSI will conduct a 24-month review of each information system, its purpose, and access contingency plans. By the end of the period, KSI expects to have a complete strategy for integrating central authorisation by key and biometric data.

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Angleburn said that the council systems are not unusual in needing this sort of security overhaul. "There are still a lot of systems out there that allow keyless access, for example with a username and password," he said. "The problem with that kind of system is that it's fallible for human reasons. People tend to pick

easily-guessed passwords, such as a favourite place, or the name of a loved one. It's inherently insecure."

A written statement from the Office of the Council heralded the move as "signalling our continuing commitment to principles of efficient organisational conduct." In the statement, the office indicated that it would ensure all KSI employees performing the work would be fully cleared to have access to all potentially-sensitive information.

KSI is currently a wholly-owned subsidiary of Centrifuge. Centrifuge shares initially climbed 3% on the PCX on the news, but soon levelled off.

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Point's Problems Reaching Resolution

By GARIMA KING

Despite the fears of many Ascendancy Point residents and even internal whistle-blowers, it would appear that the bugs and infrastructural maladies plaguing Ascendancy Point have been identified, and steps are in place to perform necessary repairs and upgrades, spokesmen say. The building is also implementing a number of procedures to ensure that problems can't rise to a similar level of severity again before being addressed.

"The Point hasn't fallen down on our ears, and frankly the whole problem was overblown," said communications director Jules Northerlie. She pointed to the success of last week's ten-year anniversary gala celebrating the building's groundbreaking as proof in point. The building's internal systems worked flawlessly during the party, Northerlie claimed, from the security sensors all the way down to the air conditioning.

She pointed to the introduction of a special support line for maintenance workers as a step the building management has taken to identify and resolve problems more quickly. "Ascendancy Point will be as good as the day it opened by the time we celebrate that ten-year milestone, too," she boasted.

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An increasingly vocal community of disgruntled tenants banded together over the weekend to form the Ascendancy Point Residents Association, with the goal of

liaising with the building's management and advocating a faster response to the opinions and needs of the tenant community, but the Sentinel has been unable to reach the officers of the organization for comment.

The Sentinel's anonymous sources on the Ascendancy Point engineering staff agreed that in the main, technical problems are being worked out and there is a clear path to resolution. They also indicated, however, that some significant potential security breaches have been uncovered, and are being investigated now. "We're starting to wonder if some of these problems weren't caused by a very skilled systems intruder," said one source. "It could be that someone got in and made some minor changes to systems he or she didn't understand, and that spurred a lot of what we've been seeing."

The announcement of positive news is just in time for a press-beleaguered Ascendancy Point. The city landmark is fighting a media battle to preserve its image and standing after a number of high-profile system failures, including one at a July music festival where the climate control malfunctioned.

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Initiative Takes Off

By ROLAND GERBERA

Roll for Damage's long-awaited next album, *Take Initiative*, is something of a surprise to fans and critics alike. So far, fans seem pleased: "The music shows that Roll for Damage is really maturing along with their fans," said fan club president Cheri Lindemann. "It's incredible that they're able to share their personal journeys with us."

As expected, the band has all but abandoned the carefree attitude of their earlier hits. With this latest offering, RFD has turned its gaze inward and found a moodier, darker sound -- a far cry from their driving, often ribald early albums. Trouble with the law, drugs, and personal turmoil have left the band with a mixed bag of experiences to express in their music.

The title song, *Take Initiative*, is an expression of self-excoriation: "Why can't I take initiative/ See what to do/ Can't follow through." The raw sound on this track is like nothing heard from Hesh Records in years, with a rich embroidery of layers of sound into a whole that defies the listener not to -- well -- get up and take initiative on something important. Echo West takes the production credit, and it's the sharp leck's guess that her signature sound is going to be in demand

by performers all across the city once the word gets out.

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"Hit Point" covers the pressures of fame, and the need to produce a string of hits to stay in the game; but the bittersweet sound makes you wonder if, perhaps, RFD is tiring of playing: "I'll be anything you need, I can't bear to disappoint/ But all you want from me, is just another hit/ just another hit point."

And the ballad "Fumble" deals with the singer's desolation over a relationship breakdown. It's an easy deductive leap to find the connection to writer Alejo Jackson's troubled personal life, in particular his relationship with ex-girlfriend and pop singer Joya. The song misses its mark, though, and the attempt at portraying longing and pain sounds more like pre-teen whining.

Keenan Thoreau breaks tradition and for the first time takes the lead vocal on a track. In "Wisdom," he sends an open letter about religious intolerance to the city, and unapologetically expresses his own views.

Sales of the album have already matched *Random Encounter*, their last album, with estimates that the one-million mark was reached sometime on Sunday evening. The band's publicist, Shane Cobalt, said that the band is planning performance dates, and that details will be announced once they are final.

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Iona Interviews... Sente Kiteway

By IONA RODIE



Academy Master Sente Kiteway greets me at the front door of his official residence in Milamont Parade at 7am, smiling and apologetic for the early start. It was, he explains, the only time he could fit me into his schedule in the next month. Despite the smiles, he looks every inch the forceful executive: more broad than tall, he is an imposing presence, a reminder of his wrestling prowess as a young man. His short steel-grey hair frames a face which shows its 60-something years, but the penetrating blue eyes seem to belong to a much younger man. He's wearing a well-cut suit; I wonder whether he ever wears anything else. "Only in bed," he twinkles. "No, I don't really do casual clothes; can't see the point."

He shows me into the spacious living room, its high ceilings typical of

the Milamont houses. The room is comfortably furnished: Ultra-modern Zingiber sofas and armchairs, Hausam-period urns on either side of the fireplace, bowls of fresh flowers on side tables around the room. No books? I wonder aloud. He promises to show me his personal library later, "but honestly, with the Academy library just across the park, it seems rather a waste to accumulate books here."

That efficiency, and the species of ruthlessness that goes with it, are central to Kiteway's character, as he himself would admit. Elected by the Senior Fellows to head the Academy five years ago, he took up the position at a time when the institution's powers seemed to be declining, its atmosphere calcifying. Within three years of taking office, Kiteway had turned that around, cutting back extraneous departments ("there's no reason for the Academy to be the finest teaching hospital in the city," he says, "that's just not our core work. Look at the motto: we're not here to teach students about questions that have already been answered. We're here to ask new questions, ones that push forward our understanding."), and securing the Academy's power base through a series of top-level alliances with finance, big business and government across the city.

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Now, of course, he faces his most difficult

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challenge, one which has already seen him come under personal attack, both in the media and by some of his more outspoken colleagues. In January of 267, the Receda Cube was stolen from the very heart of the Academy; not only stolen, but completely removed from our world, taken across to Earth. There are so far no good leads as to who might have taken it, why they did so and, indeed how they transported it across. Faced with this seemingly insoluble problem, Kiteway, the puzzle-solver, the bridge-builder, produced a radical solution: Involve all the people of Earth in a vast game whose solution, he hopes, will be the recovery of the Cube.

So, how did he devise this ingenious strategy? "I'd love to say it was a flash of genius, but in fact it came out of long hours of anthropological research. The anthro team at the Academy worked round the clock to give me all the information they could about Earth. ... We had thought their work was a little, well, marginal, but they've certainly proved their worth now. So, I read a lot, I thought a lot and then," he smiles broadly, "only then came the flash of genius. It simply became apparent to me that, actually, these people love puzzles as much as we do, that they're playful and enjoy being engaged on a quest. And they're incredibly resourceful, in some ways. So I thought, why not set them the puzzle of a lifetime -- to find the Cube?"

The obvious question, of course, is why Kiteway did not simply deliver to the people of Earth every scrap of information on the theft of the Cube straightaway. Kiteway harrumphs and declares that point of view disingenuous. "Of course we could have sent over many long lists of dry facts and reports, but who would have paid attention? We feel our chance of recovering the Cube is greater if we can only engage the widest number of people possible."

Kiteway's strategy has been hailed in some quarters as brilliant: Darrant Rue, the reigning Advantage champion of the city called it an astonishing quarter-wheel manoeuvre. Inevitably, this unorthodox approach has also been condemned, even among Kiteway's own inner circle, the senior fellows of the Academy. The outspoken Estelle Sedgewick, head of the Languages department and widely regarded as something of a loose cannon within the Academy, went on-air to accuse Kiteway of putting the entire city in peril. How, Sedgewick asked, could we be sure that the theft of the Cube was not an act of war, perpetrated on us by the people of Earth?

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Kiteway sits forward in his chair, thoughtful. "Look," he says, "Estelle Sedgewick is a brilliant scholar and a good friend. I have complete faith in her abilities as a linguist, as a department

Continued

head, as an Academician, but there are parts of this puzzle she just hasn't had access to. ... Having seen what I've seen, and heard what I've heard, her interpretation of events seems pretty implausible to me. Still, she must be allowed to voice her concerns, just as I," he gestures with a hand, "must be allowed to over-rule them."

And has he been stung by the gibes and accusations of the press? He smiles and leans back, relaxed. "Look, journalists have to sell papers. They like to find a scapegoat, because a dramatic accusation is more saleable than a measured assessment of the facts. Not that your paper would be guilty of any such sensationalising of course." He gives me a somewhat sardonic look.

Surely it must have hurt, though, to read headlines accusing him of incompetence, irrationality and, occasionally, insanity? Kiteway sighs. "Would I like everyone in the city to approve of what I'm doing? Of course I would. Is that likely? No. In a job like this one, you learn to take a few hard knocks and a few hard words. Besides," a flicker of amusement passes across his face, "I've lived with two teenage daughters; I've been accused of much worse than incompetence and insanity."

Our hour is up, and Kiteway, courteous as ever, shows me to the door and thanks me for coming; he has a breakfast

meeting at the Academy at 8:30am, and then a full day ahead. I manage to ask one final question as I'm leaving; is there any truth to the rumours that he'd considered resigning? He shakes his head. "Not at all. Absolutely not. After all," he smiles again, "it wouldn't do to lose the thing and leave someone else to find it, would it? Matter of principle."

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Bank Deal Questioned

By ALWHIN COPI

The Office of the Council announced today a plan to review the PCBC's Fivebridge & Remton Consolidated Bank acquisition to be sure the move won't be detrimental to ordinary citizens. City finance deputy Hova Lonehart has indicated that there appear to be some flaws in the PCBC's economic report on the buyout's ramifications, and that no approval will be given until that matter is fully addressed.

The report submitted by PCBC to the city paints a sunny picture of ease and convenience for consumers after the deal is completed. Customers are likely to experience only benefits as the two bank's financial networks are gradually integrated, according to the report. City officials now say that the analysis did not take into consideration a wide enough data set, however.

"The report focuses primarily on the effects to people living in central Perplex City, but we have an obligation to the people living in even the outermost areas," said Lonehart. "It's unlikely that the acquisition will receive city approval unless the PCBC and Fivebridge & Remton prove to us that there will be

a ... net positive outcome for every geographic area affected."

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PCBC declined to offer a formal comment, saying that the matter was between itself and the Office of the Council; however, a highly-placed executive at Remton & Fivebridge complained that the office is throwing up arbitrary obstacles in the interest of publicity. "Politics, pure and simple," said the source. "Centrifuge and KSI didn't have to go through this kind of ridiculous process, and neither did Agilon and Cognivia. ... This is city officials trying to play to the back row with an election year coming up fast."

Lonehart denied these allegations, saying that other mergers have not been subject to this kind of scrutiny in the past because they have not affected individuals so directly.

The consulting economist who allegedly wrote the initial draft of the report, Monica Grand, could not be reached at her PCBC offices at press time.

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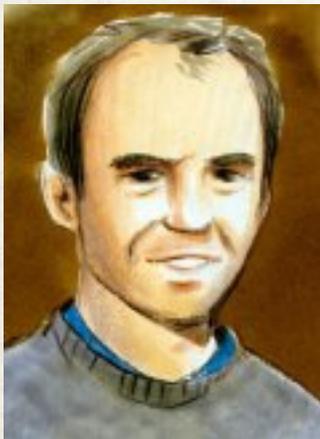
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View from Earth: Religious Freedom

By WIGLAF

Wiglaf When a society faces a crisis, it naturally takes action to right the wrong and to defend itself. But sometimes action is taken simply so that the authorities can be seen as taking action, and certain groups are targeted as scapegoats. This has happened many times in the history of Earth, and I worry that it is happening also in Perplex City.



The theft of the Receda Cube is a tragic loss for your people and it is understandable that your citizens would want to do anything in their power to secure its retrieval. Understandably the Reconstructionists came under suspicion for the theft because of their belief in prophesies that the Receda Cube “be delivered from the faithless hands of the Academics.” But the fact that the “Recon 8” were arrested simply because of an anonymous tip, and held for months without enough evidence to even bring them to trial, is shocking to this Earth observer -- especially as such detention of citizens, while illegal in most of our nations, is currently taking place on Earth in response to crimes in the name of religion.

Even after the Recon 8 were released, the prejudice against the legal Reconstructionist religion became even more evident when Sente Kiteway, the supposedly rational head of the Academy, turned Aiko Entrescore -- who had been working diligently to retrieve the Cube

-- to the police for simply belonging to this persecuted religion. The Sentinel itself fired Ryan Klein shortly after learning that he is a Reconstructionist.

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Thankfully, brave members of the community such as Keenan Thoreau have come out to freely express their religious beliefs. Thoreau’s bravery and support from his bandmates in Roll for Damage make me eager to learn more about them (and I hope that the people of Earth will also be able to enjoy their album someday).

Perhaps the thieves will turn out to identify themselves with the Reconstructionists, even if the theft of the Cube ultimately was not religiously motivated. Here on Earth, terrorists and criminals ally themselves with various religions, but these criminals pervert these religions and many of them are far more interested in power than religion.

Now, I am not looking to lay blame. Kiteway is clearly under a lot of pressure, and I am heartened that the board of the Sentinel has decided to change its administration and rehire Ryan Klein. But if such reliable institutions such as the Sentinel, and such pillars of the community as Kiteway, can briefly fall prey to this hysteria, then we must all be on our guard.

The View from Earth column is currently accepting submissions from its Earth readership. Please submit completed articles for consideration to news@perplexcitysentinel.com with ‘View from Earth’ in the subject line. Please include the pen name you wish to use and a photograph of yourself for our artists to work from.

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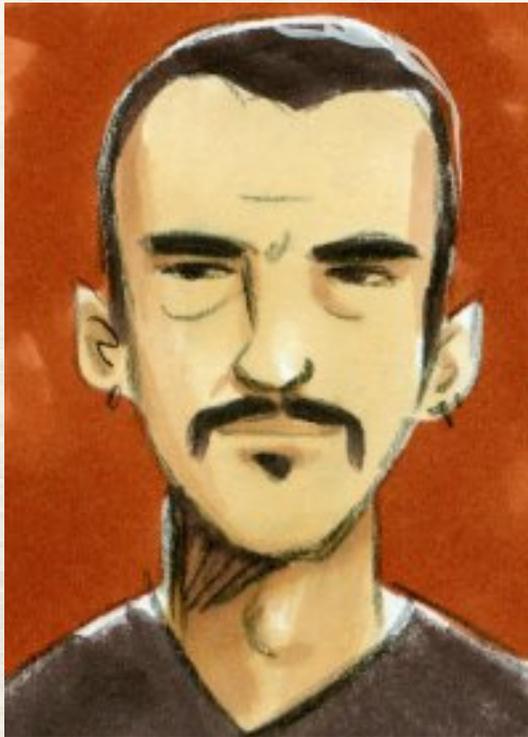
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Lighting in Old Town Begins Renewal

By NATASHA VALLIERE



Raoul Valentin

Recently-appointed chairman Raoul Valentin of the Old Town Renewal Committee announced that fresh efforts to bring commerce and interest to the area will begin with a special week-long celebration of the Lighting of the Way. “We hope that this festive atmosphere will bring families to the Old Town and that our storied past and bright future will keep them here,” said Valentin.

The festival will include the traditional cubical lamps lining the streets, with beeswax candles lit within. The celebration will include fire-dancers, singing, and of course vendors selling harbonnes with cinnamon-sugar, mulled cider,

and fresh apple pie. “The colourful lamps are perfect in the setting of the Old Town,” said Valentin, “because they emphasize the graceful architecture of these old buildings.”

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Valentin’s appointment is the latest step in the City Council’s efforts to formulate a plan to bring developers and new residents to the troubled Old Town. Crime, ramshackle buildings, and fears that the area is “bad luck” or “cursed” have kept the district from growing and developing along with the rest of the city for generations.

Although past efforts have been headed by engineers and architects, many Old Town residents feel that Valentin’s background as an Academy-educated sociologist may be just what the project needs. “The problems with the Old Town aren’t problems with the economy or with the physical buildings,” said Phaedra Owens, 58, who has lived in the Old Town all her life. “It’s a problem of cultural psychology. ... We as Perplexians have given ourselves permission to be irrational and superstitious about this one area of the city,” she said.

Although the city is focusing most of its holiday efforts on bringing attention to the Old Town this year, private efforts will still be spread city-wide. Joachim Waterbury of the Alchemy Bay Provisions Company said that the company has already begun to refuse orders for its gift baskets of baked goods, sausages, and candles. “It’s going to be a great holiday for a lot of people,” said Waterbury. “We’ve noticed a trend toward people being unusually generous this year.”

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Champaign Falls, Cahill Climbs

By CORWIN JONES

PCAG prodigy Myra Champaign has lost significant ground following her blowout defeat versus former champion Ryan Cahill over the weekend. Analysts had expected a closer match, especially since Cahill's performance has been spotty since he entered play at the start of the championship. But nobody predicted the dramatic match that unfolded, with Cahill's 6-1 victory.

"Myra played brilliantly, no question," said analyst Hamon Rutleby. "But at every turn, Ryan was just a hair faster, or more elegant, or more creative." Rutleby and other sports observers agree that this is clearly a case where experience has won over aptitude.

The resounding victory is a huge relief for Cahill, who has been handing in subpar performances since his opening match of the season. Said Cahill: "In retrospect, it was a mistake to bow out of the preseason play. ... I think we can all see that I did not open well this year." He added, though, that he feels he has slipped back into games condition, and that he fully expects his sharp-performance streak to continue.

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Champaign expressed disappointment in the match. "I guess it was perfectly fair," she said in a post-game interview. "I tried my best and hardest, but today it wasn't good enough." Just playing against an athlete of Cahill's stature, though, is "an honour in its own right," she added.

Jonas Sawgrass of the Alliance for Clean Players called the match an unexpected case of victory for natural ability over enhancement, but warned that this should not be considered a sign that enhancement is not a top-priority issue. "Just because one exceptional athlete can win over an enhanced player is no reason to halt our vigilance," he said. "Allowing these dirty players into the PCAG means all of the clean mid and lower-tier players are unfairly knocked out of competition, when they would have placed higher on a fair playing field."

Champaign, her family, and PCAG officials all agree that Champaign's cognitive treatment in early childhood is not affecting her performance now, though none of them claimed that her loss in any way proves the point.

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View from Earth: Teaching War

By COOKSTER

War. Touchy subject. But surely one that would benefit from open and frank discussion in the public arena, in order that we learn from our



mistakes and allow victims to come to terms with their grief? On earth, at least in the part where I reside, we have the luxury of a free press where the opinionated bastions of free-speech will openly criticize governments for their stances and decision-making in times of civil

unrest. Whole museums are dedicated to the annals of war, and our television schedules are packed with documentaries and dramas chronicling the battles of both past and present.

Our grandparents were caught up in the most destructive war in Earth's history, yet they did not choose to bottle up their memories and shield us from the horrors they faced. Instead they helped us learn from history's mistakes and gave us stories of heroism and courage -- tales that we can all draw inspiration from and understand how nations pull together in times of trouble. The memories of those tragic events are ingrained in us all and our dead war heroes are honoured on an annual basis through the symbolic wearing of a poppy.

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It surprises me that the subject of your war raises so many eyebrows. It concerns me more so that an academic scholar could be forced into retirement and shunned from public life for merely trying to catalogue its events. I believe that it is paramount for the growth of a healthy society to come to terms with the errors of the past and I dearly hope that your progressive new Academy Museum curator, Anja Marlowe, does not suffer the same fate at Roger Portson should she dare to broach the subject.

Has not enough time passed for you to come to terms with the war? What on earth do you teach your children in schools? Shying away from an uncomfortable period in your history will not make it go away. Indeed, centuries of pent up feeling without an outlet could at some day lead to an explosive outpouring of physical violence, and the people of your city may experience the horrors of war first-hand.

On Earth, the recent war in Iraq may have strongly divided opinion, but at least we are able to have healthy debate on the rights and wrongs of what went on. Journalists can criticise global leaders to their face; satirists can openly mock the strategy and be celebrated for it. The idea of being chastised for speaking openly about something as seismic and wide-reaching as war seems peculiar. Isn't it about time you all opened up?

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Zingiber Transcends Ergonomic Furniture

By KATE BREWSTER

Zingiber Interiors today unveiled a new line of ultra-ergonomic furniture that the company claims “obliterates previous benchmarks for effortless comfort.” The new line, called Responsa, features embedded sensors that can detect muscle state and gradually change the conformity of the seat to reduce tension. Zingiber spokesman Tore Zingiber touted the line as “surpassing mere biometric key synchronisation.”

This is a first from the consumer furniture industry, who is borrowing some of the technology used for hospital beds for long-term care. “We’ve long been working on ways to make our products more comfortable,” Zingiber said. “With our new network of Responsa sensors, you’ll be so perfectly comfortable that you should never even need to shift your weight.”

The line will feature the same sleek, unfussy styling that has made Zingiber a resounding success in the last ten years. In fact, Zingiber revealed an agreement with the Ha Gallery to display some of

the new pieces, which gallery owner John Ha called “a testament to functionality married with clean design.”

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Analysts are withholding judgement on the line, with some saying that the furniture market is already saturated with models that conform to the user’s body. “I don’t know if the need is really out there for this additional level of sensor,” said prominent interior designer Kari Woolsey. “I think removing the need to sometimes shift your weight could feel downright intrusive. ... There’s already a backlash of people looking for simpler furnishings, who want to feel more in touch with our animal bodies,” she added.

Zingiber insisted that the city is always ready for the next great innovation in design. “We’re a very design-forward culture,” he said. “Our philosophy at the company is that great design and perfect comfort are never our of style.”

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Iona Interviews... Keenan Thoreau

By IONA RODIE

Keenan Thoreau, the reclusive bassist for hot rock band Roll for Damage, seems like a much more ordinary fellow than one would expect from a rock star. Thoreau himself has the mussed hair and muzzy eyes of someone recently woken, despite the mid-afternoon sun streaming in. His Artist's Quarter home is modest in scale, and he welcomes me in personally, then brings me into his kitchen and offers to prepare me a cup of tea. The kitchen is a masterpiece of warm understatement, with its unfinished brick walls and pale wood cabinets. A line of well-used copper-bottomed pans hangs under the cabinets, a far cry from the nickel and leather one might expect.

"Ripley doesn't like the rock-star life," Thoreau says, with a hint of a smile, referring to his partner of 12 years, whom he has successfully sheltered from media attention even as RFD's popularity has spiralled ever higher. Roll for Damage has eight albums and countless lecks to their name, now, and their newest release, Take Initiative, seems to be only the latest in a string of successes. A darker side, of course, is hinted at with rumours of heavy drug use and the recent revelation

that the revered KT, as fans call him, is a member of the radical Cubist group, the Reconstructionists. Has the public outing of his religious beliefs injured Thoreau's standing, or hurt RFD's sales?

Thoreau shakes his head, grinning broadly. "Sales have definitely been good," he says. He pauses to reflect for a moment, then continues: "I think that this is finally giving me a chance to open up to the fans, to the public, about who I really am. The thing that came out of this is the song 'Wisdom,' and I think that's a pretty -- it's a powerful message. I'm proud of who I am."

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Indeed, he has taken activism for his now-public faith into his two hands, going so far as to rally for religious tolerance in defence of Reconstructionists everywhere. He spoke out when Aiko Entrescore was arrested, and he stood alongside Ryan Klein to demand Klein's job back, after Klein was removed from his position as advertising director at the Sentinel allegedly due to his religious beliefs. "It's been something of a relief," Thoreau says. "It makes me wonder what I was waiting for all this time. ... As a celebrity, I have a power to influence public opinion, for right or wrong. I only agreed to talk to you," he reminds me, "because the Sentinel reinstated Ryan Klein."

Continued

Of course, accusations fly now that the Reconstructionists are taking advantage of Thoreau for his celebrity status. Thoreau's opinion does hold a disproportionate weight in the public arena, particularly among RFD's devoted fans. Doesn't he feel that the Reconstructionists are using his popularity to further their own agenda? And how does he feel about being publicly affiliated with an organisation broadly under suspicion for orchestrating the theft of the Receda Cube?

"Of course they're using me," Thoreau answers, visibly annoyed. "I am a tool fit to work only the will of Gyvann. Being used that way is the highest calling a human being can hope for." As for the Cube: "The Cube is better off now, I think. The Academicians never deserved it," he says with a sly wink.

In 264, Thoreau and bandmate Echo West were arrested on drug charges and sentenced to undergo treatment. The two had allegedly turned to a wide spectrum of recreational and cognitive pharmaceuticals to help meet their demanding schedule of performances, until bandmate Alejo Jackson turned them in because their creative output had begun to suffer. Although the two were pronounced clean, rumours have been spreading over the last year that they have both relapsed into their habits. What does Thoreau have to say about these accusations that he is an addict?

"No truth to it," he snaps. "We do sometimes use mild enhancers, but it's all legal stuff. ... Who doesn't want to be a little sharper sometimes? But no, I totally respect that this is the only body I've got, and I have to treat it with respect."

This is contrary to reports from fans, media and concert staff, all of whom claim that Thoreau and West are abusing again in ever-increasing quantities in order to keep up with Jackson's relentless standards. It would only be natural, of course, to harbour some bitterness toward Alejo. Does he?

Thoreau shrugs uncomfortably. "Alejo sacrifices everything for his music," he says. "He forgets that not everybody has his kind of stamina. ... Anyway, A.J.'s got his own problems." Thoreau refers, undoubtedly, to Jackson's dishy personal life: A string of broken-hearted ex-girlfriends, plus highly public speculation that Jackson is the father of singer Joya's baby. Does Thoreau have any information on that to share with the public, by chance?

Thoreau shakes his head. "Alejo is my man, he's like family. I could never give away his confidence like that." He twists a ring around his finger, smiles ruefully, and adds: "Besides, I don't know any more than you do."

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PCBC Economist Found Murdered in Point Dwelling

By GARIMA KING



Monica Grand

PCBC economic consultant Monica Grand was found slain in her Ascendancy Point residence on Friday in what police are calling a “particularly brutal murder.” Detective Helena Frye said that a search for the murderer is underway. According to police, secure heat sensor data shows that the killer entered her home shortly

before 9am on Friday morning, and that a lengthy scuffle ensued almost immediately. Detective Frye indicated that Grand’s assailant was “almost certainly injured him or herself.” Frye added: “The attacker is probably someone known to Ms. Grand, because it seems that she did allow the visitor access to her floor.”

“Typically in these cases we would have a narrow suspect list, because we would have at least some sort of key signature to go from,” Frye said. “In this instance, though, it appears that the key-monitoring systems suffered some sort of malfunction. At any rate, any data regarding keys in the area at the time is missing or corrupt.” She admitted that it might be possible for a criminal with a sensor-jamming device to cause such a malfunction, but added that she considered such a scenario unlikely. Ascendancy Point has suffered from multiple known failures of its infrastructure systems in recent months, she said, so there is nothing inherently suspicious about the log failures.

Frye said that there is no known motive for the killing. “It’s most likely that this is a crime of passion of some sort, maybe a lover’s quarrel turned sour,” she said. “We can’t completely discount the possibility that this is the senseless work of some sort of madman, though, so I would urge the public to be vigilant as they go about their daily business,

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particularly when alone.”

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“The police say the killer just left her to die,” commented neighbour Waldo Carrick. “It’s so terrible to think of that poor woman dying all alone without anyone there to comfort her. ... I don’t know how long I can keep on living in this building now.”

Neighbours said that they did not hear any unusual sounds, but that the building’s sound-proofing would have concealed all but the loudest noises, anyhow. Fellow resident Marcus Joyner called Grand a “sweet, quiet woman,” adding that she largely kept to herself and did not appear to have many visitors. Colleagues at the PCBC agreed; retiring PCBC CEO Jonathan Smart indicated that he is “deeply saddened” by the news, and that Grand was “an invaluable asset to the PCBC team, even in her consulting role.”

Grand has been in headlines in recent weeks as the author of an economic impact report following the PCBC’s acquisition of rival bank Fivebridge & Remton. The report has been turned into something of a political hot potato as some council members have questioned its credibility. Police say, however, that they do not believe the murder is related to Grand’s role in the banking controversy.

Grand appears not to have any living relatives. Her will, which will be executed by PCBC lawyers, has left a significant but as-yet undisclosed amount of money to the Rudon Forest Preservation Fund. She has requested that her remains be cremated and the ashes scattered in Rudon Forest.

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View from Earth: Orbiting Entertainment

By R. I. BARNICA



R.I. Barnica In the few months since Earth was made aware of Perplex City, we've noticed many parallels between our cultures. The ingredients of our cultures are actually quite

similar; it's the proportions that vary. Our politics, our journalism, our family relations are quite similar, although the levels of emphasis within a given arena can be dramatically different. Even our pastimes are similar. But there is one Earth pastime I haven't seen mentioned in Perplex City. It combines the physical enjoyment of hiking with the mental challenge of puzzles, and stirs in a dash of treasure hunt for good measure! It's called geocaching.

At any given time, hundreds of artificial satellites orbit the Earth. One constellation of 27 satellites, called the Global Positioning System (GPS), orbits twice daily. At any time, there are at least 4 satellites in line of site for a given

location. The satellite broadcast a sort of time signal in the radio frequency. A handheld GPS receiver (GPSr) for these signals can be purchased at a number of Earth locations. Using the differences in time signals, and accounting for time of transit and relativistic factors, it can calculate one's exact location on the planet. Very likely, there is a similar system in Perplex City.

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Until May of our year 2000, the signals were partially encoded by the US military. Without proper decoding algorithms, one could only calculate one's location to about +/- 350 feet. But about five years ago, the restriction was lifted, and suddenly, you could determine your position to +/- 10 feet, in optimal conditions. Well, some inventive minds got together on the Internet and invented a game based on it; that game is geocaching.

Someone will create a "cache" -- a hidden box filled with (usually) inexpensive trinkets and a logbook. Using the GPS receiver, the precise location of the cache is determined and posted to a website which maintains lists of these caches, and who has found them. One such website is geocaching.com. There, interested parties (like your author) can select a cache, note its location and track it down using their GPS receiver. You can imagine that an inventively hidden or disguised cache can be difficult to locate even when you know that you're within a few feet of it. Once the cache is found, the discoverer

Continued

records their code name in the logbook, and exchanges some of the trinkets they've brought along for some of those in the cache. Upon their return home, the find is logged on the listing website. This would be less cumbersome with Perplex City's keys. A key containing a GPSr-like tracking function would obviate the need for a separate GPSr. And finds could be logged immediately via the key.

Over the years, some Earth geocachers have become rather talented at finding caches. In order to make the process more challenging, some experienced 'cachers like to search at night with only the light of their GPSr display for illumination. This tactic certainly introduces an element of danger to the hunt! Those hiding the caches sometimes add interest to their cache by encrypting the coordinates or a description of the hiding place, using equations, ciphers or riddles. These are the kinds of caches I'd expect to be very popular in Perplex City. Overcoming the physical and mental challenges especially appeals to adults, while the treasure hunt aspects appeal to the child in all of us! While Earth influence on Perplex City has not always been beneficial, geocaching is one export that Earth could be proud of!

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Iona Interviews... Alasandro Mere

By IONA RODIE

Property manager Alasandro Mere's Ascendancy Point offices are more modest than one might expect: a rather utilitarian closet strewn with stacks of paperwork and chunks of machinery shining with lubricants. It is located deep in the bowels of the building, and I am led there through labyrinthine corridors by a quiet young man who was waiting for me. Mere himself is not present when I arrive at his office, but joins me moments later, mopping sweat from his glistening head with an old-fashioned cloth handkerchief. He apologises profusely for the wait, and for the mess. "Let's go up to Vista, where we'll be more comfortable," he says, with a warm smile.

As property manager at Ascendancy Point, Mere has been responsible for the building's 1000-strong staff and day-to-day operations since the day the building opened, nearly ten years ago. This means that coping with the increasingly troubled systems falls to Mere, with all of the headaches this entails. Mere rubs his fingers through his moustache as he leads me to an elevator bank. "Yes, it's become a more challenging operation," he says. "Ten years ago, the building practically ran itself. Now that a certain amount of ageing and settling has gone on, we're finding lots of small details that could only cause a problem over a longer period of

time." He waves a hand briskly. "Nothing to worry about, really."

But worrying is exactly what the newly-formed Ascendancy Point Residents Association has been doing. The organisation's president, Charlene Reckson, has said that the the building's poor management is to blame for the building's problems. "We've seen failure of climate control systems, power shorts, elevator malfunctions, and the maintenance department simply isn't inclined to speak to regular residents," she said. "It seems like helping the businesses in the building is management's only concern. We wouldn't see this kind of domino effect if the concerns of residents were addressed in a timely fashion."

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Reckson and her association have been lobbying the Office of the Council to launch a full inquiry into the Point's management and maintenance practices. "Let them come," scoffs Mere. "We have nothing to hide. We know we're committed to keeping Ascendancy Point at the pinnacle of luxury living." He insists that as in any mixed-use space, some tenants may feel that their needs are not addressed as quickly as those of others. All problems, though, are managed based on a precise scale involving severity, scope, and age, Mere says. "Of course a problem affecting three office floors will be addressed faster than one tenant's faulty light switch," he explains. "It's all a matter of effectively deploying the resources we have available to us."

Continued

At the Vista Restaurant, we are shown immediately to a table; it appears that being the man behind the scenes has certain perks, including no need for pesky reservations. Mere jokes with the waitstaff like a man among his family. "I try to know everyone in the building," he boasts. "I want everyone to feel comfortable coming to me."

What, then, does he think about the whistle-blowers among the maintenance staff who have been reporting to the media in great detail regarding perceived failures of their superiors? His face sours, and he pulls out his handkerchief to mop his pate once more. "Let me give you some advice, young lady. You shouldn't believe everything you hear from the guys on the ground who don't see the big picture."

Mere points to ongoing systems upgrades and new procedures to assist maintenance workers on location as evidence that the building is continuing to improve its operational efficiency. "Ascendancy Point is absolutely the leading edge in developing a best-practices approach toward balancing maintenance requirements and tenant needs," he says. "We may not have achieved perfection, but I'd defy anyone to point to any operation as large and successful as ours is."

In order to press that point home, Ascendancy Point has begun a year-long celebration of its ten-year anniversary. In August, there was a ball to mark the building's groundbreaking, and the building's marketing staff have manufactured a series

of milestones to celebrate from now until well into next year, when the building will celebrate the ten-year anniversary of its opening. Critics have said that this is a transparent marketing ploy intended to renew interest in the building as its novelty wears off and residents start to look for a change of scene. Mere dismisses these accusations out of hand. "We maintain full occupancy," he says. "We even have a waiting list for those rare times when a vacancy opens up."

Our lunch is cut short when Mere's key flashes an urgent message. He turns pale and excuses himself on the grounds that there is an "urgent situation," that he must attend to. "No matter what," he forces a smile on his way out, "Ascendancy Point is still the pinnacle of prestige living."

At the time, of course, I did not know what the urgent message was -- but it has now become clear that Mere was being summoned to the murder scene of one resident Monica Grand, an economist whose killer cannot now be identified, police say, because of flaws in the building's key monitoring systems. As of press time, the Office of the Council has said it is "seriously considering" the possibility of a formal inquiry. Mere could not be reached again regarding the murder and its implications for the future of his "pinnacle of prestige living."

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Alejo Busted

By JULIUS LOMAN

Rock star Alejo Jackson has been arrested for manually driving a vehicle within the city's central business district while under the influence of Sublimistat, police say. Although Jackson did not precipitate an automotive accident, he was flagged to be stopped by police based on the erratic behaviour of his car, including frequent lane changing and egregious violation of speed laws. "Just shameful how an influential celebrity can disrespect the public safety like this," said traffic officer Owen Jardin.

Police say that Jackson, who is the front man for hot band Roll for Damage, was arrested Tuesday night and released from custody on bail late Wednesday afternoon. Jackson has been arrested for similar offences in the past, most recently in late February of this year, when he was involved in a single-car accident on a long stretch of Fivebridges Road.

Jackson had been on his way to a performance at Heidi's on Azad Lane at the time. The band had to cancel their appearance, but has already issued a statement to fans promising a special compensatory performance to make up for any disappointment, on a date to be named later.

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Jackson does have a prescription for Sublimistat, which Sentinel medical advisor Dr. Stuart Ivanovitch says is used to stimulate creativity in patients who are suffering under heavy life stressors. The drug does have a deleterious affect on motor skills, though, as one of its major side effects is a mild but uncontrollable muscular tremor, and because in a significant number of patients, vision changes occur.

The band's publicist, Shane Cobalt, apologised on Jackson's behalf. "He never intended to put a member of the public in any danger," he said at a press conference. "Alejo is aware of the important of public safety laws, and hopes that he can find some way to give back to the community in recompense for this mistake."

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Weekend Brings Protest at Museum Over New Curator

By WILHELMINA BEST

The Academy Museum was beset this weekend by a crowd of protesters angry at the rumours circulating that the new curator, Anja Marlowe, may be planning a war-related exhibit. Nearly a hundred protesters, led by 80-year-old botanist Soo-Yung Rosenthal, rallied to encourage the museum to give up any such plans.

“What Ms. Marlowe is doing here, it isn’t right,” said Rosenthal. “Some things are better left in the past, forgotten. ... This terrible subject is best left respectfully alone.” Rosenthal spoke to the assembled crowd mid-morning on Saturday, to enthusiastic cheers. Rosenthal organised the protest by simply announcing the plan in letters to various news organisations, including the Sentinel.

Even some onlookers were drawn into the protest. 28-year-old Franz Sepulveda was on his way home from his linguistics classes, he said, when he passed by the assembly and decided to join in. “If it’s true the Museum is planning something like this, it’s just in the worst taste imaginable,” Sepulveda said. “Some

things, we just shouldn’t discuss them.”

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Some analysts have suggested that these protests are driven by fear of Marlowe’s record rather than concrete evidence regarding her plans, but that no word out of the museum itself has lent any credence to the reports. Indeed, museum spokesman Gerard Owling said that the museum is in the process of examining possibilities for a new exhibit, but denied that warfare was being specifically targeted as the subject matter.

“The purpose of the museum is to enlighten and educate, not to infuriate,” Owling said. “I admit that we may plan to address a controversial topic in the near future, but I would like to assure the public that whatever we choose as our subject matter, we will absolutely discuss it in the most graceful and delicate way possible. ... The museum is not about rampaging through uncomfortable subjects and upsetting the public.”

Marlowe was hired as the Academy Museum’s new curator mere weeks ago. Her personal history does include designing controversial subject matter. She has been unavailable for comment on the protest.

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Iona Interviews... Ryan Cahill

By IONA RODIE

Former PCAG champion Ryan Cahill lives in a quiet Ascendancy Point flat with a view of the Mazy River. He greets me graciously, and once he has me settled into his immaculately white parlour, he hovers almost nervously, asking if he can get me a pillow, a drink, a bite to eat. His home is scrupulously clean, down to the pencils in a wire cup on the side desk, all evenly sharpened to the exact same height.

Cahill won the Perplex City Academy Games in 267, just a short while before the Receda Cube was stolen. The cloud that hung over the city took the spark out of many things; holidays, the economy -- and of course the traditional year as reigning champion, no? Cahill looks genuinely surprised. "Of course the terrible theft took a lot of the attention away from the championship, but it's only fair." He taps his fingertips together softly, with the merest ghost of a smile. "No, I don't feel like a 'shadow champion' at all. The Cube was taken during my first championship year, and perhaps it will be returned during my next one. That would be symmetry, wouldn't it?"

Of course, given Cahill's poor start to the

year, few are suggesting that he could possibly be returning to the top spot again this year, at least. Sports analysts have pointed to Cahill's exercising the grandfather option to skip pre-championship play and automatically qualify as the culprit for his tremendously poor opening. Now, though, Cahill is on fire -- since his decisive win over Myra Champaign, he's kept up a string of victories to make anyone proud, and removed the chances that he would be knocked out early.

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Cahill nods slowly. "It was a mistake not to participate in early play," Cahill said. "I've admitted this before. ... I simply didn't recognise the importance that those months of play had on sharpening my game." As for Champaign, "You know, I feel bad for her," Cahill says. "I think people have lost sight of the fact that she's only a young girl, no matter how stunning a prodigy she may be."

Champaign is a controversial figure in her own right, of course, with some anti-drug groups feeling she is benefiting from unsportsmanlike cognitive enhancement from treatment she received for an impairment she suffered as just a small child. Does Cahill feel it unfair that she is allowed to play on the same level as other, drug-free competitors? Cahill purses his lips before he responds. "I think I won't be drawn into this debate,"

Continued

he says. "The [PCAG] made a decision, and I am going to honour it."

your speculation, though, we're just really close friends."

This quiet reluctance to get into the details of a drug question are somewhat at odds with Cahill's involvement in public life. Cahill has made something of a crusade out of his anti-drug efforts, teaming with the PCAG to deliver the message to schoolchildren, recovering users in hospitals, and first-year competitors in the games. One would think, given this adamant activity, that Cahill feels stronger measures should be taken.

He points out, though, that his activities have more depth than that: "I support the use of enhancers when there is an actual underlying disorder," he says. "I certainly think that kind of pharmaceutical has made a huge impact on the lives of people who need it -- I'm not universally against all cognition-heightening drugs, you know."

For all that Cahill's public life at fundraisers, education rallies, and charity events is an open book, his private life has by contrast traditionally been very private indeed. In recent times, though, there have been an increasing number of sightings of Cahill out with pop singer Joya. Is he perhaps considering settling down with her and helping to raise her unborn baby? Cahill smiles and shakes his head. "I care about Joya a lot. She's really a warm person, and she's going through a difficult time right now. Stop

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Academy Museum Announces War Exhibit

By LUCAS VOORHIES

The Academy Museum announced at a press conference today that it is planning to create an exhibit focused on the history of war in Perplex City. The announcement has been widely anticipated, as it follows weeks of rumour that the museum's new curator, Anja Marlowe, has been planning to do exactly this since the day she was hired mere weeks ago.

Marlowe herself delivered a statement clearly designed to allay the fears of the public regarding how the sensitive topic would be treated and explain why she felt it was important. "We understand that many people in the city feel that the war is a taboo matter," she said, "but we are a city that prizes rigour of intellect. Why should we fear the pain and guilt of generations before us? The spirit of the past can only be laid to rest when we understand the crucial messages its story has to teach us."

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Despite her assurances, however, the move is almost certain to spawn strong

opposition. Addressing the specifics of war in all but the most private forums has long been considered the height of poor taste, with many unwilling to even speak of the unpleasant matter privately. An anonymous source from within the museum has said that a handful of employees are planning to resign from their posts if the planned exhibit actually moves forward.

The recently-founded group Peace Watchers, led by botanist Soo-Yung Rosenthal, was first in line to publicly call for the plans to be scrapped, and for Marlowe to be summarily dismissed from the curatorship. "This outrage against the peaceful people of our city should not be tolerated," said Rosenthal. She called on Sente Kiteway, Master of the Academy, to derail the plans and sack Marlowe. Failing that, she said, it would be fitting for the City Council to step in to manage the affair.

Rosenthal is becoming a grass-roots leader of the anti-exhibit movement, which has been growing in recent days, despite the exhibit's status until now as mere speculation. Last weekend, she rallied close to a hundred protesters at the museum, despite the fact that the museum claimed at the time that no such exhibit was under consideration.

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View from Earth: History of More War

By L.K GIRDWOOD



I was very surprised to discover that Perplex City suffers from prohibition in the form of not discussing the part of its past that was described as ‘the war.’ I believe it is a very taboo subject that few wish to talk about as it is considered to be a ‘dark part’ of your city’s past and that you have moved on. I commend you on your ability to move on, but I was concerned by the fact that it is not openly discussed. Possibly, Perplex City does not wish to discuss the war out of shame and fear -- the fear and shame of the things that happened and the consequences those actions had on others.

On Earth, we have had many wars and we have shown ourselves time and time again the evil that man can accomplish and is capable of. For example, in World War Two (1939-1945 AD) the Nazi Holocaust took place where approximately 3.2 million people died in concentration/extermination camps -- 90% of these people were of the Jewish faith. They were deliberately worked

to death or gassed in the extermination camps. Also during WWII, the first atomic bombs were dropped, killing at least 120,000 people outright and twice as many over time (95% of which are believed to be civilian casualties). It is believed that World War Two claimed around 50 million lives in total.

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On Earth, we learn about our wars and the atrocities that took place -- the things that human beings have done to one another throughout history -- to try to learn from these mistakes and make sure that they never reoccur. We discuss them openly, and to this day, debates rage on regarding, for example, the justification behind using atomic bombs.

I believe that this is a far more healthy than not talking about it. I believe that war and the things humans are capable of should be discussed openly so we can try to understand why they happened and, more importantly, to try to ensure that they do not happen again. I would urge Perplex City Citizens to discuss ‘the war’ openly to promote understanding and caution to future generations.

The View from Earth column is currently accepting submissions from its Earth readership. Please submit completed articles for consideration to news@perplexcitysentinel.com with ‘View from Earth’ in the subject line. Please include the pen name you wish to use and a photograph of yourself for our artists to work from.

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Museum Protesters Rally After War Exhibit Announced

By WILHELMINA BEST

Over nine hundred protesters gathered on Saturday at the Academy Museum to voice their opposition to the museum's new plans for a war exhibit. The gathering was organised primarily by Peace Watchers leader Soo-Yung Rosenthal, though Academy Senior Fellow Estelle Sedgewick also spoke at the rally. Police monitored the gathering for signs of emerging unrest, but no intervention was necessary, said chief Eoin Morgan.

In a surprise move, Academy Master Sente Kiteway appeared personally at the protest to speak to the assembled activists and explain the Academy's formal position on the exhibit. "We at the Academy feel that no subject should be considered too sensitive for furthering the pursuit of reason," he said. "Examining the actions of humanity at its worst can only grow our knowledge of sociology and anthropology. We would of course cover the topic with nothing but dignity and respect."

Kiteway's address was met with jeers and derision from the crowd. Kiteway left the assembly shortly after speaking, and was not available for questioning by the press.

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"Sente says it's important to examine all aspects of the human condition, but that's just ridiculous," said protester and Academy student Kelly Robart. "Perplex City as a

society has chosen to eschew all of the choices that could lead to a recurrence of this kind of conflict ever again. We've learned all the lessons there are, here. ... Examining these painful times in detail can only bring sorrow."

Rosenthal spoke to the crowd regarding the example of Earth, whose "culture of glory" encourages violent conflict, and indeed canonises those who wage war as heroes. "On Earth, there are memorials and museum exhibits and statues in every city commemorating the achievement of violence over reason," Rosenthal said. "Ms. Marlowe and Master Kiteway have too long been touched by the hand of Earth. They have been corrupted by that influence. They don't see the obvious correlation between the glorification of war and the continuation of it."

Museum spokesman Gerard Owling said that Kiteway's appearance at the rally came as a surprise to him. Owling had a formal statement from Anja Marlowe, the museum's new curator and the architect of the exhibit, indicating that she understands the reservations many in the city have over the exhibit, and that she will take all constructive criticism to heart.

Marlowe was appointed the curator of the Academy Museum mere weeks ago. It was widely anticipated that Marlowe would try to address the topic of war in a new exhibit, as she has a track record of choosing controversial subjects around which to build exhibits. Marlowe herself has remained unavailable to the press.

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Upcoming Viard Album Should Be Banned

Opinion/Editorial

Up-and-coming recording star Viard has produced an experimental album, *The Silver City*, that Hesh Records claims uses an experimental technology to use input to the auditory nerve to alter consciousness, particularly as pertains to intellect. Viard and his representatives claim that this technology is intended to enhance critical thinking skills, and is intended as listening material during puzzle-solving activity. We at the Sentinel feel the release of this experimental technology in the form of a simple consumer album is both abhorrent and unethical.

It has long been known that music can effect mental focus, but this is the first known attempt to intentionally prime the subconscious for a specific effect. Representatives at Cognivia have indicated that the arena smacks too much of mind control or other strictly unethical disciplines, and that as such, has not been considered an appropriate avenue for research or experimentation in the broader field of cognitive enhancement.

The Sentinel received an advance copy of the album, and found the music to be particularly disturbing. The music operates on several levels simultaneously,

and while one may experience some enjoyment on the surface of the music, it is troubling to listen to the music and feel that it is somehow altering your mental state without your explicit permission. How can we really know what layers of suggestion are being set like traps for us to stumble upon in our own brains? How do we know that there will be no harmful results from the release of this album to unsuspecting listeners across the city?

Indeed, anonymous sources inside the recording studio have given us heavily redacted reports on trials of this album and the preliminary research that led to its development. These reports indicate that the technology is by no means universally beneficial -- and there have been dark hints that in some cases, exposure has resulted in "serious and malignant side effects," though their nature has been left for us to speculate. From context, they could range from headaches and ill temper clear through temporary psychosis.

If there is even a grain of truth to to these reports, then Viard and Hesh must stop production of *The Silver City* at once. If they are using cognitive research in this monumentally irresponsible fashion and will not be dissuaded from their course, it is clearly incumbent on the City Council to put a stop to this release. The minds of our city are our greatest asset, and are no place for any "grand cognitive experiment," no matter how voluntary nor how well-intentioned.

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Iona Interviews... Jonathan Smart

By IONA RODIE

Former Perplex City Banking Corp. CEO Jonathan Smart lives in a surprisingly modest home overlooking Polygon Park. When I arrive, he is on his knees in the front garden, applying mulch to the bare, thorny sticks of some anonymous perennials. Even in dirty coveralls, Smart has a presence that extends far beyond what one might expect from his silver-haired aura of dignity.

When he notices me on his walk, he stands up, clearly surprised at the hour, and pulls off a muddy glove to proffer one of the most legendary handshakes in business. “Good to see you,” he says, and when Jonathan Smart says something, you believe it. Smart stepped down as CEO of the PCBC in late September, after a lengthy transition of power to hand-picked successor Walter Cove-Houghton. How is it to let go after a ten-year tenure as one of the most powerful men in business? Surely it can’t be easy to attend to nothing more complicated than a garden.

He leads me into a gleaming kitchen to wash his hands off. “Well, I am still on the board,” he reminds me. “And I think our Walter will be listening to my advice

for some years, yet. ... It is nice to finally be out of the game, though. I’m ready for some peace.”

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Indeed, some insiders have said that Cove-Houghton’s appointment as Smart’s successor to the top spot comes only after a lengthy bargaining process in which Cove-Houghton must continue to follow Smart’s orders. After all, board member have spoken public about Cove-Houghton’s “abrasive personality” and his lack of complete understanding of the bank’s position in the current market. At their darkest, some rumours suggest that Smart has intentionally picked a weak successor so that his position at the bank remains strong despite his formal retirement. How much truth is there to these accusations?

Smart prepares a pot of tea, his brow furrowed, as he actually considers the question. After a time, he replies: “I suppose I can see how you could get that impression, but it certainly isn’t my motivator here. ... I’ve known Walter for many years now, and I know that the brain in his head understands the way our society is moving and adapting to technology like nobody’s business. We’ve got some challenges ahead of us.”

The “challenges” Smart refers to include

Continued

the PCBC's recent slip in position and popularity. Consumer business is transitioning to more personal services, or even to full-service buildings such as Ascendancy Point with their in-house Comprendo Finance. The bank is contemplating the modern-day question of how to make a monolithic business seem warm, accessible -- even caring.

Smart admits there is no easy answer. "One of the driving forces of the [Fivebridge & Remton Consolidated Bank] acquisition was this need to find ways to make yourself relevant to a consumer on a personal level," he says. "F&R are famous for making you feel like they're your best friend, and that's something we need to explore as an enterprise."

That acquisition, meanwhile, is under political pressure from the City Council, under accusations that the companies did not adequately address how the deal will affect consumers living outside the central urban area of Perplex City. Smart waves these concerns off with a brush of his hand as he serves tea in a traditional hand-painted set. "The politicians needed to sound like they're keeping watch on us, but everybody knows the plan is sound. It'll go through in no time," he says. "The only real problem here is that an election year is coming up."

It should be noted that the PCBC, under Smart, was one of only two Perplexian

corporations who took up the Sentinel's offer to advertise in the Earth-based External Edition when it launched last March. The bank certainly can't be reaping dividends from Earthly customers, making the move an obviously unwise expenditure. What motivates that?

Smart chuckles, rubbing his palms on his pants. "I'd call it investment in the future," he says. "It's never too early to begin a branding exercise in a new market." He gives me a sly wink. "Besides, it was a favour for Michiko [Clark, editor-in-chief of the Sentinel] and it never hurts for the press to owe your favours."

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Elderly Old Town Grocer Foils Vandal

By JEREMY CLARIDGE

A case of attempted vandalism was foiled by 96-year-old greengrocer Florence Alvarez in the Old Town late Tuesday night. Police say that the elderly business owner heard a ruckus outside her establishment, discovered a crime in progress outside, and subdued the perpetrator until police could arrive. Police Lieutenant Hansel Dixon said that the alleged criminal, 23-year-old Oliver Sands, was intoxicated and violent when he was arrested, and has been charged with misdemeanor property damage and attempted assault.

“I was a champion wrestler in my younger days, and I still know how to pin a man when I have to,” said the diminutive Alvarez proudly.

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According to witnesses, Sands had been on a rampage through the Old Town, breaking windows and defacing property. He arrived outside the Fresh Market just as Alvarez was closing the shop for the night. When Alvarez demanded Sands remove himself from her property, Sands

became angry and rushed Alvarez, say witnesses. At that point, Alvarez wrestled Sands to the ground and pinned him while bystanders called for police.

“A big guy like him jumping a little old lady,” said Shia Patrick, a neighbourhood resident who was a witness to the scene. “It just isn’t right, and I’m glad he got what was coming to him.”

Dixon said that Alvarez succeeded in keeping Sands immobile for nearly ten minutes, the time it took police to arrive.

Sands suffered minor injuries in the scuffle and was treated by medics on the scene before being released into the custody of police. Alvarez was uninjured.

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Sente's Team on Earth Delivers on Promises

By IONA RODIE

Master of the Academy Sente Kiteway held a joint press conference along with City Council Leader Camryn Scott to announce a significant development in his endeavours to locate and recover the Receda Cube. According to Kiteway, his subordinates on Earth, Mind Candy, have delivered a system that allows would-be Cube-hunters to solve cards and accrue Perplex Points. The system is designed to be reminiscent of some kinds of PCAG play, with high scorers rising to the top of the leaderboard, a move expected to foster amicable rivalry between friends. Inside sources at the Academy suggest that Sente may even plan to award special Earth-only leitmarks to players who reach specific point scores.

The system appears to be popular among Kiteway's Earth players, with approximately 150 ranked players and more than 2000 instances of correct solves in less than 24 hours of play.

"This is a proud day for the city, and I think it will mark a turning point in our efforts to interest the Earth public in our situation and encourage them further to help us," said Sente. Scott called the system a "noble effort by parties in both worlds, finally come to fruition."

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The first card solved was a red pixel card: #25, Read Between the Lines. The very first solver

was Dysper -- though she got it correct only on her second try. The first silver card solved was #244, Syzygy Cube. The woman taking the honour was Cassandra.

Thus far, most of the top-ranked players are from the United Kingdom and the United States. The highest-ranked player from another country is zoltan, from Denmark. At press time, he is ranked in 7th place with 929 points. Of the top 10 players, 4 are women, and only two of the five players to have broken the thousand-point barrier are men.

The first player to accrue over a thousand points is BrianEnigma, who dominated the leaderboard for some time. He was briefly eclipsed by players walther and Hunting4Treasur, but at presstime has regained the lead with 1436 points and an impressive 51 cards solved (of the 66 released thus far) in a mere 81 attempts. Before BrianEnigma began his rush to the top, play was dominated for several hours by Malinky.

The system appears to be the final step in Kiteway's plan to engage the people of Earth in an elaborate game to interest them in searching for the Receda Cube, stolen from the Academy Museum nearly two years ago. Kiteway had endured significant criticism for the secrecy and slow pace of his efforts, but with these visible results to show, the city is beginning to warm to his plans. The Sentinel plans to cover activity on the leaderboard in order to monitor Earth's ongoing interest in aiding the city, and the relative success of the plan.

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View From Earth: War of Ideas

By MOKEY FRAGGLE



Perplex City and Earth share a common plague. It has penetrated both worlds like an enormous rat sniffing out the weak.

I write about ideas.

The Perplex City Sentinel has made the grave error of welcoming this rat, publishing dangerous ideas in every edition. From Earth, we watch with wonder at your careless treatment of treacherous topics.

Take a closer look at Ryan Cahill. He claims to be an anti-drug Perplexian, and yet in his non-competitive time, he explains substances to children. If Cahill cared about the consequences of illegal drug use, he would treat the discussion as taboo. The less your children hear of drugs, the less inclined they'll be to take them.

Your newspaper promotes these ideas by publishing Cahill's story. A true anti-drug activist would turn his back on users and hide the truth from his children.

On Earth, the Idea Plague has also found its place. Consider the debate over sexual education in schools. The misguided declare that instructors must teach our children the details of intimacy. Now, individuals with more foresight must remove their children from such classes, preferring no education to inappropriate education.

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Sexually transmitted diseases, teenage mothers, and unwanted children are on the rise in several Earth countries. Someone has to shield our youngsters from these things.

I've been shocked by the Perplex City Sentinel's glorification of the Receda Cube theft. Whether it's a lengthy article on the investigation, interviews with members of the community, or even unrelated stories described in terms of whether they occurred prior to or following the crime, the newspaper has gone out of its way to promote deviant behaviour.

The idea of finding fame from foul behaviour has penetrated your world. How can a city in love with logic allow itself to obsess over a crime to the point of lauding it?

As with all evils, the best approach is no approach. The more a failing is discussed, the more commonplace it seems. Consider -- if no crime is reported, then no crime was committed.

Continued

Perplexians have not given in to all ideas, though. Your recent reaction to the Academy Museum and Anja Marlowe shows that there is hope. It takes a strong mind to avoid thought when it is provoked, but the war exhibit protesters have done admirably.

We have Anja Marlowes here on Earth, and they have led to more suffering. Through our pain, we see the Marlowes for that they really are: war promoters. They claim to seek the truth. But their version of truth is photos of dead troops being shipped home, stories of chaos and murder, and rallies in the streets with signs that read "No Blood For Oil."

Those victims of the Idea Plague create more victims of war, crime, disease, and drug addiction. They promote the very things they claim to be against. Thankfully, in Perplex City, ideas have not penetrated the most destructive issue of war.

As they are on Earth, laws should be written to protect your security and prevent further thinking.

But you mustn't stop at Marlowe or Cahill or the Perplex City Sentinel. There is only one way to ensure crime doesn't continue, and that is to ignore it.

Good luck, and remember these important words from an Earth man who knew the

danger of free thought:

"Ideas are more powerful than guns. We would not let our enemies have guns, why should we let them have ideas?" -- Joseph Stalin, 1879-1953

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Student Discovers New Beetle Species

By LUCAS VOORHIES

Amateur entomologist Ricardo Curlaway, 19, was honoured by the Academy Wednesday evening for his discovery of a new species of beetle inhabiting central Perplex City. This is the first confirmed discovery of a new species since Lola Bancroft documented the existence of spotted tide-pool clams in the Newguard area in 151. It is not known whether this species is recently evolved or if it has existed undiscovered for many years.

Curlaway had been gathering data on the population of toad beetles living in Azad Park. He was surprised to realise that the species they have under the microscope was not the yellow-horned toad-beetle but in fact has distinctly green horns. "Boy was I surprised," Curlaway said. "My classmates thought I was silly, spending all my time looking at beetles, but I just find them really fascinating - in many ways they're more interesting than people."

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Curlaway's discovery was at first discounted by the Academy's biological

sciences department but, by dint of persistence, he was eventually granted partial access to their genetic databanks, giving him sufficient information to confirm that the species was, indeed, utterly new and unknown.

"That kid just kept calling and calling. He wouldn't leave us alone," commented Ryan Jaipur, adjunct senior fellow in the department of natural sciences. "Eventually we decided it'd just be simpler to give him the access he wanted than to keep fielding his calls. More fool us -- he's made an amazing discovery here."

For Curlaway's next project, he's researching the biology of newts in the Catbite region -- and he's hoping for yet more discoveries. "Our knowledge of the natural history of our own region hasn't really advanced in the past 100 years," he commented, "I aim to change all that."

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Five Top Earth Board After Week of Play

By KATE BREWSTER

Competition among the Earth-based Cube hunters on the puzzle card leaderboard has heated up this week. Five players are now in a tie at first place, each with 1829 points. Every one of the five have solved 60 of the set of 66 currently available. Of those players, oliverkeers13 did it in 86 attempts; dusty and solitair in 107 attempts; walther with 111; and last week's top performer, BrianEnigma at 117 solve attempts.

At press time, there are nearly 8000 cards solved among well over 400 ranked players.

The United Kingdom is dominating the leaderboard, occupying no less than six of the top ten spots, with the United States lagging behind with a mere three. The next highest spot occupied by a player from another country is Denmark's zoltan in 17th place, followed by Ireland's swampy353 in 42nd place; nv3nvmd of Sweden in 79th place; and thelandofbob representing Japan in 81st place.

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Despite the significant firsts struck by women in the first week of play, including first overall solve and first silver solve, the highest-ranked female player is now nightingale in 7th place, with 1762 points, followed by Hunting4Treasur in 9th, zaeil in 13th, and Quadschick in 19th.

Perplexians are enthralled by the competition, which media analyst Rafe Lovage said was “nearly as gripping as the Academy Games.” Many feel that the Earth competition is more compelling, if only because the stakes for Perplexians are so much higher. “We finally have some feedback on this whole master plan of Sente [Kiteway’s],” Lovage said.

The competition is part of Academy Master Sente Kiteway’s plan to encourage Earth citizens to search for the missing Receda Cube and return it to his agents on Earth, Mind Candy. Kiteway believes that leaderboard competition such as this will encourage players to learn as much as possible about Perplex City and its people, and solve the mystery of where the Cube is now.

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Duncan Defeated By Upstart Pohele

By CORWIN JONES



Oliver Pohele delivered a surprise loss to PCAG favourite Serena Duncan over the weekend in a decisive 5-2 match. The move comes at a crucial time in the championship season, with the October eliminations looming ever closer. "Serena is a quality player," Pohele said in post-game interviews. "I have to say, I never expected to beat her. ... This is absolutely my personal best, now." Pohele described the victory as an "amazing feeling" that he will remember all of his life.

Duncan's poor showing surprised sports analysts, who considered a Duncan victory over Pohele all but writ to the records book. "Nobody is saying Ms. Duncan is impervious to other players," said analyst Johan Reginald, "but I think nobody expected her to lose to such a low-ranked player. It certainly gives a confidence boost to others who may be up against her in the next weeks." According to

Reginald, at the top levels of play, performance can boil down to a simple equation of confidence under stress, rather than a clear-cut division based solely on skills. "Confidence is key, here. If you think you have a chance at winning, your performance definitely advances."

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For Pohele, the points should be sufficient to keep him in play through November. The unexpected boost certainly gets him out of the danger zone, and if his performance through the end of the month stays on an even keel, then he will almost certainly pull through. When asked about his future in the championship, Pohele only shrugged. "I'm not in this to be the next champion," he said. "If I don't even make it into November, I'll at least know I give it my all -- and that I beat a reigning champion, once."

Duncan's loss has certainly dented her record, but she is in no danger of missing the cut. She refused to offer excuses for her performance, saying only, "I suppose I had an off day. It does happen, you know."

Pohele is widely regarded as a rising star. His first year of competition was in 265, and although he has never yet made the final cut, his level of play has seen steady and marked improvement. It is thought that in a few years' time, he may be a champion-quality competitor.

Duncan, the reigning PCAG champion, is heavily favoured to win again this year.

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View From Earth: Theorists Awarded

By SCOTT MYERS



Every year, The Bank of Sweden awards a Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel. In a move recognising the importance of gaming sciences, The 2005 (268AC) award was granted jointly to Robert J. Aumann of Israel and Thomas C. Schelling of the U.S.

“for having enhanced our understanding of conflict and cooperation through game-theory analysis.”

Schelling, who is at the Department of Economics and School of Public Policy, University of Maryland College Park, has focused his work largely in two directions. His early work includes *The Strategy of Conflict*, which has been considered one of the most influential works of the twentieth century. Perplexians are cautioned, this work may be somewhat inaccessible, due to its subject matter. Schelling explores the relationships between two parties in aggressive stances. He demonstrates how sometimes it is better to retaliate than to have the ability to defend. The practical applications of this idea may be applied to gaming, business, industry, politics, and military conflict.

Schelling’s later work went into the tendency

of segregation models to gain momentum, and has been cited as both timely and profound. He recalls his earlier concepts of organisational bodies working against each other, and goes on to espouse the tendency of those organisations to shift into separate and distinct conflagrations. Or, in other words, tiny cells with minimal preferences will greatly affect a larger model in increasing severity.

Aumann has worked from The Center for Rationality, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel. He has studied, in his words, “game theory, which is a branch of science which studies situations where people interact and each person has a different goal. Each person wants to do the best that he can for himself.” Aumann observed “correlated equilibrium” in game theory, in which players of a game are likely to treat unknowns about the opponents the same as any other unknown in a game. Seemingly random moves are usually not altogether random, but are a response to unknown information about the opponent. Furthermore, Aumann has studied the notion of common knowledge in game theory in a rigorous way.

Although the prize was awarded jointly, and the two gentlemen know each other somewhat, their work has been performed independently in all cases.

Past winners have included the charismatic and enflamed John Forbes Nash, who won the award in 1994, for his analysis of “equilibria in the theory of non-cooperative games.” This is particularly noteworthy because Schelling’s and (to a greater extent) Aumann’s work has largely been a response to the Nash Equilibrium.

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Finlay Quits Consumer Giant in Run for Office

By ROBERTO GOODWIN



Douglass Finlay

Douglass Finlay, co-founder of the multi-billion-leck company Finlay-McLennan, today announced his intention to run for leader of the City Council. Not only does Finlay face stiff competition from the current favourite, Nathan Earlywine, he must also leave behind the company that made him his fortune in accordance with the council's ethics policy.

Political observers were surprised by this unexpected foray into politics. In a press

briefing, Finlay explained: "In the year since the theft of the Receda Cube, I've seen our government become increasingly secretive and less and less accountable to the public. It is in times like these that the people need strong, trustworthy and open leadership, not expensive and ineffective policies, such as the clandestine search operation led by Sente Kiteway."

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Finlay said that a statement on his economic and social philosophy is in the works, and refused to elaborate extensively before he has a finalised platform. He did, however, voice his objections on one of the controversies of the day: the war exhibit planned at the Academy Museum. "We should be looking forward, not back into the past," he explained. "As a city, we have a fantastic opportunity to grow through our developing relations with Earth, which makes it all the more important our lives, culture and media reflect who we are today, not hundreds of years ago."

While the election is still several months away, Finlay has already set up his campaign headquarters on Schloss Street and is looking forward to his first meeting with his competitors. When pressed for his views on current council leader Camryn Scott, Finlay paused some time before replying, "It has sadly become clear to everyone that she should step down." Finlay also offered an opinion on

Continued

Nathan Earlywine: “[He] is a great man, yet he sees our city the way it was, not as the shining beacon of significance and innovation it could be.”

According to sources close to Finlay, while he regrets the need to leave the company he created with childhood friend Roger McLennan, Finlay certainly can't complain about how the move leaves him financially. From the proceeds of liquidating his shares in the company, Finlay has joined the ranks of Perplex City's multi-billionaires.

Finlay-McLennan has seen profits soar over the last decade as it established itself as the leading supplier of home and personal care products. Since the announcement of its takeover of Fulgen Foods last October, the share price has almost doubled, placing Finlay-McLennan near the top of the PCX.

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Council Rules: Viard Album Banned for Sale in Perplex City

By GARIMA KING



The City Council voted unanimously on Tuesday to ban sales of the upcoming Viard album, *The Silver City*. The album has been embroiled in controversy after word has surfaced that the album uses controversial sonic cognitive therapy techniques, with an aim of improving cognitive function while the music is playing.

Council leader Camryn Scott said that the ban was “the only choice,” given Hesh’s reluctance to release complete reports on this alleged audio technology and its side effects. “The citizens of Perplex City are not test subjects in some misguided artist’s attempts at experimentation,” she said. “We find the very idea of this

abhorrent and irresponsible.”

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Council member Roy Yolen suggested, however, that if Hesh were to turn over all of its research relating to the audio technology used, the council would be open to reconsidering its stance. “The point is, Hesh isn’t giving its fans the opportunity to make an informed decision,” he said.

Hesh representatives called the move “extremely disappointing.” Said spokesman Kai Cinelli: “Viard and our production team have worked very hard on this project, and it’s really a crushing blow to think that nobody will hear it. ... This kind of censorship is something I never expected to see in our modern city.”

The initial uproar over the album came when rumours surfaced that the music uses embedded cognition enhancing technology, which can have detrimental side effects on a fraction of the population as a whole. Reports on test runs of this technology were given to the Sentinel by an anonymous source inside the studio. These reports were heavily redacted; further information from the source suggests that side effects could range from “temporary melancholy” and headaches, to outright psychosis.

Viard himself was -- as is typical of the elusive artist -- unavailable for comment.

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View from Earth: Crime and Punishment

By TERTIUS



As an attorney, I can't help but wonder what sort of Perplex City justice we Earthlings are supporting. On Earth, punishments for stealing rare and priceless items vary greatly from nation to nation, and even from state to state or province to province. In many countries, for example, the punishment would

most likely include a fine, community service, or imprisonment from anywhere from a few days to a few decades. However, in some countries, the punishment would range from the removal of the defendant's hand, to his prompt, public execution. This doesn't even approach the question of whether the defendant received a fair trial (or any trial) prior to receiving the punishment.

We know that Perplex City has courts and trials (which, for the sake of this article, we will assume are fair), but which of the above punishments most closely resembles those of Perplex City? Are the people of Earth desperately searching for an object stolen by a person who will be delivered up for torture or execution? If so, I daresay many of our beloved "cubehunters" would not be so eager to turn over the perpetrator's identity.

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Perplex City seems a logical place. However, as the Sentinel has shown us, crimes do occur there. Not all Perplexians are perfect. The question is, what does Perplex City do to these less-than-perfect citizens? Are they strapped to a chair while Cognivia employees inject them with mind-altering drugs? Are they frozen and stored for hundreds of years as in the popular Earth film "Demolition Man"? What will become of our cubic criminal?

I, for one, urge the government of Perplex City not to execute or torture the perpetrator. It will solve nothing. I realize it is not the right of Earthlings to alter Perplex City law, but you asked for our help. While I don't pretend to speak for all of Earth, a review of the laws of the majority of nations listed on the leaderboard (United Kingdom, United States, Sweden, Japan, Ireland, Denmark, Canada, Australia, France) suggests that most people seeking the cube agree that execution of thieves would be wrong. As a result, I encourage the Perplex City government to respond to this inquiry, and guarantee to the people of Earth the cube-thief will be treated fairly and justly, and will not be tortured or executed. If the government of Perplex City is not willing to comply with this request, I urge the person on Earth who discovers the identity of the thief to keep it secret until the Perplexians agree to the fair treatment of this soon-to-be most notorious criminal of all time.

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Oliverkeers13 Breaks Away from Pack

By KATE BREWSTER

In a surprise move, player oliverkeers13 has broken away from the pack and assumed a solitary place in the lead. He now has 1948 points from solving 63 cards in 102 attempts. Sources at Mind Candy indicate that the two cards that allowed this move to a solo lead were #150, A Journey in the Desert, and #142, Photoshopped -- two as-yet-unreleased card from the upcoming wave of new cards due out in a few weeks.

Rumours abound regarding how oliverkeers13 could have obtained these pre-release cards; Mind Candy refused to speculate on how the cards could have been leaked before their formal launch date.

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The move leaves a sum total of nine players in a tie for second; last week's top players are joined by nightingale, lillyplop, Juxta, lauriek, and gid.

Over 5,000 cards have been correctly solved since the last report, and some analysts believe the 15,000-cards-solved

milestone may come as early as next week. The number of ranked players has swelled to over 700.

This week, a player from Armenia jumped up to the 38th place. The player, Sasuntsi Davit, has 1453 points and 55 cards solved. New up-and-coming players from other nations include Jon 79 from New Zealand in 107th place and Australia's er123 in 118th place.

Of the top 100 players, 18 are women and 13 provided no gender data, despite the strong initial strength of female players when the leaderboard initially opened.

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Iona Interviews... Michiko Clark

By IONA RODIE

Perplex City Sentinel's editor-in-chief and acting publisher, Michiko Clark, practically lives in her office these days. The modest space in the heart of the Sentinel's building is filled with greenery, her one concession to comfort. She gestures toward the jungle-like walls. "They help me breathe better, I think," she laughs. "And anyway, I never get outside anymore, so I need something to remind me of what it's like."

Clark is a little on the pale side lately, with dark smudges under her eyes, but her trademark sweep of dark hair is as glossy as ever. There's no question that the dual workload is taking a toll on Clark, typically known for her almost draconian control of every detail of the Sentinel's operation. Clark quirks an eyebrow at me. "Draconian? You really want to ask your boss something like that?"

Then she shrugs. "I try to be reasonable and fair," she says. "I do expect complete dedication from my staff, but honestly, you don't get into this business without a lot of passion for the truth."

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Clark herself is now the acting publisher of the Sentinel because her predecessor, Lauren Grove, was sacked in the denouement of a religious-discrimination conflict. "That was a terrible mess," Clark says, pinching the bridge of her nose. "We're on a candidate search for a suitable publisher now. I don't actually want the job, you know."

Clark's stewardship, unwilling though it may be, comes during a period of increasing difficulty for the paper, in large part because she is being strongly pulled in conflicting directions on several fronts. Despite the fad-like popularity of all things related to Earth, a vocal minority is now calling for the View from Earth column to be discontinued, for example. And the Sentinel is torn between its duty as a public watchdog keeping an eye on the doings of public officials --most notably, Master of the Academy Sente Kiteway - - and the need to work alongside these officials to obtain information -- and in the case of Kiteway, to keep publishing the Earth-intended external edition.

"View from Earth is a actually a very popular column," Clark says, then she frowns. "The only problem is, we've been receiving a very limited number of submissions. It's really too bad, since the readers can't get enough of what they have to say. It's always a big hit when we get letters from the external readers, too, and we actually get almost none of

Continued

those at this point.” The Sentinel has no plans to discontinue the column, she adds, providing that suitable material continues to flow in.

The paper’s relationship with the Academy, though, is a much more difficult situation, Clark concedes.”Sente and I have always been on the same note when it comes to the importance of pushing information about Perplex City to an Earth-based readership. ... Obviously in order to publish the external edition, we need to work side by side, and at the same time, I have an obligation to the city to call out institutional flaws where I see them.”

She insists, though, that tension between the two organisations is not responsible for intermittent problems with the external edition’s publication. “The truth is, the technology that allows us to do this is a bit on the fragile side, and sometimes it simply fails to operate,” she says. “As with everything, the paper is always trying to strike a precise balance to allow us to stay on top.”

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Perplexing Nights Perplexingly Bad

By FOSTER LIDDELL

The highly anticipated Perplexing Nights opened their doors for the first time yesterday to an expectant audience. This reviewer, for one, wishes they hadn't. In an effort to buck the recent trend of Earth-based dishes, the aim for veteran restaurateurs Johann and Janice Peters was clearly to return to innovative and enticing Perplexian cuisine. At this, their restaurant fails spectacularly. The menu has been constructed with such precision and assiduousness that all thought of enjoyment has been lost.

In traditional cuisine, a dinner should be a rewarding mystery: New and exciting flavours exploding in your mouth without warning, with each course blending into the next in unexpected and delicious ways. No such delights were to be found at Perplexing Nights.

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Food ranged from bland to unpalatable; indifferent to positively noxious. It was as if their kitchens had become a chemistry experiment, where the only concern was to create something new, not

something great. In short, the food was all head and no heart. Adventuresome entrees like the roasted whole butterfish with berry glaze was too heavily laden with conflicting flavours, such as garlic and white vinegar. By contrast, the desserts were uniformly too sweet, and lacking in redeeming texture or depth of taste. Even the seasonal harbonnes were disappointing, both too chewy and too heavily sugared.

The ambience did little to improve the evening. Over-complicated wall puzzles either render you baffled and annoyed or take attention away from your food; exponential seating arrangements leave parties with either several small single tables, or vast ones that no party could fill; and syncopated music changes beat and rhythm so often as to leave you dizzy.

Our restaurants are in danger of becoming swallowed up by Earth's various multicultural cuisines. For restaurants to return to Perplexian cooking is a bold and necessary move, but misguided and lacklustre efforts such as Perplexing Nights will only make it harder for first-class and daring restaurants to be successful.

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Earth Leaderboard Dominated by UK

By KATE BREWSTER

Data provided to the Sentinel shows that the Earth-based puzzle card leaderboard is dominated by citizens of the United Kingdom, with all but three of the top 20 players listing the UK as their geographic location. This domination by the UK extends through all ranks of the leaderboard -- in fact, the number of UK players is roughly on par with the number from all other nations combined.

The top echelons remained fairly stable this week, as the top players appear to have solved as many cards as they can -- a few cards remain stubborn enigmas, however. The first-wave cards that remain entirely unsolved include #251, The Thirteenth Labour, and #238, Riemann. Some analysts suggest that these cards may never be solved by Earth players.

Among our rising stars, we have ramsfan, who joined the board only yesterday and has already collected 1056 points to rise to 97th place.

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The most widely-solved card to date is #25, Read Between the Lines, followed by #9 Ishihara and #27 Bar None, each with well over 450 solves. In total, there are 10 cards with more than 400 correct solves each. On the other hand, the least-solved cards are #244 Syzygy Cube, #241 T-L-P, and #219 Master of Secrets, which were solved a mere 46, 54 and 79 times, respectively.

The board broke the 15,000-cards-solved mark earlier today, bringing the total number of points acquired to over a staggering 325,000. Of those solves, 3400 cards and 72,000 points were gained this week alone.

The average player has solved 19 cards and accrued 405 points. These points were not won without struggle, however; that same average player has also submitted approximately 13 incorrect solves. To date, the total number of incorrect solves has exceeded 10,000 in total.

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Hesh to Launch Viard Album on Earth

By GARIMA KING

Hesh Records stunned the city on Wednesday when it announced that the banned Viard album, *The Silver City*, will be released after all -- on Earth. Hesh spokesman Kai Cinelli said that the company had reached an accord with Earth company Mind Candy to provide the contraband music to an Earth audience only. Cinelli did not indicate the date that the album would become available on Earth, though he did say that it should be "within weeks."

The move has touched off a firestorm of criticism from both the City Council and from the citizens who had worked to ban the album in Perplex City in the first place. "This is an absolute outrage," said council leader Camryn Scott. "It's clear from this that Hesh is interested only in following the letter of the law, while abusing the spirit in which it was made."

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Author Clark Wooster, who was a pivotal player in convincing the council to look at this issue, agreed with Scott's statement.

"Unleashing this dangerous music upon the people of Earth is just as ill done as it would be to release it in the city," Wooster said. "Is this how we want to reward all of the people who are helping search for the Receda Cube? By exposing them to the irresponsible works we wouldn't allow to harm our own citizens?"

Cinelli repeated previous defences of the album, saying that "the effects are well-documented and unlikely to cause any serious harm." He also pointed to the leeway given to other artists, such as Randal Tokei, who was permitted to construct and then burn a structure in Azad Park. "How is lighting a giant fire in the middle of a public park less dangerous than allowing another artist to exercise his freedom to express himself through music?" Cinelli asked. "There's definitely not an even standard being applied here. ... Nobody is forcing any individual to listen."

Sources at Mind Candy were unreachable for comment; Academy sources declined to speak to the Sentinel about their Earth agent's involvement. Viard himself was, as typical, also unavailable for comment.

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War Exhibit Details Released Amid Outcry

By WILHELMINA BEST

The Academy Museum today released details of its soon-to-open war exhibit. The fiercely-protested exhibit is scheduled to open to the public on Monday. New information from sources close inside the museum indicates that the controversial material to be put on display includes a wide range of literature and artefacts from the period, including many from non-Perplexian regions.

Some of the materials include letters, diaries, and official orders from such famous names from the period as Commander of the Perplex City Forces Rifa Woad; Vianne Adamek; Anthony Granier; Vikram Castellan; and Estelle Desine. These items were culled from Academy and city archives, and even from a few private collections.

Museum curator Anja Marlowe said that she is particularly pleased with how the exhibit has pulled together. "All of these things pulled together really tell us a moving story -- each one has a tale to tell," she said. "I think this information is really crucial to figuring out what Perplex City is and how it was shaped."

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Despite Marlowe's optimism, protests to the exhibit have only continued unabated. Rallies at the Museum site have been held every weekend since the exhibit plan was announced, growing greater crowds each week. These protests have failed to sway the Academy, and a growing chorus of voices are now calling on the City Council to intervene. Thus far the council has declined to step in.

Citizens opposed to the exhibit point in particular to such artefacts to be displayed as childrens' toys said to have belonged to refugees from Anjsbourg; everyday household items damaged in the conflict; and even some non-functional weaponry. "What purpose can it possibly serve to display this kind of object?" asked Academy senior fellow Estelle Sedgewick. "This can only make us abhor our own heritage as Perplexians. We should be searching for material to give us pride in who we are, not shame."

Although the opening is on Monday, a gala preview will be held on Saturday evening. A number of high-profile citizens have been invited, but many have publicly stated that they will snub the affair, including Aurora Belle, Randal Tokei, and Serena Duncan.

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Leaderboard Adds to Top of the Pack

By KATE BREWSTER

The Earth leaderboard for Cube retrievers added three newcomers to the second place this week. Honest Goblin, Bert, and Steven join the twelve tied for second place, with 1920 points each. Player oliverkeers13 remains alone in the top position with 1994 points following his mysterious acquisition of unreleased second-wave cards.

Honest Goblin became the first to solve card #181 Down, A, B, Up, Up, Right, last week. The card has infamously suffered from production problems, which Mind Candy has now rectified by providing additional information on the solve page for that particular card. It has since been solved by over 80 additional players.

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No other first-solves of first-wave cards have been found. There are now a total of five solved second-wave cards, however -- joining oliverkeers13 is Ryanandrew, who has solved three second-wave cards, though he remains in 14th place. The second-wave cards Ryanandrew has solved are #143 Pocket Rockets; #21

Divide by Three; and #20 Barbeque. Sources at Mind Candy remain as puzzled as ever on how second-wave cards have made it into the wild. Second-wave cards are not yet available for sale, though Mind Candy insiders are optimistic that it will be soon.

Interestingly, the most-attempted cards do not appear in the list of most-frequently-solved cards. Card #112 Three Little Words has in particular been attempted over 900 times, though a correct solve was submitted as long ago as 11th October. Excluding the unreleased second wave cards, the most-solved card, #25 Read Between the Lines, has been solved ten times more often than the least-solved card, #244 Syzygy Cube.

This week topped last week's solve numbers. Players this week solved over 3700 cards for nearly 80,000 points, bringing the totals to over 19,000 cards and 412,000 points to date. There are over a thousand ranked players, now, and the average player has 405 points.

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Maitland Planning Counterpoint Exhibit

By LUCAS VOORHIES

Bryan Felder, curator of the Maitland Museum, has unveiled plans for the most comprehensive modern-era art exhibit ever held. The collection, to be called “Perplex City Today,” will focus predominantly on influential pieces from the last 200 years, and showcase new and challenging works by several famed artists. The pieces slated for display include landmark paintings from the controversial Felix Varn, and some never-before-shown works by puzzle scribe Aiko Entrescore.

Felder announced the goal of the exhibit was to “embrace our city and the Perplexian way of life.” He explained: “Over the last few years, our people have been turning away from Perplexian culture and lifestyles as this fascination with Earth grows. ... We are in danger of losing our own identity. This collection is of paramount importance, not just to highlight the fascinating and beautiful work produced by our own native artists, but also to remind us of who we are, separate from the influence of Earth.”

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Felder denied suggestions that the theme was chosen to capitalise on the escalating animosity toward the newly opened war exhibit at the Academy Museum. He insisted, instead, that the two exhibits will be complementary. “I see it as a counterpoint,” he said. “Instead of focusing on negative topics, we choose to look at the development of the great city we know today. Instead of looking back to a sad period of history, we look forward to a bright future.”

A calculatedly Perplexian approach is already planned for the exhibit. The famed gallery maze will make a welcome return, with the layout changing daily to allow visitors to encounter paintings and sculptures they might otherwise have missed. Large interactive displays are to be installed in the museum’s recently refurbished Taversen Hall, encouraging the public to engage more deeply with interactive pieces on exhibit.

The exhibit will kick off with a red carpet extravaganza, rumoured to be budgeted at several million lecks, though the exact figures remain a secret. Felder expects more than fifty thousand visitors are expected in the opening month, over five times the museum’s most recent numbers.

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Iona Interviews... Myra Champaign

By IONA RODIE

Myra Champaign, the controversial prodigy who has taken the PCAG by storm, lives with her father Klaus Lowrie in a quiet flat in the Artist's Quarter. Lowrie lets me in and shows me to Champaign's room. "Be nice," he warns me. I notice that, although Champaign and I are left alone, the door remains ajar, Lowrie reading quietly in the next room.

Champaign herself bounces up from her desk when she sees me, then invites me to sit. She sits cross-legged on her neatly-made bed and leans forward. "Sorry it's a bit of a wreck," she says. "I was going to try to tidy up, but I guess I ran out of time." Champaign's bedroom seems like a part of her brain spread out for ready view: cluttered with brightly-coloured projects, puzzles, and the inevitable detritus of schoolwork. A poster of Roll for Damage singer Alejo Jackson hangs on her wall -- signed.

She blushes when I ask her about it. "Alejo is the best," she gushes. "He sent it to me after my first match, you know, with Terpening. ... He'd heard I'm a big fan, and he sent the sweetest note about how he felt bad for me." She points to the note, which is stuck to her mirror, right

by a spray of dried wildflowers.

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She refers, of course, to her first PCAG match against Mikhail Terpening. She was admitted to the PCAG only after a long delay, while a specially-convened committee investigated allegations that she should not be allowed to play due to prior cognitive enhancement. During her first match, a particularly vehement group - the Alliance for Clean Players - subjected her to jeers and name-calling before they were removed from the audience. Despite the PCAG's formal acceptance of Champaign into play, there are still protests at many of Champaign's matches. How can she continue to defend herself against such opposition? And is there a grain of truth to their claims?

Champaign's shoulders bow as she struggles to find words. "I understand that there are people who are afraid. They know that I had Walker's Syndrome, and now I'm, well, I guess I'm pretty sharp." She smiles, her enthusiasm and pride in her own performance breaking through. Then she frowns. "They don't see how that could be unless I'm cheating. The whole thing is just so unfair," she says. "I've put my medical records out for public view, and if anybody cares to look at them, they can see that all of my treatments were discontinued by the time I was eight, and that at no point were any of my levels elevated above a perfectly

Continued

normal range. ... I was treated for a disease, and now that I'm the person I was supposed to be, these people think I'm doing something terrible."

Her eyes shine, perhaps a little too brightly. "If Jonas Sawgrass would bother to look at the trials for my treatment, he'd see that it's been shown that they have no effect on someone without Walker's to begin with," she says. Then she swipes at her eyes with a sleeve. "It's clear Jonas doesn't care about me as a person, anyway," she says. "He's just got his pet cause, and I'm an easy target because I'm young."

Young as she is, Myra has had more than her fair share of media attention, and it shows in her careful answers to my questions. Now that she is in the PCAG, comparisons are inevitable -- she's most widely compared to reigning champion and PCAG darling Serena Duncan. How does Champaign feel she stacks up?

"I can't even say how flattering that is," Champaign says. "I mean, all of this 'best young player since Serena' kind of talk is so exciting. And Serena was already seventeen when she first began play, [Champaign recently turned 15] so to have all of the pundits talking like that already is, well, it's kind of unreal."

All the same, Champaign is clearly not going to take the championship anytime soon. As the season progresses,

competition gets only more intense, and with her current standing, Champaign is unlikely to make it into December. She shakes her head. "No, that's right," she says. "I've played very hard, but I'm definitely losing ground the last few weeks. It's all right, it doesn't hurt my feelings or anything." She tosses her hair back over her shoulder and grins. "Anyway, my schoolwork needs a little more attention, so it's just as well."

And have the protests had an effect? Or will she be entering the PCAG again next year? She takes a deep breath and raises her eyebrows, suddenly looking every inch the naughty 15-year-old.

"Oh no," she says, "I'm going to enter again next year. And, sometime soon, I'm going to win."

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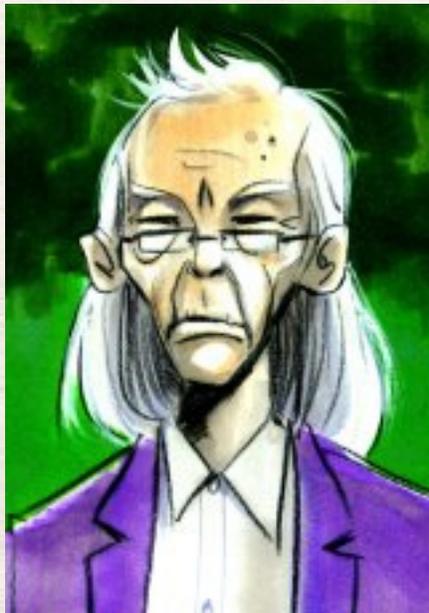
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Franke Performance Brings Tears, Joy to Fortunate Audience

By JOYCE HARRINGTON



Dorian Franke

Long-retired pianist Dorian Franke graced the Manifold Concert Hall with a special one-time performance on Saturday evening. Franke, widely regarded to be a legend in the music world, was urged to come out of retirement by his great-niece, the acclaimed poet Teva Willow. It was Franke's first public performance in over 40 years.

Fraction Media, Hesh Records and Sharpest Edge Records have all reportedly offered bids to release a recording of the performance, with label insiders putting the bids between PCL50 million and PCL200 million. "It's not just

the money from sales," said one anonymous source. "Releasing this performance would put its label squarely into the history books, and who doesn't want that?"

Willow has indicated, however, that it is unlikely Franke will accept any of them. "Uncle Dorian believes in the freedom of art," she said in interviews. "I expect he'll be distributing a recording to anybody who wants a copy, provided anyone can convince him that they'd really want it in the first place." Franke, she explains, is notoriously humble, and has difficulty comprehending the fuss over his talent.

Audience members were unanimous in declaring the concert a profoundly moving experience, and signs of high emotion were everywhere. Academy adjunct senior fellow of music Rebecca Croft commented that Franke's performance "changed forever the way I will understand these pieces." She explained: "The sensitivity of phrasing, the delicacy of technique, revealed multiple layers of meaning in these much-loved classics. I'm just so grateful that I was here tonight."

Students from the Perplex City School of Music had been given free tickets to the concert as part of Manifold's ongoing educational outreach program. They too were enraptured by Franke's performance. "Franke has been a legend to us," commented 20-year-old Charlotte Wang, "and to hear his performance was an immense privilege. It will be an inspiration for years to come."

At least one such student, reduced to tears by the music, indicated that he would be pursuing an alternate course of study. "I know now I could never be as great as Dorian Franke," said Xian Meadows. "To try after hearing him is vanity at its worst."

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Ryanandrew Makes Breakaway Play

By KATE BREWSTER

Late last week, player Ryanandrew made a surprise break to the top and now holds second place all to himself. He enjoys this position with 65 cards solves for 1987 points -- one more card than rival oliverkeers13, who occupies the top position, but with only 64 cards totalling 1994 points.

Both of these players have mysteriously obtained unreleased second wave cards, and it is this that has allowed the pair to be propelled to the top; it would appear that Ryanandrews has obtained more such cards, but that oliverkeers13's cards are worth more points in total. There is still no word from Mind Candy on how these cards might have been released early.

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Now in third place is an ever-broadening pack of players, currently numbering fifteen. This week, the following new players have reached 1920 points and third place: doublecross; ChalcoDoror; Mr.Shifter; and TheBoy. Up until a few short weeks ago, 1920 points earned a

share at first place. This would still be the case, if no second-wave cards were in play.

Total points accrued and players registered continue to climb hand in hand. Last week saw over 83,000 points claimed, bringing the total to 491,000 so far -- at this rate, there should be a half a million points awarded by next week. The total number of registered players is now nearly 2500, though less than 1200 players have points. This is in keeping with the rate of registration vs. solves - - this week, only about half of the new players registered successfully solved a card.

Card #112, Three Little Words, remains the most-attempted card, with over a thousand attempts, though it's only been solved by 322 players -- a mere 12% of all registered players. This doesn't even come close to putting it among the ranks of least-solved cards, however -- even discounting unsolved and second-wave cards.

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View from Earth: Truth or Taboo?

By HAWK



Humanity always seems to be searching for meaning in its existence. For some, this involves tracing their ancestors; for some, it will be defining themselves by what they do. Many people on Earth find a

great sense of identity in their national history, and a fair, unbiased view of the events that formed their nation can be invaluable. Oftentimes, however, the truth can hurt. I guess all of us would find certain aspects of our individual histories hard to look back on, but ultimately, it is this that defines us.

How tragic, then, for people who are denied a truthful retelling of their country's history. There are several governments on Earth that would rather not tell the true story about certain episodes in their past; understandably so, when previous rulers or governments are responsible for genocide, a military shaming or worse. I'm sure that our Perplexian cousins would find such willful perversion of the

truth just as abhorrent as we do. And yet it is exactly this attitude, of not wanting to let the truth be aired, that seems to prevail in the minds of those protesting outside the proposed war exhibit.

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Yes, war is a terrible thing. Yes, atrocities, slaughter, death and destruction are not pleasant things to review. But for a City, a People, that still seems to be trying to find its identity, it would seem like foolishness to ignore such formative events in Perplex City's history. Worse yet, there must be at least an entire generation that has been brought up with no access to the real history of the city they inhabit, with their history being a taboo. A society that prides itself on mental acuity must surely value the truth, and to deny it from others is truly unfair.

Ultimately, we can't change the past; but we can, and must, be changed by it. I would urge Perplex City to embrace its past, not to run from it if only so that the same mistakes aren't made again.

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Demand for Earth Goods Shakes Economy, Report Says

By ALWHIN COPI

A new report out from the Office of the Council today indicates that through the last quarter, Earth goods have continued to grow at an unprecedented rate, with no end in sight. For several months now, the markets have been affected by the the public's craze for Earth artefacts, food and culture, with companies bowing to the trend growing in leaps and bounds, devouring the market share from those companies that stood by their traditional product lines.

City Council Member Roy Yolen suggested that the report means the council should consider a luxury tax on Earth-style goods, in order to support flagging Perplexian businesses. "We need to protect our traditional way of life," he said. "We can't let who we are be frittered away because our youth are only interested in the next 'sharp' thing."

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Council leader Camryn Scott disagreed, saying that it was not a traditional Perplexian value to subsidise unsuccessful businesses, and that it would be against the spirit of the Council's governing mandate to "begin such bald-faced interference in matters out of our scope." This new report suggests that most year-end projections issued in the last several weeks will be inaccurate, as the demand for Earth-related items through the year-end buying season is likely to grow only stronger,

against the widely-predicted return to more traditionally Perplexian goods. Many had seen this trend in consumer retail as a temporary fad, expecting business to soon return to normal, but in the wake of today's report, few continue to believe that the effects will be short-lived. The new report includes a survey of citizens suggesting that Earth-style goods this quarter will garner a staggering 240% larger share of the consumer retail market than the same period last year.

Some Perplex City cultural institutions - - such as the Brain Bender chain of puzzle bars, or fast food chain Crispy Heaven -- have both announced meaningful reductions in profit margins, anticipating 3% and 8% drops respectively. PCX senior managing director Giordana Moore said that given the popularity of news surrounding the quest for the Receda Cube on Earth, it isn't surprising that all things Earth are remaining hot. "As a culture, we're very engaged with Earth right now," she said. "It's a way for us to try to feel comfortable with the situation we find ourselves in now, of relying on the people of this strange place to help us."

In accordance with the report's predictions, several smaller companies have found themselves propelled up the PCX in recent weeks. Earthworks, Soupery and even Fraction Media have all announced record earnings, with Earthworks in particular reporting a booming business. Many other companies that have been trading in replica or Earth-inspired goods have seen profits soar.

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Half Million Points Earned to Date

By KATE BREWSTER

Last week, the Earth-based Cube retrieval team Sente has assembled blew through the half-million points mark, and have now earned nearly 560,000 points in total. This week's 61,000 points earned is one of the biggest since records became available to the Sentinel. There are roughly 1300 ranked players, now, with over 2700 registered. Analysts suggest that this week will see the ranks of the top players begin to spread out again, as second wave cards should be available starting this week. Players oliverkeers13 and Ryanandrew have dominated the top places for a few weeks now on mysteriously acquired second wave cards, but it is widely agreed that this is unlikely to remain the situation once more players have a crack at the second wave.

The number of players on the third spot swelled again, this week. There are now 25 players all tied with 1920 points. They are: Honest Goblin; Juxta; Bert; walther; solitair; lillyplop; gid; dusty; BrianEnigma; Steven; nightingale; doublecross; ChalcoDoror; Mr.Shifter; TheBoy; josiah; Hunting4Treasur;

Dooooog; thesaint; TeamMfM; Fathom; The Inquisition; RebusPrime; Langley Moor; and 011v3R.

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All of these players are from the UK or US; the top-ranked player from a third country is Australia's Sasja, whose 1859 points put her in 32nd place. Asia's top player is thelandofbob of Japan, who sits in 157th place with 1121 points overall.

This week's breakaway new player, Cheesy, has accrued over 1126 points since joining on 16th November. Cheesy has shot up to be the highest-ranked player from Luxembourg, in 153rd place. No other new player from the past week has yet accrued even 700 points, making him clearly the week's rising star.

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Iona Interviews....

Helix Hesh

By IONA RODIE

Helix Hesh looks every inch the playboy of reputation when he greets me at the door of his Mobius Strip mansion. Dressed in an immaculate white suit with contrasting sea-blue shirt, his features still handsome despite the crow's feet around his eyes, he wears his 45 years well. Pausing at the front door, he invites me to admire the 360-degree sea view from his home, and points out his yacht in the marina before ushering me inside, smiling the feline smile of a confirmed, and unabashed, womaniser.

Before answering any questions, he insists on showing me through his hothouse, on the south side of his home. An enormous glass bubble, specially designed to capture every ray of sun available and amplified, in the winter months, by banks of daylight bulbs, it is only one of the many luxuries of this ultimate bachelor pad. Even now, Hesh's home is filled with honeysuckle freshly picked from the hothouse and, he tells me, the same technology can be used for year-round sunbathing in his private solarium, an extravagance which, he intimates, I am welcome to try out for myself.

I refuse politely, and begin by asking whether he feels that living in such opulence separates him from the public who buy his records; has he lost his edge in recent years?

Hesh smiles broadly. "Not at all," he says. "I don't see there's anything wrong with enjoying the fruits of my labour. I still keep my ear pretty close to the ground, make sure I listen to all the new sounds coming out of underground

clubs, it's just that these days I can do that on a state-of-the-art sound system."

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Famously, Hesh is a self-made man; growing up in a slum neighbourhood in the old town, he began his career as a DJ but quickly moved on to music production. He borrowed 20,000 Lecks from a Carrick Foundation grant scheme to found Hesh Records and within ten years had turned it into more than 20 million. Now, his label is one of the most prestigious in the city, with many of its top musical talents signed; Hesh is famed for his eclectic taste, from rock, with bands such as Roll for Damage, to electronic artists like antebuse and now Viard. Hesh's taste is now one of the most valuable commodities in the city. It's a question he must have been asked a thousand times before, but what's the secret of his success?

"Hard work," he says, then breaks into another smile, "and hard play. It's no use unless you enjoy it, you know? In a business like music you have to love what you do, that's the only way you'll be prepared to put in the hours it takes to make it. And I've had my lucky breaks as well. The trick is not to wait for them to come along, but to keep on working; that way, when opportunities arrive, you're ready for them."

Isn't he also famed for his skill at deal-making, his ability to persuade top-name bands that he will take the greatest care of their interests?

"We keep our talent by making sure we keep our talent happy," he declares. "Roll for Damage, for example, have their favourite studio technicians and support team, and it's part of my job to make sure that their preferred people are constantly available."

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That need to be “constantly available” has caused some criticism, hasn’t it? Famously, Zanadun Kane, the legendary producer, parted company from Hesh after arguments over creative control and working hours, taking some very lucrative contracts, including that of Joya, with him. Does Hesh feel he asks too much?

He smiles, charming as ever, and runs his hand through his hair. “Zanadun’s a great guy, an incredibly talented producer, and I still consider him a good friend. He felt that he had to move on for personal and professional reasons, and I respect that decision, but it’s ancient history now. He and his partner came for dinner just last week!”

Hesh is so convincing, and so very eager, that I almost expect him to produce a series of snapshots just to prove the point. He is correct that the split with Kane is old news now though, particularly when Hesh Records have hit the media headlines recently with a completely different story: the music of the mysterious Viard, whose first album *The Silver City* has been banned in Perplex City but will now be distributed on Earth. This despite the fact that the music has been ruled unsafe for its use of sonic cognitive therapy techniques, with side effects ranging from “temporary melancholy” and headaches, to outright psychosis.

Hesh denies all suggestions that the music may be damaging; he himself has found it “soothing and invigorating; like spending time meditating. In fact, studies indicate that the music may increase intelligence. It’s a shame that our city, which is usually so pro-innovation, has developed an irrational fear of this music. Anyone who listens to it will see that it is a work of genius, and that there’s nothing to be afraid of.”

He offers to play the contraband music for me, but I refuse and he does not insist, his skills as a charismatic host taking precedence even over his enthusiasm for Viard’s work. That charisma is, of course, as well-known as his musical talent. He has been romantically linked with many of the city’s most eligible women over the years, including Academy Senior Fellow Astrid Lindstrom, singer Satine Noir, and Giordana Moore, MD of the PCX.

Who is he seeing now? He shakes his head: as a gentleman, he couldn’t possibly say. It is fortuitous, then, that as I am leaving, a young blonde woman descends the curved staircase in the main hall, dressed only in a towel, a pair of Isabella Levenay shoes and a gold ankle bracelet. Her face is familiar, but I cannot place her for a moment. “Oh!” she says, “sorry! I’ve just been sunbathing. I didn’t hear you.”

Hesh smiles up at her and she comes to stand beside him as he bids me farewell. It is only as my car pulls away from the mansion that I put a name to the face: Hesh’s latest conquest is apparently Tippy Ankron, puzzle scribe in the cube retrieval project at the Academy.

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View From Earth: Designs for Life

By RACHEL WILD



Fashion is a subject we readers of the External Earth edition of the Sentinel hear very little about as part of the culture of Perplex City. This is understandable given the often superficial nature of fashion trends, and certainly an attitude shared by many of our own more serious publications. However, as long as people wear clothes, fashion will continue to be an integral part of visual culture, and often says a lot about the culture of which it is a part.

We understand that Earth seems to be a prevailing trend with many of your citizens, whether it be expressed in food, shopping or bad linguistic habits. As a result, some commentary on current Earth trends first hand may come in useful for any budding trend setters out there, but as a fashion designer myself, it would also be interesting to consider any similarities or directions in which you may inspire the way we dress.

As a technologically advanced culture,

and one that seems to value, or even require, intellectual influence on all aspects of life, including the visual arts, I wonder whether this has affected the clothes you wear day to day. Are puzzles embedded into patterns, or is this merely expressed in business-like suits, sombre colours and the sharp conservatism often associated with giving an air of intellectualism? Geek chic has recently become popular here, spreading from alternative streetwear to the mainstream high street and heralding the return of the tie and smart blazer-type jackets even in casual wear. Technology as a part of the fabric, with conductive fibres and bluetooth connectivity to various mobile devices, is currently in development and soon to be introduced to consumers through various soft furnishings, garments and accessories; but whether this will take off is yet to be seen.

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Conversely, despite seasonal trend changes and different key looks and themes, an overarching shift towards hand crafted goods can be seen in many areas of Earth fashion at the moment. A desire for authenticity and individuality in many people as a reaction against the mass production that is so prevalent in our shops, has inspired a rebirth in such crafts as knitting, crochet and embroidery. The new coolness of shopping for vintage clothes or customizing or creating your own garments from scratch has influenced designer fashion that aims to imitate the look without the hassle, and has even

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trickled down to the same mass market retailers who are now increasingly offering limited edition ranges and specially sourced vintage clothes for sale alongside their normal collections.

However much garment textile technology advances, people will always value individual one-off items, and lovingly hand-created goods. The quality of a well tailored suit or the craftsmanship of a gorgeous pair of shoes (and I know there are some Perplexian ladies who know what I'm talking about) will never go out of fashion and I hope, for your sakes, that the skills involved are still being kept alive.

The View from Earth column is currently accepting submissions from its Earth readership. Please submit completed articles for consideration to news@perplexcitysentinel.com with 'View from Earth' in the subject line. Please include the pen name you wish to use and a photograph of yourself for our artists to work from.

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Second Wave Cards Disperse Leaders

By KATE BREWSTER

Second wave cards hit a widespread audience this week, causing a major reshuffling of the entire leaderboard and a huge leap in player numbers. The top three players now are solitair with 5315 points in first place; nightingale in second place with 4311 points; and in third place, Coxtin with 4188 points. Coxtin, hailing from Djibouti, is the leading non-UK player. The remains of the former pack in third place have been knocked down to 54th place, though only seven players now share that spot.

The former leaders on the board, oliverkeers13 and Ryanandrew, have dropped to 47th and 48th place, respectively.

This month's leading new players are donstobbart at 3305 points and 10th place. She joined on 11th Nov. Jenniferison is in 17th place with 2900 points, after joining on 19th Nov. New player Scomazz has also put in an impressive showing, adding 2012 points to get to 46th place since only 21st Nov.

The total number of players is fast growing toward 8500, though the average player has dropped to 138 points and six cards. Well over 800,000 points have been accrued in total, and over 37,000 cards total solved -- with more than 11,000 cards and 201,000 points this past week alone. This week also added nearly 4400 new ranked players. The number of women at the top has begun to grow again, up to 6 in the lead 20. Only two players in the top 20 are from outside the United Kingdom, and the leading American player is now BrianEnigma in 54th place, presumably due to the slower transit time of second wave cards to another continent.

An overwhelming number of first solves have of course taken place over the last week. The most incorrect attempts have now gone to card #56, Gravity, with 4646 wrong answers submitted since its release last week. That card has also become the most solved, with 4656 correct answers submitted. There are a number of unsolved second-wave cards, but of the ones solved to date, #173, 14-15, has the distinction of the least solves -- only one person, 12th-ranked Sasja, has entered the correct solution.

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Duncan Determined to Reclaim Prize Despite Defeats

By CORWIN JONES

Reigning PCAG champion Serena Duncan has surprised many by a string of poor games over the past few weeks. Some point to her surprise defeat at the hands of Oliver Pohele in mid-October as the moment when it all began to go wrong for Duncan. Others say that this mid-season slump isn't significant to her overall standing, though she has dropped as low as fourth place in recent weeks, and is now just a hair below Klaus Johnson and Ryan Cahill, who are tied for first.

Sports analysts are fast rethinking their predictions that Duncan has an easy win ahead of her this year. "Competition is much steeper than we'd anticipated," said Raina Hollow of The Sporting Daily. "Serena isn't putting in the breathtaking performances of her last few years, either. Nobody thinks this will be an easy win for her anymore, though it's by no means too late for her to turn it around and reclaim the championship."

Duncan herself insists that victory is still within her grasp. "I've had a number of bad matches," she admitted last week, "but there's never once been an uncontested championship. It wouldn't be exciting if I won every last match, now would it?" She also suggested that her slip in position has been vastly overstated, a fluke of statistics more than a meaningful interpretation of her performance. "I really feel pretty good about where I am," she said. "We all know how one can manipulate

numbers to fabricate an illusory problem, and that's exactly what's going on here."

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Still, analysts are now predicting that Duncan's primary rival, Ryan Cahill, may reclaim the championship for this year. Cahill took the championship in 267, but lost it to Duncan last year. Many early in the season discounted Cahill's chances of victory, particularly after his season saw a rocky start. Cahill himself admitted that sitting out the preseason competition was a poor idea, and that his game suffered in the early weeks as a result.

"It's too early to call the championship won," said Cahill. "It's gratifying to know that the fans and pundits have growing faith in me, but it doesn't mean I need to work any less hard on improving my game."

Gabriella Petel has also shown signs in recent weeks of a resurgence in play, climbing as high as fifth place, though she was knocked down by Jack Fleury late last month. She surprised many early in the year with her unprecedented winning streak, but had since settled into her level of play from previous years. Still, she has won decisive victories over Myra Champaign and Mikhail Terpening in recent days, and has climbed safely into the range of December play. Some consider her a fan favourite for taking the championship.

Petel herself only laughed at this suggestion. "I think the only thing safe to predict," she said, "is that the championship won't be decided for certain until the season is over."

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Controversial Exhibit Attracts Crowds

By LUCAS VOORHIES



Soo-Yung Rosenthal

Despite ongoing rallies by protesters, the Academy Museum's extremely controversial war exhibit has drawn strong attendance numbers through its first weeks of opening. The museum reports that traffic through the exhibit is on the order of thousands a day, steadily increasing through a peak of nearly 8,000 visitors last Saturday.

"The queues are really incredible," said museum spokesman Gerard Owling. "We're seeing people waiting for four and five hours to participate." Owling indicated that if the museum had a higher capacity, the numbers might be even higher. "We obviously don't want people to rush through this experience," he said. "We find a lot of visitors are lingering

in some of the galleries for up to an hour."

Several members of protest group Peace Watchers called the attendance numbers "shameful." Soo-Yung Rosenthal, the activist who founded Peace Watchers, said that the numbers don't indicate popular support for the exhibit. "What we're seeing here is the natural result of curiosity," Rosenthal said. "After the people of the city have heard so much about this awful exhibit, they want to come and see it, to make an informed opinion. ... We're seeing many people step out of the museum and come join the ranks of protesters right away."

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Museum curator Anja Marlowe, the brain behind the exhibit and its design, is unabashedly proud of the results for her work, however. "It's definitely gratifying to see so many people come to see our true history," she said. "I strongly believe that the truth should always be revealed."

Visitors coming out of the museum were mixed in their response. While most agreed that the exhibit was done in a "tasteful and sensitive manner," a significant fraction still felt that the exhibit should be shut down. "It's too painful to look at all of this tragedy at once," said Gisele Derringer, a 23-year-old Academy student. "I think Professor [Estelle] Sedgewick is right, and we shouldn't condone this villification of our ancestors."

Owling said that the attendance numbers are record-setting for the museum, with a typical exhibit drawing a scant two thousand visitors a day, on average.

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Elucidate Card Solved by Player Solitair

By KATE BREWSTER

In a surprise move this week, player solitair became the first to correctly solve card #240, Elucidate, for 60 points. This places solitair in a tie for first place overall with Scomazz, who has rocketed to the top after joining on only 21 Nov. Both top players have accrued 6180 points by solving 124 cards. Since solitair's breakthrough, the Elucidate card has been solved by seven other players.

Other notable first-solves this week include Card #246, Homage in Glass, by 12th-ranked ReeKorl; Card #245, Relativity, by 62nd-place drp; and card #249, The Angel's Key, by Rube2K in the 89th spot. These four cards occupy the top four places for least-solved cards to date.

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The cause of retrieving the Receda Cube on Earth appears to be gathering further inertia, with the total number of cards solved fast nearing 55,000. The total points accrued blew well past the million mark this week, as well, with the total number standing at 1.3 million as

of today -- a sharp rise from last week's mere 800,000.

While a number of notable new players have joined recently, three newcomers in particular bear watching: nickpage107, who joined on the 28th Nov. and has accrued 2797 points to reach 106th place; Ueno, who has hit 2614 points and 118th place since a mere 1st Dec.; and Fuseunderground, who since joining on 28th Nov. has since climbed up to 129th place with 2427 points.

In other interesting developments, several players at the top appear to be changing national allegiance, including 3rd-place oliverkeers13, formerly of the United Kingdom, who now represents Antarctica; and 13th-place Coxtin, who now plays on behalf of Kyrgyzstan.

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Seaside Announces Plan to Release Earth Anthology

By CORINNE HATHAWAY

Seaside Press announced today a plan to publish a yet-to-be-named anthology of works by never-before-published Earth authors. Seaside's Director of Acquisitions, Ellen Moriyama, said that the anthology will include "diverse works by a number of Earth writers," most or all of whom are heavily involved in the Academy's Cube retrieval effort.

"This is an exciting day for the city," said Moriyama. "We are forging unbreakable ties of artistic expression between our cultures. With this book, we are helping to build a bridge between worlds never seen before." While no publication date has yet been set for certain, Moriyama indicated that the time-to-press would be as speedy as possible. "We're hoping to release the book by the end of the year, if not earlier," she said.

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Some publishing insiders said that while Moriyama is couching the acquisition in noble language, the move is nothing but a quick attempt to cash in on almost-certain

sales spurred by the ongoing Perplexian fascination with Earth. One Fraction Media representative even questioned whether the book actually existed, or was a clever marketing move to repackage mid-list Perplexian writers to stimulate sales. "It's even possible that Seaside has been fooled," said the source. "Anybody can say they're from Earth."

Moriyama, though, insisted that the book is completely legitimate. "The team of authors is working with a very reliable Perplexian editor," she said. "I'm not able to release her identity at this time, but this is somebody with close ties to the Cube Retrieval Team at the Academy. This editor is able to completely ascertain the identities of her writers and be sure that all of the material is precisely as advertised."

The book is a first for publishing, because, if the publisher's claims are accurate, the manuscript is comprised solely of never-before-published material written by Earth authors specifically for a Perplexian audience. Historically, Earth literature in the city has been confined to republication of existing works written by Earth writers for an Earth-only audience.

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Iona Interviews... Gregory Dempsey

By IONA RODIE

Gregory Dempsey, the once-shamed former lead of the Centrifuge research and development team, has a brand new venture in the Old Town. Its new offices are riddled with the imagery of prosperity, from a smooth sweep of natural quartz -- the reception desk -- down to the original Sansi Valaya three-dimensional visual puzzle in the lobby. Dempsey himself is dapper in a sueded jacket, his silvering hair lending him a gravitas his youthful face would otherwise deny him. Dempsey is clearly of the school that looking successful leads to true success.

On this Tuesday morning, the office is bare of employees, however. He greets me at the desk himself, and a brisk walk to his office gives me glimpses of empty rooms filled only with construction supplies. "The company is just gearing up to occupy this space," Dempsey says, with an unreadable quirk of an eyebrow. "Most of our personnel are working odd hours and odd locations until we're done with the building. Our bloody estate agent couldn't get us into anyplace in a timely fashion, and now we're used to working that way."

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Dempsey's claim to fame, until now, was his unexpected and highly public termination of

his decades-long relationship with security giant Centifuge. Until then he had enjoyed a quiet career in the Centrifuge research labs, working alongside a succession of more high-profile colleagues such as Sente Kiteway, Raisa Howell, and Amiko Leckworthy.

"It was an excellent education in security policy," Dempsey says. "I spent decades learning from the best, climbing up from a research assistant all the way to the top. It was my dream."

For someone who had given so much to the company, working exclusively in the employ of Centrifuge from the day he graduated from the Academy in 222, his firing must have seemed like a heart-stopping act of betrayal. Dempsey and his defenders have said that he was made a scapegoat for the failings of the entire next-gen key division, which is even today rumoured to be riddled with security loopholes and other critical design flaws. According to Centrifuge's most recent announcements, the technology has been delayed until late next year.

Dempsey shrugs, though his face is dark with bitterness. "Someone had to pay the price for all of the nex-gen problems, and particularly the Magic Lamp issue. As head of the department, all security breaches were ultimately my problem, so at the end of the day, I was blamed internally for Djinn [even though] the actual vulnerability was exploited by someone who had improper access to company information. ... If our internal security policy had been strictly adhered to, there would never have been a Djinn." He adds that he feels, however incorrectly, that if he had been more of a news figure

Continued

on his own before then, he might still be at Centrifuge today. "I didn't have the media muscle to fire back," he says.

With his new enterprise, Locus Technology, Dempsey is finally stepping into the limelight. Now out of Centrifuge's shadow, Dempsey has transformed from a retiring figure in a white labcoat to a wheel-spinning entrepreneur, setting investors on fire with his vision for the future. Rhetoric aside, though, was it difficult to attract investment with such a black mark on his record?

"It took a long time," Dempsey admits; time during which he began the company anyway with leeks from his own pocket. "We actually had several clients before we had any investors at all. It's been a troublesome time for me and my family."

Now, Locus is still a fledgling affair, though growing fast with the help of seed capital from a cabal of private investors -- satisfied clients all, Dempsey claims. "With Locus, we plan to completely reinvent the private key services sector," Dempsey says. "The giant companies have begun to treat security like a commodity product, when it just isn't. ... Centrifuge and the other headliners are only interested in enterprise-level security these days, and it's just as important on a personal level. We aim to provide boutique security services to a smaller scale, where the scope of our endeavours fits more closely to the precise need at hand. ... Families and individuals."

Those aspirations certainly sound grand - - maybe even bankable. But the question remains, who are the customers? Dempsey

shakes his head. "We have customers, trust me," he says. "But I wouldn't be a very good security consultant if I went telling you who they are, would I?"

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View from Earth: A Sporting Analogy

By CJFTHISTLE



I am personally fascinated by the PCAG and the amount of media coverage that has been devoted to Serena Duncan and her current form. We on Earth can only come to grips with the Games, as with all things Perplexian, through fragile and sometimes

misleading analogy. In my country, sport is the prime diversion of the newspaper readership and is the analogy I choose to understand this aspect of Perplexian culture.

There are, I should imagine, many differences between these pastimes. For example sport is often much more about the body than the mind, combining a degree of violence and strategy that depends on the sport and on the level at which it is played. In other sports where the mind is under greater scrutiny, like golf, cricket or snooker for example, we still talk about a mental toughness or resistance, rather than a Perplexian agility or flexibility of mind.

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In fact, a great many of our sports have as their origins death, violence and war. Take for example the 'noble sport' of boxing. Although it cannot be said that the sport has total approval

on Earth, it is definitely popular and has very clearly defined rules and regulations to ensure a fair contest. When the recent controversy regarding oliverkeers and his beating up of 5 small children broke in the Sentinel, how many Perplexians realised that oliverkeers would have followed the Rules laid down by the Marquis of Queensbury in 1867? Or that he would have dedicated a certain sum of the prize purse to his agent? While our sports may appear violent and bloodthirsty to you in Perplex City, do not despise their civilised nature.

In my home town of Glasgow the sport of choice is fitba. This game resembles both the American sport of football and the global sport of soccer. The rules are simple: like all Scottish sports, the object involves a ball and an attempt involving controlled violence to place that ball where one wants it to go. An extreme version of tidying-up, if you will. Fitba, however, has one important difference: the influence of the 'fans,' the spectators. In recent years the ability of the fitba fans to incite hatred, accomplish victory by simple wishful thinking and act with extreme indignation following defeat has become nothing short of an art form, especially with the advent of television coverage. More and more people are daily becoming spectators as what was once the reserve of the enthusiastic, motivated and pathological has become accessible to the lazy, uninformed and pathological.

I would like to hear more from the Perplex citizens on the role that spectators, fans and pundits play in the Games, whether passions run high between rival groups of fans and whether anyone believes the hype generated by the press. I hope too that we can continue to find and work on analogies between our cultures as we strive for common understanding and ever closer co-operation.

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MrGoss Becomes Player Number Ten Thousand

By KATE BREWSTER

Earlier today, new player MrGoss became the 10,000th player to register on the leaderboard. At this time, MrGoss has not yet claimed any points. Other notable new players since last week include GretaGarbo, who has vaulted to 120th place and 3187 points since joining on 6th Dec. Flash-Draven, also new on the scene, has made waves with his climb to 201st place and 2049 points since joining on 5th Dec.

Also in the past week, a major new first solve has been entered by 501st-place HiveMind. HiveMind became the first player to solve Card #247, Polar, to earn 62 points on 8th Dec. Since then, the card has been solved by an additional 57 players.

Going back a bit further in time, a number of new players from the last month have made serious inroads toward the top including Uhtoff at 29th place and 5593 points; Phaid at 28th place and 5686 points; robspot in 23rd place with 5805 points; and of course Scomazz, who now sits at the top of the leaderboard with 6304 points.

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This is a distinction Scomazz now shares with nine other players. As of this writing, the other players sharing the number one spot on the leaderboard are Lazarus, solitair, lillyplop, Fathom, oliverkeers13, Bertyb, nightingale, TeamMfM, and josiah.

The total number of players now stands at over 10,000, with over 6,800 players successfully claiming points to date. Total cards solved has exceeded 66,000, and total points accrued is fast closing on an astonishing 1.7 million. Over 250,000 points have been claimed in the past week alone. The average player currently has solved 10 cards for 246 points -- and has also entered 6 incorrect tries.

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Council Member Roy Yolen to Retire After Term Complete

By ROBERTO GOODWIN

Council member Roy Yolen today announced that he will not be seeking to retain his position on the City Council in next year's elections. Instead, he will serve out the remainder of his term before stepping down to spend more time with his family. Yolen's press representative, Oliver Powell, issued a statement reading in part: "Councilman Yolen has dedicated his life to improving our city, oftentimes at the expense of his family. While his family have always supported him, he has found it increasingly difficult to balance his political work with raising a young family. ... After long and difficult deliberation, Mr. Yolen has decided that he will be retiring from politics at the end of his current term."

Yolen took a six-week sabbatical during his current term to be treated for leukemia. According to Powell, Yolen "has for some time been seeking more time to convalesce and fully recover from a draining physical and mental ordeal." Yolen's commitment to executing his duties through the remainder of the current session of the City Council remains solid, however. "He recognises the rapid and complex changes the city is going through, and wishes to cause as little disruption as possible," explained Powell. "He will wait until the next election for a successor to be chosen in the proper manner."

Rumours as to Yolen's possible replacement are already beginning to circle the council halls. One highly-placed staffer in the Office of the Council claimed that Yolen's supporters have begun talks with Giordana Moore of the PCX to convince her to run for Yolen's spot. Others suggest that Yolen's absence will make it easier for a candidate with an opposing point of view to rise to ascendancy. Analysts are already predicting that Academy Senior Fellow Margaret Wildwood may finally make the transition from theory to public policy, as she has often been encouraged to do. "Roy made a lot of bold choices during his time and the people will want a change, someone more in tune with the views of the public," said the anonymous council staffer.

Earlier this year Yolen provoked outcry with his suggestion to tear down all of Old Town before issuing an apology saying it was "an ill-considered expression of frustration." He voted along with the majority of the council in the controversial decision to open up the Northside Preserve for development. Although this decision was supported by the majority of Perplexians, the objecting minority was very vocal, and the plan was ultimately scrubbed when the nature preserve was sold to an anonymous party who has chosen not to develop the land. More recently, Yolen has expressed concerns over the popularity of Earth-based goods, leading some to question his suitability for public office in a time when the Perplex City-Earth relationship is at such a delicate stage.

Yolen will be spending his retirement with his two sons, Alan, 12; and Peter, 7; and with his partner, Rose Evenbaum.

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Finnegan Shines in Exhibition Match

By CORWIN JONES



Alma Finnegan

Veteran PCAG player Alma Finnegan surprised fans and analysts alike with her knockout victory over Klaus Johnson in last night's exhibition match. Finnegan proved surprisingly deft in both the linguistics and spatial puzzle categories, areas in which her performance is typically merely adequate.

"I just wish the match had counted," Finnegan quipped in interviews. "I could use the points!" Finnegan has a history of outperforming her record in exhibition matches, however, including notable victories against Ryan Cahill in 267 and Jeannie Murrow in 265. It is generally acknowledged that the tension of performing in formal matches degrades her level of play to some extent, and that the more casual atmosphere at an exhibition match allows her to excel.

Johnson took the defeat with equanimity. "Alma had a wonderful day today. There's no shame in losing to somebody playing at top form," he said.

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Other exhibition matches of the past week have sent in few surprises, with Gabriella Petel losing to Serena Duncan, Ryan Cahill spinning in a solid win over Oliver Pohele, and Mikhail Terpening just defeating Ethan Roanoke.

Raina Hollow of The Sporting Daily insists these results mean little, however. "Models of performance in exhibition versus the last three weeks have been tried through countless iterations, and there is simply no relationship," Hollow said. "Better players tend to do well in both exhibition and competition matches, but you can't [look at] these few weeks of non-tournament play and conclusively identify who will win from it."

Unlike the typical championship matches, the exhibition matches between the December cuts and the final 21 days of the tournament de-emphasise Clash, and instead focus on more general feats of sportsmanship, such as linguistics and formal logic. Exhibition play will continue through the weekend, then players will receive the traditional week of rest before the intense 21-day finale to the championship proceeds.

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View from Earth: Free Speech?

By G. PERKINS



Earth and Perplex City clearly differ in their perceptions of freedom of speech. An obvious example is the recent controversy over the new Viard album, *The Silver City*. While the Perplexian authorities deemed it unsafe

and promptly banned it, Hesh Records have now released the album on Earth in collaboration with the Earth-based company Mind Candy.

What does this say about differing mentalities in Earth and Perplex City? Some may claim that this shows the Perplexians to be closed to new ideas, that they refuse to accept a new and radical form of communication. However, others may say that the authorities responsible for the ban are merely being cautious, and showing concern for their citizens' safety. The society of Perplex City is clearly one that values mental power more than that on Earth, so is it not natural for them to be suspicious of anything which could

harm this power?

Does this suggest a recklessness in the Earth mentality, that we are willing to allow anything to be released in our eagerness to uphold the principle of free speech, with no concern for safety? As long as the effects of the cognitive therapy techniques are clearly stated to listeners, surely it should be their choice whether to listen or not? As Kai Cinelli, a spokesman for Hesh Records, said, nobody is being forced to. On the other hand, the fact that Hesh has been reluctant to release the details of this technology suggests that it is still being refined, and may have unknown side effects on its users.

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So should *The Silver City* be released anywhere? Until full reports on the audio technology are released, along with proof of its safety, I stand by the Perplex City Council in its decision for the album not to be released, and am concerned over Mind Candy's apparent disregard for the well-being of the listeners who will purchase the album out of desire for new experiences, without being properly informed of the possible side effects.

Only time will tell as to these effects. It is entirely possible that there will be no adverse effects whatsoever, but the point is that the technology's developers apparently know little more about it than we do. I have to confess to letting curiosity get the better of me, and have listened to the album. Despite its

Continued

haunting, otherworldly qualities, I heard nothing which sounded particularly out of the ordinary, and feel no different mentally, although perhaps this is merely the subtleties of the cognitive therapy at work.

Viard is clearly an artist who rejects the conventions and boundaries of modern music, and the secrecy that surrounds him is part of his *raison d'être*. However, when this secrecy extends to refusing to supply the details of potentially dangerous technology which will affect listeners, I believe it has gone too far. As someone who has listened to the album, these opinions may make me sound hypocritical, but shouldn't the views of someone who has experienced the music first hand hold more water than those of someone who has only read descriptions of it, and the rumours and speculations of others?

The View from Earth column is currently accepting submissions from its Earth readership. Please see our submission guidelines for more information.

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Advisor's Death Throws PCBC Deal into Deep Water

By ALWHIN COPI



Monica Grand

The PCBC admitted today that it is having difficulty defending the broad economic impact of its acquisition of the Fivebridge & Remton Consolidated Bank after the death of Monica Grand, an advisor to the bank who penned a significant portion of the bank's impact report. The Office of the Council opened up an inquiry into the merger on the grounds that the report did not adequately address the effect it would have on citizens living outside the central Perplex City area.

"We regret that we are taking so much time to defend the case, but we still very much believe the purchase will be the best thing for the PCBC and for the city," said PCBC spokesman Cory Clary.

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City finance deputy Hova Lonehart said that the bank's disarray after the tragic murder of a single consulting economist proves that the bank's research was shoddy and incomplete. "I think it's clear they were cooking the books to make sure the deal would go through," she said. "If anything like sufficient care had been taken in assembling this report, the data would be there to draw on now."

Clary denied the allegations. "Ms. Grand was a highly valued advisor to the bank, and she was truly at the center of this deal," Clary said. "The Office of the Council needs to provide more time for another economist to become as familiar with the specifics of this transaction. ... It's a complicated deal with far-reaching effects, and Ms. Grand had been studying it for over a year. It's ridiculous to suggest that someone else could fill her shoes in a few weeks."

Grand was found murdered in her Ascendancy Point home in mid-September of this year, shortly after the Office of the Council opened its investigation into the banking deal. According to the police, no suspects have been identified, and no charges have been filed.

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Two Million Points

By KATE BREWSTER

The Cube retrievers on Earth broke the staggering two million points mark earlier today, with over a million of those points earned in the past month, and over 243,000 points earned in the last seven days. There are now over 7000 ranked players and nearly 78,000 solved cards. The average player has solved 11 cards for 277 points.

This week brought further growth to the pack at the top of the leaderboard, with last week's first-place players joined by TheBoy, who also has 6304 points and 126 solved cards.

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Just shy of 50,000 incorrect answers have now been entered, an average of 7 per player. Over 6,000 incorrect answers were submitted in the last week alone. The most common cards to receive wrong answers remain Gravity, card #56, followed by card #112, Three Little Words, and card #25, Read Between the Lines. Interestingly, although cards #56 and #112 are the two most-often solved cards, card #112 is not in the top most-solved cards at all.

This week brought in new player dandrew with 68 solves for 1517 points. He joined on 17th Dec. Ranging back over the last month, up-and-comers include KCJoJo who has risen to 42nd place and 5498 points since 24th Nov.; TopGun2, whose 5493 points since 26th Nov. have earned 43rd place; and torinarg, at 47th place with 5241 points since joining on 25th Nov.

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Joya Delivers Healthy Baby Girl at Phuah, Recovering Well

By JULIUS LOMAN



Pop star Joya, and Allegra Melody

Pop star Joya delivered a baby girl at Phuah Hospital early Thursday morning, and were released to be cared for at home later that evening. The infant, whom she has named Allegra Melody, weighed 3.0 kilograms and was 48 centimetres long.

A statement from Joya's personal physician, Dr. Ian Copeland, said that both mother and baby are now resting comfortably at home and are being attended by a number of close friends and relatives. According to Copeland, Joya's labour was roughly four hours long, and there were no complications.

Reports sources present on the scene indicate that Ryan Cahill was with Joya when she

was admitted to the hospital, and was very solicitous of her during the remainder of his stay, but that he left at midnight, some time before the 2:48am delivery. Joya's publicist maintains that the two are not in a romantic relationship, but are simply close friends.

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Records indicate that Joya has not identified the father's name on hospital records, though she retains the right to update the record at any time. Celebrity watchers have long speculated that the likely father is either her long-time flame Alejo Jackson or her former producer, Horace Shockley. Jackson and Joya had a high-profile but often tumultuous romance, but split up early last March. Joya subsequently announced her engagement to then-producer Horace Shockley, but unexpectedly severed both her personal and professional relationships with him by skipping their summer Solstice Day nuptials.

Both Shockley and Jackson came to the hospital while Joya was in labour, but reports indicate that Joya refused to admit Shockley, who arrived at half past eleven. Joya did admit Jackson, who arrived shortly after 2am and was present for the birth.

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Leaderboard End of Year Round-Up

By KATE BREWSTER

As the year comes to a close, we look back on quite possibly the most ambitious project the Academy has ever undertaken: Recruiting the citizens of Earth to aid us in locating the stolen Receda Cube. In mere months this project has recruited over 10,000 cube hunters, with the numbers ever growing, and yet it all began with the simple idea of merely asking the people of Earth to think more like us.

On the 10th of October, Master of the Academy Sente Kiteway announced a significant development in his endeavours to locate and recover the Receda Cube. Mind Candy, Kiteway's representatives on Earth, had delivered a system that allows would-be Cube-hunters to solve cards and accrue Perplex Points. The points would be tracked on a leaderboard, viewable to all on Earth.

Within 24 hours, 125 ranked players had racked up 1700 correct solves. "This is a proud day for the city, and I think it will mark a turning point in our efforts to interest the Earth public in our situation and encourage them further to help us," said Sente. But this was just the beginning.

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After just a week, the number of players had grown to 400 with 8000 cards solved. Leaders were already beginning to emerge from the pack, with oliverkeers13, dusty, solitair, walther and BrianEnigma tied for first place with 1829 points each. Ten days later, oliverkeers13 jumped clear into the lead, solving #150, A Journey in the Desert, and

#142, Photoshopped -- two as-yet-unreleased cards. Rumours abounded regarding how he could have obtained these pre-release cards but Mind Candy refused to speculate on how the cards could have been leaked before their formal launch date. Over 13,000 cards had now been solved with 700 ranked players staking their claim on the leaderboard.

On the 21st of November, just over a month since the card solve system was switched on, the players burst past the half-million-point mark. That week would also see the release of the second wave of cards, bringing the total number of available cards to 132. As the new cards hit a widespread audience, there was a major reshuffling of the entire leaderboard and a huge leap in player numbers. By the end of the week over 800,000 points had been accrued and 4400 new players had registered.

December saw several milestones passed and numerous notable events: on the 5th solitair became the first player to correctly solve the infamous Wave 1 card #240, Elucidate, while in the same week the total points grew to over a million. On the 8th HiveMind became the first player to achieve a major wave two triumph with the solve of card #247, Polar; on the 12th MrGoss became the 10,000th player to register on the leaderboard; and on the 19th, the Cube retrievers broke the staggering two million points mark with nearly 78,000 solved cards.

The leaderboard is now dominated by thirteen players: Lazarus, solitair, lillyplop, Fathom, Scomazz, oliverkeers13, Bertyb, nightingale, TeamMfM, Josiah, TheBoy, Fuseunderground, and Juxta, with 6304 points each from 126 cards. With the release of the third wave of cards due sometime in the new year, analysts are already speculating on how long these thirteen can stay at the top.

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Year in Review: Newsmakers of 268

As the year 268 rolls to a close, the Sentinel likes to take a look at the events that have shaped our lives and touched our hearts over the past year. This year has brought renewed hope of retrieving the Receda Cube, saw the dramatic end to Michael Corolla's murder trial, and witnessed tragic crimes uptown and down. Following is a roundup of the some of the top news items of the year.

Michael Corolla

After the death of his his new wife, Karen Chondelle, Corolla was put on trial for murder. However, judge Alice Zeller declared a mistrial in May, and further investigation of the case found that a juror was being paid to influence the jury. The case against Corolla has since been dismissed, and he is now working on a written account of his story for publication.

Cube Retrieval

The beginning of the year saw Master of the Academy Sente Kiteway under heavy fire for the lack of visible progress in returning the stolen Receda Cube to its home in the Academy Museum. Finally, in the middle of the year, the plan was revealed: the Academy has teamed up with Earth company Mind Candy to create puzzle cards. The success of these cards and the progress of the Earth searchers is covered in a separate story.

Unsolved Murders

Although crime was down this year, even in the Old Town, two murders have remained unsolved -- a shameful mark on the city's police record. Bernardo Holyoke, the proprietor of Old Town drinking establishment the Five of Cups, was murdered in his home in late April. Later in the year, PCBC consulting economist Monica Grand was found murdered in her Ascendancy Point flat. Both cases remain unsolved, and the police indicate they have no firm leads.

Urban Renewal

Early in the spring, the City Council announced a plan to sell parts of the Northside Nature Preserve to mitigate crowding and rising real estate prices in the central city. After vocal protests, the land was purchased by an anonymous consortium of individuals who plan to leave the area undeveloped. In return, the City Council has vowed to apply those funds toward improving conditions in the Old Town, though little progress has yet been seen.

Museum Controversy

The Academy Museum brought in new curator Anja Marlowe late in the year. Marlowe, who has a reputation as a maverick and boat-rocker, soon announce plans for an exhibit addressing the war and its tumultuous era, spawning massive objections. Since the exhibit has opened, its reception has been mixed, with some renewing demands for the exhibit to be closed and Marlowe to be removed from her job, while others insist the exhibit is very moving and sheds light on a dark time in our history.

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New Year Begins with Dazzling Milestone

By KATE BREWSTER

On the 29th of Dec. at 1:05pm GMT, player danlewy solved the 100,000th card on the leaderboard. The card in question: #80, Cruel and Unusual, which has since been solved 845 times. An additional 15,000 cards have been solved after the 100,000-card-barrier was broken. PCAG statistician Samara Jones commented, "We've been tracking the players' progress very carefully, and if the solves continue at this rate we'll be at the 1 million mark in less than a year. ... We've all been amazed at how well they're doing. We never thought the people of Earth could be so Perplexian!"

The Academy has been playing down speculation that puzzle scribes are making the cards too easy, insisting that the next wave will be even harder than the last. Anna Heath, on loan to the Cube retrieval project from the Academy's department of languages, pointed out that at the same time as the number of correct solves goes up, the number of incorrect attempts is also growing, with 71,517 wrong answers so far.

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In other developments, on 2 Jan.

hturan became the first player to solve the troublesome Wave 2 card, #248 Differently Lethal, which has since been solved by 46 other players. This still leaves a number of cards unsolved; most notably #238, Riemann; #242, Ciphers of History; #243, Shuffled; and #251, The Thirteenth Labour -- all in the silver difficulty level. Popular opinion among Earth-watchers at the Academy is that some of these may never be solved.

The top of the leaderboard has seen some dramatic shifts in the last week. Ten players now tie for first place with 6614 points each. Only eight of the top 50 players are not from the UK and just ten of the top 50 are women. Academy sociologist Marta Lowe remarked, "It's somewhat surprising to see this gender imbalance ... I expect we'll see this change in the coming months."

Lowe also believed the geographic imbalance is due for a shift. "The paucity of non-UK based players is unfortunate, but we understand from Mind Candy that there are currently more UK-based retailers for the cards, though they are expanding into more stores in other countries."

With over 12,000 players and on the cusp of jumping the 3-million-point hurdle, the Academy are hopeful that the New Year will bring with it even more Cube hunters, all ready and eager to help us find the missing Receda Cube, wherever on Earth it may be.

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View from Earth: Good and Evil

By SOLITAIR

Solitair What is good? What is evil? Are they absolutes or simply relative values?



I do not believe good and evil can be absolutes. Any act that is good may easily be perceived as evil from a different perspective and vice versa. How many evil acts have been committed “for the good of the people”?

There are many examples of evil acts from throughout Earth history, and I have no doubt there are many in the history of Perplex City, but were they perceived as evil at the time by their perpetrators? Perhaps they were seen as necessary at the time and only once the full consequences came to light was the tag of evil attached. Often malice is assumed where ignorance was the fact.

Even if an act is known to be evil, can it be necessary to perpetrate an evil act for a good end? War is considered evil. There are two sides in any war, one side must be the aggressor and one the victim, but the victim most often retaliates and thus continues the act of war when simple capitulation would end the war then and there and thus lessen the evil. However, that act of capitulation could encourage further aggression promoting further evil and thus can be considered an evil act in itself. Can we ever know the consequences of our actions, would

we ever act if we did and if we did not what then would happen? This is a paradox, one which cannot easily be resolved and which could easily paralyze someone who thinks too deeply on the subject.

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Sometimes you have to act and deal with the consequences as and when they happen as to not act would result in dire circumstances. Sometimes mistakes are made with dire repercussions, but if the intent is honest and there was no obvious alternative at the time, why drown yourself in guilt, take whatever punishment is deemed appropriate and get on with your life.

If you cannot, you will continue looking only at the past, reaffirming your guilt and stagnating, stuck in a spiral of guilt and self loathing. If you cannot look to the future, there is no future for you.

I know almost nothing of the war in Perplex City's past as you will not allow anything to be told of it. People are uncomfortable talking about it. Have any lessons been learned from it? Perhaps they have, but if you will not even talk about it how can they have been? Someday you may face the same situation again, and how can you respond other than in the same way if you have not learned from past mistakes?

We have a saying on Earth. Deal with it and move on.

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Artist's Quarter Calligrapher Attacked by Vandals

By JEREMY CLARIDGE



Robert Drake

Professional calligrapher Robert Drake was found beaten and unconscious outside his apartment on Drake Lane early yesterday morning. The Artist's Quarter resident was immediately taken to Phuah Hospital for treatment, where it was ascertained that he had fortunately sustained no major injuries. He is expected to be released from the hospital sometime today.

According to testimony in the police report, Drake had heard several loud noises outside his window and gone outside without his key to investigate. Once outside, he witnessed several youths spraying graffiti on the brick wall of the building and damaging the entrance sign. According to the report, he shouted at the youths to stop, at which point they approached him. Unwilling to stand down, Drake ordered the youths to leave. The youths responded by attacking him, knocking him to the ground and repeatedly kicking him, the report said.

It is unclear when the assailants left the scene and how long Drake was unconscious. The police were alerted when building manager Rebecca Glen discovered Drake lying close to the front steps of the building early in the morning. Glen said that Drake "looked terrible" when she found him. "I was afraid he was dead," she said. "Who would ever think that such a terrible thing could happen here on our own block? This is a friendly neighbourhood. Everybody knows everybody."

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Graffiti at the site is still clearly visible despite prompt application of a solvent: the word "Proudhon" in a large blue circle. Police chief Eoin Morgan commented on the case, "Mr. Drake was extremely lucky not to be more seriously hurt. ...

Continued

We wish to assure members of the public that we will bring the culprits to justice. Precautions are being instituted to ensure this remains an isolated incident.”

of law is spreading.

Morgan indicated that the police already have a few leads, but warned that it might be some time before there is visible progress to report.

Janelle Munrowe, manager of the Soupery location on Creation Lane, shared her concerns with the Sentinel. “We’re all worried about the state of the Old Town; it’s why many of us moved as far away as possible,” she said. “To find this kind of aggressive behaviour has come clear across the city is extremely unsettling.”

The attack comes during a politically sensitive time for the police department. Despite last year’s early reports of success at cutting the crime rate in Old Town, the rate has been slowly rising again in recent weeks -- both in the Old Town and other areas of the city. Nonetheless, violent acts have generally been rare and primarily limited to the Old Town.

Despite a strong renewal of desire among both the public and the City Council to see the Old Town revitalised, no significant strides have been made to date. Some civic groups are now beginning to question not only whether the police are successfully addressing crime in the Old Town, but whether this failure at basic maintenance of the rule

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PCAG, Mind Candy Plan Earth Events

By GARIMA KING

The PCAG announced late last week that they plan to hold a pair of competitions on Earth. The competitions, to be held in New York City in the United States of America and in London in the United Kingdom, will be the first-ever Academy Games held outside the borders of Perplex City itself.

“As we prepare to celebrate the crowning of this year’s champion, we thought it would be appropriate to share our city’s sport with the fine people of Earth who are trying so ardently to locate the Receda Cube,” said PCAG chairman Robert Zhi-Hui.

The first event will be held on the evening of Feb. 15. Sources at Mind Candy, who are helping the PCAG co-ordinate the competitions, say the the venue is not yet certain, but that the event is planned to be held in Manhattan, New York. Although the precise start time may be subject to change, organisers have indicated that they are planning for the festivities to begin at 7pm. The Sentinel’s sources were closed-mouthed regarding precisely what will be played at the competition,

preferring to reserve the element of surprise. According to information already propagated on Earth, however, the event will feature “traditional head-to-head contests.”

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The second event, in London, England, will be a city-wide team competition, sources say. This event will take place on a Saturday afternoon in late February or early March, though the specific date has not yet been established. Mind Candy sources have said that more specific information will be available in the coming weeks, including team sizes and other organisational details. Our source suggested that Mind Candy is considering a list of suggested equipment, but that it is by no means certain that such a document will be supplied to players ahead of time.

In both events, leaderboard points will be awarded and there will be an opportunity to win vouchers for Firebox, one of the first retailers to offer the sale of puzzle cards. Players looking for more information are encouraged to visit the PCAG site. Mind Candy has requested that potential players indicate their interest as soon as possible so that the venues and events chosen will be appropriate in size for the total number of participants.

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Duncan Shines During Week of Team Play

By CORWIN JONES

Reigning PCAG champion Serena Duncan wowed the city last week with her spectacular performance in team competitions, traditionally one of the most difficult periods for her. "I've found my pace again," Duncan preened on Saturday, clearly enjoying being on the winning side of this year's all-player team event -- for the first time ever in her career.

The final week of the championship begins today, with only 32 competitors now remaining. Notable names knocked out during the multi-player matches include Gabriella Petel, Klaus Johnson, and Georgi Shepherd. Duncan and former champion Ryan Cahill are in a close tie, though analysts have begun to favour Duncan for this year's win over Cahill. Close on their heels, though, are Ethan Roanoke, Jack Fleury, Jeannie Murrow, and Maureen Fender-Hu, all within a narrow margin of the leaders. Few insiders are giving them more than a token chance of an overall victory, as none of these players have shown the same consistent level of play under pressure as both the reigning and former

champions.

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Raina Hollow of The Sporting Daily, though, is calling the championship "one for the record books," asserting that the championship had not been so hotly contested since Fiona Carrick snatched victory from Walt Greenleaf in 263. "This is a very exciting year, and for all that everyone has their pet theory on who will take the prize home, it's all speculation," Hollow said. "There's nothing here that anyone could talk to the bank, and that's the only thing certain about this year's match-up."

Duncan admitted in interviews to feeling "very optimistic" about her chances this year. "I went through a poor spell, but I'm past it now. ... I'm very pleased with my progress this year."

Cahill was somewhat more cautious in his own prognostications, however. When asked how he felt about being favoured to win in some circles, he appeared genuinely astonished. "Well," he said, "I suppose the beauty of the games is that anyone at all might win, isn't it?"

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3M Point Mark Passed

By KATE BREWSTER

The 3-million-point milestone has now been passed, with over 130,000 cards solved. Angelsk still tops the leaderboard with 6614 points, but she is now joined by 24 others tying for first place. The board is still dominated by the UK, but the Seychelles, Heard and McDonald Islands, Barbados and Kazakhstan are also beginning to make a showing.

The cards are being solved at an increasing rate, with the solves predicted to top a quarter of a million in a month's time. The number of registered players, meanwhile, is now at 12,715, with that number expected to increase to 16,000 in a month.

Of the new players joining within the last week, B.O.A., KnightOwls, thewizeneone, PhilG and PuzzleMasters have shown impressive performances, with B.O.A. ranked 363 and Puzzlemasters ranked 532 on the full leaderboard. Among players joining in the last month, MonkeySlave, Garath, wombat girl and Modern_hero are in the lead, while AngelK81 is already ranked 93 on the full leaderboard after only joining at the start of the year.

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The players remain stumped by wave 1 card #180, ARG!, though Academy sources suggest the players are almost there, with only the correct answer to question 11 missing. Several silvers also still remain unsolved. Caine Johansson, member of the Cube Retrieval Project at the Academy, remarked, "If they can't solve these, we can't wait to see how

they cope with the next wave."

Johansson also revealed more information about how the players are progressing: "We're still seeing a lot of wrong answers. ... The ten most incorrectly solved cards all come from the green difficulty level or below. Cards 56 [Gravity], 112 [Three Little Words], 25 [Read Between The Lines] and 123 [Illogical] have been the most incorrectly attempted cards for quite some time now." He suggested that the players are learning to wait until they've solved a card rather than just guess, as card 242, Ciphers of History, has only been attempted 20 times.

With the upcoming New York and London live PCAG events, announced late last week, the leaderboard may see some substantial shake-ups, according to PCAG statistician Samara Jones. "Until the release of Wave 3 we're not going to see any major changes at the top," she predicted. "These events could be just what it takes to separate the top puzzle-solvers from the pack. We'll have to wait until February to see what happens. ... I, for one, can't wait."

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View from Earth: Sexual Politics

By BENJAMIN BRUM



Sexuality is not something you can take for granted or assume. Contrary to popular belief, you can't tell whether someone is gay or not by looking at them. On Earth it's widely accepted that one in ten people

are gay (or homosexual -- someone who is attracted to someone of the same gender). Perplex City may mimic Earth in several ways but this is one of those areas that doesn't seem to follow. It seems that Perplex City is utterly devoid of gay people. (Perhaps there is a hidden community of gay people, but the social stigma against gay people in Perplex City means they don't feel they can come out.)

It's hard to believe that there aren't any homosexual Perplexians -- a city of that size statistically should have a number of homosexuals within its community. It's possible that the attack on professional calligrapher Robert Drake, reported in the Sentinel on the 5th of January, could be an instance of a hate crime directed

at a gay person. It's sad to consider that there's such a culture of homophobia in Perplex City that no one feels safe to come out or declare their sexuality.

It's interesting to note that the word gay doesn't get used in Perplex City at all. On Earth the word gay has changed its primary meaning dramatically during the 20th century. The word is thought to derive from the French "gai," and originally meant "carefree," "happy," or "bright and showy," and was very commonly used with this meaning in speech and literature. In the 1960s, gay became a word used by homosexual men to describe themselves. The word "homosexual" was used as a term to denote mental illness until 1973. More recently, the word gay has morphed into a pejorative term (e.g. "that film was so gay") and can be deeply offensive. This term implies that someone or something is of a lower quality or stupid.

As a member of the Cube Retrieval Team on Earth I'm proud to be "out" as a homosexual, it doesn't surprise me that there's a number of the Earth-based team who are gay (both out and "in the closet"). Every year communities of gay people around the world march together and have a series of celebrations as a sign of solidarity and a mark of respect for the gay rights activists who ensured that certain rights could be won for homosexuals. It would be exciting to see Perplex City start to take significant steps towards integration of all people within their communities; perhaps the Earth Cube Retrieval Team can help in some way.

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Iona Interviews... Dale Robarding

By IONA RODIE

Dale Robarding is in some ways the most recognisable face of Cognivia. His tightly-curved hair stays close to his scalp, and the deep furrows in his brow remind one of the suffering face of Madna depicted in the half-buried murals at the Newguard Ruins. When his assistant guides me into his office, I find him standing at the floor-to-ceiling window, gazing out toward Lake Ellipse, hands clasped behind his back. I clear my throat to catch his attention, and he turns to me with a warm smile and a solid handshake. "Welcome to my little empire," he says.

Robarding has long been a high-profile public advocate for Cognivia. On top of his position as director of research, he is often called to testify before the City Council in policy sessions on drug-related legislation, and has helped to guide the governing body toward a position where controversial and potentially harmful drugs are tightly regulated, but still available to those for whom nothing else is effective. Today, Robarding also organizes regular recruiting sessions on the Academy campus, holds a special visiting professorship on neuropharmacology at Edyta College,

and has published a handful of books on the history and cultural impact of the chemical advances of the last hundred years. One wonders how he finds time to perform any research.

Robarding nods, running one long-fingered hand across his hair. "It's true, I don't get to do as much research personally as I once did," he admits. "I retain a significant guiding voice in establishing what avenues we pursue as a company, but I do miss having a personal connection to the people whose lives we have touched."

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Robarding picks up a sketch on his desk -- a very young girl with freckles -- and shows it to me. "This is [PCAG notable contender] Myra Champaign. I worked with her myself when she was just a tiny bit of a thing. ... Without our help, she would not be the bright young woman that she is today. I want to build a world where everybody is that able to tap into their hidden reservoirs of talent."

Champaign is an interesting topic, especially for a man in Robarding's position. Although Robarding works for Cognivia now, he was a top player in his time; he placed in the top eight or better for six consecutive years before retiring from sport to focus on research. Do his statements regarding the ever-controversial Champaign mean that he

Continued

believes the PCAG should allow players to use cognitive enhancement substances during matches?

“Well, of course as a player I vigilantly followed the guidelines for drug use laid out by the games authorities, but I’ve always felt that their drug policies are draconian,” Robarding says. “[PCAG Chairman Robert] Zhi-Hui would have you think that there is no social benefit to drugs like, say, Ceretin. But side effects aside, I think we might live in a better world if we could all push ourselves to continually operate at a higher level.”

Robarding refers, of course, to the perennial debate on drugs in public life; while opponents insist that allowing the use of drugs would force everyone into use, possibly endangering their health, a growing body of advocates suggests that our best and brightest -- such as PCAG champions -- might be spurred into greater achievement in both sport and overall contributions to society if the bans were lifted.

Robarding points out, though, that the ever-advancing frontier of science produces safer and safer drugs every year. The rate of harmful or distracting side effects for the latest generation of Ceretin on the market is a mere 20% that of the original product. “And even the original Ceretin was very safe,” he adds, wagging his finger at me. Ceretin-V, due out sometime in the next two years, is

currently in the final stages of testing, and a beaming Robarding proclaims that in testing, it appears to be the most safe and effective yet.

The long cycle of drug research means that there are indubitably additional generations of Ceretin already in the pipeline, but Robarding declines from elaborating on specifics. “We’ve of course continued to look to the future,” he says with wink. “There will always be something faster, better, safer.”

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Stevewh Makes Stunning Debut

By KATE BREWSTER

Stevewh has leapt to the top of the weekly leaderboard with a stunning 5091 points off 117 solves, despite having only joined last week. PCAG statistician Samara Jones commented, "It can't be much longer until he joins the 34 players in first place. He only need 10 more cards to make it." In the last week alone, the players have solved 13,617 cards to accrue over 300,000 points, bringing the total cards solved to 144,459 and the Perplex Points total to 3,884,047.

In light of the large number of players in first place, it's important to recognise the players who haven't quite made it yet. Dvmrph and ka' both just need to solve card #244, Syzygy Cube, to make it from 35th to first place, while donstobbart just has to solve card #241, T-L-P.

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The players are continuing to look for help with the notoriously difficult cards #180, ARG!; #238 Riemann; #242, Ciphers of History; #243, Shuffled; and #251, The Thirteenth Labour -- but so far with no success. Asked if he could give out any hints, Von Lubik, member of the Academy's Cube Retrieval Team, would

only offer: "There's no need to rush to solve them. They should be admiring the beauty of the puzzles, not looking for fast and easy answers. We've no intention of giving out any extra hints -- other than our hint line -- at this time."

The number of incorrect solves remains at over half the number of correct solves for the last week, month and total. Caine Johansson, also a member of the Cube Retrieval Team at the Academy, commented, "We're obviously disappointed that so many people are getting the wrong answers, but we're also aware that some of the cards have alternative answers that we don't always think of before release. ... We're working hard to keep the solution database up to date and taking extra care with the future waves of cards to eliminate this problem as much as possible."

The leaderboard continues to be dominated by men and the U.K., but Academy sociologist Marta Lowe remains firm in her belief that we'll see a large shift in both. "As it becomes easier to get the cards anywhere in the world, we'll definitely see the U.S. and the rest of Europe appearing more at the top. As to the gender imbalance correcting itself, it can't be long off. After all, we've already got 2 women at the very top of the board."

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Cahill Captures Crown in Surprise Victory

By CORWIN JONES

Ryan Cahill became the PCAG champion for 269 on Saturday night with his upset victory over top competitor Serena Duncan in the final minutes of play. Cahill trailed Duncan throughout the match, but in the closing forty minutes showed a tremendous resurgence and recaptured all of the lost ground, eventually taking a narrow lead.

Cahill is, naturally, pleased with his victory. “I feel like a shadow has been lifted from me,” he said in post-match interviews. “I feel like I could do anything.”

Cahill’s first PCAG championship was spoilt when the Receda Cube was stolen during the Academy Ball. Cahill has said that he felt the terrible incident had set a bad tone for his championship year, and so he feels as though this is his first actual championship win. He has expressed great relief that last night’s Academy Ball celebrating his win was uneventful. Cahill has also suggested, perhaps a bit optimistically, that the Receda Cube might be recovered during his current reign as champion. “It would

be appropriate, wouldn’t it?” he said.

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Duncan, who was the 268 champion and had been defending her title, was shockingly candid about her displeasure in losing the finals match to Cahill. “We all know that I am a stronger competitor,” she said. “What happened [on Saturday] is purely a matter of luck. There’s no way in a fair and level match that Ryan should have beaten me. He simply isn’t that good.”

Duncan refused to answer questions about whether she would seek an investigation into the results of the match, provoking speculation that she plans to do just that. PCAG insiders, however, have pointed out that the Clash cards for the final are drawn up months ahead of time and placed into heavy encryption during the championship season. The cards are assigned randomly during actual play. The potential for cheating is significantly reduced by these measures, PCAG officials say.

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View from Earth: War is Good

By CHRIS MARTIN



The effects of war can be horrific. Many die, many are maimed, and many are left homeless, jobless, childless, parentless and lifeless. Alongside this, war can also be an amazing force for good. Brutal leaders of regimes can be overthrown, the oppressed can be released from their oppression and the country can be rebuilt as its people want. New and better institutions can be erected in the 'losing' country providing more resources, freedoms and benefits to the people of the country. This can only be a good thing -- despite the graveyards being packed.

Sixty years ago, we had a war here on Earth. The leader of a country, Hitler, killed his political opponents, suppressed free speech, was aggressive and invaded his neighbours. Even worse than this, though, were his attempts to exterminate a race of people. He rounded up these people like cattle and took them to 'camps' where 6,000,000 (20% more people than the entire population of Perplex City) were gassed to death. Some people on Earth would say this was not absolutely evil. Merely because Hitler perceived the extermination of a race of people as a rational act which would benefit the world, then maybe our perception of it as an evil act is also false. It's nonsense. The belief that this brutal extermination is evil is founded upon strong moral and rational beliefs that the

majority of people in the Western, civilised world believe in. The 'who are we to say that was wrong' is fatuous and immoral beyond belief.

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There are absolute values that some people on Earth care deeply about, which the people of Perplex city share: The protection of women's rights and freedom of speech and of the press, for example. There are strong moral, social, political and economic reasons why we care about these values, and it should be of no surprise that the countries on Earth who care less for these values are poorer, culturally and economically, as a result. These values are so strong and so decent they should be exported to other people who are not given them, preferably through peaceful debate, but by force where necessary.

Little is known on Earth about the war of Perplex City, and it's entirely possible that terrible war crimes were committed. In spite of this, the people of Perplex City should look at the culture you have now. The freedoms granted to your citizens, your intellectual ability, your scientific progress, your largely secular beliefs, your democratic process, your apparent relative equality and your ability to do great things

Look at the past, and if crimes were committed to defend the values which make Perplex City great, then revel in your ability to take action against people who would threaten them. And if crimes were committed not to defend these values, then understand why they were done, deal with it, and move on. Either way, look around you, look how good the city is, look where it can be changed for the better and appreciate that not all cultures are morally equal. Yours is superior to most on Earth, and certainly worth defending.

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Police Raid Disrupted, Claim PCPD Sources

By JEREMY CLARIDGE



Gillit Subway Entrance

Residents around the closed Gillit Road subway station reported hearing gunfire late on Tuesday night, in what some sources speculate might have been a “botched police raid.” Police insiders, speaking on condition of anonymity, say that a raid led by Detective Helena Frye went foul when an unexpected interloper turned up at the scene. The alleged interloper, as yet unidentified, has been released from police custody, but may be returned to jail following a more complete investigation of the events.

Sources say that the covert operation was part of the investigation of a high-tech theft ring, and was possibly related to the murder of Bernardo Holyoke last April, though the murder case was officially closed in August.

Holyoke, who was also the proprietor of the Old Town bar the Five of Cups, was reported to be a high-profile fence of tech goods for the underworld.

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Official police sources say that there was no police activity in the area of the Gillit Road station Tuesday night, and that they will look into the source of the noises. No known injuries have been reported, leading police to say that the sounds heard may in fact have been caused by subterranean equipment remaining in the station.

According to local resident Fulbright Gao, the Gillit Road station has long been a quagmire for illicit activities ranging from drug deals to trafficking in contraband technologies and stolen goods. “I don’t know why the police don’t crack down harder on that kind of thing,” Gao said. “I just don’t feel safe walking by the old entrance, especially at night.”

Raoul Valentin of the Old Town Renewal Committee attacked police for allowing criminal activity to continue at the station. “How hard can it possibly be to close off that unused station for good? This is exactly the kind of simple move the city needs to make to improve the Old Town and quality of life for all of its residents,” he said.

Frye refused to speak to the Sentinel regarding the affair beyond denying that any sort of raid or police operation took place in the area Tuesday night.

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Harrowak Forced to Offer Resignation

By NATASHA VALLIERE

Director of the Health Office Julian Harrowak has been asked to tender his resignation effective immediately, according to an announcement today from the Office of the Council. Harrowak has been director of the office for nine years, but has been ordered to step down under revelations that he is afflicted with Barrow-Feld Syndrome.

In a prepared statement, City Council Leader Camryn Scott said that the council “has profound gratitude for the many years of dedication and service Julian has given to us all,” but that ultimately the council unanimously agreed he must leave his post for the greater good of the city. She announced that Harrowak had already followed direction and submitted a letter of resignation, effective immediately, though sources in the Office of the Council indicate that the letter is “strongly worded” and make it clear he is resigning only under extreme duress.

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Harrowak was not available for comment, but his former second-in-

command, Raisa Vickering, said that both she and Harrowak were opposed to his termination. “In our modern day, we can monitor Barrow-Feld Syndrome and be sure that no harm is being done,” she said. “Julian is in excellent health, and to date, absolutely no symptoms of the disease have manifested in his brain patterns. ... This is an act of gross ingratitude to a physician who has given so much of his life to the service of our city.”

Vickering is the obvious first choice to step up to the post, but she has said that she may refuse to do so as an act of protest against the City Council’s decision. She said that Cognivia has reported significant strides against the disease in drugs coming down its pipeline, and that a complete cure might even become available long before Harrowak manifests any symptoms whatsoever.

According to the Sentinel’s medical advisor, Dr. Stuart Ivanovitch, Barrow-Feld Syndrome is a degenerative brain condition that initially manifests by degrading the victim’s ethical decision-making centers. As a result, the disease leaves its sufferers unable to make consistent moral choices, leading to a variety of antisocial behaviours such as theft and fraud. In its end stages, sufferers often descend through progressively severe psychosis and ultimately coma and death.

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Donstobbert Defeats Infamous ARG! Card

By KATE BREWSTER

Player donstobbert became the first to solve the infamous card #180, ARG!, last Friday, taking her to first place on the top of the leaderboard. Since then, 127 other players have solved the card, with 27 of them joining donstobbert in first place.

The card refers to the novel Earth pastime of Alternate Reality Games, or ARGs, in which players are drawn into a fictional story through websites, emails, faxes and phone calls. The players progress through the games by solving puzzles which lead them on to the next clue and deeper into the mystery. The card asked the Cube hunters on Earth to answer several questions about these new and imaginative stories. The answers to all but the last question had been known for quite some time, but the elusive last question remained. How this was eventually solved is still unknown, and Academy sources refuse to speculate.

In other news, the total points accrued has now topped 4 million from 155,600 cards solved, with over 11,000 cards solved in the last week alone. While the U.K. is still dominating the top of the

leaderboard, players sharing the top spot also represent such diverse locales as Antarctica, Barbados, the U.S., Heard and McDonald Islands, and the Seychelles.

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As for the new movers and shakers for this week, player the fountain has accumulated an astounding 4933 points with 110 solves, some way ahead of ottakar who has scored 1808 points. Among new players in the past month, figson is in the lead with 6839 points from 128 cards, closely followed by Mathematician, Dwane Diddly, kameleon and Rox.

PCAG statistician Samara Jones commented, "We're currently seeing the board change in sharp bursts before quickly settling down. ... The speed with which a large number of players suddenly solved card 180 suggests they may be sharing their answers, leading to this bunching up at the top of the board. I'm certain points from the upcoming Earth events [in New York and London] will help break it up."

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Iona Interviews... Alejo Jackson

By IONA RODIE



Alejo Jackson, lead singer for Roll for Damage, meets me mid-morning at his studio at Hesh Records, rubbing his red eyes and yawning so wide it makes my own jaw ache. The studio is littered with pizza boxes, half-drunk beers, and a nest of cables snaking between massive pieces of audio equipment. In the corner, a tangle of sheets spills out of a camp bed and onto the floor.

He looks at the mess with surprise when I point it out to him. "I suppose it is awful, isn't it? I don't really notice, I guess,

and when we're working, we don't let in cleaners. It disrupts the flow."

Still, this kind of single-minded dedication is precisely what one would expect from Jackson and Roll for Damage. Their commitment to their craft is legendary; rumour has it that even the day the city discovered the Receda Cube was missing, the band was in the studio working while the rest of the city was paralysed with shock.

Though the story has a distinctly apocryphal flavour to it, Jackson admits that it is true. "The music doesn't wait until it's convenient, you know? It seems natural to us, but I suppose not everyone has that same kind of drive. It's intense. You can't fight it." He grimaces and, looking down, puts his hands into his pockets. "Of course, we had trouble getting a crew together that day. Lulu [Hayashi, a Hesh talent assistant] and Jinhing [McGovern, a Hesh sound engineer] never even showed up that day. Even Cyrus [Quinton, another Hesh sound engineer], our most reliable guy, showed up like two hours late."

Right now, though, Jackson is working alone. He loosens up a bit and flashes his billion-leck grin at me. "Don't worry, the band isn't splitting up," he says. "We all like to strike out on our own between albums and see where we go independently. When we all come back together to record, we always find a huge

Continued

synergy in our craft -- all of these new things we've been trying, all the risks we've been taking."

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His current project is a simple ballad. He plays a few clips for me, though he does not allow me to record them for myself. "This is just an exercise," he says. "Something to let me stretch a little."

The ballad, though, has a sweet sound to it; it brings to mind longing and lost love -- which of course leads one inevitably to the question of Jackson's well-publicised romantic life, and particularly his heavily-observed relationship (or lack thereof) with fellow top musician Joya.

"She's really an incredible person," Jackson says, and it's easy to imagine his focus has become a little dreamy. "I don't know where thing went wrong between us, but I do really regret it. We're great friends even today, and I have a lot of respect for her." Sometimes, he says, he really does wish things had turned out differently.

And the baby? Jackson's jaw clenches. "Joya doesn't want to talk about that publicly, and neither do I," he says. "Subject closed."

Jackson is eager to discuss his career, though, and future ambitions. He waxes enthusiastic over Hesh's recent move

of releasing an album on Earth. When the Viard album *The Silver City* was ruled too controversial for Perplex City, Jackson thinks *Helix Hesh* hit on the next big thing in Perplexian music: an Earth-based audience. Jackson has become profoundly jealous, he says, and aspires to release a similar project.

"Can you imagine doing art for an audience with a whole different set of cultural references?" he asks. "Or even an audience who isn't familiar with your own older, amateurish work. How great would it be to be recognised for only the body of work you create at the height of your craft?"

Does Jackson, then, have specific plans to pursue an Earth audience, then, much like Viard has? That saucy grin creeps back onto his face as he winks at me. "I have a few ideas," he says. "We'll see where it all goes."

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View From Earth: One Strike?

By OLIVER KEERS



In Perplex City, the Academy is at the centre of your society. The professors of the Academy are highly revered in your society. Sente Kiteway is as well known as Joya. However, I pose the question to you: How much do you really know about

the people you trust with your children?

Sente has struck many people on Earth as suspect. His eyes seem cold and harsh, he seems almost like a predator. I am aware that many members of the Earth wing of the Cube Retrieval Team have thought that the lack of a mother to Violet and Scarlett is indicative of the deviancy of Sente.

Here in England, there is currently a furore about the history of many teachers. The government has been greatly criticised for not having spotted members of its staff who are deemed to be a threat to the nation's children.

These people may be teachers, caterers, or caretakers; it doesn't matter to people. What does matter is that they have made one mistake. These people have all committed a sexual crime at one point in their lives. The government has deemed that this should stay with the person, and dominate the rest of their life. They enforce this by placing the individual on a "Sex Offenders Register." This is a list of all the individuals

who have been found guilty of committing a sexual crime.

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One's initial response to this is one of praise; these people may molest children, and ruin their lives. Consider it more deeply, however, and it proves deeply troubling. Sexual crimes are the most difficult to prove, victims often aren't willing to testify, and there is usually a lack of evidence. This means that convictions of guilty are given on little evidence. Hence people who may not have committed a crime, where there is no evidence that one took place, and where no-one says they did so, are being found guilty. This can lead to their whole lives being dominated by something they didn't do.

Even if the crime was committed, our prison system is built on the idea of reform. We do not incarcerate our criminals merely to punish them, but to try and re-educate them. As a result, people are let out of prison after a period of time, one that is shortened if they have been judged to have reformed. However, even after being released and having reformed, the individual's life is blighted by their past.

We claim to belong to a society that believes in second chances; a society that preaches forgiveness. Yet we do not give second chances to those who deserve them. The past is never a certain indication of the future; just because something happened before, doesn't mean that it will happen again.

In summary, a person can be convicted of a crime they didn't commit, serve a sentence for it, be judged to no longer be a threat to society, and their lives are still affected. Is this representative of a so-called just society?

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Leaderboard Pack Continues to Grow

By KATE BREWSTER

While donstobbart remains at the top of the leaderboard, she has now been joined by 40 others tying for first place. Until more points are awarded at the upcoming Earth events in New York and London, there is little chance any player will break away.

So far, Academy and PCAG sources are refusing to comment on how the point system at the upcoming events will work, insisting that we and the Earth based competitors will have to “wait and see.” This is the first PCAG tournament ever to take place outside of Perplex City, and the details remain firmly under wraps.

Tying for 42nd place are dvmrph, kameleon and matrix, all with 6778 points, only 61 points behind the leaders. The top American player is Ashin, currently among the pack in first place. The top player from Denmark, zoltan, is in 174th place, and the top player from Finland is pliget in the 184th spot.

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The top new players for this week are

Herne, RedFraggle and Janeyhen, with 2256, 1734, and 1602 points respectively. They are still some way behind last week’s top player, the fountain, who racked up an astonishing 4933 points in just one week and is now 140th overall. The top new players for January were Fisgon, Mathematician and ExquisiteEnigma who all share first place overall with 6839 points.

The total number of players has now risen to over 14,000 with more than 165,000 cards solved. At the same time, the total number of incorrect solves is approaching 100,000 with more than 750 incorrect attempts in the last day alone. PCAG Statistician Samara Jones commented, “We expected the harder cards like [# 180] ARG! to be the cause of all the incorrect solves, but that particular card has only around 600 failed attempts. ... The cards causing the most problems [for players] are actually [card #56] Gravity, [card #112] Three Little Words, and [card #49] Bookworm, which each have thousands of failed attempts.”

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Northside Bombshell: Reconstructionists Part of Nature Trust

By GARIMA KING

Evidence was revealed late on Friday indicating that the Reconstructionists, an offshoot Cubist sect, is a substantial part of the Nature's Trust, the coalition of until-now-anonymous donors that purchased development rights to the Northside Nature Preserve with the intention of foiling development plans in the area. The evidence includes banking records to the Nature's Trust's account showing substantial deposits from Reconstructionist interests, which were revealed to the Sentinel under strict secrecy guidelines. The Sentinel is under obligation not to report the specific amounts involved, nor identify their source.

The Reconstructionists issued a press release earlier this morning admitting involvement, and claiming that the move was intended to be apolitical. According to the statement, the group donated the money anonymously to, among other reasons, avoid the controversy that is now playing out. In part, it stated: "We

recognised that our identity alone could cause the city to be blind to the sense of our actions."

The revelation has unleashed a new storm of criticism that the government allowed the Northside plan to be so easily derailed. It also raises the spectre of religious concerns having a disproportionate influence on government and public policy, say political analysts. "Of course Scott and her cronies want to avoid the appearance that anyone so controversial as the Reconstructionists telling them what to do," said Council Leader candidate and political maverick Douglass Finlay. "This is just some political justice, as far as I'm concerned. This is what happens when you don't look at your benefactors carefully enough."

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Raoul Valentin of the Old Town Renewal Committee called the news "very troubling," and said that it might spell doom for the plan to funnel the funds from the sale of the Northside land into development and renewal in the Old Town. "The Brotherhood of the Six is a major community influence in the Old Town, among their neighbours," said Valentin. "Even though the Brotherhood originally supported the plan to begin renewal, now that the source of the money has been revealed, they may withdraw that support, and that could make the whole plan fail."

Continued

The Brotherhood themselves have long been known to have a hostile relationship with the Reconstructionists, since the groups split over theological and cosmological points nearly a hundred years ago. When presented with the evidence of Reconstructionist involvement, a visibly flustered Sister Golda Flynnnt said that the Brotherhood would need to discuss the matter internally before it could issue any new statements on the matter.

Although the Reconstructionists have now been revealed as a substantial contributor to the Nature's Trust, the Sentinel has been assured that there are numerous other groups and individuals involved, though they remain anonymous.

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Former Champion Zaid Passes Away at 99

By WILHELMINA BEST

The inestimable Ornella Zaid, former PCAG champion, philanthropist, and infamous puzzle designer, died last night at the age of 99. Zaid is best-known for winning the Perplex City Academy Games in 215 and establishing the prestigious Zaid Prize in cryptography with her prize winnings, in honour of her grandfather, Fynn Zaid, himself a notable cryptographer.

Robert Zhi-Hui commented on her passing, calling it a “great loss for the games and for the city.” Zaid had been one of the driving forces behind puzzle design and implementation in the games since taking over as lead puzzle scribe in 240.

Zaid had a long and colourful career. In her youth, she worked as a gardener at the Mimasan Maze, an experience she attributed for her deft understanding of spatial puzzles in her 252 memoir, “Finding the Way.” She worked her way up the ranks at the Maze, eventually becoming a crucial part of the institution’s design team by the time she left to lead

the PCAG’s puzzle team, she had been the senior designer at the maze for nearly thirty years.

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In 214, she first turned her attention to the PCAG, winning the 215 championship deftly. She opted not to compete in subsequent years, claiming she had an unfair advantage due to her long-time position as a puzzle designer herself. Starting in 218, though, she began ad hoc work on puzzle designs for the games, a task she gradually found more varied and interesting than her work at the Mimasan Maze.

The maze’s current director, Garron Ortega, said that Zaid had been his mentor in his early days with the maze. “I always regretted her leaving,” he said. “We do our best, but there is simply no way to fill her shoes.” Ortega said that the Maze will not charge an admission fee over the weekend in Zaid’s honour.

Zaid is predeceased by Rachael Woorsley, her long-time companion. The two opted not to raise children together, though Zaid was widely known to consider Woorsley’s two adult sons, Hal Woorsley and Will Bennington, as her own.

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Alejo to Participate in Live Chat with Earth

By JOYCE HARRINGTON

Pop megastar Alejo Jackson of the legendary band Roll for Damage has agreed to participate in a never-done-before live computer-mediated chat with fans on Earth. The chat, which is scheduled for Wednesday 8 Feb. at 8pm GMT, has been organised with the Centre for Reality Research in conjunction with Mind Candy. Fans who wish to participate should connect their IRC client to server events.perplexcity.com on port 6667. The moderated chat will be in channel #alejo-live, while fans can chat among themselves in #alejo-chat. Suggested IRC clients include mIRC for PC users or Colloquy for the Mac.

Hesh Records spokesman Kai Cinelli called the move a “bold new step in Earth-Perplex City relations.” He added that this is just the latest in a string of firsts for Hesh. “With this chat, we remain solidly in that nexus where technology and art intersect and grow,” he said. “We’re pushing boundaries, and that’s what Hesh is all about.”

This is just a sign of the increasing involvement between the people of Earth and of Perplex City. In the past year, Earth radio outlets have spoken to student Scarlett Kiteway and Sentinel editor-in-chief Michiko Clark, and another artist from the Hesh stable, Viard, released *The Silver City* to an Earth-only audience after it spawned too much controversy at home. The communication extends both ways, however, with an increasing number of Earth citizens writing columns and letters for the Sentinel. Seaside Press is also planning the release of a book written by a collection of authors on Earth exclusively for a Perplex City audience; the book is scheduled for release as soon as next week.

Alejo Jackson recently confessed in an interview that he is very excited by the idea of interacting with an Earth audience, spurred in part by jealousy of Viard’s release of an album on Earth. “This is just me taking back my rightful place at the very edge of things,” he joked.

Cinelli says that the chat will be moderated to provide order to proceedings, and only one person at a time will be allowed to speak to Jackson. More specific instructions, he said, will be provided at the time of the event.

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Excitement for Earth Events Grows in City

By KATE BREWSTER

Anticipation for the upcoming Earth-based PCAG events continues to grow as the top of the top of the leaderboard balloons further. With 48 players now tying for first place, the points awarded at the event could be crucial in separating out the top puzzle solvers. While the New York event is still open, registration for the London event is now closed, though spectators are welcome to come along to watch the games and swap puzzle cards. PCAG statistician Samara Jones remarked, "It's getting extremely tense. Unless someone cracks one of the unsolved cards in the next three weeks and keeps the answer, the top of the leaderboard could be completely determined by these events."

Currently sharing 49th place, effectively the second spot on the leaderboard, are dvmrph, kameleon, massiverugsale, stumped, and unclean, all with 6778 points from 127 solves, and just needing one more card solve each to join the pack at first place.

In other news, the 5 million-point-mark is certain to be passed by the end of the day. 14,774 players have now registered, with a combined 174,604 cards solved. These numbers are likely to increase rapidly over the next few months as the cards are officially launched in the United States at the International Toy Fair in New York next week. Cube Retrieval Team member Anna Heath explained, "The cards have been available in North America since their release last year, but they were only stocked by a small number of stores. ... This

launch will see [the number of stores carrying the cards] increase, making them much more easily obtainable by new Cube hunters."

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The total number of incorrect attempts at a solve has now passed 100,000, with players racking up 4856 incorrect attempts in the last week. The average number of cards solved per player is now 18, while the average number of incorrect attempts per player is 11. Over one third of all attempted solves in the last day were incorrect.

The top new player of the week was Pogle, who accrued 3495 points from 94 solves, putting him in 404th place on the overall leaderboard. He was closely followed by UKver2.0 with 2810 points and 88 solves. The top players of the past month are Stevewh with 6839 points and 128 solves, putting him in first place on the overall board; and doobby21, who racked up 6718 points off 126 solves to reach 56th place.

"It's great to see so many new players racing up the leaderboard so quickly," said Heath. "I'm sure it can be quite daunting for new players to find themselves so far down to begin with, but players like Pogle and Stevewh help show that it is possible to climb quite quickly. We can't wait to see what happens when Wave 3 comes out!"

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Police Arrest Pair of Arson, Vandal Suspects

By JEREMY CLARIDGE



Malcolm Kaplan

The police arrested two suspects last night in connection with the recent incidents of vandalism, arson and assault in the Artist's Quarter. The pair, who are brothers, have been charged with three counts of destruction of property, one count of grievous bodily harm and one count of arson. Police believe that the men did not act alone, though no other suspects have been arrested to date.

At an early-morning press conference, Police Chief Eoin Morgan confirmed

that Malcolm Kaplan, 26, and Spencer Kaplan, 23, were arrested for the attack on Robert Drake on the third of January; the damage to Euler's Disc on the 17th of Jan.; and for setting the Feb. 5 fire at the Creation Lane Soupery. Morgan declined to convey details of the arrest, citing security concerns and the possibility of warning additional suspects who have not yet been detained. "Our sympathies are with the victims of these youths' violent acts. We hope they can receive some small measure of comfort when they are brought to justice," Morgan said.

Witnesses to the arrest, who have requested anonymity, say the police raided the Kaplans' home at approximately 11pm last night. Six officers were present on the scene, several of whom were needed to restrain Malcolm as he was dragged from his home in a dressing gown. Through the noise, several witnesses believe they heard Kaplan shout: "Property is theft. The reality of our society are the individuals!"

The Kaplans will be held at a high-security facility adjacent to the police station. Said Lieutenant Camden Ho, "We're concerned that the brothers are part of a larger gang, who may attempt to aid them in escaping. ... It's the senselessness of the acts that has all of us so disturbed. [These actions are] more like something you'd find on Earth." He also expressed disbelief at the apparent lack of motive in the crimes. "It's like

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they've turned their back on society," he said. "We're most concerned at the present with locating any other members of the gang. ... [We're] simply unable to understand their way of thinking, and as a result can't predict what they might be capable of next."

Sentinel research has turned up very little about the Kaplans. Interviews with their neighbours indicate that they seldom saw, let alone spoke to, either brother. It seems as though the pair made a concerted effort to vanish from the key network, beginning with Malcolm shortly before he left Perplex City University in 265, with Spencer disappearing a year later. This type of "off-grid" behaviour is more commonly seen in certain insular religious communities, such as the Reconstructionists, who believe that the bustle of modern communications can interfere with living in harmony with others.

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Alejo Chat 'Exciting'

By JOYCE HARRINGTON

Alejo Jackson of hot band Roll for Damage last night participated in a never-before-done live chat with fans from Earth, along with a few lucky contest winners from the RFD Fan Club. In a follow-up interview, Alejo said that the chat discussion was "Very exciting," though he did have some difficulty working the equipment necessary to speak to Earth. Following is a transcript of this unique encounter.

Cobalt:
Roll For Damage fans and people of Earth, under the auspices of the Centre for Reality Research, I'm delighted to welcome you to the first ever Perplex City-Earth live webchat with rock legend Alejo Jackson! Participants in this chat will include both people from Earth and also winners of an RFD fan club contest who won the opportunity to take part. I'm Shane Cobalt, RFD's publicist, and I'll be moderating the chat this evening. This means that you need to send your questions to me by /msg, and I'll pass them on to Alejo one by one. We do have a time limit today, depending on how the link holds up, so I'll keep you posted when we're getting near the end.

Cobalt:
I think for our first question we have a member of the RFD fanclub here in Perplex City, Superkitty55. Welcome, Superkitty55!

Cobalt:
<Superkitty55> Alejo! I love you! Your awesome! I neeeded to know if your seeing any1 right now?!?! If no, Ill send you my pic! If yes, shes not as hot as me!!!

Alejo:
Hey Superkitty55. I'm glad you think I'm awesome. I'm not really on the market right now, and I'm trying not to talk too much about my personal life. It seems like that's the way to get hurt, you know? Keep listening and enjoying our music.

Cobalt:
Next up! <skenny> Hi Alejo! It's great to finally be able to chat with a famous perplexian! My question to you is, who has influenced your musical career the most? Who has given you the most support, help, and aid in your career?

Alejo:
Hi, skenny.

Alejo:
That'd have to be my bandmates KT and Echo. We've been friends since we were all around 10 years old, and have been playing together all that time.

Alejo:
We're still playing together, and of course still really great friends after all this time

Cobalt:
Thanks skenny!

Cobalt:
Next up we have: <jojojojo> Hi Alejo, whats your starsign?

Alejo:
Hey, jojo. I'm a Maze

Cobalt:
Simple question, simple answer! <Ollie> Hi, is there any chance that the Roll For Damage album will be released on Earth? I'd really

Continued like to hear your work.

Alejo:

You know, Ollie, we'd really love to release some of our music on Earth. I'm really jealous that Viard beat me to the punch! I'm talking to Helix at Hesh about it, but no immediate plans yet, sorry. We'll keep you posted when we have something coming!

Cobalt:

Now another from this side of the connection!

Cobalt:

We have <RFDGrrrrl> Alejo, I love you sooooo much! You look so hot in the vid for Hit Point! Are you guys going to be playing Gladstone soon???? Please say yes!!!!

Alejo:

Hi, RFD Grrrrrl. I'm glad you enjoyed the video :)

Alejo:

It was a lot of fun making it, even though we all got pretty wet over the course of the day.

Alejo:

And, yes, we're hoping to play some dates in Gladstone over the summer - hope to see you there!

Cobalt:

Now one I can't wait to hear the answer for.. <jojojojo> Hi Alejo. Any juicy secrets you care to divulge about your fellow bandmates?

Alejo:

Sorry, jojo - a great creative relationship is all about trust, and so I could never tell you anything that was really secret. But if you're wondering, KT's life is all in the open anyway. Man doesn't have a secret in his brain. And

Echo, well, I don't think she'd tell me her secrets anyway...

Cobalt:

<Six> HI Alejo, firstly I'd just like to say squee. Now, how did you guys come up with your name?

Alejo:

When we first started RFD, there was a huge fad at home about these paper-and-dice based adventure games you guys had come up with, and we just kind of thought it sounded cool.

Alejo:

We kind of regret that's it's stuck, actually, but it's a little late to change, isn't it?

Cobalt:

An interesting one: <MasterCheese> Hey Alejo, it's really great to be able to talk like this with someone from Perplex City. At least you beat Viard at something! So, I was wondering, if you could have any superpower, what would it be?

Alejo:

Man, I wish I never had to sleep.

Alejo:

I could get so much more done, you know?

Cobalt:

I don't know if he has, but I certainly haven't! <kraed> Have you ever tried the beans on toast recipe that was in the view from earth column in the perplex city sentinel?

Alejo:

I saw that recipe, it wanted a lot of things we don't have in Perplex City. I did try this peas on toast thing one cafe based on it, but it was pretty awful.

Continued

Cobalt:

<giggsey> Hey Alejo, just a quick question for you. What got you so interested in Earth? Was it a youth activity or something you learnt when you were young. Also (nice quick question :P), what do you find the strangest about Earth? Thanks, and good luck in the future.

Alejo:

Wow, what a great question, giggsey

Alejo:

The whole city has been kind of fascinated with Earth since it was discovered. I think it's this amazing feeling that you aren't alone in the universe, you know? Like there's hope for everyone. I think it's strange how you all are so different from each other, though.

Alejo:

I mean, we're different, too, but the differences seem a little smaller.

Cobalt:

<perplexed> Hey Alejo, I know on Earth some bands are superstitious about recording and there seems to be more concentration on starsigns in Perplex City, are you at all superstitious especially about recording?

Alejo:

I wouldn't say we're superstitious at all, though we do try to respect KT's beliefs, since he's a pretty observant Cubist.

Cobalt:

I can tell you *I'm* adorable. <buzman> Hi Alejo. I was wondering if you always work with the same team when creating music (engineers, producer etc). If so, what sort of people are they? Do you know them well? Is there any one person who stands out?

Alejo:

e don't always work with the same team, but it is nicer when we are able to. Echo always says that production crew are the cooks who create an album out of the ingredients we give them.

Alejo:

Using these tools is so weird

Cobalt:

Another from a lucky Perplexian fan! <Mandamoo> I love Roll for Damage so much! I have all your albums, and a big poster of the band in my bedroom at home! Some of the girls at school say that you suck, they like Samiad more, but I still think you're the coolest! Take Initiative is the best yet!

Alejo:

Thanks, Mandamoo. We think you're the coolest too. And we're glad you liked Take Initiative - we were pretty pleased with it ourselves ;)

Cobalt:

A sad day for us all I think. <Mima> Hi Alejo, did the disappearance of the Cube affect KT the day it happened? As you carried on working, how did you all support each other?

Alejo:

KT reached into himself and found some great music that day, Mima. The loss affected all of us, though - we were in the studio recording that day.

Alejo:

Even our best production guy, Cyrus, was a little off that day - I remember he was having this big argument, said he was talking to Helix about his contract, but when I redialed from the studio console a little later to talk to Helix, I got some office at the Academy.

Alejo:

We were all pretty flustered.

Cobalt:

<Rob> What is your favourite thing to do in Perplex City?

Alejo:

Well, besides working in the studio, I love to walk along the Strip at night. There are so many stars, and they reflect in the water. It's

Continued really inspiring.

Cobalt:

I couldn't agree more, it's so rocks! <RichyB251>
Alejo - Take Initiative ROCKED! I love that album! How did you come up with the idea for "Fumble"? I've listened to that song like a million times!

Cobalt:

(A Perplexian question I'm sure you'll guess!)

Alejo:

Well, Richy, the way we find all of our songs is pretty much the same way. We go out separately and reach into ourselves to see what's in there, and then when we come back together, it turns into music.

Alejo:

Every song reflects something that one of us is thinking about or going through.

Cobalt:

<MasterCheese> Hey, you mentioned your best production guy, Cyrus, having an argument with someone and I was wondering, is this normal for him? What's he normally like?

Alejo:

Haven't seen Cyrus in months, he's not at Hesh now. Too bad, he's a great guy and I really miss him. It wasn't like him to have that kind of argument, no... I mean, it was kind of in character for him, he was super-apologetic to whoever he was talking to and not really combative.

Alejo:

But mostly he was really quiet, kept to himself. One of the PAs managed to find out his birthday once, and brought a cake in for

him, right in the middle of the PCAG finals. He turned so many kinds of red, you wouldn't even believe it.

Alejo:

Never wanted too much attention, you know?

Cobalt:

<Scott> what do you think of Nature's Trust?

Alejo:

I think they've done a great thing, trying to keep all of the green spaces around our city. It's a crying shame that people can be blinded to what's right because they don't like the people doing it.

Cobalt:

I once got sent something incredibly strange, but sadly that's another story. <Enigmaster> Hiya Alejo, what's the weirdest thing a fan has sent you?

Alejo:

Once, a fan sent me these life-sized sock puppets with these giant button eyes, made to look like me and KT and Echo. That was pretty weird, especially because it clearly took a lot of work... it's fascinating to see what people are inspired to do by us!

Cobalt:

Looks like we're running into a little difficulty here at the CRR, folks, so I'm afraid this next question will have to be the last one.

Cobalt:

So here it goes <Rob> What do you think of Sente's approach to finding the Receda Cube?

Alejo:

I guess the team at the Academy are probably trying their best. I know for the average person

Continued on the street in Perplex City, there's a lot of gratitude to you guys for all of your interest in helping us and all the work you're doing. We really owe you a big thanks.

Alejo:

I know I'm really grateful that the CRT's efforts have allowed me to talk to you here on Earth. It's been a tremendous experience, and I hope to do it again someday. Thanks, everyone, and so long!

Cobalt:

Thank you all so much for joining us today! I hope you all had a great time talking to Alejo. He and I both really enjoyed this opportunity to communicate with you, and we look forward to a future when Earth and Perplex City can communicate more freely! Hope to see you again next time, but for now, enjoy your night!

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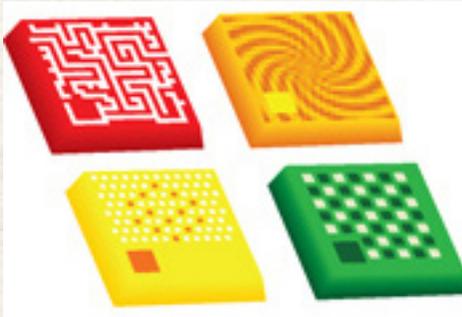
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Virtual Leitmarks Debut on Earth

By ALEXEI FAIRETOURE



Virtual leitmarks debuted on the leaderboard last week, after months of quiet discussion between Mind Candy and the Academy. According to Academy Master Sente Kiteway, the move is a “long-needed way to signal the accomplishments of the people on Earth who are doing so much to help us.”

The awarding of leitmarks on Earth brewed a scandal early last year when the Academy awarded them to 333 people who had volunteered to try to locate the stolen Receda Cube. As a result of the furore, the Academy has been reluctant to award additional leitmarks. Now, though, according to PCAG Chairman Robert Zhi-Hui, “There has been a real change in sentiment. ... Now, the city is willing to see that the people of Earth are truly earning this kind of recognition.”

These new virtual leitmarks are awarded based on total points earned by solving cards. Red leitmarks are awarded at 950 points, orange at 2,300, yellow at 4,500 and green at 5,900. Academy sources say the leitmarks are available through to black and silver, but the points level are being held under close guard until they have been earned.

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In other news, the leaderboard has seen the number of people sharing the top spot swell to 56, with Jaded69 and pharzo sharing 57th place, each with one more cardsolve to join the pack at first. Only six of the top 56 hail from a country other than the United Kingdom; 12 of the top 56 are women, though another three persons have chosen not to reveal their gender.

As expected, the leaderboard has burst through the five-million-point mark, and has already surpassed 5.3 million. Over 200,000 points have been earned in the past week alone, and the average player has now accumulated 536 points. PCAG statistician Samara Jones has indicated that the growth has been maintaining a steady rate, but added, “some acceleration may be possible in the coming days, due to the increased level of press exposure seen on Earth, and Mind Candy’s push to increase awareness of our plight in the North America region.”

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Iona Interviews... Anna Heath

By IONA RODIE

Academy puzzle scribe Anna Heath has everything under control. The walk up to her house is a festive and precise Rauen Tiles pattern, and the knee-high hedges are neatly trimmed. Anna greets me at the door, and judging from her sharp sweater-and-skirt ensemble, she is every bit as polished in her private life as in her public. She also exudes a personable warmth that welcomes me into her family's Sunday morning routine.

"We'd best stay in the kitchen," she says, guiding me into a warm if cluttered room filled with half-finished craft projects. The walls are papered with art children's art, but the copper pots hanging by the stove are a bit dusty, evidently out of long disuse. The walls are painted in yellow and green stripes, reminiscent of the uniforms of the Nomads.

"I'm a big Nomads fan," Heath admits, lighting up. "I never miss a match. It's something of a sickness," she laughs.

A kinetic blur passes by us. "My boys, Otto and Pip," she says. She deftly snags both of the 6-year-old twins by the collars of their shirts and has a few quiet words with them. Presumably at her direction,

they set themselves up on the kitchen table with paints and proceed to ignore my presence in their home through the remainder of my visit. Although Heath has a third child, she tells me that the baby, Eve, is out with her father at a swimming lesson. She shows me pictures, clearly very proud of her family.

Though it would be easy to dismiss Heath as a devoted mother with a knack for language, her maternal warmth is deceptive. Make no mistake, Heath is cutting an ever-larger figure at the Academy. For years, Academy insiders have suggested she has the drive and potential to be the future Master of the Academy. At a mere 37 years old, she is already a full fellow in Ancient Languages, the senior-most member of Master Sente Kiteway's Cube Retrieval Team, and carries a legendary reputation as a professor who is always available for students who need her. Indeed, her colleagues at the Academy department of languages have said that she is taking on an increasing burden of administrative tasks in the operation of the department as a whole.

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Some would say that Heath devotes too much time and energy to your family and personal projects, and that a person with as many commitments as a full fellow has no business on the Cube Retrieval Team. Surely, critics say, the Receda

Continued

Cube is an important enough project to demand a person's full attention. Is Heath's attention is sliced too thinly?

Heath scoffs at this idea. "We need to be presenting our best selves to the people of Earth," she says. "Our best people are naturally multi-faceted. It's far better for us to have three people on our team with diverse interests than one who does nothing else. Part of the Academy's philosophy is to produce whole people, rather than savants in one or two narrow topics. Why should any area be an exception to this?"

Still, the Cube Retrieval Team has come under heavy criticism, most recently because of the highly-public association of scribe Tippy Ankron with playboy record executive Helix Hesh. One wonders how the diverse personalities on the scribe team have meshed after all this time, and how smoothly the day-to-day operations of the team are now running.

"Sometimes I feel like I'm the mother to all of them," she laughs. "I do quite a bit of management of the team. Master Kiteway is of course in charge, but his schedule is very demanding. He simply doesn't have enough hours in the day. Fortunately, he's also a master of delegation."

As part of the Cube Retrieval Team, Heath has enviable access to all things Earth at a time when the Earth is enjoying

unprecedented popularity in Perplexian society. How has this affected Heath, aside from making her a popular guest at dinner parties?

"I feel sometimes as though I live on Earth and not in Perplex City at all," she says with a smile. Then she becomes more serious, eyebrows pulling downward. "I was a part of the team studying Earth long before the Cube went missing, and those were really some difficult days. Very difficult. There's so much uncontained aggression on Earth, and so much tragedy. Do you know there are people on Earth who actually die for lack of food and basic medicines? It was really appalling when we were first trying to understand these things."

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Council Ignoring Dangerous Drug Trade

Opinion/Editorial

While it makes for an exciting subplot in novels and PCBS shows, the black market drug trade is real, ugly, and dangerous -- and the City Council should be marshalling all its forces to stamp it out. Why is it that Council Leader Camryn Scott has failed to address the issue in her public appearances? How is it that no high-profile arrests for black market drug dealers have been announced in well over a year?

It's true: The drug trade is raising its nasty head again, with insidious effects that can be felt in all areas of the city. Crime is on the rise again in both the Old Town and the Artist's Quarter, no doubt linked to the renewed vigour of these criminal drug transactions. Who knows how far the dark hand of this evil trade is reaching, even already? Perhaps PCAG top performers have been cheating with chemical enhancement, and innumerable cases of illness and death may have been falsely attributed to less-stigmatised causes.

While the drugs manufactured by Cognivia are safe and detectable, the versions sold on the black market are largely not. Unscrupulous drug labs scrub or alter their illicit products to remove telltale chemical signatures, or are synthesised without these important components at all -- particularly for such popular chemical cocktails as Ceretin, Cardinal and Synergy, as well as a host of more dangerous chemicals not commercially available at all. The result: harmful and nearly undetectable drugs could be coursing through

the veins of nearly anyone.

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In many cases, the drugs have had the telltale signatures intentionally removed to prevent detection in routine checks, such as those performed by the PCAG, or to prevent electronic sensors from sniffing the material when it is in transit. The process also removes important elements of the drugs that prevent some side effects, which can also increase the risk of overdose.

Worse, because these drugs have such a high reputation for efficacy and safety when sold through regular channels, the unsuspecting consumers of these cheap black-market drugs can find themselves suffering serious detrimental consequences -- nausea, tachycardia, even death. The average citizen's sensible caution has been lulled by the safe commercial drugs of today that many have forgotten how very deadly uncontrolled substances can be.

Nonetheless, the government turns a blind eye to these victims, rather than maintaining a righteous and indefatigable vigilance over the populace. How many lives must be harmed before the council and police will finally do their jobs? How far must this menace to society grow before the public has had enough? This abominable situation must come to an end, before irreparable damage is done to our society and to our people.

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View from Earth: Cult of Celebrity

By PETE DAVISON



Numerous writers to this column who have come before me have highlighted some of the differences between Earth and Perplex City. There are few things that make this difference more apparent than the issue of celebrity. Earth's current love for

celebrities who are famous, paradoxically, for nothing other than being famous probably sounds like an absurdity to the average Perplexian. But it happens.

Here on Earth, and particularly here in England, some might say, the world is driven by the media. We are subtly influenced in our ways of thinking and our knowledge by everything that surrounds us -- advertising, television, printed media, the Internet -- everything is geared to plant subtle messages in our mind about who to trust, who to distrust, what to like, what to hate, who are "heroes" and who are "villains." The world is, of course, not that simple. Everyone has their own opinion. But there are some sides of the

media that will always try and get their way.

The current fad for so-called "reality television" is a prime example of this. A "reality" show can be anything from the housebound Big Brother, where contestants go about their daily lives in an enclosed compound with a number of strangers and get voted off week after week by the viewing public, to The X-Factor, where numerous music hopefuls sing for their supper week after week in a desperate attempt to reach superstardom.

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What many people who watch these shows fail to take into account is the fact that the way we perceive these people is entirely due to the way they are represented on the screen -- and in that sense, the editors of these shows are both omniscient and omnipotent, having access to all the footage that has been taken of these people AND having the power to choose the sections that back up a prescribed "character" for the person in question. They can make or break people -- turn them into heroes, turn them into villains, turn them into figures of ridicule or renown.

But it doesn't stop once the show is over and won. We have magazines devoted to the cult of celebrity. These are staffed by writers who think we have nothing better to do than chuckle at pictures of people we may or may not have heard of taking their dog for a walk, or picking their nose,

Continued

or going to the shops with no makeup on. Many of these people whom we may or may not have heard of are famous for nothing more than being a member of the public who was on one of these “reality” shows for a week or two. Very often, they have no “talent” as such which makes them worthy of notice -- they are famous for fame’s sake. The people with real talent often go unnoticed.

This is, I think, what appeals to many Earth residents about Perplex City. The Perplexian culture of valuing the power of the mind above all else appeals to those of us who are sick of the cult of celebrity. Anyone can become a figure of repute simply through using their brain, rather than channelling all their resources into trying to appear on the television, only to reveal themselves to the world as a vapid babbling moron.

And it is for this reason that so many people here on Earth are assisting with the hunt for the Cube. It is not about the reward offered. It is not about attaining fame and fortune. It is about using our brains, working together, and doing our very best to help someone, while giving our brains a much-needed workout. The fact it lets us understand something of a culture so similar yet at the same time so different to our own makes our efforts all the more worthwhile.

The View from Earth column is currently accepting submissions from its Earth

readership. Please see our submission guidelines for more information.

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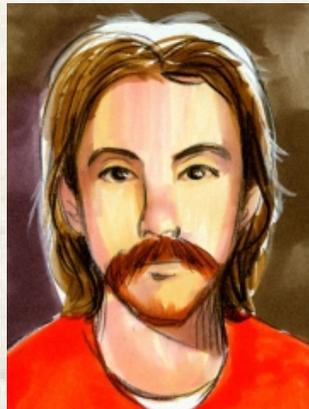
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Blafard in NY Crowned First Earth PCAG Winner

By CORWIN JONES



Blafard was crowned the first-ever PCAG champion on Earth on the 15th of February, in an historic moment for both the PCAG and for Earth-Perplex City relations. He was awarded with a crystal cube trophy and will also be receiving 300 points on the leaderboard, probably to appear later in the week. Runner-up str1cken will be receiving 200 points for his own impressive performance.

Interestingly, blafard was not a previously-registered Cube hunter, and so his victory at the PCAG tournament was his phenomenal first step into the cause of Perplex City, the games, and the Cube. Str1cken, on the other hand, is a veteran card solver, with over 2000 points to his name on the leaderboard at present.

The New York games were a single player knock-out tournament involving over 40 competitors, unfolding over five rounds. Opening with the Perplexian classic, Roundabout, which is comparable to the

popular Earth game of 'Rock, Paper, Scissors'. Each player earned up to three points in the opening round. In the second round, tables of players faced off in Set, an Earth card game involving rapid pattern recognition. In this round, the contestants battled against each other to score the most points, with one point awarded per set matched during a single round of the game.

The top eight scorers from the first two rounds then advanced to round three, in which players were assigned pairs to play two games of QbicZu, a three-dimensional version of the Earth game tic-tac-toe in which the winner scores the most lines, rather than the game halting when only one line is drawn. The four top players were then reduced to two through a round of Batik, an Earth-developed strategic spatial game. Finally, these two top puzzle solvers met in front of all the competitors to dual in the highlight of the PCAG tournament, a game of Clash.

The finalists raced to be the first to score five points at a series of riddles, questions and conundrums, which included several as-yet-unreleased puzzle cards. Blafard took an early lead over str1cken, eventually leading 4 to 2. The game culminated in a tense series of questions where neither competitor was able to provide the correct answer within the set time limit. Finally, Blafard ended the games and the night by scoring the winning point off an unreleased Wave 4 card: St. Ives. Blafard was presented the cube trophy on behalf of the PCAG, Robert Zhi-Hui, and the people of Perplex City.

A second PCAG tournament was held over the weekend in London, but full details have not yet emerged. The Sentinel plans a full analysis of the event as soon as more information becomes available.

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Everything Changes on the Leaderboard

By KATE BREWSTER

A breathtaking slew of developments shook the leaderboard up this week, leaving behind a new landscape. In combination, the PCAG Earth events, a sneak preview of a Wave 3 card and the solving of a Wave 2 silver have instigated a complete overhaul on the board, particularly at the top.

The changes began almost two weeks ago when it was announced the top players from the New York PCAG events would be receiving extra points on the leaderboard. These points (300 to player blafard and 200 to player str1cken) have yet to be awarded, and their overall effect is likely to be small. However, the games also included a taste of things to come. Several Wave 3 and 4 cards were displayed, including card #69, Algebragraffiti. Just four days later, this card was released as part of a puzzle supplement in a major British newspaper, the Sunday Telegraph.

Foregoing the standard unique code format, this card was printed as part of a double page spread of puzzles and included a web link which could be accessed by anyone. This link led to a standard solve form for the card, allowing hundreds of new and old players to solve the card before it was officially released. While only 18 points were awarded for correctly solving the card, the order of the top leaderboard players slowly began to change as the news of the card spread and the solves came in. The first 250 correct solvers were also rewarded with a pack of puzzle cards. The card has now been solved over 800

times.

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Many had expected this would be the last big change before the London PCAG event, but they were greatly mistaken. On the night of the 24th of February, less than 24 hours before the start of the London event, Gibbet correctly solved the Wave 2 silver card #242, Ciphers of History. Shortly after, the card system received even more correct solves -- over 100 to date. This brought on another significant set of changes at the top of the board. Now, donstobbart is back at the top of the board, sharing 1st place with 51 other players, all with 6198 points. This, however, will soon change again.

Although details from the London PCAG event are trickling in very slowly, the Sentinel has learned that teams of players competed not only to claim the most points at the event and win the main prize (a crystal cube trophy for each team member of the first-place team), but also to win points on the leaderboard. While these points have yet to be awarded, it is safe to assume that the members of the Puzzle Monkeys, the winning team, will soon see themselves climbing up the board.

In other news, the 200,000-cards-solved mark was passed this weekend, and the total number of players now stands at nearly 27,000; rumours began circulating at the London event that the Reimann card does require solving the Riemann hypothesis, though the Academy refuses to comment on this; and Mind Candy have unofficially announced that Wave 3 cards will be available in late March.

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Earth Interviews: Mind Candy's Andrea Phillips

By SCOTT MYERS

I caught up with Mind Candy's Andrea Phillips, Ad Hoc Polymath, at the American International Toy Fair. Exhaustion is showing on her face. "It's been a really busy week," she explains. Indeed, Mind Candy have had a very busy year. That single week in mid-February held the PCAG Earth competitions, the Toy Fair, and the exciting announcement of Gamus Distributors (<http://www.gamus.com/>) carrying the puzzle cards in North America. And with puzzle card sales going quite well, there appears to be no slump in sight.

But does Mind Candy find time to relax? Andrea informs me there is a DDR rivalry raging in the office, and she seems to be the former champion, with Adam Martin, Mind Candy's CTO, currently holding the (disputed) championship. Other new-media games include the Xbox 360, particularly PGR3. I inquire about Mind Candy's interest in the latest trend in gaming, Alternate Reality Gaming. Phillips does recognize it as an "interesting gamespace," but no-one at Mind Candy are playing any ARGs at this time (that she is aware of, anyway).

And what of Perplexian games? Has such continual interaction with Perplex City begun to rub off on Mind Candy personnel? Not as such, no. Phillips reveals: The puzzle cards which have become so popular on Earth actually share a very close root to the game Clash. In this way, all of Earth have become Clash players, of a sort. However, other resources on games like Pyramid are still very limited, although Phillips expresses a great interest in learning how this fascinating game is played properly.

Other aspects of Perplexian culture are rubbing off as well. Phillips tells me of the Winter Solstice celebration she spent with her daughter. "It was quite fun!" she confides. Interestingly, the distant city is becoming quite familiar to her. She thinks back, and cannot remember a time or a thing which stands out as being truly surprising or foreign. "Almost like I live there now," she jokes.

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So then it must be very difficult for Mind Candy to receive the brunt of criticism from certain news sources within the city. Indeed, prior to the puzzle cards becoming widely available, Mind Candy was met with considerable criticism from all angles. Phillips dons a sad face. "Yes, it was so very hurtful of them." She also points out the connection between the ruling regime in the Academy -- namely

Continued

Sente Kiteway -- and Mind Candy. “No matter how hard we try, critics might prefer The Academy be run by someone else... Sometimes it is very difficult for them to see that we are doing anything.”

Phillips goes on to explain, “The fundamental problem is that we have no idea where the Cube might be. We are hoping the cards will let people sift through information. Our job is to provide information, and help people sort it all out.”

And what of the connection between Earth and Perplex City? Phillips is not able to go into detail about the nature of the connection itself, but she does explain some facts. For instance, the link is run by the Centre For Reality Research, which is in partnership with the Academy, and all data must go through them before getting to Earth. While other parties have expressed a great interest in establishing a link with Earth, the technology simply isn't in place. So the recent live-chat with Alejo Jackson, and other events such as radio interviews with Scarlett Kiteway and Michiko Clark all had to be coordinated through the CRR.

I point out: there is some popular opinion that Mind Candy has a certain degree of editorial control over what information reaches the city. Is there someone watching over the line? Phillips quickly assures me, no, no-one is intentionally censoring anything.

The Academy was very reluctant to contact Earth to begin with, but when it was discovered that the Receda Cube was definitely located on Earth, establishing contact was unavoidable. At this time, Mind Candy regards the Academy as a sort of client, and acts on their behalf on Earth. However, the Academy is rather tight-lipped on the future of the relationship. “Right now the objective is to find the Cube,” she informs me.

The Academy doesn't want to talk about how to get the Cube back to Perplex City, either. “We have been discussing a safe haven for the Cube until a way to get it back to them has been decided upon,” Phillips says. But the Academy refuses to speculate any further.

This interview was conducted by Earth correspondent Scott Myers. If you are interested in reporting Earth-based news for the Sentinel, please contact news@perplexcitysentinel.com with your proposal. For this piece, Mr. Myers has received ten points on the Perplexcity.com leaderboard, as will future View from Earth columnists.



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Puzzle Monkeys Victors in PCAG London Event

By CORWIN JONES



Six-member team The Puzzle Monkeys walked away with the prize in the London PCAG tournament, winning the first-ever PCAG team games on Earth. The six members of the champion team were Deadly Zoidberg; Sheran Jaay; Orac; Crystal Star; Soccerdog; and Alpatrion.

This second and final part of the games took place in London, England on Saturday the 25th of February. A square mile of the capital city was transformed into a puzzle arena, with 40 teams of six or fewer players each taking part in a series of puzzle challenges, questions and scavenger hunts. At 1pm, the teams raced out from the base camp to win points at a variety of challenges including anything

from forming a 127-person conga line in Trafalgar Square, to singing the Hokey Cokey in Leicester Square, through to creating towers of biscuits, and or even solving a maze through the National Gallery. The teams crammed themselves into phone boxes, formed words out of their bodies, answered questions such as, “How many yellow lanterns are there in Chinatown?” and “What do you lose if you order a kwak in De Hems bar?” and raced between underground stations to solve riddles.

Roughly 240 individuals competed in the event, with many more just observing. Players came from as far away as Ireland and America, with one entire team arriving from Barcelona, Spain. Film crews followed several of the teams throughout the day, as well as interviewing players, volunteers and Mind Candy staff.

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The day ended with the announcement of the top three teams. In third place, team Logic, Intelligence and Excellance [sic]; in second place the Perplex Monkeys; and finally, in first place, The Puzzle Monkeys. Each member of The Puzzle Monkeys was awarded with a crystal cube trophy engraved with the Academy logo, while the top eight teams took a flight on the London Eye through the generosity of an anonymous benefactor. Though unannounced at the event, fourth place was taken by The Cube ReCoventry

Continued

Team, with the fifth spot held by Team Jazz Hands.

Each player from the top five teams will receive leaderboard points relative to their final rank in the PCAG event. First-ranked players will receive 300 points; 200 for second place; 150 points for third place; 100 points for fourth place; and 50 points per player on the team that took fifth place. Mind Candy has indicated that these points should be awarded by the end of this week, no doubt causing a significant shake-up on the leaderboard.

The event was the biggest single event of its kind in the UK and would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of both the Mind Candy staff and volunteers who assisted the PCAG staff in organising the event.

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Hesh Denies Security Troubles for RFD Performances

By JEREMY CLARIDGE

Hesh Records spokesman Kai Cinelli vehemently denied allegations late last week that the string of performances it has organized for top pop band Roll for Damage have suffered from insufficient security. The accusations come hard on the heels of reports from numerous fans about poor crowd control after a surprise club performance at The Click.

According to witnesses, the number of fans who rushed to the venue to try to catch the performance vastly exceeded the club's capacity. Complaints filed against Hesh claim the resulting crowd remained in the street "milling aimlessly" and completely blocking traffic in both directions on Fivebridges Lane for nearly two hours. Marmalejo College student Virgil Kim, one of the many hopefuls who didn't make it into the audience, said the scene was "really frightening. ... There was a bad mood in the crowd, everyone was so disappointed. It's pretty surprising that it didn't get ugly." No injuries were reported, though some Fivebridges Lane business owners reported minor accidental property damage.

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Cinelli insists that the performance was planned in accordance with the company's best practices, but that the crowd reaction to this impromptu show "took us all by surprise." He noted that as The Click is the club where Roll for Damage first rose to stardom, it is to be expected that so many fans would want to see the band return to its roots.

Police lieutenant Heidi Lokhande noted that the police did not receive notification that the road was blocked for nearly half an hour after the show began. "We can't resolve problems we don't know about," she said. "After we learned of the issue, we had to call in some volunteer forces to help in peacefully dispersing the crowd." She said that the situation might have been significantly less severe had the police been contacted sooner.

The band has refused to rule out the possibility of announcing further surprise shows. Cinelli insists, though, that Hesh makes the safety of its audience its top priority, and that concert-goers would be perfectly safe attending such a concert. Nonetheless, "We plan to work more closely with the city police in the future," Cinelli said.

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RFD to Play Free Show at Euler's Disc on Tuesday

By JEREMY CLARIDGE

Hot band Roll for Damage has announced a free performance at Euler's Disc on Tuesday afternoon, spurring concerns that the city may encounter security problems similar to those found at their performance last weekend at The Click. During their last show, sources say, poor crowd control resulted in Fivebridges Lane being completely blocked to traffic travelling in both directions for nearly two hours.

Roll for Damage front man Alejo Jackson said that the free concert is a way of "giving back to our fans as a show of gratitude for all they've done for us." Tickets into the venue will be issued on a first-come first-served basis, with a limit of one ticket issued per person. Fans have been strongly discouraged from camping out for extended periods in order to maximise the chance of getting seats. "We very much want our fans to avoid disrupting the regular activities of the area," Jackson said. "All of our fans are expected to fully comply with the demands of the law and of good manners."

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Both Hesh spokesman Kai Cinelli and police lieutenant Heidi Lokhande have issued statements indicating that there are extensive plans in place to prevent a recurrence of last week's problems, while maintaining safety in the rest of the city, though neither would divulge details of the plan for security reasons.

Critics, though, are already calling this string of surprise shows a "cheap attention-getting move." Said pop singer and former Jackson love interest Aurora Belle, "There's no need for this. The band is obviously trying to work up some extra publicity, regardless of the cost to the city. It's very childish, if you ask me."

The performance is expected to begin at roughly 6:30pm GMT, to run roughly one hour. Police insist that extra crowd control measures will be in place, though, until after the venue is thoroughly emptied and the audience appears to be properly dispersed. Cinelli has suggested that ticket-seekers arriving in the area much before 4:30pm risk being refused admission due to the need to maintain order in the area.

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Team Jazz Hands Dominates the Board

By KATE BREWSTER

A handful of players have broken away from the top of the pack following the award of points for the Earth-based PCAG events, and as other new avenues for accruing points have become available. A scant three players now share the top spot: oliverkeers13, Coxtin, and number9dream. Surprisingly, all of the top players, and even MikeyJ who is now ranked fourth on the board by himself, were all members of Team Jazz Hands at the PCAG London tournament.

Team Jazz Hands finished fifth in the event. Before the points were awarded, the point structure had spurred wide anticipation that the top-finishing team, The Puzzle Monkeys, would overtake the top of the board, so it is astonishing that not only none of The Puzzle Monkeys, but none of the top four finishing teams, have any players that have landed in first place. In fact, the highest-ranked member of The Puzzle Monkeys is Alphatrion, who has solved 123 cards and collected 6352 points, to hit 141st place.

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The former first-place pack is now gathered soundly in fifth place, with over 60 people sharing the rank.

The Academy has also announced a new way to earn points, through a deal arranged with the Sentinel. Said Academy Master Sente Kiteway, “In the interest of retrieving the Receda Cube, we must foster Earth interest and involvement with our city, and not merely a superficial entertainment from solving cards. The people of Earth must be persuaded to feel empathy for our loss.” With this goal in mind, the Academy will now award five points to players who write a star letter of the week to the Sentinel, and ten points to View from Earth columnists. Any given player will only be eligible to receive these points once, though of course any Earth citizen is welcome to write in as often as desired.

In other developments, the total number of players has surged past 17,000 and is fast closing on 17,500. Total cards solved have surpassed 215,000, and total points accrued is growing ever closer to 6.5 million. “I expect the 6.5 million points marker will be passed soon,” said PCAG statistician Samara Jones. “If nothing else, I expect a significant bounce in all of the numbers when the Wave 3 cards are released sometime in the next few weeks.”

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Earth Anthology Sells Well Despite Cool Critical Reception

By FOSTER LIDDELL

Tales from Earth, the anthology of fiction written by Cube hunters for a Perplexian audience, has sold nearly a hundred thousand copies to date, putting it solidly at the top of the best-seller charts for the last several weeks. Seaside Press has called this a “victory for interworld relations,” and has put a giant marketing push behind the book, calling it “Earth’s personal message to us.”

The book seems to have perfectly caught the same wave of enthusiasm for all things related to Earth that has brought unparalleled success to such diverse projects as the Earthworks retail chain and the Earth-based cuisine available from restaurants from Mexi’s Place to Conundra. “Earth is hot right now,” said publishing analyst Lawrence Fenne-Seafood. “Seaside’s genius here is that they worked to bring in original content rather than merely redistributing works available on Earth already.”

Reviews of the book among the wider literary crowd have been mixed, however, even veering to hostile in some instances. One review in the City Literary Review called the offerings in the book “varied in tone and, frankly, in quality.” Critics have nearly unanimously frowned upon the uneven tone of the book and suggested that the nominal editor, Violet Kiteway, did little if anything in the way of quality control or editorial oversight.

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Some have even suggested that Seaside Press has descended into mere sensationalism by publishing Tales from Earth, though given the book’s impressive sales numbers, it is difficult to argue against the tactic. Fenne-Seafood suggested that the book’s sales speak for themselves, regardless of any determination of artistic merit.

Seaside editor Ellen Moriyama scoffed at the angry reception by the literary community. “We’re providing a voice to people on Earth who have something to say to Perplex City,” she said. “The cultural elitists in our city are trying to make some kind of example of this book, trying to tear it down as an example of everything that’s wrong with Earth, but we feel absolutely the opposite. ... Real people on Earth poured real time and energy and love into these stories, and it’s ridiculous to criticise this heartfelt offering on the grounds that it doesn’t adequately respect the traditional literary conventions and traditions of our own culture.”

As Seaside Press has no direct method of paying the authors for their work, they have set up a scholarship for students at the Academy who plan to specialise in Earthology. The scholarships will be awarded by a panel of fellows in the Academy’s Social Sciences department.

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Ramazel Overtakes Top Spot Alone

By KATE BREWSTER

The leaderboard made way today for the late-breaking ascension of Ramazel of France, who has overtaken the top spot on the board, now occupying it alone with 7000 points and 129 solves. She was a member of The Cube ReCoventry Team, which finished in fourth place at the London PCAG event.

Despite this small flurry of activity on the leaderboard, things have begun to settle down again. Last week's top players, oliverkeers13, Coxtin and number9dream remain in joint second place (knocked down by Ramazel from shared first last week) with MikeyJ alone in fifth. It is widely anticipated that members of the other winning PCAG teams may begin rising to the top as the next several weeks unfold.

The total number of registered players, currently standing at just under over 17,700 continues to grow at an increasing pace with over 200 players signing up in the last two days alone. The total numbers of cards solved has surpassed 220,000, and well over 5000 cards have been solved in the last week alone. A

scant third of all solve attempts in the past month were incorrect.

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The top-scoring new players of the week were Team_Lebowski who accrued 1835 points off of 69 solves, and browncoats who picked up 1808 points off 45 solves. Only time will tell if they will soar up the board like a leaf on the wind or if they'll simply abide in the mid-ranks. Top new players of the month are moominpapa, logogriph and gunhead who racked up 6375, 5936 and 4836 points, respectively.

PCAG statistician Samara Jones predicted, "We're unlikely to see any additional major changes on the leaderboard until the third wave of cards comes out in late March or early April." Contrary to Jones' statement, however, there are rumours in the Academy that Mind Candy have arranged for several more card promotions where players will be able to obtain certain cards, and their points, for free. So far, no firm details on when, where or even if these promotions will be happening has been disclosed.

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View from Earth: Cube Roots

By KIAN



The people of Perplex City have given us a gift. Perhaps you Perplexians already recognise the connection between puzzle-solving and your peaceful society. Or perhaps you have become complacent and don't realise the impact that intellectual games really has on your culture. From this end of the data stream, it appears that the loss of the Receda Cube has generated a sudden awakening among you, a kind of introspection about your culture, that this shocking loss has really made you re-evaluate things. The rug has been pulled out from under that complacency. For those of us engaged in searching for the Cube on Earth, things have also changed.

The pair of us have always enjoyed puzzles and games, but have tended to engage in them independently as isolated and isolating activities, or at most, in small groups of close friends. Some people on Earth enjoy larger gaming activities of course, but more often than not, those activities are highly competitive. Co-operative gaming is much less common

for us. Gaming as a pervasive life activity is almost unheard-of. Changes in society and technology in the past decades have also impacted how we relate to the people around us. It is rare that people talk with their neighbours or socialise with them these days. We all seem to engage in more and more isolating activities, and have lost the time that previous generations may have spent interacting co-operatively.

Working to solve the puzzles presented in this Cube search has given us a small taste of what Perplexian society must be like. Our first cards were a gift from a friend. Since getting those cards, we have spent more time together as a couple enjoying each others' company and combining our complementary talents to solve the cards. We have both been more social with people we know, and people we barely know, both in introducing the cards to others and seeking answers. I've had no qualms about holding out a Perplex City card and asking a group of people I hardly know: "Excuse me! does anyone recognise these molecules?" I've learned more about my co-workers' hobbies and talents in the last month by talking with them about these puzzles than I have in the prior seven years I've worked with them. Seeing the activities of other Cube hunters around the world, I know that our experience is not unusual.

The Receda Cube apparently revolutionised your society and drew you all together in many ways, but particularly in the shared pursuit of solving its mystery. Apparently the Cube

Continued

is putting out its tendrils to have a similar effect on Earth. Though the number of people able to participate in this search is comparatively small, the effect of this shared goal, the mental challenge, and the peaceful co-operation involved has exponentially larger effects. Perhaps the mysterious properties of the Receda Cube are precisely what this unhappy planet needs just now. While I know that we will all continue to work diligently to recover, and if possible, to return the Cube to Perplex City, no matter how the Cube arrived on Earth, we do appreciate both the loan of the Cube and the gift of its influence. For that matter, where might the Cube have insinuated its influence before finding its way to Perplex City? Perhaps Earth and Perplex City will both derive some long-term benefits from this temporary change in the Cube's locale, and maybe the Cube has a deeper history and broader future than either of our societies imagines.

The View from Earth column is currently accepting submissions from its Earth readership. Please see our submission guidelines for more information.

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Police Bombarded with Prank Calls

By JEREMY CLARIDGE

Police were bombarded with an overload of prank calls and hoaxes during the Roll for Damage concert Tuesday evening, when police resources were already stretched thin from keeping peace in the Euler's Disc area. Police say that the incident has all of the hallmarks of a concerted attack, but have yet to determine any sort of purpose behind it. "We are taking this matter very seriously," said police chief Eoin Morgan. "It looks like a very organised crime group tried to completely overload the city's law enforcement assets, and to a degree were successful. We want to know why."

According to police records, the unprecedented volume of crime reports began to pour in at around 5:30pm on Tuesday, shortly after the police had dispatched a sizeable force to maintain order among fans hoping to attend the free Roll for Damage concert that evening. Records show that for over two hours, reports flooded in of crimes small and large, from vandalism to bomb threats. Crimes reported included such diverse incidents as kidnappings, sightings of high-profile criminals, and escaped zoo creatures. Few of the incidents checked out once officers were sent to the scene.

While police were tied up searching for fictional bombs and other threats, a few legitimate crimes fell by the wayside. Notably, a teenage boy was assaulted in the Old Town a mere block away from the local police precinct, but an emergency squad was unable to be dispatched to his aid until long after the culprit had fled the scene. The boy is currently in critical condition at Phuah Hospital.

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In another case, a violent father broke the wrist of a six-year-old girl and assaulted her mother. The woman, who does not wish to be identified, said that the police did not respond to her call for assistance when she spotted her former husband across the street. The mother and child have both been treated and released from medical care at Greycastle Hospital. A handful of other injuries have also been reported, mostly the result of domestic dispute calls that were given low priority. No deaths associated with the prank calls have been reported.

Police say they have tried to trace the calls they received, but that the call sources appeared on the surface to come from multiple non-specific sources in the city. "When we try to do a deeper trace to find an earlier origin, the information trail just vanishes," said lieutenant Gerard Boarhide. "Whoever set this up really knew their stuff." Boarhide expressed deep concern at the resources available to this alleged criminal enterprise. "We're talking some serious technical know-how and a frightening amount of human involvement," he said. "It's very troubling that there are so many people involved."

Hesh spokesman Kai Cinelli has said that Roll for Damage are shaken up by the idea that someone could use their popularity to an unsavoury end, and have decided to call a halt to their surprise show dates until the security implications for the city can be more carefully examined.

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Earth Edition Celebrates First Anniversary

Opinion/Editorial

One year ago tomorrow, the Perplex City Sentinel launched the External Edition of our trail-blazing newspaper. Since that time, we have served as an invaluable line of communication between Earth and Perplex City, bringing our high standards for accuracy and insightfulness to an ever-expanding border. Through our efforts, the two worlds are reaching a degree of understanding and appreciation that we believe would be unprecedented, even if these historic events had some near analogue in history.

The Earth Edition was conceived as a part of Academy Master Sente Kiteway's then-mysterious plan to solicit Earth's aid in seeking out and retrieving the Receda Cube. Though we agreed to fill this role per Kiteway's request, we were very strict regarding our need for editorial independence and integrity. Indeed, the Sentinel's adherence to honesty caused some significant problems in the early months of the Sentinel.

Our staff were unafraid to report on the growing public sentiment that the Academy had no real plan for recovering the Cube, which caused significant strain in the relationship between ourselves and the Academy and Centre for Reality Research. We also reported in those early days on controversy internal to the city, most notably the Northside Preserve development plan and its corresponding uproar (a debate that rages through today). When the Sentinel was stricken with a personnel issue that ultimately resulted in the publisher being

terminated, we felt it more important to deliver the ugly truth than paint a pretty face on our own actions.

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We felt it crucial to prove even from the beginning that we were no patsy of the Academy's, even when we were working side by side; nor of the government's; and that we are unafraid to examine even ourselves in a critical light. The Sentinel is a proud and storied enterprise, and we do not bend in the face of adversity. Our noble goal is to shed the light of truth everywhere that it would be least welcome.

Those early storms have been gracefully weathered, and the Sentinel has maintained its legendarily high standards even for our cousins on Earth all the while. We continue to strive to bring the Earth both news relevant to the Cube and the hunt therefore, but also a taste of the city itself. Our reporting has covered crime, politics, sports, and art; and the link to Earth has enabled us to bring the phenomenally popular View from Earth column to both editions of the paper, a small move that has resulted in a broader and deeper understanding between our civilisations.

We look back on the past year and feel tremendous pride in this achievement. We hope our readers also feel they have been a part of something greater than themselves. And even as we pause to reflect on the past year and all that it has held, we look ever forward to the years to come. There will always be new stories to write, new opinions to explore, and new truths that must be sought and brought to the eyes of the public.

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Serena, Helix Seen in Romantic Interlude

By JULIUS LOMAN

Music mogul and infamous ladies' man Helix Hesh was spotted out at late-night hot spot Cervantes with none other than PCAG star Serena Duncan late Tuesday night. The two were sighted deeply involved in an intimate conversation, and eyewitness reports say the pair left together at around 1am Wednesday morning.

One fellow club-goer who was at the scene said that the pair looked very cosy. "There's absolutely no question in my mind something was going on between them," said the source. "I think if there was even enough space between them for anyone to fit, they would have been zapped by the electricity running between them."

If Duncan and Hesh are in fact dating, this brings to question the state of Hesh's relationship with previous high-profile female companion, Tippy Akron. Ankron, who is a puzzle scribe on the Cube Retrieval Team at the Academy, was last sighted with Hesh at Conundra late Sunday evening, apparently having an amicable evening together. A celebrity

watcher who happened to be at the restaurant that evening said that it seemed "all is well between those lovebirds."

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Hesh is the top executive at Hesh Records, which has suffered setbacks in recent weeks with poor sales of the new Jam One album, *Until Morning*, and the blitz of poor publicity accompanying the last few Roll for Damage surprise concerts. While speculation suggests that Hesh has personally taken significant losses lately in the stock market, it appears he is, as ever, lucky in love.

Duncan, last year's PCAG champion and this year's runner-up, has kept a remarkably low profile for someone of her prominence, and little is known about her personal life. Gustav Pembroke, who was knocked out by Duncan in the early rounds of the PCAG tournament last year, said of the sharp siren, "Serena relishes a challenge -- if she really has got something going on with Hesh he must be sharper than the papers give him credit for." Neither Hesh, Duncan, nor Ankron has ever been married.

Kai Cinelli, Hesh Records spokesman, declined to comment on the affair, citing a policy of not discussing Hesh's colourful personal life.

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Tally Climbs to Top Place on Leaderboard

By KATE BREWSTER

After climbing to the top of the leaderboard by way of her team's fourth place result in the London PCAG event, Ramazel has now slipped to third place. Tally, a 97-year-old from the UK, has overtaken her for the top spot. Tally was part of the second place team at the London event, earning 200 points, and has now solved three Wave 3 preview cards to take her point total to 7144. In second place now is Gibet, a teammate of Ramazel's in the London PCAG event.

The Wave 3 preview cards were released in a variety of Earth publications, with Card #69, Algebragraffiti, appearing in a printed edition of the UK's Sunday Telegraph; Card #98, Magic Squares, appearing in the US magazine GameDaily; and Card #2, Designer Flakes, appearing on the popular online blog BoingBoing. Mind Candy have exclusively announced to the Sentinel that several more cards will be released in a variety of publications over the next few months. The official release date of all of the Wave 3 cards has yet to be announced, but Academy members are hinting that an early April date is likely.

In other news, the total number of players has now grown to very nearly 19,000, and is expected to top 20,000 before the end of the month. The total cards solved has now grown to over 232,000, though the number of failed solved attempts has also risen to surpass 129,000.

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The principal website for introducing the people of Earth to Perplex City, Perplexcity.com, has undergone several changes recently. Along with many cosmetic changes, the site now allows would-be cube hunters to see any bonus points they may be awarded, to search for other players by username and full name, and add and remove tags from their profile pages. A new downloads section has also been added where players can obtain Perplex City ephemera such as computer wallpapers and avatars.

This morning, another major addition to the website was unveiled: Free virtual puzzles cards. It is now possible for all registered players to solve virtual versions of two Wave 1 and 2 puzzle cards: cards #56, Gravity and #106, Ricketty Old Bridge; for which they 14 and 27 points may be earned, respectively. Mind Candy has refused to comment on how long these cards will be available, or if new cards will be made available in this way at a later date.

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View from Earth: Education Matters

By JO PROUT



Here on Earth, myself and many other players have been fascinated by the Perplex City education system and how it is similar and different to our own systems. Being a teacher myself, I have found this topic particularly interesting, especially in the context of

discovering why the people of Perplex City seem to be more intelligent than the people of Earth.

I was once told by my University lecturer that:

“Teaching is the most important profession there is. Without teaching children properly at a young age, we would have no doctors, lawyers or similarly intelligent professionals.”

I wholeheartedly agree, and I’m yet to meet a person who can prove that their profession is more important. Education of our children today affects the shape of our adults of the

future.

An example of comparing intellect is looking at the puzzle cards produced by the CRT and Mind Candy. The children of Perplex City are expected to be able to solve the riddle on “The Age of Sente,” whereas I have shown children “Spot Anything” and they have struggled to see the hidden picture. Given that this is a low red card, I am forced to assume that our Earth children do not possess the intelligence of their Perplex City counterparts. But this does not answer the question WHY?

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In Britain, when children start their education at the age of four, teachers are responsible for ensuring that children develop skills in six main areas:

Personal, social and emotional development
 Communication, language and literacy
 Mathematical development
 Knowledge and understanding of the world
 Physical development
 Creative development

These areas are developed by what we call “Learning through Play.” Children are given structured activities and educational toys so that they may learn in a stress-free, fun manner. Once children reach the age of five, and move up to a new class, they are expected to follow the National Curriculum which studies Language, Mathematics, Science, History, Geography, Religious Education, Art, Technology and Physical Education.

The current argument in Britain is whether to extend the “Learning through Play” phase, so that children will not start formal education till they reach the age of seven. In other

Continued

countries, such as Germany, this is already in place, and has been for several years. It has been found that German children in their teens have academic results that are as good as, if not better than, their British counterparts.

Are we denying children the right to just simply be children? Are the stresses they are placed under at an early age really necessary? I personally think that learning through play should be adopted as soon as possible. From a teacher's perspective, I have seen very young children get worried and upset over the work they are expected to do at this young age. Where would my time be better spent? Calming stressed-out youngsters, thus abandoning the rest of the class, or developing interesting and enriching practical activities that will help their overall understanding and general happiness?

We have a phrase on Earth that sums up this dilemma perfectly:

"I hear and I forget,
I see and I remember,
I do and I understand."

We all learn in different ways, either through auditory skills, visually, or kinaesthetically.* It has been found that most children learn kinaesthetically, so therefore it makes more sense to provide these practical activities for as long as possible, and this includes using computers and other "high-tech" aids. In Britain, and in most other countries on Earth, children are encouraged to use computers as much as possible from a young age. We are of the same belief as Hannah Ikeda:

"The fact is, kids need to learn to work with these tools to have successful careers over the long term."

Having read the Sentinel report on "Skills for Learning" it makes me wonder why the Board for Education instilled this rule. Looking at research carried out by various educationalists on Earth, and through my own experience, I have noticed that using "high-tech" tools such as computers has only had benefits to learning and understanding. It has only been in the last ten years that Britain has had proper access to computers in primary** classrooms, and our children seem to be improving continually in tests. Will the children of Perplex City become less able as a result of this measure? We on Earth have not heard anything about it since last May. It would be very interesting to hear about any progress that has been made.

From what evidence I have seen, Perplex City children seem to undergo practical activities by way of puzzle setting and solving. Certainly, the pictures drawn by Anna Heath's twins (on #024, Double Vision) show that their fine motor skills are far better than those of our six-year-olds. So, we can only wonder, are the children of Perplex City more intelligent as a result of good, practical early years experience, or are they all that way because they are born more intelligent than our own Earth children?

*Kinaesthetically: By doing something practically.

**Primary: Children aged 5-11.

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Reconstructionist Accuses Cult of Stealing Cube

By WILHELMINA BEST

A woman calling herself only Kostka has contacted the press and police saying that she has inside information that the Reconstructionist religious group stole the Receda Cube. Police have identified Kostka as Jessica Holyoke, an Old Town woman who, according to police, moved permanently into the Reconstructionist compound outside the city about a year and a half ago, a few months after the Receda Cube vanished from its place in the Academy Museum.

Kostka's statement read, in part, "I know I should celebrate the Cube's liberation from the unbelievers at the Academy, but my conscience suffers because there was a death that night. It is time for someone who knows the truth about what was done in love and faith to step forward."

Police chief Eoin Morgan said that Kostka has been taken into police custody for her personal safety. "We plan to take this fresh accusation against the Recons very seriously," said Morgan. "I personally feel there may not be a case here, though. We've been down that road already and came away empty-handed." Morgan referred to the long investigation of the

Recon 8, regarded as leaders of the cult, who were held by police for just over four months under heavy suspicion of involvement in the theft of the Cube. The police have said that despite compelling motivation and some circumstantial evidence, they are now convinced the Reconstructionists had no involvement in the theft.

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A Reconstructionist spokesman who refused individual identification made this statement: "We understand the motivations that are driving Kostka to make these false and unmerited statements. Kostka has been through a very difficult year, and is approaching the anniversary of the death of her husband. She is also in the third year of her faith, which is often a difficult transition period for worshippers who come to us as adults. ... To Kostka, we would like to say that we still love and accept you, and we urge you to come home to our retreat where we can care for you and help you to move past this turbulent time."

Academy and Centre for Reality Research teams have determined that the Cube is now located on Earth, though they have been unable to pinpoint a specific location. Police continue to investigate the events surrounding its theft and the murder of security guard Fran Mendling the same night. No charges have been filed.

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Leaders Gradually Emerging from Pack

By KATE BREWSTER

Tally remains at the top of the leaderboard for a second week, closely followed by Gibbet and Ramazel. The three players have earned 7144, 7044 and 7026 points respectively. After Ramazel is a 32-point gap before number9dream and oliverkeers13, who are tied for 4th place. The pack that had once shared domination of the board has now slipped down to 10th place, where 56 players are tied with 6944 points.

The last week has seen player numbers jump to over 19,500, as over 500 players have joined through various online and magazine promotions. PCAG statistician Samara Jones remarked, "I'd expect these numbers to grow even faster as the general public on Earth becomes more aware of Perplex City. ... Both the competitive nature of the leaderboard, as well as the opportunity to help us find the missing Receda Cube, will no doubt lead to substantial changes on the board over time."

The top new players of the week are Rifflesby, girlwithnolife and Boojum, who have accrued 3710, 2264 and 1880 points, respectively. Over the last month, the top new players have been chimera245, GamesU and bertyuk, with an astonishing 6926, 5452 and 5253 points, respectively.

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Internationally, the UK is still in the lead, with Ramazel from France the highest-placed non-UK European player and Hunting4Treasur

in 10th place the highest-ranked US player. Academy officials are growing concerned at the number of unexpected countries at the top of the leaderboard, with many suspecting that Gibbet and oliverkeers13, for example, are not, in fact, from Zaire or the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The Academy refused to comment on whether this matter would be pursued further.

To date, 3,734 leitmarks have been awarded in the red, orange, yellow and green categories combined, with over 10% of players earning a red leitmark. So far, no one has been awarded a blue leitmark. Both the Academy and Mind Candy have declined to reveal at what point level these will be awarded. Of the 5,171 players who have given details on their profile pages, almost one third are female, 21% are from the UK, 4% are from the US and 1% are from Australia. The most common age is 26, with the top twenty most common ages lying between 17 and 36.

Three Wave 1 and 2 cards remain unsolved: cards #238, Riemann; #243, Shuffled; and #251, The Thirteenth Labour. Mind Candy and the Academy have confirmed that card #238, Riemann, does require proving the Riemann Hypothesis. Caine Johansson, from the Academy's Cube Retrieval Team, has commented, "All of us on the team are very interested to see which Wave 3 cards will keep the players guessing as long as these have."

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View from Earth: Medical Destiny

By SARA LONG



As a medical student in the middle of my first year on the wards, I get all the ‘interesting’ jobs: taking the medical history from the man who looks and smells like he’s not washed for three weeks; trying to take blood samples

from the woman retaining so much fluid that you can’t see her veins; measuring the swollen, infected and oozing calves of a patient with a suspected deep-vein thrombosis; but the words that make me long to be somewhere else are usually along the lines of: “Can you take a history from the lady in bed 12? She’s very confused, but try your best.”

In a hospital situation, the confused patient is indeed a well-aimed spanner in the works. It isn’t easy to ask someone who is adamant that they’re in a restaurant and you’re the waitress where the pain is, extremely tricky to explain to the patient who thinks that you’re trying to hurt them that you’re just listening to their heart,

and nigh-on impossible to have any sort of conversation with the elderly lady who is now only speaking Greek, on the basis that she believes herself to be 16 again and in the sunny Athens of her past, not Oxford on a wet afternoon in 2006.

Sadly, this situation is bound to become more common in the future. People in the more privileged areas of Earth are living longer through improvements in lifestyle, a healthier diet and better medical interventions. We are already seeing the results of this in our hospitals: where I work currently the average medical take* of 30 patients will mainly consist of people over the age of 70 who have mostly been leading full and active lives before admission. But current statistics dictate that approximately 20% of people over the age of 80 will suffer from some form of dementia, rising to 70% of people over the age of 100. As we see average Earth lifetimes pushed further and further into the 80s and 90s, it would appear inevitable that patients with some form of mental decline are going to form a greater part of the doctor’s workload unless treatment regimes for cognitive decline are able to progress at the same rate.

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But what struck me whilst reading the limited information available on Earth about Barrow-Feld Syndrome is that our two planets are not so different in our reactions to people who have ‘lost touch with reality’, particularly if there has been a marked impact on the personality of the

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sufferer. Speaking to families of confused patients who say that it's like living with a stranger, that the sometimes erratic behaviour of their loved one leaves them feeling embarrassed or stigmatised, and that they are often ashamed of having to ask for the help must be a scenario common to doctors on both of our planets. Similarly, many elderly people become unwell through trying to care for a spouse or family member with a form of dementia; I'm sure this is something that you see in Perplex City in the families of those with Barrow-Feld.

It is my greatest fear that I will end my life dependent on others and not recognising the people that I care about the most. Although research on Earth into the causes and treatment of these diseases is progressing, it seems that the breakthroughs necessary will be too late for my lifetime unless some form of sharing of scientific information can be established between our worlds; Perplexian work in the field of cognitive enhancement is leagues ahead of our own, and I feel certain that your scientists are not far from a cure -- or at least a valuable treatment for Barrow-Feld. However, it is essential that both planets place an emphasis on improving understanding of these conditions in the wider community, as removal of the stigma surrounding the illnesses can only help the families and friends of those affected find it easier to bring in specialist care earlier, to the benefit of all involved.

*Take: admission of patients to hospital on referral from their family doctors or through accident and emergency.

The View from Earth column is currently accepting submissions from its Earth readership. Please see our submission guidelines for more information.

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Tourism Boom Anticipated

By CORINNE HATHAWAY

The city is preparing for an expected boom in tourism over the next five to seven years, following the April 1 implementation of looser travel guidelines. The easing of travel regulations between Perplex City and Allerdun, Harbin, Xia-Hifa and Brauenbourg is part of the pact the governments agreed to in signing the Halley Peace Accord last year.

Under the terms of the accord, it will become much simpler for a foreign tourist to obtain permission and receive the official travel documents required to visit Perplex City. It will also become simpler for Perplexians to visit the foreign locales covered by the treaty. Council leader Camryn Scott declared that the first of April will be “the dawning of a new age” for the city. In a speech at a campaign fund-raiser Tuesday night, she said, “The economic stimulus this historic agreement will provide will usher in an unprecedented level of prosperity for the city and its inhabitants. ... We will be reaping the harvest of this new trust for many decades to come.”

Some city business owners have expressed concerns about how to cope with a rise in demand and potential disputes caused by cultural differences. Council member Aben Henniker, who voted against ratifying the accord, suggested that the move is a terrible mistake. “The city has been self-sufficient and operating in an economically sustainable way without this kind of outside contact for many decades,” said Henniker. “Increasing the degree to which our economy relies on foreign wealth is a terribly misconceived idea.”

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In order to soothe these kinds of fears, the Office of the Council plans to develop a series of seminars for business owners on how best to accommodate foreign tourists and cope with the expected jump in demand. The Office of the Council is examining a proposal to offer capital improvement grants for businesses expected to be most affected by an increase in tourism. and is also creating a key-based pamphlet to educate Perplexians on any cultural differences to be aware of when dealing with foreign tourists.

The Perplex City Transit Authority has said it is nearing an agreement with their counterparts in Xia-Hifa and Brauenbourg to build a new network of ultra-high-speed trains that would allow travel in the fastest, most comfortable manner possible. The new lines would be completed in late 275. Upgrades to the existing Allerdun and Harbin lines are expected as well, though no plans have been announced. Upgrades would be required to accommodate more passenger traffic, as the rails and trains in operation now are better suited to freight.

The Halley Peace Accord is the culmination of years of negotiation between the City Council and the foreign governments in question. Observers widely agree that the agreement is a sign of growing good faith among the five participating cities, and expect the growing economic network between them to develop further. The accord formally declares a state of peace between all of the involved cities for the first time, though none have actively been in conflict with one another in hundreds of years.

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Mother of Four Gains 'Whole New Life' in Drug Trials

By NATASHA VALLIERE



Jeanine Lowry-Barton may seem like a fairly ordinary person; the 53-year-old mother of four lives in an unremarkable house near Shiran Lane and has a modest business selling hand-crafted pottery. She is anything but typical, however: Eight years ago, she was diagnosed with Barrow-Feld Syndrome, which to all accounts progressed rapidly.

Her physician, Dr. Frida Janssen, watched helplessly as Lowry-Barton progressed through the stages of the horrible disease;

deceit, theft, and increasing incoherence. "It's terrible to see a patient like this, so young and with so much to live for, and there's nothing at all you can do to help," she said. "I estimate we were about three months away from having to check Jeanine into a facility for the rest of her life."

Lowry-Barton describes her terrible condition as a battle with another creature directing her impulses. "I call him the cheat," she said. "I couldn't really tell he was even there, though. It felt like it was all me, all things I wanted to do."

Then, in late 2006, Janssen received a request for candidates to participate in an experimental drug trial at Cognivia for patients suffering from Barrow-Feld. Lowry-Barton was one of the first patients enrolled in the program, and Cognivia came forward to announce its first success with the new drug, Veritana.

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Cognivia spokesman Lawrence Kim said that Lowry-Barton's experience should give new hope to all sufferers of Barrow-Feld Syndrome. "Science has been searching for a way to help those afflicted with this stigmatised disease for decades," said Kim. "These people and their families have suffered enough, and a new day is dawning for all of them."

Cognivia sources report that the

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treatment is primarily for late-onset sufferers of Barrow-Feld Syndrome, and that success with sufferers under 40 has been extremely limited. “We hope to find an equivalent treatment for younger candidates, as well,” said Kim. “Our research team is very hard at work.”

Lowry-Barton said that the treatment she has undergone does not eliminate the urges she feels to engage in unethical behaviour, but that it’s much easier for her to suppress those unwelcome desires. She can now differentiate between the things she herself chooses to do, and those that her disease is spurring her toward. “The cheat is not dead,” she said, “but I know how to ignore him now. And I can consciously look at a decision and see it from someone else’s point of view again.”

The course of treatment hasn’t been entirely without its problems, though, and among the side effects Lowry-Barton says she has suffered are headaches, bouts of nausea, vertigo, and hair loss. “I wouldn’t trade it for anything, though,” she said. “Just to know my family is looking at me again like a person, like they can trust me. I just can’t describe how good that feels.”

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Release of Wave 3 Cards Confirmed

By KATE BREWSTER

Sentinel sources at the Academy have confirmed that the third wave of puzzle cards will be released on Earth on Thursday 6th of April. While the majority of packs will contain a mixture of cards from all three waves, there will also be a limited run of Wave 3-only packs. These limited packs will be available to pre-order on the 6th for delivery several weeks later, but how the players can do this remains a closely guarded secret. So far, both the Academy and Mind Candy have refused to officially comment on this news, stating that they will not be rushed into making any announcements on the basis of leaked information.

The release of Wave 3 cards will likely see a flurry of activity on the leaderboard, which last week saw the total number of players pass the 20,000 mark. Samara Jones, PCAG statistician, commented, "The last few weeks have already seen how the early release of just three Wave 3 cards has completely changed the shape of the board. It's impossible to predict what effect the release of the remaining 59 cards will have. With this wave containing ten cards each at the black

and silver levels as opposed to only six, there are more opportunities to gain large numbers of points."

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The release of virtual versions of Cards #056, Gravity, and #106 Ricketty Old Bridge, has led to a large number of new sign-ups with Mind Candy. The Academy is planning on keeping these available to all registered players for the foreseeable future. Other upcoming promotions are rumoured to involve a Wave 4 card.

Tally remains the top player on the leaderboard with Gibbet and Ramazel in 2nd and 3rd place respectively. At the top of the US leaderboard are Hunting4Treasur, UKver2.0 and walther, all with 6944 points. The top players on the girls' and boys' leaderboards are Tally, Ramazel and jojojojo representing women; and Gibbet, number9dream and oliverkeers13 on behalf of men.

In other news, it is now possible for the players to create their own mini-leaderboards through their tracked players list, as these lists are now ordered by points. Players can subscribe to an RSS feed of the Perplexcity.com news page; UK, US, Boys' and Girls' leaderboards are now available; you can now search for other players from the leaderboard page; and the solved cards grid now displays the card's wave as well as its name and number when you hover over it.

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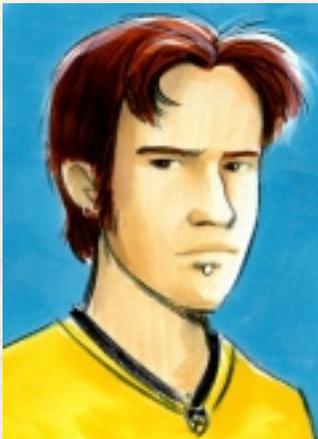
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View from Earth: Warm on Collaboration

By GUIN



Perplexian society is facing up to one of the greatest challenges in its history -- the retrieval of an artefact that would seem to underpin the whole of its

society. An object so valuable that the challenge to retrieve it has led to the employment of incredible tactics such as the collaboration of two worlds to ensure its safe return.

Here on Earth we are also facing one of our greatest challenges, but one that does not just threaten the very fabric of society; rather one that threatens our planet as a whole. Climate change! And yet, rather than collaborate and tackle the issue head-on, our nations are divided on the right course of action; leaders pontificate, finding it difficult to take ownership of a responsibility they have chosen: not only leading their nation today, but also providing a future for those of tomorrow.

Warranted, agreements have been

brokered and targets have been set, but these all too often fall short of facing up to the reality of what will happen if we do not make some tougher decisions sooner rather than later. All too often, it is the argument of how individual economies will suffer greater financial loss if they take a moral lead, fearing other nations will replace them in the economic pecking order. And ever still, while continuing to ignore the inevitable, our predicament gathers momentum and continues travelling as a train without a driver towards an ecological train crash.

As a teenager, I remember feeling as passionate about this subject as I do today and have tried to make my own little contributions throughout my youth and into my adulthood. I recycle 90% of all my household waste, and while I am not perfect, I feel a great sadness when on refuse collection days I see a street of overflowing bins. I have recently acquired an allotment with the intention of growing my own produce and have made a decision to buy local produce where possible, hopefully helping both the local economy and the environment. But I still have my faults and know that I can do so much more -- such as using my car less (but I doubt I will ever take up cycling!)

As an individual, I have chosen to make tough decisions that impact upon my life and know I need to look harder at some of my other practices. These choices do not, however, reduce the quality of my life. I am still able to live a normal day-to-day

Continued

routine as any other. It's the little things. Remembering to turn something off when it is not in use. Using only what I need. And reusing whatever I can -- even the empty yoghurt pots I cannot recycle are to be used to grow seedlings for my new venture.

And this is my view from Earth. One that the Perplexians can teach us a great deal about. Collaboration, however small, will always result in great things being achieved. Individuals working together to meet the needs of the many and provide a stable future for those that have no say, in my book, is a great thing. I am not saying stop what you are doing and change everything today (although this would greatly please me!) I am simply saying that as individuals we can start to make a difference. I have often been told that my efforts are fruitless and that my efforts are in vain. I am a little voice in a noisy room. But it would be easier to stop and ignore my individual responsibilities than to stand up and say I am proud of this fact.

So next time you leave a room, turn off the light (obviously ensuring no one else is still there!). Use the recycle bin for those papers instead of the wheelie bin and before you know it you will have started to make a difference and others may have noticed. If we can all work together the outlook need not seem so bleak.

The View from Earth column is currently accepting submissions from its Earth readership. Please see our submission guidelines for more information.

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Nuru Petitions PCAG for Requalification

By CORWIN JONES

Games competitor Jackson Nuru has petitioned the Perplex City Academy Games to be allowed to participate in a qualifier match and compete in this year's championship tournament. Nuru was ejected from the City Council Classic during preliminary rounds last year after testing positive for inappropriate use of cognitive enhancers.

Nuru held a press conference in which he insisted that he would submit to any test the PCAG's Substance Compliance department requested at any time in the games. "I made some terrible mistakes last year, and it was a difficult time for me," Nuru said. "I sat out of play for one entire year, and now I'm ready to get back into the games. ... I'm absolutely committed to upholding the rules and playing on the same level plane as everyone else."

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Nuru's move is a highly unusual for a player in his situation; other banned competitors, such as Gina Laskey and Viktor Helm, have quietly announced

their retirement from sports rather than continue to try to compete with a blemish on their record. Paula Ching, Director of Substance Compliance for the PCAG, said, "Most players feel after testing positive that their highest marks in the future will always be suspect. Who wants to compete feeling everyone is against them?" Jonas Sawgrass of the Alliance for Clean Players is adamant that Nuru not be permitted to return to competition. "It's a travesty," Sawgrass said. "Just because a player makes the right noises about respecting the rules doesn't mean he's become a new person. I would bet it means he's just found some new way to cheat without being detected."

Ching, though, said that allegations such as Sawgrass's are without merit. "The PCAG works very closely alongside all of the labs doing research into cognitive enhancement so we can detect the signs of even chemicals still in development. We are confident nothing slips through out of ignorance on our part."

According to PCAG guidelines, Nuru's petition will be considered in a specially convened committee, probably to be held toward the end of the month. The PCAG declined to offer any speculation as to which way it might rule.

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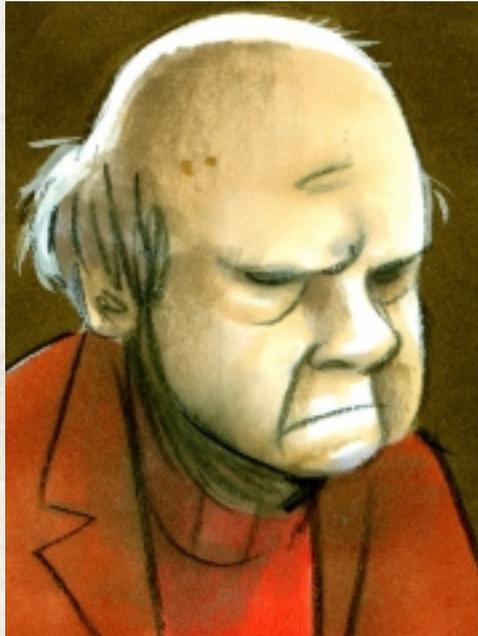
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Rhygsveldt Nibbles at Levenay Empire with Local Flavours

By ROLAND GERBERA



Raph Rhygsveldt

Haute couture designer Raph Rhygsveldt of fashion house Flattery is seeing success with its bold new direction with apparel and accessories. Although Flattery is a boutique house compared to giant Isabella Levenay, analysts think the smaller house has taken as much as 4% of the larger fashion designer's market

share over the past year. Flattery's secret: "We've been working harder to produce clothing that is art that you wear," said Rhygsveldt. "An important element has been taking the things we find around us and discovering how we can introduce that into what we produce."

As a result of Rhygsveldt's approach, Flattery's designs rely heavily on natural local materials, "to build a connection between the wearer and the world," Rhygsveldt said. "I send my people into the farther reaches of the city, and then we use what they find there."

For example, the tall, wide grasses from the plains just south of Catbite might be woven into a handbag or even crafted into a light vest; the blush that gives the gladstone its name might be polished into pebbles and used to make buttons or jewellery; the green-tipped feathers of the ducks that nest in the Quagendiep Wetlands have been used (albeit sparingly) as trim for anything from boots to blouses.

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Jasmine Price, a buyer for Sahrbacher's, says the retailer is planning to double its selection of Flattery items over the next three months. "This idea of local touches is absolutely striking consumers in their sentimental spot right now," she said. "People are really responding to the idea of wearing items decorated with the

Continued

same kinds of seashells as they found on the shore of Vastage Inlet as a child. ... It taps into nostalgia.”

Isabella Levenay CEO Oscar Levenay sees no threat from Rhygsveldt and Flattery, however. “Sales go up, sales go down,” he said. “We stick to pure lines and colours, and nevermind passing fads. Levenay is about looking timeless.”

Still, Rhygsveldt has no plans to abandon his current vision anytime soon. Indeed, he has suggested his next step may be to use inspiration from local landmarks and architecture to suggest new directions for him. Does this mean there will be a hat shaped like the famous clock tower of Embertown? Rhygsveldt chuckled at the idea; “Probably not,” he said.

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Wave 3 Brings New Leaders, Redesign

By KATE BREWSTER

Last Thursday saw the release of Wave 3 of the Academy's puzzle cards and the complete revamp of PerplexCity.com, the main site for introducing the people of Earth to our world. The Wave 3 release includes 62 cards, seven each of red to purple difficulty and ten each of black and silver. The cards are mainly available mixed together with cards from Waves 1 and 2, though a limited release of Wave 3-only packs has also been arranged. These packs will be produced at the end of the current print run, and so will not be available until the end of April. However, it is possible to pre-order the packs through a secret link that, so far, the Sentinel has been unable to discover.

The simultaneous redesign of PerplexCity.com was spearheaded by Mind Candy, the Academy's representatives on Earth. The changes to the site reportedly include the inclusion of a community page to help bring together the Cube-hunters on Earth, and an introduction to Perplex City. Mind Candy and the Academy hope that these changes will galvanise the people of Earth to join together in helping us locate the still-missing Receda Cube.

On the leaderboard, the release of Wave 3 has completely altered the ranking, with oliverkeers13 shooting to the top of the board with 8554 points and 178 solved cards, becoming the first player to be awarded a blue leitmark. Joining him at the top of the board in 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th places respectively are: Mathematician, ManleyM, Ron53 and grizy.

Nearly 22,000 players have now registered and over 267,000 cards have been solved, with 2,774 cards solved in the last day alone.

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A number of players have made their reputations by being the first to solve a silver card in Wave 3. These solves include: Card #226, Instruction, solved by randomkevlar; Card #227, NAND, solved by angelbb; and Card #228, Primer, solved by omitchell.

Some players have also been the first to solve blacks in the new wave, a distinction only slightly less prestigious than being the first to solve a silver. These include: for Card #193, Three Thousand Words, solved by astro random; Card #195, Road Trip, solved by magicmancraig; Card #196, RGB, solved by RichardMcDowell; Card #197, Linguini Junction, solved by garath; Card #199, Three, solved by doublecross; Card #200, A Dream of Babel, solved by thalamus; and Card #201, Smoke and Mirrors, solved by alexdent.

Mind Candy has also issued several corrections to cards: Card #103, Sudoku, should read (1,E) Deadly Sins, (3,F) Atomic Number of Lithium, (8,I) Continents on Earth, (6,A) Groundhog Day; and both Cards #164, Weighs and Means, and #229, Ball Night contained mistakes within the main solution database which have now been rectified.

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View from Earth: City States

By SIMON DOUGLAS



As an inhabitant of Earth I have been following with interest as the external edition of the Sentinel has revealed more and more about Perplex City and its people. One of the things that strikes an Earth observer is the apparent

isolationist nature of the city. From a reading of the Sentinel, Perplex City has few, if any, links with institutions, trading partners or government structures outside of the City. Until very recently, in fact, the Earth readership, while having heard of the Halley Peace Accord, had no idea that it related to the city's relations with other foreign cities. We had been aware of the events which were discussed recently relating to the Academy museum's war exhibition, but mentions of any remaining cities on the same planet as Perplex City have been scarce for the Earth reader.

As a student of Earth history, the preponderance of city states would almost seem to be analogous to the historical

prevalence of city states on Earth. These were last popular and powerful around the time of Plato, which was an era of great philosophical and scientific experimentation. Some of the basis of our modern-day political philosophy and even medicine has roots in this great era of prosperity. Perhaps the great scientific advances in Perplex City can be partly attributed to this successful model of cooperative habitation. On Earth, however, these great and successful city states have long been overtaken in power and influence by nation states which accommodate many more millions of inhabitants than Perplex City. What was the reason for this, and why has this happened on Earth and not the planet where Perplex City can be found?

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As we have found out more about Perplex City, there have appeared to be more similarities than are initially apparent. Although war remains a prominent feature, with Perplex City seemingly involved in wars with many other cities over the last few hundred years, it would appear that these wars are fought more in self-defence of the city than for any other reason. On Earth the city states did not survive for a long period of history. It seems to this writer that the generally acquisitive nature of Earth people is significant. Once the ancient Greek city states were weakened through internecine conflicts, they became easy targets for the expansionist policies of successive Roman invaders. The Roman model was

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to expand a concept of 'Empire', based on the idea that the conquered peoples would be allowed 'citizenship' of the Empire in return for living peacefully under the invaders. The brief heyday of the city state was truly over.

Throughout Earth history, waves of aggressors have invaded land, conquering and then assimilating the population before being invaded themselves in turn. This happened eventually to the Romans and subsequently to the Germanic tribes which had invaded them. This policy continued even into more recent history with the expansion of the British Empire, involving many episodes which are now viewed as shameful in the modern era. At one time the British Empire truly encircled the world and gave rise to the famous saying that 'the sun never sets on the British Empire.'

Wars have always been fought on Earth, and mostly these have to do with the expansion of nations and the acquisition of more land. We seem unable to settle for a life where we can sustain equilibrium and contentment. Could this be because we have grown towards a society in which achievement is measured in terms of ownership or capital, and intellectual prowess is debased in favour of financial success or celebrity?

This is something which does not appear to be the case in Perplex City, even as more of its past history has been revealed. The

rich culture of puzzles and intellectual challenge provides the best method by which an inhabitant can gain self-esteem and respect from society. I for one would like to see more of this culture on Earth.

The View from Earth column is currently accepting submissions from its Earth readership. Please see our submission guidelines for more information.

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Polygon Marathon Expected to Break Attendance Records

By ANTONY CLAPHAM

The fifty-second annual Polygon Park Marathon is expected to draw its biggest participation ever, with over 18,000 runners competing on a purely physical level, and another 9,000 participating in the parallel puzzle marathon. Organiser Evelyn Trowell is “very pleased” with the registration levels so far. “The race isn’t for some time yet, and we typically get a surge of last-minute entries, so the fact we’ve hit these all-time high numbers already is just thrilling.”

The race starts at 10am on May 6 at the northwest corner of Polygon Park and loops north through the commercial district before doubling back and completing a circuit of the park at the finish. Trowell says that there will be water stops at every mile along the way, with finishers receiving a grab bag of free merchandise from companies as diverse as Whipsmart and Earthworks.

“Corporate participation is really amazing this year,” Trowell said. “Companies are realising that this is a great way to encourage public goodwill.”

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Trowell also said he’s particularly proud of the puzzle marathon planned for this year. “Some people like to exercise their muscles and their brain at the same time,” he said, “and for them, we’ve brought in a tremendous team of puzzle scribes. We’re actually in talks with the PCAG about making this a qualifying event for this year’s championship, though nothing is settled just yet.”

The winner this year is expected to bring home a prize of PCL100,000. Popular favourites include Winnie Strauss, Vance Coplinger and Rasheed Santiago. Strauss won the race last year with a time of 02:12:44.

Police insiders admit to being concerned about security at the event, given the department’s poor track record at Roll for Damage shows in recent months. Police Chief Eoin Morgan publicly announced he had no worries over the race, however. “This race is shaping up to be the largest ever, but we’re doing everything we can to make sure it will be the safest ever, as well,” he said.

Would-be registrants can contact the park on their key, or arrive at the starting line on race day by 9am.

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Mazyford Invaded By Honeybees

By JARED CHERRYWOOD

The rural town of Mazyford was unexpectedly invaded by angry honeybees yesterday when a train car containing their hives was inadvertently left open. Residents, many of them rail workers, poured into the rural town's lone health clinic yesterday afternoon complaining of multiple stings, though no serious reactions have been reported.

Walter Stonemiller of the Perplex City Rail Authority indicated that safety procedures were not being properly followed when the train stopped over in Mazyford to unload freight supplies. The car containing the bees was inadvertently opened and remained open while other cargo was being unloaded.

Before the incident occurred, the bees were intended to be distributed to a number of farms between the Mazy and Black Fork rivers. The bees, which were bred in Elmsford, are a routine part of the Office of the Council's ongoing effort to reclaim natural processes for large-scale agriculture. Academy biologist Rosalinda Farrow, who worked with the Council in developing the agricultural strategy twenty years ago, said that maintaining a population of bees for certain crops

assists in pollination and can increase crop yields.

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Farrow indicated that the hives had not been properly prepared for transport. "Even if someone left the rail car open, the entrances for the hives should have been blocked off," she said. The bees were very angry and prepared to defend their hives by the time the train arrived in Mazyford, resulting in injuries for the unwitting bystanders. "We'll let the bees settle back down for a bit longer and then we'll just smoke up their hives and lock them up again," she said.

It is not yet clear how the train car containing the bees was left open, but Stonemiller vowed an investigation would be underway.

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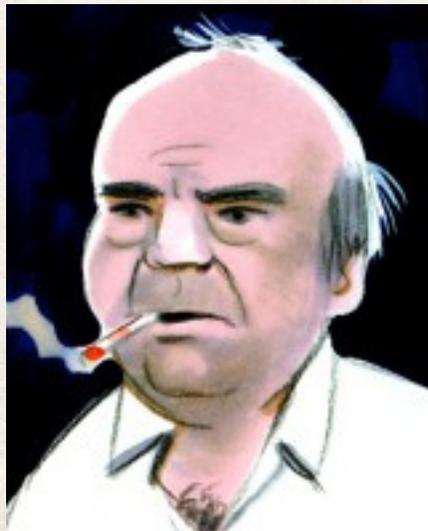
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New Sentinel Publisher Takes Reins from Clark

By WILHELMINA BEST



Douglass Arroyo

The Sentinel has brought Douglass Arroyo on board to take over as publisher, according to a Friday announcement from the Sentinel's parent company, CJM Holdings. The Sentinel's editor-in-chief, Michiko Clark, has been acting as both editor and publisher since the last formal publisher, Lauren Grove, was fired last August. Arroyo has assumed his duties beginning today.

The CJM press release read in part, "We welcome Douglass Arroyo to the Sentinel and know that a man of his integrity

and business acumen will help us soar to unheralded peaks. ... We are excited that we were able to persevere and find the perfect person for this role and the challenges it faces today."

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Arroyo is leaving his position as publisher at the Finance Observer, where he had been for twelve years. Earlier in his career, however, he spent many years at the Sentinel working his way up from being a cub reporter to being the Sentinel's finance section editor. "It feels great to be coming back to the Sentinel, like I'm coming home," Arroyo said.

As for Clark, she says that giving up the publishing position will be a "tremendous relief." Acting as both editor and publisher "is very stressful, because you can't do either job to the fullest," she said. "Now that my energy is no longer divided between business and content concerns, I can refocus my effort on maintaining the Sentinel's high standards for accurate and incisive reporting."

Lauren Grove, the Sentinel's last editor, was terminated by the CJM Holdings board after a religious intolerance scandal. Grove fired a senior employee after becoming aware of his religious inclinations. The employee, advertising manager Ryan Klein, has since been reinstated.

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Earth Conquers Wave 3

By KATE BREWSTER

It's been just two weeks since the launch of Wave 3, yet only four cards remain unsolved: Cards #202, Mother Tongue; #225, Broadside; #233, The Earth's Destiny; and #234, Mosaically Challenged. Notable achievements include the following players, who achieved the first solve for a silver card: randomkevlar solved #229, Ball Night; Fuseunderground solved #230, Eternally Grateful; omitchell solved #232, Water Music; and kian solved #231, Cast Adrift 2.

Also of note are echidna and trevor jarvis, who were the first to solve the black cards #194, Confounding Cube, and #198, Headrush, respectively.

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At the top of the leaderboard is 23-year-old ManleyM from the UK, with 9805 points gained from solving 188 cards. Tying with him for first place is 44-year-old doublecross from the Seychelles. These two, along with omitchell, are the only players to have solved Water Music, putting them clearly in the lead by 58 points.

Numerous players gained extra points in a recent preview of the Wave 4 card #92, Dudeney's Medallion, which was first solved by Modern hero. Mind Candy have declined to comment as to whether any more Wave 4 cards will be previewed in this way. Helped along by this and other virtual cards, 4,736 players have now received enough points to be awarded a leitmark, with 81 of these reaching blue leitmark status.

The current top five countries are the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, Canada and Ireland, led by ManleyM, bendover, chimera245, EvilGenius and s00bf0f8. ManleyM is the top-ranked man, while lillyplop is the top-ranked woman, though she is ranked 18th overall. Of the 24,654 players, only 26% have specified their genders; of those, 28% are female and 72% are male. The most common age is 26, while almost a quarter of the players are between 16 and 38. Roughly 18% of the players are from the UK, while 5% are from the United States and 1% from Australia.

Over at Perplexcity.com, new community fansite directory and community news sections have been added to help bring the Earth puzzle solvers together. Mind Candy have also revealed an upcoming film competition, details of which are to be announced this Thursday.

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PCBC CEO to Resign Amid Board Strife

By ALWHIN COPI

Perplex City Banking Corp. CEO Walter Cove-Houghton, who has been embattled practically since the moment he stepped into his position, is now widely rumoured to be planning to resign. Cove-Houghton assumes the chief executive role in September, only a few months ago.

An anonymous bank insider said that Cove-Houghton is becoming tired of the degree of scrutiny to which the board subjects him. “Jonathan [Smart, Cove-Houghton’s predecessor] gave up the responsibility, but he can’t give up control,” the source said. “Cove-Houghton can’t rearrange his pens without having to consult the board first. It’s utterly ridiculous to hire the man and then not let him do his job.”

PCBC spokesman Cory Clary called the rumours “unfounded and irresponsible,” adding that if Cove-Houghton were planning to leave the bank, that news of it would come from credible sources and official channels. “The bank’s management does have a number of serious concerns right now that we’re trying to resolve,” Clary admitted,

“but nobody is talking about leaving. Absolutely not.”

Former CEO and current board member Smart told reporters that the board is still “a thousand percent behind my man.” Cove-Houghton was Smart’s hand-picked successor for the post, and if he were to leave the bank’s top spot, it could seriously strain Smart’s relationship with the rest of the board, analysts say.

Cove-Houghton himself declined to speak to the press. In his refusal for interviews, he also indicated that if he had any announcements to make, he would make them when he was “good and ready, and not a second beforehand.”

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View from Earth: The Snowball Effect

By IAN WHALEN and FIERA



It starts off small. Then, suddenly, events can take on a life of their own, growing bigger than ever expected. This phenomenon has been coined “the snowball effect.” Literally speaking, it encapsulates the

idea that a small snowball rolling down the hill will pick up more and more snow, growing larger and traveling faster as it descends. What does this simple colloquialism matter to the citizens of Perplex City? To put it shortly, the spread of Perplex City across Earth has begun to snowball.

Starting in the United Kingdom, the plan of Sente and Earth-based company Mind Candy has worked wonderfully, capturing the minds of everyday citizens. Advertisements in newspapers, live events and radio interviews have all contributed to the rapidly growing awareness of Perplex City’s plight among the citizens of the UK. In fact, a quick search of the puzzle card leaderboard shows approximately 4,500 registered users in that country

alone. However, as wonderful as it is to see such great numbers assisting in the United Kingdom, the Cube Hunters in other countries have been dismayed at their own countryman’s seemingly impassive attitude toward Perplex City.

Many Cube Hunters from the United States have suspected that the apparent dearth of interest does not stem from any lack of compassion, but rather from lack of awareness. It is no secret that America is a “trendy” country, where a good portion



of the population is receptive to the latest fads, including the types of games they play. While this is great news for the crazes that have become popular, it is nearly impossible to determine what will become America’s latest fad. America is a large country with a fickle population. With limited resources, it is difficult to reach any mass audience and find those who will latch onto the niche that will help anything become more mainstream.

Perplex City, however, offers the population something that most “games” do not: Americans want games that open their minds and hearts, not just their wallets. They want something that will engage them mentally and emotionally, make them feel as if they are a part of something larger and that they alone

Continued

can make a difference in the outcome. Sente's decision to approach Mind Candy and create the puzzle cards in order to draw people into the action was either a brilliant stroke of genius or a lucky guess. Either way, people are slowly being lured into the hunt for the Cube, either as puzzle seekers and detectives or simply people who want a chance at the monetary reward.

It is this budding interest by those in the United States that has inspired us to help spread the word of Perplex City's predicament. Having only 1,300 Cube Hunters on the leaderboard in the United States has encouraged us to remedy the paltry involvement here, so we have latched onto Mind Candy as willing assistants.

What Mind Candy began, then, we have determined to continue. Starting in the next several weeks, a group of dedicated Cube Hunters across the country will begin to spread word about Perplex City to American citizens. Puzzle cards will begin to appear in mysterious places, posters will be seen in windows and stickers will be slapped on to telephone poles. There is even talk of hosting regular events so that Cube Hunters from around the country can gather to play games, discuss puzzle cards, and (hopefully) ultimately recover the cube.

Some time ago there was discussion about whether Sente Kiteway was a good

choice to lead the Cube Retrieval Project. The Perplex City Sentinel believed he was not, and we can understand why this newspaper said so at the time. And while it has taken some time, a little over two years in fact, to reach this point, I believe that Sente has been vindicated. As he said, the puzzle cards have enraptured a number of us to the point where we have begun to spread word of the Cube on our own. The tiny snowball that was Mind Candy has grown, and while it is nowhere near the bottom of the hill, its size has increased substantially.

We are hoping that we can gain more interest in this project, dubbed the PCX Street Team. Anyone around the world is welcome to join this group of dedicated players interested in furthering the spread of Perplex City around the United States and around the world. Anyone who has an interest in joining or just wants to learn more about us can contact us at <http://s11.invisionfree.com/pxcstreetteam/index.php>. Hopefully, together, we can cause awareness of Perplex City's plight to snowball across the world.

The View from Earth column is currently accepting submissions from its Earth readership. Please see our submission guidelines for more information.

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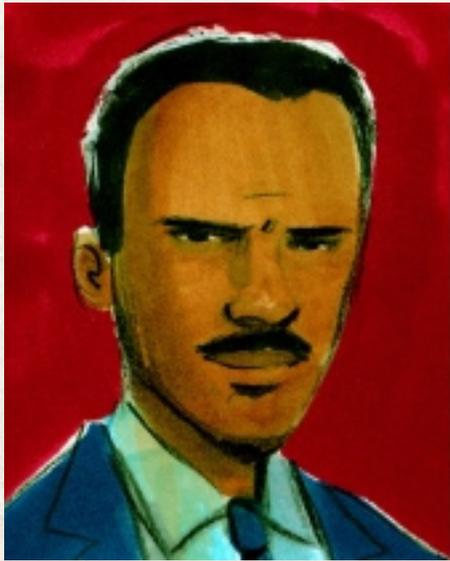
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Woolham Signs a Triple Deal with Generation

By GAVIN CREWEL



Aban Woolham

Legendary director Aban Woolham has signed a three-film deal with Generation Studios after a hiatus from the entertainment business spanning nearly eight years. Neither Woolham nor Generation representatives would discuss the contract terms agreed upon, but industry rumours suggest Woolham will be receiving a ten-figure lump sum as well as a very comfortable benefits package. Generation's president, Bao-Bei Lin, said that the deal is "the dawn of a new sun over Generation Studios. ... We've cleaned house, and now we're getting ready to produce some of the finest work in cinema the city has ever seen."

The deal comes amid a flurry of rumours that Lin's job was on the line if a significant turnaround failed to present itself by the end of this year. An anonymous Generation executive said that the terms with Woolham were "much

too generous, even for a man of his genius." According to the source, Woolham agreed to the deal primarily because of his personal relationship with Lin -- the two were close friends in their Academy days -- despite his reluctance to return to the business.

Signing Woolham, the creative hurricane behind such landmark works as "Dark/Light" and "Bite's End," is a real feather in Generation's cap. The film house has lost credibility through a string of amateurish art-flops, which reviewers universally panned as both overambitious and poorly executed. The studio's last big success was with "Marion's Dream," released in 267.

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"Generation really needs this to work out for them," said industry analyst Shepherd Strom. "They've been just bleeding lecks like nobody's business, and if it keeps up like that, they don't have a lot of time left before they'll need to fold."

Woolham himself said that he is "excited to have this great opportunity to return to my creative roots." He added: "I've needed the last several years to reconnect with myself and my family, but I always knew I'd have to return to film. I haven't run out of stories that need telling, yet."

In announcing the deal, Generation said that the first film, already in the early stages of development, is likely to be a Jeanine Forthright vehicle. The studio said the film's concept is "a gritty period piece covering the cut-throat PCAG championship season of 187."

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Oliverkeers13 Reclaims Number One Position

By KATE BREWSTER

The ever high-profile oliverkeers13 has returned to solitary occupancy of the number one position on the leaderboard, after a lengthy hiatus. Oliverkeers13 has solved 188 cards, as have the numerous players sharing the second-place spot, but it is the 50 points accrued from his team's fifth-place finish at the London PCAG tournament that edges him over to 9855 points and the lonely top of the board.

Currently, ten players share second place, including lillyplop, who tops out the women's leaderboard at second place overall; Peapod, who stands at first place on the United States leaderboard; and ramsfan, who has the top honours on the Australian leaderboard.

The leaderboard is edging closer to a significant milestone -- over 9.7 million points have been accrued to date by the nearly 26,000 players, and Perplex City gambling houses are beginning to buzz with predictions as to when the 10 million points landmark will be passed. PCAG statistician Samara Jones indicated that at current rates of points per solve,

only approximately 8,200 cards need be solved to hit that mark. "We've seen that solve volume in as little as a few days, or as long as several weeks," she said. "It will be very exciting indeed to see how long it takes."

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The same four Wave 3 cards remain unsolved as of this writing: Cards #202, Mother Tongue; #225, Broadside; #233, The Earth's Destiny; and #234, Mosaically Challenged. In addition, the notable cards #238 Riemann, #243 Shuffled, and #251 The Thirteenth Labour from earlier waves remain unsolved.

Jones predicted that the remaining unsolved cards will likely be solved gradually, if at all. "I don't think we'll see the rest of these go in a rush all together," she said. "If they haven't got them yet, I think we'll only be seeing solves after lots of hard work and effort are expended."

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View from Earth: Interworld Relations

By A.A. THOMAS



Yesterday in America was an interesting day, to say the least. On May 1, 2006 (269 AC), many Latino-Americans took the day off in “The Great American Boycott” in protest to

Congressional Bill H.R. 4437, The Border Protection, Anti-Terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005, currently in committee in the Senate. The bill would bring stricter punishment for persons who entered the United States of America through illegal means and persons assisting these “illegal aliens.” The most symbolic provision of this bill, however, is the requirement of a 700 mile (1120 km) fence along the U.S.-Mexican border. As it stands, the largest amount of illegal immigrants coming into America are Mexicans seeking work to support their families.

Since they are undocumented residents, some employers take advantage of this and

give them jobs that pay less than minimum wage for an exorbitant amount of work, chiefly physical labor. The Latinos rose up yesterday, on the traditional worker’s holiday of “May Day,” to oppose the “criminalization” of their status. They stood together, refusing to work or purchase anything, to show Congress what it would be like to not have these undocumented workers here anymore. Many conservative congressmen still stood fast to their legislation, saying that after the terrorist attacks on America on September 11, 2001 (264 AC), we cannot take any chance in letting more terrorists threaten the lives of Americans. The debates and protests rage on.

In an eerily similar vein, we have the relationship between Perplex City and Earth.

Recently, a Natural Sciences researcher named Oistin Meade made a psychological test available to the people of Earth for research purposes. Being a participant of these tests, I found myself confused by the numerous references to Perplex City’s culture that I could not, for the love of me, decipher. Apparently, these are common knowledge in Perplex City, but this was a test for Earthlings. I’m sure I speak for the majority of the test subjects when I say, “What were you talking about?” Another thing that made me uncomfortable was an editorial in the Sentinel saying that Sente Kiteway awarding leitmarks to some Earth Cube-hunters “cheapens the noble Leitmark, turning it into a mere trinket for a body of dilettante puzzle-solvers.” The

Continued

author also calls members of the Earth Cube Hunt “foreigners who have proved neither their worth nor their intellects.”

Like the immigration debates in America, the base of this problem is a lack of understanding. While the immigrants want the ability to provide for their families in a place where there is opportunity, the government wants to protect and defend the citizenry. Likewise, the people of Earth want to expand our horizons and foster amicable relations with the people of Perplex City, some citizens of Perplex City want to protect and defend their city from a great unknown. I am, by no means, criticizing the intentions of those citizens. I understand and sympathize with the wariness they feel. However, the only way to alleviate the uncertainty is to learn and understand that which you do not know; through knowledge comes understanding, through understanding comes peace.

America is a country of immigrants. Most people here can trace their families back to Europe, Africa, Asia, and nearly every country on Earth. Though we Americans have had our share of conflicts and problems, we have prospered for nearly 230 years. Where else in the world can you walk down the street and pass a Jewish deli, an Indian market, a Chinese restaurant, an Irish pub, a sushi parlor, and a hot dog cart in the span of a block? Let us take this opportunity, born of a tragic occurrence in your home, to build

and grow ties between our worlds that will flourish and last forever. Hopefully, we can also learn something about and from each other.

The View from Earth column is currently accepting submissions from its Earth readership. Please see our submission guidelines for more information.

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Old Town Residents Hold Protest Rally

By NATASHA VALLIERE

Residents gathered together in Key Square yesterday evening to protest the lack of visible progress in the City Council's avowed plan to bring new life to the Old Town. The rally, which appears to be a spur-of-the-moment grassroots effort, was attended by nearly a thousand people. The protesters chanted "New life now," and carried signs excoriating the City Council for a long history of neglecting the Old Town and its problems.

Protester Mikhail Henley explained that the mood in the Old Town is very negative at the moment. "We all know the Office of the Council is sitting on a huge sum of lecks, every one earmarked for improving life in the Old Town, and doing nothing to fulfil their obligation to the people of the area," he said. "The greedy foxes in government would rather keep their coffers nice and fat than actually do anything to help us in the Old Town."

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Raoul Valentin, chairman of the Old Town Renewal Committee decried the protests,

saying that citizens were demanding "rash action rather than careful consideration of the situation." He insisted that although minor renewal efforts have begun, it is important that the existing problems of the Old Town be thoroughly studied and understood before significant progress could be made on improvement. "We are conducting a very thorough analysis of the situation right now," he said. "What good would it do to spend a billion lecks today if we spend it doing exactly the wrong thing?"

Old Town citizens, though, insist this line of argument is simply ducking the question. "Suggesting that the problems of Old Town haven't been studied to death is just ridiculous," said Gretel Owings, the owner of a small convenience store in the Old Town. "We know what's wrong: high crime, crumbling infrastructure, and lack of support from our government."

The City Council received a windfall sum from Nature's Trust by selling development rights to parts of the Northside Nature Preserve last year. Nature's Trust, which was heavily backed by the Reconstructionists, insisted the funds be used to redevelop and improve the Old Town.

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Explosion Rocks Old Town Apartments

By JEREMY CLARIDGE

A major explosion occurred this afternoon in the Old Town, in the vicinity of the Caldera subway station. The affected building is Highview on Centine Way, just off The Shift. The building is heavily damaged and ablaze; thus far, rescuers have only emerged with one woman and two small children. It is feared that there will be no additional survivors, due to the severity and unexpected nature of the blast. In addition, firefighter Bryce Coriander is missing; the building partially collapsed while he was inside during the last rescue foray, and his team fears the worst.

Three residents have been confirmed dead, though no identification has been made. Firefighters are still working to minimise damage to neighbouring properties. Fire chief Ryda Stoneford said she suspects the explosion was caused by a major leak in a gas main, and has confirmed that there will be a very serious inquiry into the matter. “No maintenance problem should have become so serious it could have resulted in something like [this explosion], not even in the Old Town,” she said.

Explosion

Explosion at Centine Way

As a precautionary measure, gas mains

have been shut down to all buildings within two blocks of the fire. Stoneford says the situation appears to be under control, and she believes the fire will be extinguished by the end of the day.

Emergency medical teams are currently treating the woman and both children who were rescued from the burning building. They have been identified as Faye, Amber and Chester Yung. The three have reportedly suffered from serious smoke inhalation and minor burns. A number of injured bystanders who were struck by debris when the explosion occurred have already received first aid or been transported to the hospital.

Faye Yung, mother of the two children, has said that she feels “exceptionally grateful to be alive,” and does not know how her family survived the blast. “I think it’s not something I should question too hard,” she said.

The building houses roughly 70 occupants, though it is hoped that most residents were not home due to the blast’s timing during the regular workday.

Last updated: 4:04pm



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10 Million Points Hit

By KATE BREWSTER

On the 6th of May, the 10 million-point mark was passed, with over 337,000 cards now solved by more than 26,700 registered players. The average cards solved per player has now risen to 18 cards, while the average number of attempts per person has also risen to 11. Almost 1000 new players have signed up in the last week, with the top new players of the week being dorsborne with 1651 points, nickieca with 1538 points and beezn with 1334 points.

PCAG statistician Samara Jones remarked, “This is an incredible milestone. We always knew the players would break the 10 million point barrier after Wave 3 was released, but for it to happen so soon is fantastic news. It’s also wonderful so many new players are joining in the hunt for the Cube. With so many people searching, it surely can’t be that much longer until someone finds it.”

Over on the main leaderboard, oliverkeers13 remains at the top of the board with 9914 points earned from 189 solves. He climbed back up to the top spot after being temporarily knocked off by doublecross who, on the 2nd of May,

became the first player to solve the Wave 3 silver #234, Mosaically Challenged. Since then, another 35 players have solved the card. Now only three Wave 3 cards remain unsolved: Cards #202, Mother Tongue; #225, Broadside; and #233 The Earth’s Destiny.

Of the roughly 6700 players who have specified their genders, 27% are female and 73% are male. Ms. Jones appeared clearly disappointed when asked to comment. “It’s hard to say what the true gender split is when only 25% of the players have told us, but obviously we’d hoped our plight would gain attention across a diverse cross section of people from Earth, both men and women, as well as around the world. To see such a bias in the genders is ... somewhat unexpected. [I’m certain that as] more people across Earth learn of Perplex City, these imbalances will right themselves.”

Jones continued, “The last six months on the board have been incredible. The Earth-based Cube Hunters have climbed from a mere handful of players, to the tens of thousands now working together to track down our missing Receda Cube. ... Before the year’s end the final wave of cards will be released and, it is hoped, the Cube will be found. The coming months are certain to be exciting, both for players and observers. I, for one, can’t wait.”

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Beauty Alliance Unveils Spring Project

By GARIMA KING

Beauty Alliance, the art consortium led by Randal Tokei, has revealed its spring project, called ‘Dreamer’s Path.’ Artists associated with the alliance swept through the streets of the business district late last night, blazoning the sidewalks with words and images. The phrases are carefully constructed to tell a story, traversable from multiple directions, Tokei said. “The dream will unfold at your feet no matter your origin or destination.”

The images have been blazoned in a special polymer that will withstand heavy foot traffic and weather for some months, gradually wearing away in layers to reveal new patterns, but is expected to fade away entirely by September. “It is the nature of a dream to fade from memory,” said Tokei, “So of course our project must also fade from view.”

Pedestrians in the area seemed largely enchanted with the work this morning. John Vining, proprietor of the Filter coffee shop on Polis Ave., said that it was all his customers could talk about. “Everyone is very excited,” he said. “Outside, I see little clusters of people coming together

and excitedly discussing their dreams. Nobody can wait to see how it will all change over the summer.”

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The project is an unprecedented work of street art in scope, though Tokei insists it is “merely a warm-up to get used to working together.” The Alliance’s founding charter describes a goal of making art that will “endure a thousand years.” Alliance member Shoshana Keller agreed with Tokei, and said that the group may well do several smaller-scale projects such as this in order to foster creative trust and a healthy collaborative environment before tackling its thousand-year ambition.

The Office of the Council has said that it did not issue a permit to the Beauty Alliance for the project, and is conducting an internal review to decide if it should initiate action. One junior official inside the office, though, said that it is unlikely that any punitive measures will be taken, due to the impermanent nature of the project.

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Whipsmart Dairy Supply Falters

By CORINNE HATHAWAY

Whipsmart's prized herds of clever cows have been stricken with a new ailment that inhibits milk production, according to Whipsmart spokesman Donnie Munsey. While the virus fortunately doesn't seem to harm the cows to a serious extent, it does spread very quickly. Whipsmart milkmaids first noticed that the cattle were ailing in late April, but since then nearly every Whipsmart cow has been affected.

The decline in milk supply is from 35% to 70% in each cow, Munsey said, and it is not yet clear how long it takes for the virus to run its course. "It's possible that the reduction will last until the next calving season," said Munsey. "We've run some models, and it's likely that supplies won't come up again until mid-July at the earliest." Munsey indicated that it has its in-house team of veterinary researchers investigating the problem and looking for a long-term cure.

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Munsey also said that the virus poses no threat to consumers. "Of course all such viruses and bacteria are processed right out of our raw products," said Munsey.

"But even beyond that, it appears that the virus isn't expressed into the milk at all in the first place." None of the Whipsmart milkmaids have reported an infection with the virus, so it appears the bug isn't transmissible to humans.

Whipsmart fears that the reduced milk supply in their herds will lead, in turn, to reduced availability of Whipsmart ice creams in the summer to come. Some retailers may be encouraged to mark up prices excessively, though Munsey insisted that prices will remain stable at Whipsmart's company-run locations. "If we were any other dairy company, we could just bring in milk and cream from other farms to meet demand. ... We value our customers too much to offer them a substandard product."

Ice cream lover Lorelei Chen, 12, said that she plans on eating ice cream all summer regardless of the price. "It tastes good and it makes me sharper," she said. "It's worth triple the money!"

Whipsmart shares took a decline on the news, down nearly 10%.

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Broadside Sunk, Destiny Foretold

By KATE BREWSTER

The puzzle-solving, Cube-hunting legions of Earth have made yet further progress this week, solving both the remaining Wave 3 silver cards. Broadside (#225), which features a cryptic assortment of nautical flags, was first cracked by AndyAndyO last Wednesday. He nonchalantly remained as the only player to solve the card for a whole five days, although some 68 players have since made the same synaptic leap and scooped the 57 points available. Ron53 bagged the first solve for The Earth's Destiny (#233), a cryptic map of an unfamiliar landmass, albeit after players had tried a cumulative 651 failed answers.

Nonetheless, it remains a close competition at the top of the leaderboard, with no less than 21 players awkwardly sharing second place. Atop them all, however, is oliverkeers13, thanks to his 50 bonus points from the PCAG London event. Samara Jones, our resident PCAG analyst, joked that this was “really, honestly, totally unexpected. We absolutely didn’t see this coming, and when we heard this guy was top of the leaderboard, our first thoughts were, ‘Oliver? Oliver who?’ Talk about from zero to hero!” She added, “In seriousness,

the field is still wide open, especially for an ambitious challenger who earned points in the PCAG events. For members of The Perplex Monkeys, The Puzzle Monkeys, and any other monkey-based teams, this is a golden opportunity to take the top spot.”

Twenty-four players have now made the grade for the exclusive Purple Leitmark, the highest of the six accolades currently awarded to puzzle-solving participants. The points required for any further awards remain a closely guarded secret, but Jones speculates that it may be “somewhere between a gazillion and a bajillion, statistically speaking.”

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These developments mean that the black-rated Mother Tongue (#202) is now the only unsolved Wave 3 card. In more positive news, though, it looks like the days are numbered for encryption challenge The Thirteenth Labour (#251), with players developing a method to break its ultra-secure code by sharing their computing resources. Recently, this method was improved yet further to analyse the code more than twice as fast, and players are being encouraged to download the code-breaking program and join the distributed solving effort.

The equally mysterious ciphertext of Shuffled (#243) also remains impenetrable after more than ten months.

Continued

“I’m a little surprised that there hasn’t been a breakthrough yet, but at this point, I expect it will take a fresh pair of eyes to reframe the problem,” mused Jones. “As the search for the Cube grows, we’ll probably see someone take a slightly different approach and suddenly get to the core of the puzzle.”

“I think it’s going to surprise people,” she said. “That isn’t a clue, by the way.”

The search for the Cube is indeed growing, with almost 800 new players this week and more than 4,500 joining in the past month, taking the active player count above 19,000. This new influx of players is making a “huge impact” on the stats, says Jones. This week’s niftiest newcomers include quagmire, racking up 74 solves in the past week, and andyhall, blazing a trail up the leaderboard with 141 solves and 4,908 points in just nine days. Andy says that if he could have any superpower, it would be “a bendy body,” but declines to comment why, insisting “that would be telling.” A contender to watch for the future, surely.

Check in with us next week for the latest analysis and commentary on all the leaderboard action... plus Norway vs. Mexico - The Rivalry Continues!

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Thrill-Seeker Jumps from Ascendancy Point

By GARIMA KING

An unidentified thrill-seeker successfully traversed Ascendancy Point's security systems and completed a jump from the building's peak in the early hours of Wednesday morning. The jumper apparently evaded Ascendancy Point's security team and used a little-known maintenance access hatch to get to the very highest point on the building before leaping off and parachuting to safety.

The jumper abandoned the chute and made a hasty retreat into the subway system, police say. "Clearly we have a number of laws broken here. Trespassing, wilful endangerment of innocents, and of course littering," said police detective Harrah Finnegan. "We would be very appreciative if anyone who can identify the culprit would step forward and provide us with information."

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Some onlookers, though, say that seeing the jumper was inspiring. "When I first spotted him climbing to the top along the outside, I was terrified," said Brianna

Costa, an employee at the Red Hot Bakery. "Then when he jumped I was sure he would hit the base of the building, but he managed to glide out far enough, and then he unfurled a magnificent purple parachute." Costa indicated that the jumper landed in one of the parks along Schloss Street.

The Point's communication director, Jules Northerlie, said that the building's internal security team is already investigating the breach in security. "We can't help but wonder if this were a person with internal access of some kind," she said. "We are treating this as a very serious matter and will be conducting a full internal investigation."

Though Ascendancy Point has declared itself long prepared for this eventuality, no jumper has previously succeeded in evading Point security to complete a jump. The last attempt, according to Northerlie, was in 266 by Clarissa Oh, who was apprehended by building security who had spotted her parachute.

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View from Earth: To Err Is Human

By PETE DAVISON



”Earth children do not possess the intelligence of their Perplex City counterparts. But this does not answer the question WHY?”

These were the words of Jo Prout, a teacher from here on Earth writing a View from Earth column for the Sentinel called “Education Matters” some time ago. I have a theory regarding her question, speaking as a fellow teacher, and someone who is increasingly despondent at the seeming lack of intelligence of modern young people in our society. Naturally, I may be wrong, and my opinions may not apply to all people, be they Earthling or Perplexian, but over the last three years it is something I have given considerable thought to.

“Failure” has become a dirty word in modern education. Children no longer “fail” to reach a particular standard, they are “working towards” that standard. It is becoming increasingly difficult to fail examinations at the end of courses.

Pressure on teachers and educational establishments to constantly “drive up standards” leads many to desperate measures. And each time this happens, a new cohort of children passes through the system, being increasingly pandered to year after year in a bid to feed their self-esteem.

Consider the controversial issue of our examination system, for example. Year after year, upon the publication of students’ results from their end of high school examinations, there is a row over the results. The government will claim that results are up yet again, while senior educationalists will argue that the exams are getting easier. Neither are, strictly speaking, correct. What is actually happening is that the grades required to achieve a particular grade are actually lowering each year. In 1988, an eleventh-year student (fifteen or sixteen years of age) would have to have scored 65% on a Mathematics paper set by the exam board OCR to gain a grade C -- the boundary for what is regarded as a “higher” grade. In 2000, the same grade was given for a score of just 45%. So it is not that the papers are necessarily getting easier - achieving the results is getting easier.

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The knock-on effect of this is that each new cohort of students quickly comes to realise that they do not need to work as hard as their counterparts from a few years previously in order to get a good qualification. This leads rapidly to laziness

Continued

and apathy among some. Couple this with copious plagiarism thanks to unattributed quotes from the Internet as opposed to genuine research and you will begin to see where the problems are coming from -- the students do not feel they "need" to work hard because there is so little risk of failure. As a result, many are rapidly losing essential skills such as research, hypothesising and communicating their ideas.

Conversely, my experience of Perplexians so far - and you will forgive me if I am off the mark here -- is that failure is embraced as an opportunity to reflect on what you have done wrong, and learn from the experience. Failing to complete a particular puzzle gives one the opportunity to find out the best ways to succeed the next time you try. I can say with some confidence that the citizens of Earth who are helping you all in the drive to recover the Cube are not afraid of failure, and that we relish the opportunity to puzzle over a conundrum, for weeks if necessary. My only fear is that if this disaster had happened ten years down the line, would the new generation of Earthlings collaborating with the Perplexians be able to handle it?

To err is human. Some of our greatest achievements have been borne out of the most foolish of mistakes, and some of our greatest mistakes were borne from the proudest achievements.

The View from Earth column is currently accepting submissions from its Earth readership. Please see our submission guidelines for more information.

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Copycat Point Jumper Injured on Descent

By GARIMA KING



Raoul Benton

Presumably emboldened by last week's successful jump by a mystery thrill-seeker, stunt enthusiast Raoul Benton was captured and arrested after an unsuccessful jump off the pinnacle of Ascendancy Point late last night. Benton apparently used the same maintenance hatch as last week's jumper, but badly miscalculated the force and direction of winds in the area, authorities say. According to police reports, he hit the building on the nineteenth floor, and then slid the rest of the way to the base of the landmark building, sustaining injuries in the process.

Police detective Harrah Finnegan said that Benton insists he is not the same person that successfully made the jump and got away last week, leaving behind only a purple parachute. Benton was not permitted to

speak to reporters. "It would be dull of us to believe there is no connection at all between the jumpers," Finnegan said. "This points to a group of thrill-seekers sharing strategy and access information. Who knows how many of these reckless scofflaws are out there?"

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The Point's communication director, Jules Northerlie, said that she was "shocked and dismayed" to learn that a second jumper had successfully navigated the building's internal security. "We've decided, in light of this and other events of the past several months, to bring in an external security analyst for a comprehensive assessment of our systems and personnel," she said. "We find this situation is absolutely indefensible, and on behalf of the building's management, I'd like to apologise to all of our tenants."

Benton was arrested by authorities a few short minutes after his jump last night. The injuries he suffered through the course of his botched jump prevented him from making a hasty escape, police said. When he was taken into custody, he was in a state of shock, and emergency medical personnel arrived on the scene shortly after.

Doctors at Greycastle Hospital say Benton's impact with the building and subsequent fall left him with multiple scrapes and contusions, a fractured collarbone, and several fractured ribs. He will be released into police custody when his condition improves sufficiently, and charged with trespassing and wilful endangerment of innocents.

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MikeyJ, Oliverkeers13 Tied for First Place

By KATE BREWSTER

MikeyJ has finally joined Oliverkeers13 at the top of Earth's leaderboard this week. The two rivals were formerly team-mates in the 5th-placed Jazz Hands London PCAG squad, putting them ahead of the competition but, alas, not each other. Badbarry also edged a hair's breadth away from the rest of the pack, thanks to his recent "Homage to the Cube Hunters" earning him five bonus points from The Sentinel. Another 27 players have solved every currently solved card and now share 4th place, while 32 players have earned the purple leitmark.

According to Samara Jones, our in-house PCAG statistician, the real action this week has been between the twin superpowers of puzzling, Norway and Mexico. "It's really heating up," said Jones. "With nine and ten players respectively, this is bound to become a mano-a-mano fight to the finish. Lately, we've seen Mexico upping the ante, with 195 cards solved versus Norway's 135, but the balance of power is all in the hands of key power-players like skeleton, whose 5494 points really skew the statistics in Mexico's

favour. If the Scandinavians could club together, for instance, and buy MikeyJ a nice getaway in the fjords, they'd really have the chance to deliver a decisive blow."

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Such underhanded tactics might prove unnecessary, however, with new players making lightning progress up the leaderboard. This week, the curiously named Pea Smellers earned 2140 points, while tiggz rules this month's new players, having already solved 179 cards.

Finally, a brief analysis of current profile data indicates that the average Cube Hunter is 26, British, male, and almost certainly roguishly handsome. With some 74% of players currently opting not to submit any information, however, our friends on Earth largely remain as mysterious as the cards they are tasked to solve.

Check in with us next week for the latest analysis and commentary on all the leaderboard action!

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View from Earth: Demon-Haunted

By COLIN CLARK



For the human race on Earth (and I'm assuming this is true for Perplexians, as well) our history has long been one of fear and discovery. Ever since our early days these two processes have played back and forth. Fear: the

setting of the sun brings on darkness and cold, and makes the human, with his relatively dull senses, easy prey for the carnivore around the corner. Discovery: using a piece of flint and some dry wood, a fire can be made to provide light, heat, and protection. But on the other hand, fire can quickly get out of hand and destroy one's home. Over the years this same give-and-take has played out, with man-made fears being added to natural ones, and the process of discovery becoming more focused and streamlined.

As humanity progressed, old fears for food, shelter, and security were tamed. However, some fears did not go away so easily. What happens when we die? Where did we come from? Why do we have to

suffer? How can others be trusted? These questions and fears couldn't be solved by anything that could easily be found in the surroundings, and hence were considered "unknowable" or "supernatural." In response, humans created answers that seemed best to them. Obviously there must be something greater controlling the world around humans, and our ancestors assigned these somethings names: gods, demons, spirits, ghosts. By giving names to these fears they became something that was concrete and relatable, and thus potentially controllable. Therefore the fear of illness became the fear of evil spirits, and these could easily be expelled from the body by repositioning one's house, or possibly by drilling a hole in the skull, or just by asking a benevolent deity for help.

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These beliefs have been around on Earth for ages, and have been developed by their adherents into a multitude of extremely complicated and esoteric formal religious systems. There are debates about prophets and protocols; wars have been started over interpretations of traditional texts; two people who worship the same god under different names may be mortal enemies. Yet essentially this all serves the same purpose as it did all those years ago: providing answers to those "unknowable" questions and deep-seated fears. They are very effective at this, which explains why oftentimes religious viewpoints persist even when contradicted by natural observations.

Continued

Coming from the standpoint of the veritable religious cacophony on Earth, it was quite surprising to me to see the relative calm of Perplex City. I don't see the multitude of godheads I'm used to, or any widespread magical thinking. All of your religious groups seem to be based around worship of the Receda Cube and, give or take a prophet or two, this seems to me to be a very concrete, natural thing to base a religion around. There is the fact of the Cube's existence, and the fact of its resistance to any attempts so far to de-mystify it. Groups such as the Reconstructionists and the Brotherhood of the Six are a natural attempt to assuage the fear of the unknown that the Cube inspires. However, their apparent monopoly on religious thought begs the question of whether their existence is an anomaly in Perplex City. So much of the city's culture appears to be based around reason, logic, and critical thought that appeals to the supernatural seem out of character. Have you, indeed, conquered the fears that we here on Earth are still struggling with? Or is it that you have developed unique ways of coping? I continue to be fascinated by the different approaches to the same problems our two civilizations have taken.

The View from Earth column is currently accepting submissions from its Earth readership. Please see our submission guidelines for more information.

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Yung Children Released from Hospital

By JEREMY CLARIDGE

Amber Yung, 4, and her brother Chester, 2, have been released from Phuah Hospital into the care of their father. The children suffered from burns and smoke inhalation in a fire caused by the May 5 gas explosion that destroyed the Highview apartment building in the Old Town, where the children lived. Both children and their mother were rescued by firefighters; four others perished in the flames, including a firefighter, Bryce Coriander, who was trapped in the building during a rescue foray.

Doctors say the children have physically recovered enough that they should continue the healing process at home, though they still have a long way to go. “We felt it best for the children to be among family now,” said Dr. Rosalinda Clark. “The children do have some physical injuries yet, but they are no longer in immediate danger. ... We are more concerned with helping them deal with the emotional trauma, now, and keeping them in an unfamiliar place isn’t appropriate for them any longer.”

The Yung family’s residence was destroyed in the blaze, but Jonah Yung indicated that the family will be staying with his parents for some time, until a more permanent living arrangement can be arranged. He suggested the family may take its time, though, to avoid disrupting the children’s lives further. “Their grandparents are of course very comforting and familiar. [That’s what] they need right now.”

Faye Yung, the children’s mother, was also injured in the blast, though she remains under hospital care at this time. She suffered more severe burns than the children, presumably because she was trying to protect the children with her own body. Clark indicated she is also at serious risk of a secondary infection, and her medical team is still monitoring her condition very closely. Her husband Jonah remains upbeat, though. “We’ve come this far,” he said. “Of course I want to have my wife back, but the important thing here is that we’re all still alive.”

The cause of the explosion has not yet been determined, and the incident is under investigation.

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Serena to Wed Hesh, Confirmed Bachelor?

By JULIUS LOMAN

Celebrity-watchers are whispering that infamous bachelor and proprietor of Hesh Records Helix Hesh may be so head-over-heels for PCAG star Serena Duncan that the two have become secretly engaged. A source close to Hesh said that the pair became engaged during a romantic dinner on a twilight cruise to Seawatch for a weekend getaway together. "It's just so wonderful," gushed Duncan fan club president Harrison Louvell. "Serena took her [PCAG championship] loss to Ryan [Cahill] very hard this winter, and it's just beautiful to see her find happiness again."

Louvell continued: "Of course, the two would be very concerned about the scrutiny on their personal lives, and anyone would doubt that Helix is sincere after his personal history. Still, we are absolutely certain this rumour is absolutely true." Louvell also cited the short lifespan of the couple in their desire for privacy -- the two have been dating for little more than two months.

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Hesh, who by reputation typically sends

his employees to purchase gifts for his romantic interests, was spotted in person at an upscale Dalia Way jeweller early last week. A sales clerk who wished to remain anonymous said that a solitary Hesh visited the discreet establishment and spent "three excruciating hours" mulling over his purchase. Hesh ultimately appeared very nervous about his purchase, a traditional Tanraga-style wedding bracelet set with gemstones, the source said.

An assistant chef who claims to have helped to prepare the fateful dinner on that twilight cruise said that the pair most definitely enjoyed some sort of meaningful moment during the meal. "He gave her a small box, and she was overcome by tears of joy," said the chef. "There was a lot of laughing and kissing, I tell you this."

Duncan was unavailable for comment regarding the rumours, though a close friend did acknowledge that she spent the weekend on holiday at Seawatch with Hesh.

Kai Cinelli, Hesh Records spokesman, declined to comment on the rumour, citing a policy of not discussing Hesh's high-profile personal life. Hesh's fortune was recently reported to be on the decline due to stock market losses; but the unrivaled success of Earthbeat, a compilation of Earth hits performed by Perplexian bands, has buoyed his star in recent weeks.

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Mother Tongue Twists Ranks of Leaderboard

By KATE BREWSTER

Earth's puzzlers finally completed the task of solving all Wave #3 cards last week, sending shockwaves through the leaderboard as they did so. Mother Tongue (#202), the last Wave 3 puzzle card to be solved, was finally cracked by Miamo_tutti last Tuesday. "The solution came to me in an odd, backward way," he mused, although it remains unclear if Tutti himself is either odd or backwards. "My moment in the sun as the only solve of Mother Tongue was nice, but since I am indebted to the hard work of other solvers (on this card and others) I felt obliged to not hold out on a hint or two."

"Hint" is exactly what he did, with 178 players suddenly solving the card over the next few days. Coincidence or conspiracy? You decide.

These changes have rocketed Guin to the top of the leaderboard, buoyed above the rest through recently awarded bonus points from the Sentinel. "I bet he's Guinning from ear to ear!" commented statistician Samara Jones, unforgivably. BadBarry continues in second place, brilliant and dynamic, bombastic and really rather youthful. Former reigning

champ, Oliverkeers13, has dropped into 43rd place, assumedly eschewing the temptations of the available hints in favour of a solitary solve.

"This is, like, so unfair," shrieked Jessica Langley, 16, from Port Newguard - and unofficial head of the Oliverkeers13 Dream Team Fan Club. "But he is going to work it out really soon, because he is so smart, and it's not his fault that the puzzle is like, totally not cool." The OK13DTFC previously campaigned for access to the PXC-Earth datalink, in order to express their undying love directly to the wunderkind, but were rejected by the Centre For Reality Research on "legal, ethical, social, procedural, and psychological grounds."

"The pressure of such adoration," said psychologist and senior CRR advisor Bill Franklin, "can ruin a puzzle-sharp's career."

This week's notable newcomer is dramaqueen153, already boasting 78 solves and 16 points-per-hour since she joined the cube hunters just five days ago. Andyhall continues to lead this month's new players, earning an astounding five leitmarks in just over three weeks; both players are already attracting serious lecks in Old Town betting circles, as gamblers seek to diversify their stakes in preparation for the final wave.

Check in with us next week for the latest analysis and commentary on all the leaderboard action!

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Hikers Sickened on Trail

By JARED CHERRYWOOD

A tour group of twelve hikers were hospitalised in Tanruga Town early on Tuesday after they reportedly fell ill on their journey with a virulent strain of bacteria. The travellers apparently became sick after sharing a meal on the hiking trail contaminated with an as-yet-unidentified bacteria. The group, primarily older teenagers on holiday, called for help when it became clear that nearly all of their group had become seriously ill. They were all transported by emergency helicopter to the town shortly thereafter.

Doctors at Tanruga Hospital say they are not yet certain what strain of bacteria the hikers have contracted, but say they believe the risk of contagion to others is minimal. “There are a lot of brackish pools and still ponds along the trails, and we suspect this group cooked a meal using improperly treated water,” said doctor Gaspar Hammond. “All of the patients are suffering nausea and vomiting, serious dehydration, high fever, and so on. ... We have the situation under control, though, and suspect we’ll be able to release all of them in the next day or so.”

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Trail guide Adelaide Trent said that small pockets of similar infections occur frequently along the trails, but rarely are so many ill at once. “There’s a lot of bad water if you’re not a great outdoorsman,” she said. “It’s really an awful shame that these poor kids were out there on their own without better supervision and guidance.”

Trent said that a standard kit for hiking in the area includes treatment pills and filtration, and she suspects the group prepared dinner on Monday night with untreated water. “It’s not a mistake you make more than once,” she said. “I just hope this doesn’t turn them away from the outdoors entirely!”

The hikers were a part of a 16-person class of recent graduates from secondary school. Tanruga authorities have declined to identify which school or to name the individuals until their families can be notified. Four people with the group have not fallen ill, but have been admitted to the hospital for observation.

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View from Earth: Open Hearts and Borders

By *RAYMOND PHERIS*



Raymond PherisAs a history buff, I have started to study the fascinating history of Perplex City and have taken particular interest in The War. While I understand that this topic is

deemed by some as socially unacceptable, I hope to bring an understanding to the citizens of Perplex City that matters pertaining to The War need to be discussed openly in order to truly gain closure and to be able to move forward peacefully.

War is not an occurrence unique to your planet. In fact, the War that took place in Perplex City reminds me of an Earthen battle we refer to as World War II. The propagators of this war were an alliance of countries that sought to expand their boundaries and eliminate those they deemed inferior. For a few years they succeeded, and when it seemed that they could not fail, a neutral country decided to enter the conflict, but unlike Machiantes,

they joined the side of the defending countries. They eventually produced a weapon of great power that ended the conflict for good.

How does this affect the citizens of Perplex City? The Halley Peace Accord has officially ended your war, and interaction between your cities is beginning to occur for the first time in ages. While your citizens may be apprehensive about this, there is a lot to gain from this interaction. New commercial markets will open, improving economic conditions. The flow of ideas can be widened, encouraging academic growth and advancement. Perplex City may even gain an ally as your cultures begin to become better acquainted and find there are similarities in thoughts and beliefs.

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The thought of new commercial opportunities becoming available just makes common sense. While Perplex City has grown accustomed to being self-sustaining, I am sure there are items that are not available there that are readily available in another city, and vice versa. By trading your excess for products you lack, you will increase the amount of consumer options and opportunities, which makes for a happier consumer and a healthier economy.

Widening the flow of ideas should be seen as particularly attractive in a city that rewards intelligence such as Perplex City does. A common phrase on Earth is

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“two heads are better than one.” Multiply that by the academics in other cities and you can imagine the good that could come from that brainstorming session. This meeting of the minds could lead to great new puzzles, discoveries, and constructive debate that would be for the betterment of everyone involved.

The idea of an ally is probably one that is foreign to you, seeing how Perplex City has been in relative isolation for so long. By nurturing these new contacts and relationships, an alliance could form, and given time cities such as Allerdun and Xia-Hifa could be depended on to come to your aid if another threat ever arises. These relationships could even lead to future conflict being averted! While these notions may seem somewhat sensational, on Earth the countries that started World War II are now allied with the major powers they battled with just 60 years ago, an occurrence I am sure my grandparents never envisioned.

As you can see, there are a great number of positives that can come from the opening of your city to the outside. While I can understand if there is initial apprehension, I implore the citizens of Perplex City to see this as a positive step in their growth and to encourage this interaction so that it may blossom into a Perplexian Renaissance.

The View from Earth column is currently accepting submissions from its Earth

readership. Please see our submission guidelines for more information.

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Scandal Hammers Finlay's Campaign

By ROBERTO GOODWIN

Industrialist-turned-politician Douglass Finlay is facing a major setback to his fledgling campaign for a spot on the City Council after an anonymous staffer apparently sent out copies of secret documents to several major news outlets, including the Sentinel. The documents detail agreements with Finlay's private-sector business associates to push policies beneficial to them should he be elected, as well as a number of schemes to infiltrate security and spy on current council members' homes and offices, including those of Council Leader Camryn Scott.

It is unclear whether any of these alleged spying schemes has actually been implemented, though the leaked documents did include what appears to be a transcript of a conversation between Camryn Scott and her personal assistant discussing a new policy on defence spending.

Police Chief Eoin Morgan said that he has been alerted to the possibility of criminal misconduct within the Finlay political campaign. The department is currently examining the documents and seeking out corroborating evidence.

Morgan said that he would not comment on the authenticity of the documents until the preliminary investigation has been completed. "This may be a whole lot of hullabaloo over nothing at all," he said.

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When approached with the possibility that her personal files and conversations were being pilfered by a political rival, Scott expressed deep dismay. "Do I think he did it? I don't know. But if it's true, if all of this private information is in his hands, I will feel very sorely betrayed. ... I don't have any bones buried in my cellar, but everyone is entitled to a reasonable degree of privacy." Finlay's campaign manager, Anton Kaneda, immediately issued a furious denial of the legitimacy of the documents. "These allegations are completely false, and I am sure the wheels of justice will bear us out. ... These documents are a complete fabrication, probably concocted by the same members of the old guard who are now crying victim. [Finlay plans to] represent all the people of the city, and not solely the men who have made him wealthy."

Finlay himself was unavailable for comment. Finlay, co-founder of personal care giant Finlay-McLennan, left his post on the company's board and liquidated his shares in order to meet the stringent regulations that apply to political candidates to prevent fiscal conflicts of interest when he announced his candidacy in October of last year.

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Wave 4 Card Causes Solving Frenzy

By KATE BREWSTER

This week's big news is the advance release of a wave four card, St Ives (#31). The riddle is featured in the new, alternative London newspaper The Penny, but Earth readers will have to track down a real-life copy to get access to the solve form. It might only be worth eight points, but this can make a crucial difference in rank at the giddy heights of the leaderboard summit, a fact not entirely lost on the 300+ Cube Hunters who've already completed the puzzle. Adam43240, not to be confused with the other 43,239 Adams, scored first solve.

MikeyJ currently holds the top spot, but only five points, awarded by The Sentinel for a Letter of the Week, separate him from the second place oliverkeers13. In turn, they dominate the chasing pack by virtue of their PCAG point-bounty. In just over a week, however, the winners of the Perplex City Video Competition will be announced, with further bonuses to be awarded to the winning participants. Potentially, this could cause sweeping changes to the current hierarchy - or cement the existing leaders' positions yet further.

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This week's hot new puzzle-solving properties include Rhino Store Five, a collaborative entity of puzzle-pros from Perplex City's newest North American retailer. Together, they've racked up 2355 points in the past three days. Rikamaru is this week's second sharpest new player, with 2316 points from 84 solves in six days. Andyhall continues to lead this month's new players with 8044 points, but graduates into the Leaderboard proper tomorrow, leaving situp to lead the way with the tidy sum of 7292 points.

Check back next week for the latest updates on all the leaderboard action!

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View from Earth: Spirituality, Stigma and Secrecy

By PSYCHE

Psyche Perplexian religion is something we on Earth still know little of, beyond the basic idea of the Cube as sacred. However, for me it has always had a certain resonance. This is because I am a Freemason, and concepts of geometry and building are at the heart of our ritual.

Freemasonry is much misunderstood even on Earth, but to explain briefly: It is an ancient order which explores spiritual and moral issues through metaphor and ritual, the details of which are only revealed to initiates. In many ways, Masonic rituals are much like puzzles or riddles. Their odd, complex language and symbolism force you to seek a deeper meaning, and their very strangeness naturally stimulates the mind to new perspectives and leaps of logic.

While there are important differences between Freemasonry and the religions of Perplex City, there are enough similarities to make a comparison meaningful to residents both of your world and of ours. In this article I will look at what we know

about Perplexian religion, and discuss Freemasonry in that context.

Building and geometry

Although our knowledge of Gyvann is limited, we do know that he is referred to as 'The Builder.' And as the name suggests, the core metaphor of Freemasonry is building. The metaphor of building a great temple, and all the work that entails, is used to convey spiritual and moral principles. Our 'building' work is performed internally, as we pursue our spiritual evolution, and externally, as we strive to make our contributions to the world.

As part of this great metaphor we use geometric concepts, geometry of course being central to architecture. The square and compasses are especially dear to us, but amongst other symbols every Masonic lodge contains two cubes, one roughly hewn and one smooth and polished. The connection between divinity and geometry is central to our way of thinking. Bernard of Clairvaux (involved in the founding of the Knights Templar, from which many consider Freemasonry to derive) famously said that God is "length, breadth, height and depth."

Stigma

From reading the Sentinel, we gather that people in Perplex City are generally suspicious of religions, and that there is a stigma attached to them, with

Continued

many keeping their faith secret. Here our understanding is limited: We don't know whether there are religions not based on the teachings of Gyvann or the sacredness of the Cube, and so we don't know whether this stigma applies only to certain groups, or to religion as a whole.

Freemasonry also has a stigma attached to it. In its mildest form, sitcoms poke fun at us, presenting us as archaic nutters who roll up one trouser leg and give funny handshakes. More seriously, there is a wide view that Freemasonry is rife with a 'jobs for the boys' kind of corruption. And at the extreme end, Freemasons have been actively persecuted at certain times and places, for example during World War II.

Perhaps it is unsurprising that suspicion should be attached to an institution about which so little information has historically been available. Even today, when Masonic orders are so open about their existence that they all have websites, many masons remain quite discreet about their membership, simply because of the negative image most people have of Freemasonry.

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Conspiracy

This is an area which it's extremely difficult to research from Earth. However, my research gives me the impression that there are various shadowy groups

connected with the history of your religions, many of which are generally considered apocryphal these days. The website of the Brotherhood of the Six lists a few -- The Archers of Dawn, the Quadrilists, the Fire of the South, the Third Power, the Society of Elders, the Tarsians, the Kababah Clan -- and implies that some of these groups are alleged to have been guardians of the Cube.

The history of Freemasonry is also murky, and we have been linked to any number of shadowy groups and secret orders. Most people consider such theories to be hokum, and dismiss groups such as the Priory of Sion and the Illuminati as the products of a fevered imagination. However, the anti-conspiracists have a tendency to throw the baby out with the bathwater, and some connections are demonstrable enough. There is reasonable evidence to connect Freemasonry to the Templars, and various esoteric groups such as the Golden Dawn, Rosicrucians, and Crowley's OTO have Masonic roots. Freemasonry's impact on the world has been significant, as it naturally inclines its members to work to the greater good, and many of our greatest artists, scientists and politicians were masons. Among them are several of America's founding fathers, and the values of liberty, equality and fraternity, which are so central to both American and French ideology, come directly from Freemasonry.

More exotically, we are one of the

Continued

groups periodically rumoured to be guardians of various legendary artefacts (most of which we are supposed to have inherited from the Templars). Perhaps the most interesting for the purposes of comparison is the Ark of the Covenant, which some sources claim contains a holy stone bearing enough divine power to lay waste to cities, and which was kept in a cube-shaped sanctum. It is sometimes identified with the Holy Grail, as in certain sources the Grail is described as a stone, sometimes depicted as a cube.

The teachings of Gyvann

Lastly, I must mention the crucial difference between Freemasonry and the Perplexian faiths we know of, which are based on the teachings of Gyvann. In this respect these faiths are more comparable to Earth religions such as Christianity or Islam than to Freemasonry.

From the limited information available to us on Earth, it's not clear whether Perplexians, like us, recognise a difference between religion and spirituality. This is an important distinction here, as in recent times religion has declined but spirituality grown. The concepts are fuzzy, of course, but broadly speaking the key difference is dogma. Religions tend to be based on doctrines which dictate right, wrong, and the nature of the universe. Freemasonry is not a religion, and is actively non-dogmatic. The metaphorical nature of our rituals means that every Freemason has to form his own opinions about their

meaning, and Freemasons may be of any faith, or of none.

I hope this brief comparison has been of interest, and I apologise that space prevents me going into greater detail. I'm sure there must be Perplexians as hungry for details of Earth's spiritual life as I am for details of yours. As the exchange of ideas increases between our two worlds, I very much hope that esoteric and philosophical ideas will be amongst them, and I look forward to a much better understanding of your spiritual tradition.

The View from Earth column is currently accepting submissions from its Earth readership. Please see our submission guidelines for more information.

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Iona Interviews... Joya

By IONA RODIE

Joya meets me in an inscrutable hotel suite just off Dalia Way. The room is spacious and comfortable, with floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the busy shopping district below and subdued floral arrangements tucked into all of the right places. But the only hints at Joya's own personality are the baby toys laying strewn across the floor. Tiny Allegra Melody herself, the hottest celebrity baby in town, lies sleeping peacefully in a white cradle.

Joya's signature pink hair shines softly in the sunlight from the window, and she looks eminently serene as she encourages me to sit down in one of the giant overstuffed chairs in her sitting room. "This is the first heavy interview I've done since the baby was born, you know," she reminds me, curling her feet up under her. "I'm not sure why I let my publicist talk me into it." The words, though, are tempered by a sweet smile, and she laughs when I remind her that she is, after all, in the business of self-promotion.

In that vein, first things should of course come first: Her fans are desperate to know if motherhood has derailed her

career. Will there be a next album, and if so, when?

"I'm made of music," Joya declares. "I could sooner give up breathing than performing, and I've already begun a series of small club shows." She stretches her arms up and takes in a deep breath. "And of course the reason my publicist wants me to talk to you," she says, almost shyly, "I'm about to go in the studio with a new album for Hesh."

The news that Joya is returning to the Hesh fold should surprise nobody. She left Hesh when her then-producer, Horace Shockley, quit the label. Since that time, though, and one broken engagement to Shockley later, Joya has kissed and made up with the ones who launched her to fame in the first place. Does she have any comment on the Shockley break-up, and her reasons for leaving him on the day of the ceremony?

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Joya hesitates before answering. "I was in a really vulnerable place then," she says, slowly. "I was pretty desolate after everything that had happened with Alejo, and I found myself just going along with everything Horace wanted me to do. ... I felt really trapped, and the day before the wedding, I didn't even think about it, but I just ran." Her smile is a little tremulous, now. "I'd like to say Horace and I are friends now, but it's not so.

Continued

That's why I'm back with Hesh, I could never salvage a working relationship with Horace now."

Hesh representatives say now that she's returned, with a vibrant sound that is "more mature and passionate" than the Joya of old. Joya becomes thoughtful when I ask about her new direction. "I feel like a lot of my music has been very shallow," she says. "I'm still pretty young, and I didn't have a lot of life experience before the past few years. ... When I'm writing and singing now, though, I feel like I'm tapping into something bigger than just me and how upset I am that my date stood me up."

Production on the album could reportedly take several months, though, as Joya is strictly limiting the hours she works in order to spend time with her new daughter. Clearly, Joya is dedicated to her child. But how is motherhood suiting her?

"There's nothing like it in the world," she says, her face alight with happiness. "I feel so powerful now, like there's nothing in the world I can't do. Being a mother has made me feel so connected to everything, it's just incredible."

And she doesn't find the single-parent lifestyle a struggle?

Joya nods. "It was hard to find my rhythm in the beginning," she says. "Caring for a

brand-new infant isn't easy, and you have all of these hormones floating around in your bloodstream, so it's not just about getting up at night to feed the baby, it's about having someone who understands why banking ads are making you cry. ... Now, though, Allegra's figured out who I am, and I've figured out who she is, and I'm just as happy not having to share that special bond."

And what about little Allegra? Does Joya plan to reveal the identity of her biological father? And does Joya have any long-term plans to introduce him -- or any man -- into her tiny family?

Joya's eyes unfocus as she contemplates my questions. "Of course I'll tell Allegra all about where she comes from when she's older," she said. "But the really interesting thing is how I feel so at peace right now. Allegra is really all I need. I've never felt so happy and peaceful before, and I don't see why I should do anything to change that right now."

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Giant Mushroom Saves Five Lives in Woods

By JARED CHERRYWOOD



Roland Lankar

A family of five were trapped in a ravine and survived for one week by consuming an extraordinarily large mushroom they discovered. Ronald and Akasma Lankar were on an educational camping trip in the Soldiering Woods to show their three children how to survive in the wild with limited resources, and so were not even carrying keys on that fateful day. “We never dreamed that something like this could happen. ... That mushroom is the only reason we’re still alive,” said Ronald.

The family were rescued when another hiking group passed by the ravine and heard their cries for help. Forest rangers were able to assemble a rescue squad and retrieved the family within a few hours; the five are now resting under observation at the White Fork Hospital in Wooster. None of the family suffered serious injuries in the fall, but doctors say all five are suffering from dehydration and mild malnutrition.

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The family say they were walking along the edge of the ravine early in the afternoon on June 5, when the trail gave way and all five down the rocky precipice. Park rangers say that the path may have been weakened by last year’s heavy rainfall. The family had left all of their gear back at their camping site, and were unable to climb back up to safety. Later that evening, Roland Lankar, 14, discovered the life-saving mushroom: a whiterock variety over 20 inches in diameter, the family say.

“I wish I had photographs of the mushroom before we began to eat it,” said Roland. “I’ve certainly never seen the like before, and I doubt I ever will again. ... Who even knew they could grow as large as all that?”

The family also drank water from the small stream that runs at the bottom of

Continued

the ravine and sheltered in a makeshift hut of pine boughs. "It looks like our educational trip was much more realistic than we would ever have planned," said Akasma.

Stella Lankar, 11, said that she is very grateful to be rescued. "I'm glad we found that mushroom and all," she said, "but I'd really like to eat something different now. I'm not sure I'll ever be able to look at a mushroom ever again."

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Calm Before the Storm

By KATE BREWSTER

The reigning leaderboard champions face disarray tomorrow as the winners of Mind Candy's Video Competition will be announced and a slew of bonus points awarded to various competitors. It is shaping up to be a decisive and disruptive moment, shattering the calm that traditionally descends upon the board's upper echelons following the completion of a wave.

PCAG statistician, Samara Jones, explains the numbers: "The current setup is straightforward -- the board is dominated by an elite of power-puzzlers who've solved every card yet released, and collectively account for the top fifty board positions. Furthermore, five among these, including such luminaries as MikeyJ and Oliverkeers13, have risen slightly above the riffraff by virtue of bonus points earned through live events and writing for the Sentinel.

So a thirty point bonus for someone just short of the top spot -- like the enigmatic Foxy Lady -- would rocket them from 51st place to the top five. It's definitely going to shake things up."

Outside of the spotlight, the solving action continues apace, with 352,000 points earned in the last week alone. Notable new players include RamRockEdFirst, who joined as this article was being written. While he lacks points, his personal motto is "The Hammer Fixes Everything, And What It Doesn't Fix, It Breaks," aptly illustrating the determination and hard-headedness required of a modern puzzle champion. Topping our weekly leaderboard are victorslaymaker with 109 solves in 4 days, and Butterat, with 73 cards already cracked.

CMF obliterates the competition among this month's new players, having accrued an astounding 8562 points in just 16 days. If only he'd made a video!

Check back next week for the latest updates on all the leaderboard action!

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Video Competition Reviewers Dismiss Popular Winners

By FELIX BLAKE

The results from the recent, Earth-based Video Competition were released last Tuesday, but how did the final awards reflect the opinions of Perplex City's own intelligentsia? The Academy's Social Sciences department distributed entries to a select group of film critics, social commentators and cultural anthropologists as part of their continuing Earthology program. Today, three of them comment exclusively in the Sentinel.

Waldo Gnatek, a renowned critic from the influential-if-elitist Perplex City Review, spoke highly of what he saw. Musing on Ashley In Wonderland, he described it as "deeply evocative of 'otherness', and seems to delicately imply the yin of wonder with the yang of alienation. Positively existential -- although the rabbit gave a fidgety performance and never really settled into the role." He had kind words, too, for The Hitchhiker's Guide To Perplex City. "Most impressive by virtue of its directorial ambition and artistic guts -- who else would dare

experiment with such a searing shade of magenta? Darkflame has produced, undoubtedly, an elegant and restrained encapsulation of the unknown. Where is Perplex City? Merely somewhere else. Where, then, is Earth? For us, somewhere else also. Both somewhere else, then, but else from one another. A koan worthy, I think, of Gyvann. And of course, only a philistine could miss the conceptual strength of the closing sequence, aptly illustrating that the wonder of the Receda Cube is all that lies unknown within it. It is easier to describe what it is not, than what it truly is. Do you see?"

Jenni Kwon, editor of the Sentinel's Arts section, was also privileged to view some of the entries. "It's a mixed bunch and it's hard to know what to make of it. My personal highlights? Well, Difficultly Lethal looked like it had potential, but I'm really pretty busy as it goes and get distracted easily, so at seven minutes it was a bit 'epic' for my liking. I watched it at three-times normal speed, so some of it might have gone over my head, but overall... what video was I talking about again? Oooh, a squirrel!"

She continued: "Some videos left me cold, I'm afraid, with too many one-dimensional characters who I couldn't really begin to identify with. Not so with The Joy Of Perplex City! I think anyone could see that this was a puzzle-solving protagonist who conducted her affairs with extreme enthusiasm at all

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times, with the occasional moment of bemusement thrown in for good measure. A mature and nuanced performance, by any measure.”

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Many critics privately aired concerns regarding the taste and decency of submitted videos, and Kwon agreed wholeheartedly with their opinions. The first-placed video, Perplex City, Meet South Park, came in for particular criticism, for its crude language and ultraviolent content. “What I want to know is, how can the town of South Park avoid the complete social breakdown it seems to be facing? From what I’ve seen, and counter to the title, I’m sure Perplex City has no desire to meet South Park whatsoever. It’s distinctly opposing the ethical foundations of our city, and very troubling indeed.”

Others, like Shane Stone, the 22-year-old entrepreneur and editor of off-the-wall men’s mag Balls Are The New Cubes, disagreed. “Man, you’ve gotta check that movie out. The dude got his ass kicked! Don’t try and tell me that isn’t quality viewing. My friends and I are still quoting “I’M BRITISH!” at least ten times a day. Is anyone quoting The Joy Of Perplex City? I don’t think so. And you know why? Because it doesn’t have any dialogue, sure, but also because no-one gets their ass kicked.”

“Props, also, to Mysteries Of The Cube,” added Stone. “It’s a little, y’know, ‘Cube-heady’, but at least they tried to include something vaguely resembling an explosion, and used a nice hard-rocking soundtrack. As for Cubed, well, Gyvann said, ‘Doubt not that the Cube speaks, nor that its voice is heard.’ Well, I think this masterpiece aptly demonstrates that we ought not doubt it runs around, looks mad, kicks ass and smokes smelly cigars. Sick!”

All the videos, and their awards, can be viewed here.

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Tally Scores Big, Hits Top of Leaderboard

By KATE BREWSTER

The predicted shake-up of the leaderboard failed to happen in spectacular fashion last Tuesday. Overhyped by both the Sentinel's leaderboard correspondent (yours truly) and PCAG statistician Samara Jones, the 5150 points awarded to digital video auteurs proved insufficient to provoke major changes among the top 50. Last week, the Sentinel predicted it would be a "decisive and disruptive moment" in the competition, "shattering the calm" of the traditional hierarchy, with Jones going as far as to say it would "definitely shake things up."

Instead, only a minor reshuffle occurred at the top of the board, although a new leader has now emerged for unrelated reasons. Tally has embarked on a solving spree and now sits in first place, wielding a hefty 200 point bonus from the London PCAG games. As a result, she's dominating perpetually fierce competitors such as Oliverkeepers13, MikeyJ and Guin.

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Samara Jones provided analysis: "The

flaw in my earlier reasoning is now all too apparent. Yes, there are players out there who are getting big bonuses, but in most cases, they haven't got the solid foundation of card solves to build upon. Similarly, there's a great pack of players with a terrific number of solves, but they aren't chasing these extra points to get the edge on their rivals. It's easy to talk about the long-standing leaders as if they're insurmountable, but the truth is that both he and Oliverkeepers13 only came fifth in the PCAG tournament. There's a whole troop of players with much larger bonuses out there, and when they can combine those with a competitive roster of solves, they'll be unstoppable -- just like Tally."

A big welcome to this week's top contenders who truly put the "ease" in "newbies" -- PerplexHero leads with 2464 points, while Marki and aptcox are both keeping pace with more than 60 solves each. On the monthly leaderboard, a familiar posse put the "nuke" in "newcomers," with CMF leading by points -- 8562 of them -- and BlueCorpse leading by cards solved, with 176 to his name so far.

Check back next week for the latest updates on all the leaderboard action!

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View from Earth: Reading to Live

By SUSAN REYNOLDS



Susan Reynolds I have a great passion for reading, and from what I understand about the way of life in Perplex City I assume this passion is something that most Perplex City inhabitants share. It has been proven that

reading improves not only intelligence in general but advances language and communication skills, as well as developing creativity and expanding imagination. It is this on which I have based my assumption that the majority of Perplexians, who hold all of the above qualities in the highest of regard, must be avid readers.

There has been much speculation in this column as to the reason why Earth children seem far less intelligent than their Perplex City counterparts. While I believe there are many reasons for this, I do believe that an unenthusiastic approach to reading has much to do with this. I daresay that children in Perplex

City enjoy and embrace reading as much as adults, and probably like nothing more than regaling their friends with the next thrilling installment in their current tome or novel. On Earth you are far more likely to overhear children discussing who argued with who on “Big Brother”* or who wore what to which movie premiere.

I work in a small community library, and it saddens me how few children and young people come through our doors. Recently two young teenage boys visited the library and promptly took to pestering the members of staff and the public. When asked to stop they exclaimed that there was nothing to do. Amazed at this, I commented that they were in a building that contained books encompassing pretty much any subject they cared to mention, and they could pick up and dip into any of these hundreds of books for free! The response I got to this was a simple one: “Reading’s boring.”

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As I and I’m sure many people reading this, Perplexians and Earthling alike, cannot fathom why anyone would not want to immerse themselves in the world of literature, it is hard to think of a solution to combat the problem of the non-reading masses. The only way of doing this, as far as I can see, is through simple encouragement.

Recently on Earth there has been much discourse about a fictional work by Dan Brown, “The Da Vinci Code.” This has

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been a bestselling book on Earth for quite some time now, but despite its bestseller status, many literary-minded people do not think it deserving of this title. In fact, I can guarantee that there will be many groans from Earthlings reading this, appalled that I have even mentioned the book at all, let alone in an article about the virtues of reading.

I would agree that the book is certainly not a literary masterpiece. However, millions of people have picked this book up and read it, and this in many instances has led people on to read another book and another, and so on. I think this is fantastic! Similarly the Harry Potter books have divided people on Earth into similar fractions -- those who love it and those who think there are more worthy children's books out there.

Again, it is my view that anything that encourages children to pick up a book and start reading has got to be a good thing. Perhaps in Perplex City, where the average IQ is obviously a lot higher than here on Earth, there can afford to be a bit of literary snobbery, but here on Earth that is not something that we should, or can afford to encourage. If people discover a love of reading, it should not matter from what source it originated, what matters is where it takes them. I finish with a quote from a children's author who started writing with the very purpose of encouraging children to develop a love of reading, and is a statement that I think

should be in every classroom around the world and maybe even in Perplex City too: "The more that you read, the more things you know. The more that you learn, the more places you will go."

*"Big Brother" Â– Earth reality TV show. NOT "The Lab."

The View from Earth column is currently accepting submissions from its Earth readership. Please see our submission guidelines for more information.

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Earth Interviews... Oliver Keers

By SCOTT MYERS



It was a lukewarm evening in both London and in New York when I caught up with Oliver Keers, or Oliver Keers 13 as he is popularly known. Despite our great distance, and our electronic

conversation vehicle of the internet, I found the leaderboard-leader both personable and expressive.*

I thought it best to get to know one of Earth's star athletes, to try and understand the way in which a champion thinks. I wanted to get inside his brain a bit and see what made him who he is. Starting simple, why the 13 in his moniker? The reasoning is surprisingly insightful. "13 is a lovely number," he informs me. "Some people believe it brings bad luck; I seek to change its reputation. Also, it's a prime number, which is lovely."

And as we on Earth have been learning about the city, we have been set upon with wonders and spectacles galore. Where in

the city would Keers first like to visit, should the opportunity present itself? "I'd love to see The Academy. We've heard it described so much, it must look magnificent in real life."

There are so many cards, and so many layers of puzzling throughout our search on Earth. Has any particular solve stood out as an exceptional achievement? "I think most people felt the greatest when Elucidate fell," Keers says, refers to card



#240. "We'd been staring at it for months, not getting anywhere. Then, suddenly, in the space of about a week, we made a load of progress. It was a really satisfying solve."

Ollie, as he is known among some of his closer fans, has been on the top of the leaderboard for quite a while now. To what does he most attribute this success? "A combination of effort, intelligence, and rugged good looks." Indeed. But surely he has received some assistance in the many solves. And it's no secret that a certain number of puzzle card solves may have been at least inspired by the work of others. Keers dismisses these accusations with a somewhat enigmatic "Rah, I say, Rah. Rah Rah." And thoughts on the

Continued

upcoming Wave 4? Will Ollie remain at the top? He replies, perhaps overconfidently, "Of course, he's omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent."

Returning, for a moment, to the early wave 2 cards Keers managed to get in late October of 2005, the details of which have always been a bit ambiguous: According to rumour, Keers beat up a number of small children to acquire cards #150, "A Journey in the Desert", and #142, "Photoshopped". But surely there is more to the story than that. Keers speaks like a champ when he says "I have no intention of confirming or denying any rumours. I did what I had to do to get ahead."

More recently, leaderboard successes aside, Keers was part of the "Pirates vs. Ninjas" film submission. I press him for some insights on working on the set.

"It was very, very wet. Luckily, I had a few people working under me. They would run about like headless chickens, I'd shout the odd obscenity, and they'd do my bidding. Holding an umbrella, climbing a tree, that sort of thing. It was a good day, albeit one filled with commoners."

And does the pirate crew ever get together now and again? "Yeah, the crew and I go out swashbuckling every month or so, we drink some grog, pillage, take some wenches, and bury some treasure. You

know: good, clean, piratical fun."

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In seriousness, this isn't the first time Keers worked with some of the crew. He was also on Team Jazz Hands in London's PCAG event. Does some of the rest of the crew get a bit jealous when they see the continual successes of Oliver Keers? "Not at all. Gibbet, a member of the crew, was in The Cube ReCoventry team, which beat our team by about 15 points. There's a great deal of mutual respect between us. We all get along - heck, I'd even say we're friends."

On a whimsical note, at one point Keers became a bit famous locally for wearing cravats. One wonders if it is a sort of fashion statement. Keers informs me he has been known for his eccentric appearance, and that the cravat is the master of all neckwear. "I do have a pipe exclusively for a 'look'. I find that eccentricity is key to puzzling-prowess." The charisma rings through his words, as he seems rather enthusiastic on this point. Has Ollie considered marketing the look, via sponsorship in Perplex City? Perhaps Keers fashions by Levenay?

"I'm glad you mentioned this." He takes a somewhat officious tone. "I hope that soon, the OK13DTFC will be able to offer a Hot Pink Cravat with the word 'SQUEEEEE!' embroidered on it for all its Perplex City members." He pauses, then

Continued

seeming a bit crestfallen. “Unfortunately, the Ollietmarks were unable to be made, something about trivialising the honour, but I don’t think there’s anything trivial about me.”

Regarding the OK13DTFC, it might have come as a surprise for one to learn he had such a following. Keers replies, seeming a bit blasé about it. “Not really, no. I am the best, so it is only natural that people should love me.” Strong words, but it’s easy enough to be full of vigour when one is at the top of the leaderboard. Does he have words of encouragement for those who are struggling in the lower ranks?

“But of course. If you work hard enough, you can solve any puzzle. Don’t always tackle them alone. Ask people for assistance. They’re usually more than happy to oblige. And, lastly, have fun, that’s what puzzles are all about!”

And does Ollie have anything else to say, to fans, to critics, to the people of the city and Earth at large?

“I’d just like to remind everyone why we’re doing this; to find the Cube, and unite our two cultures. Who knows, maybe someday we’ll be traveling betwixt the two!”

*Although Oliver Keers was number one on the leaderboard when the interview took place, he no longer held that position

at press time.

The View from Earth column is currently accepting submissions from its Earth readership. Please see our submission guidelines for more information.

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Mind Candy Launches New Puzzle Site

By CHO KAPLAN

Academy Master Sente Kiteway announced today that Mind Candy have launched a new puzzle site to assist Cube-seekers looking to improve their personal acuity. The small games site, called Mind Candy Puzzles, will include a variety of activities specifically calculated to improve reaction times and cognitive clarity. They will be similar to any number of key-based games already familiar to Perplexians -- an unsurprising fact, as each game was developed with the guidance and co-operation of the Academy's Cube Retrieval Team.

"We want to use every available tool to encourage the people of Earth to find the Receda Cube, and to better prepare them to do so," Kiteway said. "Short of somehow shipping many tonnes of Ceretin to Earth in order to sharpen the seekers' wits, exporting this variety of brain exercise is the next best thing."

Currently only one game is available: a timed arithmetic challenge called 'Win Sum Lose Sum.' Mind Candy representatives indicated that they expect to launch additional games periodically.

Players can play an unlimited number of practice games, but can only play one challenge-mode game per day; overall standing in challenge mode will be emailed once per day.

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Retrieval Team member Von Lubik waxed enthusiastic about the new games. "This is just another simple way to help the Cube-seekers hone a nice, sharp edge," he said. "And the best part is, it's a lot of fun -- especially when you get a better time than your friends!"

Some were less pleased with the news, however. "If this is the best Master Kiteway can come up with, it just proves how much the Academy needs more stringent Council oversight," said City Council member Elisabeth Stein. "While it is true that these games will sharpen the wits of our Cube-seekers, it's also very likely to pull their focus away from searching. ... Too much time will be spent trying to best rivals. ... The last thing we should be doing is encouraging a spirit of competition among people we wish to share a single goal."

Mind Candy is the Earth company hired by the Perplex City Academy to help recover the Receda Cube, which was stolen from the Academy Museum in early 266. The Cube was subsequently traced to an undetermined location on Earth.

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Kaplans' Arson Trial Begins with New Revelations

By JEREMY CLARIDGE

The trial of accused vandals, thugs and arsonists Malcolm and Spencer Kaplan began today with the defendants being sworn in and the attorneys making their opening statements. Both brothers have pleaded insanity to the charges; their joint attorney claimed in court that the Kaplans were influenced by masses of violent material and images received from Earth.

Much information that had previously been kept away from the public was today revealed at last. The police were led to the Kaplans through hair and fibres left behind from the Soupery arson attack. While they were quickly able to identify Malcolm Kaplan as the lead suspect, locating him proved more difficult. He was eventually found through his brother Spencer, who had purchased the accelerant used in the attack under the pseudonym Spencer Lawrence.

Surveillance of Spencer Lawrence's property on Teleo Alley soon revealed it to be the home of the Kaplans. Upon entering the Kaplans' flat, the police were confronted with wall-to-wall Earth objects: posters, books, recordings,

ornamental pieces and various other furnishings. Moving further into the flat, the arresting officers noticed a change in the style as pop music gave way to recordings from war rallies, and Earth literary classics became press clippings from Earth conflicts including those in Vietnam, the Persian Gulf, and various terrorist attacks.

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After removing Kaplan from the premises, they were able to search his bedroom, where they discovered notes on homemade bombs of Earth design, as well as books on several Earth Anarchists, including Pierre-Joseph Proudhon.

The trial is expected to continue for another two weeks, with closing remarks due a week from Friday. Extra security has been placed around the courthouse, and visitors are being required to submit to level-three scans. Police Chief Eoin Morgan is already facing questions as to how this could have been allowed to happen, and whether a ban should be placed on all violent Earth material.

"I'd always thought of Earth as a place of good," said Jane Monroe, proprietor of the torched Soupery on Creation Lane. "Now it's become clear there much more to it than the general public were made aware of. ... Someone has been hiding us from the truth and I want to know whether it was our City Council or the people of Earth!"

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EvilGenius May Be Genius; Evil Remains Unconfirmed

By KATE BREWSTER

EvilGenius finally ascended to 5th place this week, joining the leaderboard's breakaway pack. The development occurred when EG solved Broadside (#225), placing him in contention, while a five-point bonus from a Sentinel Letter of the Week pushed him above the hoi polloi. The self-proclaimed genius, who would like to have the power to "talk to the animals," also leads the Canadian leaderboard by over 3000 points.

In the stats, 3334 players (10.1% of all registered participants) have now earned the prized red leitmark at 950 points, but that number almost halves at the orange level, with a mere 1860 competitors breaking the 2300 point barrier. At the other end of the spectrum, only an elite group of 65 puzzle gurus have earned the purple leitmark, while 55 of those can now boast of solving all 193 cards yet released.

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Brazil, perhaps unexpectedly, is the most well-represented of all the non-

Anglophone countries, with more registered players than even Ireland. On the other hand, the South Americans are failing to make the numbers count -- with a mere 1700 points to Ireland's stunning 56,796 total. These statistics will surely raise doubts over the alleged correlation between beautiful sunshine, miles of golden beaches, footballing excellence and puzzle solving.

This week's sharpest solver is DLXV, who's correctly answered a frankly bewildering 151 cards in just seven days, while NEBO61 tops the monthly leaderboard with 178 solves and 8672 points.

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View from Earth: Anarchy in the PXC

By GASPAR LEWIS



“Another council tenancy/ I wanna be/ Anarchy.”

-Sex Pistols, “Anarchy in the UK”

After a six-month drop from the radar, the Kaplan boys are back in the

spotlight as the case’s details start surfacing. Early anarchist literature, homemade explosives which may have come from a book fittingly titled, “The Anarchist’s Cookbook”, and documents of the militant and violent side of Earth history. Questions are now abuzz not only regarding the Kaplans as they sit in the purgatory of the courtroom, but towards the nature of Earth as a whole. Of course, is everybody really asking the right questions?

First of all, anarchy is simply a political system; the connection to violent insurrection is just an unfortunate joining

thread of implementation. Anarchy, defined, is simply a governing system of having no organized government. The first question to ask: why, when presented with this information, rather than simply taking it into their minds, would the Kaplans turn to violent application of these ideas if Perplexian society is such a treat?

If everything is as it should be, what good is rebellion?

Secondly, the concealment of the violent nature of many Earth-dwellers has been far from hidden, even in our own submitted communication to this very newspaper. If anyone recalls from almost a year ago, regarding the questionable card-holding of a certain popular Earth solver, suggestions were made in this very newspaper suggesting, “something involving a corkscrew, a 9 volt battery, and a colony of fire ants,” by one Ankit Jain. Over the course of all the Views From Earth before this one, Earth citizens have made overt reference to World War II, sexual crimes, the nature of war, and even an overall pro-war philosophy of tear-it-down-and-build-it-better thinking. Go ahead, read the back issues and archives. Anyone who believed that Earth was all smiles has obviously been operating under an assumption that Earth has not been sending.

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Continued Thirdly, though this might be paranoia on my part, but in this case, I sense the potential for fear mongering against those of us Earth citizens that are intelligent, peace-loving, civilized, and compassionate, as well as the mighty Questioning Spirit in general. Please, allow me to fully explain. Given the right voice, this case could quickly turn from a trial into a limited-access carnival, and Earth could very quickly be painted as some sort of villainous source of corruption; fodder like this case is exactly what many anti-Earth members of Perplexian society need for their cases, or rather, their collection of talking points. Secondly, there might develop the portrayal that these boys, for putting forward the notion that their government is incorrect and needs readjustment, is as dangerous as any of the acts they committed. It is insane that they felt that not only the government, but society as a whole, was flawed, and, however regrettably violent their actions were, decided to do something about it?

In no way am I condoning or supporting their violence and property damage against the people and possessions they attacked, but I am defending their ability to question the nature of government; these same anti-Earth forces could easily follow the lines from the attacks to the insanity plea, and declare that any calls for a change in structure or personnel would be seditious. Of course, fools with such lines of thought are likely only a problem on this side of the link, and there appears to be little to no evidence of these concerns in any facet of what I am able to witness, but let it still serve as a warning, in case these prove to be preliminary steps.

Let me make my way out on another quote:

“I hope someday you’ll join us / And the world will live as one.”

- John Lennon, “Imagine”

Just remember: the quotes at the beginning and the end of this piece or not mutually exclusive. Peaceful anarchy is a distinct option, and sadly has never been sought by those actively campaigning that the dissolution of organized government is the best route to take. Not only this, but it serve as a reminder of the duality of society as a whole, no matter where you are. We all have the capabilities for peace and violence, and we should always strive for peace. But, in both Earth and Perplex City, many do not, and this is a problem that cannot be pinned on either Earth, nor on anarchy. Rather, pin it on drove the Kaplans to act, and what made them believe that violence was the only way to fight the system?

Never stop asking questions. Just don’t go hitting things when you look for an answer.

The View from Earth column is currently accepting submissions from its Earth readership. Please see our submission guidelines for more information.

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Duncan Dumps Darling

By JULIUS LOMAN

Former PCAG Champion Serena Duncan, who has been romantically linked with music mogul Helix Hesh in recent months, has issued a statement declaring that she and Hesh are “no longer together,” and reiterating that rumours that the pair became engaged on a dinner cruise to Seawatch late last month are “hurtful falsehoods fabricated to titillate the voyeuristic tendencies of the celebrity-watching public.”

The statement continued: “I appreciate that my status within the Academy Games necessitates that loss of my status as a completely private citizen. Nonetheless, I would hope that the people of the city would respect my wish for privacy in the coming months, as I train to regain the championship this year.” Duncan lost the title to reigning champion Ryan Cahill in last year’s PCAG tournament, though she had in turn bested Cahill and won the 267 championship.

A source close to Duncan, though, puts the entire matter in a very different light. “Yes, Helix and Serena were very serious, and it’s true, they did become engaged that night. ... Then the next day, Serena saw all of the press detailing Helix’s

history with women and kind of freaked out. So she denied the whole thing and sent Helix his bracelet back.” According to the source, Helix has been trying to win Serena back ever since, but her fear of his wandering ways has kept him from succeeding.

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Indeed, Hesh does have a colourful romantic history, and has been linked with women ranging as far afield as professional Wheel player Carlotta Howard, to puzzle scribe and Cube Retrieval Team member Tippy Ankron. Celebrity-watchers have long suspected that Hesh would never be the sort of person to settle down and marry, though as Rico Hannigan of Star Gazer remarked, “Sometimes people change in the ways we least expect them to.”

Hesh, who owns the successful record label Hesh Records, has not made any public statements regarding his relationship with Duncan, nor any wedding plans the two may have made, nor Duncan’s recent statement.

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Ascendancy Point Residents File Suit for Security Breaches

By GARIMA KING

A coalition of Ascendancy Point tenants formally filed a class-action suit against the building and its management today for breach of contract, alleging that poor management of security, maintenance, and other vital systems in the building have caused significant harm to individuals and businesses that rely on them. The suit alleges that a number of well-documented problems in the building over the past year or so demonstrate “a pattern of malicious neglect and apathy.”

Charlene Reckson, who is the president of the Ascendancy Point Residents Association, addressed the tenants’ complaints at a ceremony announcing the lawsuit. “For nearly a year now, we have seen the building’s management become worse and worse. Even after a resident was found murdered in her own home, not one, but two unauthorised persons were able to access restricted areas of the building, thankfully for no purpose more nefarious than a little fun. ... How many more incidents must there be before the

building lives up to its promises? When do we get what we pay for?”

Reckson referenced the as-yet-unsolved murder of PCBC consulting economist Monica Grand, as well as two separate incidents this May in which thrill-seekers parachuted off Ascendancy Point. After the second jumper, a Point source said that the building was bringing in an external security analyst to examine and update policies and procedures. Reckson alleged, however, that the announcement is purely an act of showmanship. “I’ll believe there will be lasting change when I see change in action,” she said.

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The Ascendancy Point Residents Association was initially formed to protest perceived bias in how routine maintenance was handled -- residents claimed that businesses in the building obtained faster service and repairs for similar problems. However, in the new lawsuit, the association has joined forces with the Ascendancy Point Commerce Union and the more low-key Tenants of Ascendancy Point.

Ascendancy Point Communication Director Jules Northerlie said that it is the policy of Ascendancy Point’s management not to comment on lawsuits in progress, but added, “This is all so unfortunate.”

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Coxtin, rlp6028 Emerge to Join Top Competitors

By KATE BREWSTER

Two more contenders for the top spot have emerged from the shadows this week -- the mysterious Coxtin rockets into 4th place while the catchily-titled rlp6028 is setting up camp in 6th.

Coxtin is reputed to be a familiar face among certain segments of Earth's Cube-hunting contingent, being an alumnus of the Jazz Hands PCAG team (like MikeyJ, currently in 3rd) and the Pirates vs Ninjas video competitors, of whom oliverkeers13, currently in 2nd, was also a member. He describes himself as "6-foot-9" and "a freak of a man," who can apparently be seen with "loaves of bread attached to his shoes, elbows and eyes" while "making absurd claims about his life."

Rlp6028 clutches a smaller hoard of bonus points than Coxtin, but sports an extra two silver solves to not only join the overall leaderboard elite but also clinch 1st in the USA leaderboard.

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In the broader transatlantic face-off,

the average UK competitor boasts an impressive 48 solves and 1645 points, while the Americans lag a little behind with 37 solves and 1190 points per person -- but analysts predict a substantial statistical shift as word of the Academy's Cube Retrieval Project spreads across the Atlantic. Canada's average at 754 points owes something to the leadership of EvilGenius, while Australia's chances are anything other than Down Under with a decent 1004 mean score.

This week has also produced a few new candidates perhaps worth a leek or two - axiomaticagency bursts onto the scene with 2248 points and 88 cards solved in an exhilarating 24-hour solving spree, and Thwack has made a similarly powerful debut with 67 solves in the past two days.

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View from Earth: The Need for Celebrity

By RYAN ANDREW



Despite the countless differences between our two countries, one ultimate flaw has become apparent in your world: that we have very much in common. There is a natural voyeuristic streak

that seems to run right through to the core of society. People follow the lives of those in the public eye, of the ‘celebrity’, as though they were fictional characters in a favourite TV show. It has long seemed to be a favourite pastime of the people of Earth, and, it seems, according to the close scrutiny shown towards Serena Duncan, that we share this hobby.

People have a need to compare their lives, their successes and their failings against somebody else. It allows them to assess how ‘well’ they are doing. The reason for this is that competition is a strong driving force in both of our worlds. We have a constant need to prove who is ‘the best’. By measuring your own life and the lives

of those around you against somebody that you are all aware of, you can judge who is winning the game of life. On Earth at least, the person we used to measure ourselves against would be a neighbour, but Earth is becoming (sadly) more hostile, and the culture of the friendly neighbour seems long gone.

The celebrity is somebody we aspire to be, but deep down know we never will be. When somebody is unknown, they long to be famous, desperate to be acknowledged, to be remembered. It all stems from a fear of being forgotten, of fading away into obscurity and being lost in the sands of time. But, ironically, once somebody is thrust into the media spotlight, the one thing they seem to crave is the privacy of anonymity. Serena Duncan said recently of a small news story involving herself and Helix Hesh, “(The accusations are) hurtful falsehoods fabricated to titillate the voyeuristic tendencies of the celebrity-watching public.” Whilst we may feel that she was rude to say this, and that her remarks are unjust, we must realise that we are dealing with real people, and real lives. They have real emotions, and shed real tears. There is evidently a lot of bitterness and resentment in Serena’s tone, at probably both the press and the public. Due to the craving we have for gossip, a relationship has been ended, presumably because of news reports on Hesh’s previous “conquests”. Ironically, this is all relying on the gossip we hear on their relationship being true.

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The other reason people spread gossip is that as well as needing a common hero, people need a common enemy to unite against. It is upsetting but true, that nothing brings people together like hate. We find someone to victimise, to treat as the villain, and come to see them as 'the bad guy'. It seems the wheels of the world cannot turn without someone to fill the worshipped role, and someone to fill the hated role. Who fills which role is often influenced by the media.

If the rumours are true, and Serena truly broke off an engagement over news reports, then it is a small tragedy that due to our need to fulfil our craving for gossip a perfectly happy couple have been destroyed. More importantly, by blaming her for ending the relationship, we are unconsciously deciding to fit her into the 'Bad Guy' space. Whether or not she will end up fulfilling this role or the role of the 'Good Guy' depends on both the media, and you.

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Finlay Campaign Manager Resigns

By ROBERTO GOODWIN

Council candidate Douglass Finlay's campaign manager, Anton Kaneda, has reportedly resigned as the pressure mounts on the campaign to explain the meaning and origin of documents allegedly sent to authorities last month by a disgruntled Finlay staffer. Kaneda's resignation is a real shock to political observers, as he had to all appearances been settling in for a long battle to restore Finlay's reputation in time for the elections.

A spokesman at the campaign's headquarters confirmed that Kaneda has stepped down, citing a "difference in opinion" on how the politician should proceed under his contentious circumstances. No detailed information on this difference in opinion was forthcoming, though some analysts close to the campaign believe that Kaneda may have started encouraging Finlay to withdraw his candidacy.

Finlay himself was unavailable to comment on the matter. The Sentinel succeeded in reaching Kaneda, but the only remark Kaneda would offer was that he was "bound by honour not to discuss the matter."

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Finlay's approval ratings have been plummeting in recent weeks, ever since the controversial documents were revealed. His all-time high approval polled at 63%, but in recent days the number of people saying they consider Finlay "favourably" or "very favourably" has fallen to 23%. Historically, no candidate with an approval that low coming in to an election cycle has succeeded in capturing a seat.

The so-called Finlay Papers contain evidence that Finlay had entered into agreements to use his political influence to affect policies that could affect his former business associates, as well as the rudiments of plans to spy on council members. Police have launched an investigation to determine the authenticity of the documents.

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Amadora Levenay Threatens Legal Action Against CEO Brother, Family Company

By ROLAND GERBERA



Amadora Levenay

Isabella Levenay's daughter and fashion heiress Amadora Levenay has begun to threaten her family with legal action to recover the degree of control over the company she feels she is entitled to, according to her personal spokesman. The move follows her months-long but ultimately unsuccessful attempt to wrest the CEO position from her brother, Oscar Levenay.

Her spokesman, Gustav Helwinger, held a press conference early this morning announcing the possibility of a lawsuit. "Miss Levenay feels her mother's final wishes regarding

the management and creative direction of her fashion house are not being respected," he said. "She very much regrets the need to take legal action against those who should be closest to her, and who should be honouring her mother's wishes as much as she does."

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Oscar Levenay issued a curt statement to the press reading: "We at Isabella Levenay are very disappointed in the direction that my sister is choosing to take this ludicrous personal vendetta. We hope she knows that there is still time for her to rejoin us and preserve the work of our mother peacefully, though that door will soon be closed."

No court papers have yet been filed.

In recent years, Amadora Levenay has been rumoured to be the source behind a significant amount of the turmoil the fashion empire has experienced. Amadora has publicly distanced herself from the directorate on a number of issues, and is heavily rumoured to be the source behind a significant quantity of the material in the recent book *Claws Under Velvet: Levenay Behind the Scenes*, penned by her cousin Isador Levenay.

Haute designer Isabella Levenay began her business as a couturier in the Artist's Quarter in early 203. By the time of her death in 265, her brand had become one of the most recognised in Perplex City. The privately-held Levenay corporate empire is currently estimated to be worth PCL7.8 billion.

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Wave 4 Release Rumoured As Academy Leaks Like Sieve

By KATE BREWSTER

The fourth wave of Mind Candy's puzzle cards are set for release within the month, a source within the Perplex City Academy claimed yesterday. According to leaked documents seen by the Sentinel, the 62-card release is scheduled for "simultaneous Earthwide release" on the 31st of July. Mind Candy, however, were unavailable for comment at press time, with their spokespeople alternatively "in a meeting," "out to lunch," and "hiding under their desks, humming softly," among other excuses of uncertain veracity. The timetable was met with some assent from within the Centre for Reality Research; one technician said under condition of anonymity: "This matches up with what I've heard pretty closely."

The confidential documents, marked "CRT/MC EYES ONLY," laid out other detailed plans currently in development by the cross-dimensional team. One new initiative is to give players across Earth an equitable chance at earning first solves, with Wave 4 card codes blocked until 5pm GMT. While this will

give US-based players an opportunity to acquire cards before the solve system goes live, Australian players will need to burn the midnight oil to start gaining points at 2am local time. Wave 4 cards are to be available on launch day in both limited edition "pure" packs and mixed "multiwave" packs. They will be differentiated from earlier products via an updated packaging design, according to the document.

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Rumours also emerged of a celebratory launch party. While players worldwide are expected to meet up for on-the-spot launch-day trading, an official Mind Candy party is anticipated for the evening of the 31st somewhere in Central London, England.

Next week, we'll be featuring the latest analysis from Perplex City's leaderboard pundits and statistical experts, picking their favourites for the Wave 4 championship -- but in the meantime, we can report that over 14,000 cards have been solved in the past week, with Calburn this week's top new player (2902 points) and Obrien leading the month's newcomers.

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Kaplan Verdict Issued

By JEREMY CLARIDGE

The arson trial of Malcolm and Spencer Kaplan came to a dramatic conclusion this afternoon when both brothers were found innocent of all charges on the grounds of insanity. The pair will be remanded to a secure psychiatric hospital for treatment of their violent impulses. During sentencing, Judge Roland Feehan remarked that “these anarchistic tendencies are a danger to our society in any form, and it is imperative that such destructive forces are eliminated from our society. ... My only hope is that these incidents will have brought to light this disease of lawlessness that threatens to engulf our city, before it is too late.”

Members of the public in the viewing gallery were audibly shocked when the verdict was delivered, as popular and expert consensus had predicted that the brothers would be found guilty. Annabel Child, a potter residing in the Artist’s Quarter, was devastated: “Ever since the attacks began, I’ve been terrified to walk the streets at night. Now any would-be thug is going to think they can do what they like and get away with it. Where’s the justice we were promised?”

Rebecca Glen, manager of Helix House, was also disturbed. “They’re dangerous men and they should be locked up,” she said. “The notion that they were somehow driven to this by images and tales from Earth is ludicrous.”

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The topic of Earth and its bearing on the case has been an issue of much contention, both in and out of the court. The prosecution fought

hard to have any mention of it excluded from the case, but the quantity and nature of the material found in the Kaplans’ home persuaded the judge to allow its inclusion in the case. Public opinion has been extremely divided on the role Earth has played in this drama, with many arguing it has been used as a scapegoat for the brothers’ actions, while others claim these events were inevitable. Johan Vale, an accountant with PCBC, gave his view to the Sentinel: “We’ve always known that there was a darker side to Earth that the Academy has tried to gloss over. The moment I read of the war articles found in their homes I knew what had happened. ... Why do we even allow the replication of these subversive materials? The City Council should review all material coming from Earth and decide on whether it is appropriate to show to the people of Perplex City, whether it is suitable for our children.”

The police have concluded that the mysterious symbols and names found at the scenes of the Kaplans’ attacks all share an Earth connection. During the course of the trial, Police Chief Eoin Morgan testified, “We now believe the names found spray painted at the crime scenes are all references to prominent Earth anarchists. The symbols themselves may well be pictorial representation of the Earth; its seas, lands and polar caps.”

After the trial, Chief Morgan gave a brief press statement: “We continue to work on the assumption that the Kaplans were part of a larger, organised gang. The brothers persist in their claim that they acted alone, but evidence gathered at the crime scenes suggests otherwise. Should any member of the public have any information relevant to our investigations, we urge them to come forward now, before this gang regroup and strikes again.”

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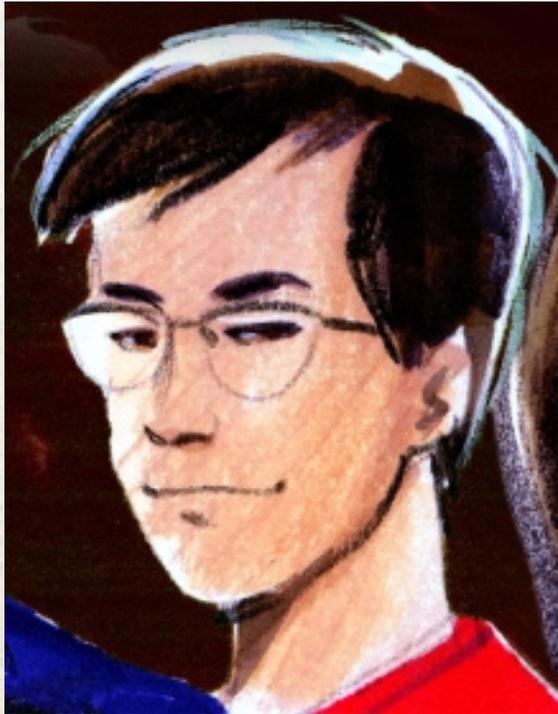
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Iona Interviews... Adrian Hon

By IONA RODIE



Adrian Hon, part of the legendary Mind Candy team, is often a newsmaker, but despite repeated requests from the Sentinel, has always turned down requests for interviews -- until now. Still, his somewhat perplexing relationship with our geography makes it difficult to get a feeling for the real Hon; no subtle cues in his environment, no quirks of body language to betray his true thoughts.

He graciously sends over a few snapshots of his working area, stacked high with paper and electronics gear. A few other

elements shed more personality on the affair, however: a small replica of the Rosetta Stone; a sepia-toned globe of the surface of Mars; a half-finished Syzygy Cube. Armed with this small feeling for Hon and his personality, I compose my first questions for Hon, and he quickly responds; in this way, in a few short hours, we have a complete interview.

First the basics; how exactly did Hon first come to know about Perplex City?

“It happened quite a while ago now. I’d just started a PhD at Oxford University into neuroscience when I heard about Perplex City through Michael Smith,” Hon replies. “Naturally, I was incredulous about the idea that there was a whole other world out there, but the evidence he showed me was perfectly convincing. It was clear that they needed our help to find the Receda Cube, and while I was a initially little unsure about their proposal to create puzzle cards to tell Earth about Perplex City, I quickly warmed to the idea.”

Indeed, the puzzle cards received a similar reaction within the city. But by now Hon must be accustomed to accepting improbabilities as the truth, given his daily work life. Speaking of -- what is it like for you to have one foot in Perplex City?

Hon responds: “Most of my communication with Perplex City is with

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people at the Centre for Reality Reality and the scribes at the Academy, including Kurt and Von; we generally talk about the development of the puzzle cards and making more Perplex City websites available to Earth. I have to admit that it's often frustrating, since the Perplex City Council has strict rules on technology transfer, and they seem to think that almost everything falls under those rules. Still, it's a fantastic experience learning from the people in Perplex City."

Adrian Hon

Adrian Hon

And how does Hon feel about the often-controversial Master of the Academy, Sente Kiteway?

"I rarely speak to Sente personally -- as everyone knows, he's an extremely busy person. However, I've taken part in conference calls with him occasionally, and I've always been impressed by his intelligence and incisiveness. He's got a very strong personality - it's what got him to his current position, and it's also probably the reason why he has his detractors and enemies," Hon says.

And after all of this work, the entire city wonders, is any progress actually being made, or is it all a stupendous delaying tactic?

"We're making progress, I'm sure of that," Hon assures me. "Hundreds of thousands

of people around the world know about the theft of the Receda Cube, and tens of thousands are actively searching for it." Despite this optimistic perspective, he does admit some doubt: "We still have a long way to go, though. There are few clues as to its location, and the CRR and Academy have yet to figure out a way to track it down or detect it remotely."

Because this alleged progress is positively invisible to the average Perplexian, there are of course concerns about whether everything is as sunny as Kiteway would have it. Mind Candy hasn't always been treated kindly by the press. How does Hon respond to his critics?

His answer is surprisingly curt: "It's easy for people in Perplex City to deride Mind Candy and Earth in general, but we are trying our very best to return the Cube. As long as we can do that, nothing else matters."

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And, while we're asking the difficult questions... what exactly is Mind Candy getting out of this? Surely Sente can't be paying in Perplexian lecks.

Hon's response smacks of masterful statesmanship, as soothing as it is calculated. "No, unfortunately he can't," he says. "Mind Candy obviously makes a small amount from sales of the puzzle cards designed by the scribes in the

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Academy, and through other Perplex City-related products and activities. However, I don't think that we're in this for the money. We're helping because we have a genuine interest in helping Perplex City. Just as you're fascinated by our world, we're fascinated by yours."

It's clear that this avenue of questioning will no longer bear fruit, so we turn to discussing more current events; for example, the new Earth-Perplex City data connection being built in San Francisco. The existing data connection has been sufficient for months if not years; why is a second link necessary?

"There are a few reasons," Hon explains. "At the moment, we only have one data link to Perplex City, and that's based in London. It can only handle a limited amount of traffic, and with the number of people using the link in both Perplex City and Earth increasing rapidly, we need another connection for the extra capacity."

Beyond that, though, is a firm belief in the prudence of redundancy: "Another principal reason for the new San Francisco connection is simply that it's always smarter to have two links rather than one. It took an awful lot of time and effort to set up that first link, and while I'm no physicist, I do know that the favorable conditions that were required to make the connection do not come around often."

In order to celebrate the occasion, Mind Candy is putting on a celebration of some sort. What light can Hon shed on this event and what will happen there?

"The event is a big thank-you from the Perplex City Academy and Mind Candy to everyone who's searching for the Cube," Hon says. "It's also a celebration of the activation of the new link, and in typical Perplex City-style, it'll involve an awful lot of puzzles and games."

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As for specifics, Hon spills the first concrete details regarding the day: "It'll all start on the morning of Saturday August 12th with a presentation at the Palace of Fine Arts Theatre, where everything will be explained. I can tell you now that it's basically a huge high-tech treasure hunt, but with a twist -- unlike the PCAG tournament in London, this treasure hunt will be collaborative, not competitive." Even through the medium of email, one can feel the pride Hon has in this undertaking. "There'll be hundreds of puzzles scattered across San Francisco, involving traveling to landmarks, looking for hidden objects, cracking codes and translating languages. Players will work together to figure out the answers. The answers serve as activation codes for special RFID tags back at the Palace of Fine Arts."

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For those of us not informed regarding the latest Earth tech, he explains a bit more: “RFID tags are essentially objects whose location can be tracked in real time by a computer. We’ll have 100 of these RFID tags, and when they’re activated, they become ‘ready for play’ in a series of puzzles and games there. You see, we’re setting up a gaming arena there where up to 100 people will be able to move around and control the games collectively. You’ll just have to wait until the event itself before finding out what the games are, but I gather that they’re very fun, and very devious.

“I’m pretty sure that no-one has run a treasure hunt and RFID game like this ever before, so it’s a real step forward for us. We’re expecting up to 1000 players, and anyone can sign up at Perplexcity.com.”

And what of people who can’t make it to San Francisco? Earth is a large place, and surely not every Cube hunter would be able to make it.

Hon acknowledges this is a difficulty. “There’ll also be an opportunity for people to help out online, by tackling puzzles scattered over the internet. The answers to these puzzles will also help activate RFID tags,” he says.

Interested in how work is shared between Mind Candy and the CRT, I ask who came up with the idea of the event, but Hon is

coy. “I can’t remember who exactly,” he says. “They obviously have a romantic streak in them, since it’s by winning at the games that the players will directly activate the new link.”

I persist in trying to untangle the division of labour between the two groups and ask how did Hon and his colleagues worked with the CRT to develop this event. A few surprising truths emerge.

“The RFID puzzles and games are being created by scribes from the Academy Cube Retrieval Team -- there are rumours that even Sente might be involved in one of the games,” Hon says. No surprise there. Then comes this morsel: “The Academy have hired a private group to devise the puzzles, since Mind Candy don’t have much knowledge of San Francisco. This means that Mind Candy is basically just providing logistical support.”

something



Mind Candy Partner Someth;ng Labs

So Mind Candy isn’t actually even running the event? His answer only puts more fuel on the fire. “We’ve had an enormous amount of help from two companies in the UK - Someth;ng Labs and Wavetrends -- to set up the RFID technology behind the event. They

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immediately clicked with the guys at the Academy and we wouldn't have been able to run the event without them," he says.

At this point, I am too astonished at Hon's nonchalance over the fact that his colleagues have admitted themselves incompetent to run the event on their own, and I fail to press the point; aghast, I inquire as to how Mind Candy's lack of involvement is likely to affect the event as a whole.

Hon seems, however, to see no problem. "Because Mind Candy isn't creating any of the puzzles or games, and we don't know the answers, an interesting consequence of this is that we get to take part in the event," he says. Then he strikes out into the realm of fantasy. "Actually, I have a sneaking suspicion that the Academy arranged it this way on purpose so they can see how good we are at solving puzzles."

And what happens if the players can't solve the games? Does that mean this important link simply won't be activated? Hon indicates that the problem has already been considered: "Well, we have a lot of confidence that our players are smart enough to tackle them. Of course, if we run into any problems, people from the Academy will be on hand to provide hints and tips, so the link will certainly go up one way or another."

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AQSYS Program Too Bloated, Needs Cutting, Says Earlywine

By JOHN CORMORAN

Scientists working on the AQSYS project have entered into heated debate with the City Council regarding the future of the sensor network, and whether it has evolved too far beyond its originally intended purpose. Harrison Jones, the project's current team leader, says that the election year pressure on the City Council has led to proposed budget cuts that would "seriously damage the science this program does to help every single Perplexian."

Council Member Nathan Earlywine, who is spearheading the effort to cut the AQSYS budget, called the allegation "preposterous" in interviews. "The fact is, the sensors on these craft have become ridiculously bloated over the past few decades," he said. "We have better and cheaper ways to monitor much of the data that comes out of AQSYS now, so we need to stop throwing away all of this money. It's simple fiscal responsibility."

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Earlywine's proposal would significantly

reduce the array of instruments included onboard the AQSYS aircraft over a period of years. As the lightweight craft age out of use, Earlywine's plan would see them replaced with the scaled-back versions. This would save the city a projected PCL37 million per year.

Gladmason, though, calls the cost "drops in the council's bucket," and says the cutbacks are mere political posturing at the expense of science. "I can tell you, for every single sensor we include in the AQSYS array, there's someone relying on it to do real, meaningful science," he said. "There is not one data stream coming off of our flyers that we could drop without impacting some other project."

The AQSYS, or Air Quality System, was first launched in 198 as a small network of simple aerostats designed to collect atmospheric data. Today, though, the program comprises a network of thousands of lightweight airborne instrumentation packages that help monitor not only weather and air quality, but also traffic, groundwater patterns, fire risk, and more.

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Wave 4 Rumours Confirmed by MC

By KATE BREWSTER

Last week's rumours surrounding the imminent release of Wave 4 were confirmed exclusively for the Sentinel earlier today. Paul McCormick, Fearsome Emperor Of Card Production and Mind Candy spokesperson, said: "Yes, it's the 31st. OK? Good." There is no evidence, as yet, that he was speaking under duress.

To recap, the fourth and final wave of puzzle cards will be released on Monday, 31st of July, and will be available simultaneously from Perplex City stockists worldwide. As expected, they will feature 7 new cards for each of the red-through-purple sets, with 10 each of the blacks and silvers. Furthermore, card solves will only be accepted on the official website after 5pm GMT, which is of course midday on the USA East Coast, an eye-blearing 9am on the West Coast and 3am the following day for most of the major Australian cities. Sharp-minded Cube hunters based in the United Kingdom will have already noted, of course, that British Summer Time means that cards will only be solvable from 6pm local.

Mind Candy will be announcing a number of launch events over the coming week,

but have provided exclusive further details of their official London party today. To be held at Borders in Charing Cross on July 31st, and starting at 7:30pm, the evening will not only allow Cube Hunters to convene and swap the very newest cards, but also involve competitions, give-aways, games, and exclusive merchandise, with "most" of the Mind Candy staff expected to attend the celebration. Would-be attendees are invited to RSVP to wave4launch@perplexcity.com.

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Meanwhile, further rumours have emerged on various internet forums of an extremely rare "Gold Card." Specimens posted online depict a card that proves to be a sombre reminder of the purpose of the puzzle cards -- to result in the locating of the Receda Cube. It also credits members of the Mind Candy team, who've enabled the people of Perplex City to communicate and interact with the people of Earth. Each card appears to be feature a unique code out of 333, fuelling speculation that only 333 of the cards will be made available.

The leaderboards in brief this week: Tally continues to top the overall leaderboard with 10,467 points, 2S is the week's bright new hope with 127 cards solved since he signed up all of a week ago, and obrienk is the player of the month with 9264 points gained in the past three weeks.

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View from Earth: Compete or Collaborate

By JAMIE DEMPSTER



"Keep that which you value close; Better to be vigilant than to rely upon the kindness of strangers."

"Cynicism is not, it must be said, an altogether admirable trait.

Thus, despite the proverbial warning, I now offer my hand in friendship and hope, relying on your kindness."

...and so, Sente Kiteway introduced himself enigmatically into our lives, and indeed, all of our realities. From such a humble genesis, so the work of the "Cube-Hunters," "CubeHeads," "CRT Earth-Div," or whichever moniker we're using this week, began in earnest. Since then, an ever-growing number of us here on Earth have been watching, investigating and analysing your world. In our attempts to glean information and clues from its traditions, news reports and inhabitants, we have learned a great deal -- in some cases, more than we might truly wish to

have discovered.

Through the work of Sente, the Academy and Mind Candy here on Earth, we have been thoroughly tried and tested, by way of the first three waves of puzzle cards, PCAG events and a number of ad-hoc competitions. Now, as we stand on the cusp of the release of another set of puzzle cards, there is a renewed buzz in the air, an almost tangible feeling of excitement. This shows, if any further proof were necessary, the wisdom in Sente's decision to spread word of the Perplexian plight in this manner. Clearly, our two worlds share many of the same characteristics, as was highlighted in the fabled "333" packs issued at the beginning of the search -- "A game, in your world, and in ours, gets people talking."

Of late, however, there have been several instances where people seem to have lost sight of this goal. Of course, rivalry and contention are to be expected, as in any walk of life, in any reality. My intention is not to advocate that our hunt should be conducted with kid gloves and lots of unnecessary hugging. As a previous article in this august periodical has previously espoused, "War" can in fact be "Good" -- under certain circumstances. What is not necessary, however, is the seemingly growing air of "one-upmanship" which has taken root within our ranks. The recent film competition, organised by Mind Candy to help spread the word of the hunt to an even wider audience, engendered many inventive cinematic efforts, across a huge spectrum. It showed many of the

Continued

best creative impulses and abilities of our number, in a variety of innovative ways. However, its success was marred by the absolute lack of sportsmanship shown by a small number of the competitors -- exploitation of rule loopholes and unpleasant jibes leaving a sour taste in the mouths of many by the closing date.

This is but one example. The oft-reported leaderboard for puzzle card solving seems in danger of becoming the next bone of contention for the antagonistic and petty-minded amongst our ranks to do battle over. Already, there have been aspersions cast upon various competitors, and the validity of their "solves." There have been instances where people have attempted to claim all of the "Top Ten Solve" placings, for reasons best known only to themselves. Without wishing to hark back to that mythical and non-existent time period of "The Good Old Days," there was far less backstabbing, jealousy or downright selfishness at the point where the initial cards were available, but the leaderboard was not. The puzzles were dissected, in minute detail, and answers were achieved collectively. A "trout" was a item of respect, handed to a contributor to help them, not used to batter them over the head with, as it seems all too often to have become now.

Throughout our investigations into the whereabouts of the Receda Cube, our greatest and most consistent triumphs have been down to the actions of groups

of people. Whilst much of our work, by necessity, cannot be publicly revealed at this time, those involved in it should all be able to list numerous instances where, if it were not for the hard work and co-operation of the group, we would have hit insurmountable dead-ends along the way, and might even have lost track of the Cube entirely by now. In the case of puzzles set for us by the Academy, the very toughest of the cards require specialist knowledge and in some cases much in-depth research -- too much to be achieved by one individual, working alone. As a collaborative team, however, we can find the answers; and ultimately we will, I am certain, also retrieve the Cube.

With the rapidly-approaching activation of the San Francisco link and the accompanying "puzzles, games and high-tech treasure hunt," along with the release of the fourth wave of cards worldwide, it is important, now more than ever, that we do not allow ourselves to be diverted from our task, and continue to work towards it as a unified, collaborative group, not a collection of divided individuals.

This, it seems, is the crux of my argument -- whilst there is nothing innately "wrong" or negative about competition, whether it be against absolute strangers, our friends, or even striving simply to better oneself, the nature of said competition is crucial. It should be positive, not to the detriment of others, and above all, retain

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the ultimate goal of helping others. We are the strangers, it is our kindness that is being relied upon.

We should not, and indeed, must not, forget this.

The author wishes to point out the existence of a particularly noble collaborative effort on the part of the Cube-hunters -- the sale of some competition prizes, with the proceeds going to charity. The auction ends on July 23, and may be found [here](#).

The View from Earth column is currently accepting submissions from its Earth readership. Please see our [submission guidelines](#) for more information.

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Earlywine Presses Advantage in Debate

By CORINNE HATHAWAY

Monday night inaugurated the series of debates among candidates for City Council. This first debate was between the four candidates who have declared for the Council Leader seat: Incumbent Council Leader Camryn Scott, Council Member Nathan Earlywine, troubled political neophyte Douglass Finlay, and long-time maverick Shannon Powell. The candidates presented basic policy positions, with more detailed discussion of issues to be covered in future debates.

Political analysts widely agree that Earlywine dominated this debate, and expect to see a bounce in his poll number in the coming days as a result. He laid out a plan to create a more unified regional government, drawing more upon the “patchwork of mayors and councillors,” in the greater Perplex City region to find operational efficiencies and cost savings for all involved. The current system, he said, causes “huge duplication of human and technological effort.”

Scott has received significant criticism on some of her past decisions, particularly in terms of agency oversight and budget decisions, and often seemed harried. She

defended her past decisions: “No leader works in a vacuum,” she said. She also accused Earlywine’s plan of sounding like “Earth-inspired imperialist hubris.”

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Finlay, who has a reputation for grandstanding at public speaking engagements, was unusually subdued for this debate, presumably because his campaign is under police investigation for several possible violations of election and privacy laws. He covered his basic positions almost by rote, differing little in wording from previous campaign speeches, and did not enter into the back-and-forth between the other candidates.

Powell, who is running for Council Leader for her fifth time, repeated the same positions that have kept her out of the seat throughout her political career; she advocated significant cutbacks in basic public services such as police, education, and health care, in order to divert the funds to massive public works projects, primarily art installations.

Roy Yolen is officially retiring at the end of his term, leaving his seat an open contest. Camryn Scott, Nathan Earlywine, and Aben Henniker are all up for re-election to their seats. Next week, a series of district debates will run for those open council seats. City Council elections have been scheduled for 27 Oct. of this year.

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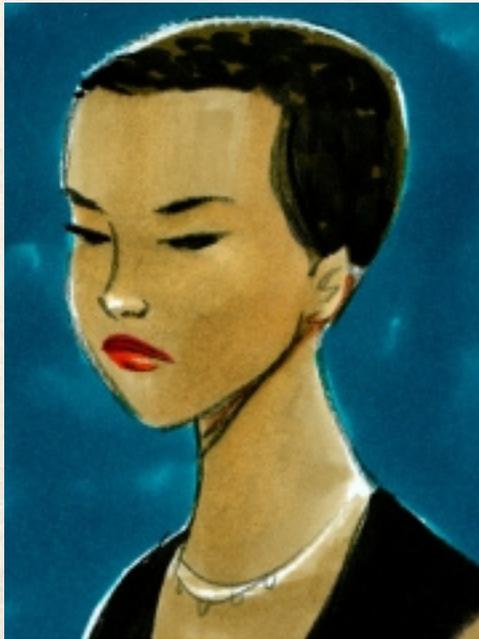
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Xia-Hifa Sending Unprecedented Delegation

By GARIMA KING



Ambassador Tao-Mei Quhifa

The City Council issued a joint statement today announcing that a delegation from Xia-Hifa will arrive later in the week for diplomatic talks. The delegation will be led by Ambassador Tao-Mei Quhifa, a highly-ranked advisor to the Xia-Hifan government. According to the announcement, the delegation is arriving to discuss the possibility of allowing Xia-Hifa to establish a permanent embassy within central Perplex City, as well as a reciprocal embassy in Xia-Hifa.

This move would be the first time a foreign government has been allowed to control property in the city in nearly 300 years. Other matters on the table include final details of the high-speed passenger railway between Xia-

Hifa and Perplex City, and the possibility of increasing trade quotas, which are at present extremely limited. The delegation should be in the city for “about a month,” according to the Office of the Council.

The council members all declined to comment on the matter individually, saying that they would prefer to present a unified face to the delegation when it arrives, and that in this delicate diplomatic stage, “We feel that dissent and its resolution should be handled privately.

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This surprise visit by Xia-Hifa officials is yet another sign of a deepening in the ties Perplex City has to its foreign counterparts, no doubt initiated in part by the ratification of the Halley Peace Accord in March of 268. The city has also begun preparing for a new wave of tourism brought on by an expected relaxation in travel requirements for citizens of the accord’s signatories.

Opponents of the city’s increasing involvement with foreign governments and economics cite the poor example of Earth, a world of closely-bordered and interlocking nations. “Proximity and over-familiarity between Earth nations leads to greed and violence,” said Academy sociologist Ricardo Givens. “Going down the same path as Earth will give us only hardship as our destination.”

Council Leader candidate Douglass Finlay, however, called the delegation’s arrival “an historic and exciting opportunity.” He insists that creating economic interdependence between Perplex City and other governments will result in a “new golden age of prosperity for all parties.”

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AQSYS Denied for Weather Researchers

By CORINNE HATHAWAY

Harrison Jones, team leader for the AQSYS project, said early this morning that cost-cutting measures proposed by Council Member Nathan Earlywine last week could be even more disastrous for the scientists that rely on the program than previously thought. Jones pointed to evidence of significantly anomalous behaviour reported in the aerostat network yesterday afternoon. Jones said that due to an as-yet-undiagnosed navigation problem, the network's small aircraft encountered "significant deviations" from their planned flight patterns.

The AQSYS program's head engineer, Horace Gladmason, elaborated on the nature of the problem. "The aerostats all stayed within their primary territory, at least," he said, "but we saw a lot of erroneous clustering patterns, a lot of blank patches in the network, and a number of close calls in which some instruments were damaged by other aerostats when their proximity detectors failed to sound the alarm. ... I've never seen anything quite like it." Due to these problems, he said that weather predictions for the city may be slightly less accurate

than typical for the next few days.

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The problems come a short time after the AQSYS program was singled out for budget cuts by Earlywine, who has advocated that the current craft and their "bloated instrument packages" be replaced with scaled-down version for a projected budget reduction of PCL37 million per year.

"Even at existing budget levels, we are clearly losing the maintenance battle," said Jones. "If the council insists on cutting some of our funding, then they may as well cut all of it, because we will no longer be able to produce meaningful science with even one leek less."

Earlywine said that he has not yet become familiar with the AQSYS system's malfunctions, but he had one comment to offer: "If we are seeing the aerostats malfunction, this would indicate, not that the program doesn't have enough money, but that the people in charge of spending it aren't doing their job," he said. "We don't need to spend more, we need to spend more wisely."

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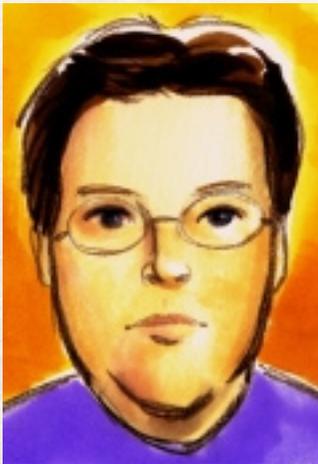
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View from Earth: Mad, Bad & Dangerous?

By MYF



I read with interest the report detailing the conclusion of the Kaplan trial. I work at a secure hospital in England, and although I am not a member of the medical profession, I take an interest in stories relating to mental

health care, and the history of asylums in Britain.

As in the Kaplan case in Perplex City, occasionally there are acts perpetrated by mentally ill people which shock the local community, and sometimes even an entire nation. These often receive a great deal of coverage in the media, and can remain in the collective mind for years, even decades after the events occurred. However, I do not wish to dwell on the most infamous cases, where the patient is largely known because of their horrific deeds. Instead, I would like to draw attention to some of the wonderful contributions made by

people suffering from mental illness.

It has long been speculated that there is a fine line between insanity and genius. Some of the most celebrated artists, performers, writers and politicians in the Western world have, or are widely believed to have, battled psychiatric problems: Winston Churchill, Vincent van Gogh, Isaac Newton, Lord Byron (the title of this piece is taken from a famous description of him), and Ludwig van Beethoven are but a few examples.

There are fewer instances of mentally ill people who have made their mark whilst in a hospital or asylum, but there are some. One such example is William Chester Minor, without whose efforts the Oxford English Dictionary would be very different. He was an American, born in 1834, and became a surgeon who served in the United States Army. By the late 1860s he was admitted to an asylum because of his mental state. In the early 1870s he came to Britain, where in 1872 he shot a man. He, like the Kaplans, was found not guilty by reason of insanity, and he was sent to Broadmoor Criminal Lunatic Asylum, one of the best-known psychiatric facilities in Britain. It was from there that he contributed numerous words and definitions to the fledgling dictionary over a period of many years. It is only quite recently that this contribution has become well known, following the publication in 1998 of a book detailing his work. Minor died in 1920, having been allowed to return to America.

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Another example is that of Richard Dadd, a British artist who was born in 1817. He showed promise as a painter, and was admitted to the Royal Academy of Art at the age of 20. In the early 1840s he travelled in Europe and the Middle East, where he began to suffer from bizarre behaviour which was attributed to sun stroke. In 1843, he murdered his father and fled to Paris, where he attempted to murder another man. He was arrested, and was committed to the Bethlem Hospital, more commonly known as Bedlam (a term which has entered the English language meaning a place of noise and confusion). He was allowed to continue his painting, and created some of his most famous works there. Many of his paintings were of fairies and other such creatures, a fashionable subject in Victorian England. One of his most popular paintings is "Fairy Feller's Master Stroke", a work which took him nine years of applying minute quantities of paint to build up a three dimensional image. Even then, he did not consider it to be a finished piece. After 20 years in Bedlam, he was transferred to Broadmoor Asylum, where he died in 1886.

I hope that people will appreciate that, while mental illness can lead to people committing terrible acts against others, it can also prompt them to make brilliant, valuable, and long-lasting contributions to society. In years to come, people

might be remarking on how Malcolm and Spencer Kaplan have influenced Perplex City. Who knows?

The View from Earth column is currently accepting submissions from its Earth readership. Please see our submission guidelines for more information.

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Scribe Anna Heath Found Murdered in Catacombs

By JEREMY CLARIDGE

Anna Heath of the Academy was found murdered late on Friday in the catacombs near the Brotherhood of the Six temple in the Old Town, not far from her home. Heath, who was a puzzle scribe on the Cube Retrieval Team at the Academy, as well as a Fellow in Ancient Languages, was discovered by a friend and a colleague taking part in the volunteer search that began when she was reported missing by her family on Thursday.

According to Police Chief Eoin Morgan, Heath's body showed signs of "serious trauma" occurring before her death. "There is no question whatsoever that this was foul play," Morgan said. "forensic evidence has clearly established that not only was she intentionally killed, but someone -- presumably the same party -- inflicted grievous injuries on her over a period of several hours while she was still alive." He declined to give specific details, citing the need to preserve confidentiality in a potentially sensitive investigation.

Morgan added that so far, there are no suspects, and there is no known motive for the crime. "Our best guess is that she was targeted because of her position on the CRT," he said. He added that this is a gravely concerning crime, and that given the high profile of the victim, he plans to supervise the investigation personally.

Master of the Academy Sente Kiteway called Heath "one of the best and brightest the Academy has ever had the joy of educating," adding "This is a senseless and horrific crime, and merits being pursued by all the forces for justice the city has to offer."

Heath's Cube Retrieval Team colleagues were distraught over the news. "Anna was such a wise and gentle person," said Aiko Entrescore, also of the CRT. "It's hard to imagine anyone harbouring a grudge against her, much less doing this."

Heath is survived by her husband, Fleming Heath, and three children, Otto, Pip, and Eve. A memorial service will be held at the Academy on the Great Lawn at 5pm on Thursday evening.

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Wave 4 Anticipation Running High, Launch Today

By KATE BREWSTER

Fans of Earth's puzzle-solving Leaderboard are abuzz today, with Wave 4 cards becoming eligible to solve right around press time. Casinos and office pools alike throughout Perplex City are giddy with anticipation of the massive reshuffling expected to occur over the coming days and weeks, though more than one cynic has suggested that once the dust has settled, the new status quo will look pretty much exactly like the old one.

As players and gamblers alike have waited expectantly for the Wave 4 release, it's been a quiet few weeks at the top. Most of the leading players continuing to possess their leads, though there has been the occasional small change as participants compete for precious bonus points to distinguish themselves from the hoi polloi. Nonetheless, a concerted campaign of solving has been underway in the seldom-watched lower ranks, putting the total number of cards solved at the impressive half-a-million mark.

PCAG analyst Samara Jones commented that "this is a key milestone for Mind Candy, the Academy and the many parties with a stake in this project, and indeed all those seeking the safe return of the Cube. Yet, it's vital that the momentum of the project is maintained - thankfully, it looks as if the launch of Wave 4 will catalyse exactly that process."

On the monthly leaderboard for brand-new players, almagest scored big with a massive 9544 points, rocketing all the way to 101st place. Xaiga is this week's fastest-moving new player, clamebring up to 1805th place with 2803 points.

Over the past month, players have clocked in over 57,000 cards solved and nearly 1.3 million points; the combined points total for all players stands today at over 15.8 million. Jones, though, displayed visible glee at the idea that the release of Wave 4 may significantly change those numbers for next month. "It's really about time I got some more interesting data to look at," she said. "You can only talk about the same top-ten players so long before you start repeating yourself."

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Doctor Arrested for Records Tampering

By JARED CHERRYWOOD

Ng General Hospital doctor Reynold Yumin was arrested late Tuesday evening at his home on charged of falsifying patient records to conceal evidence of misconduct and criminal negligence on his part. Yumin has been a biochemical specialist in Greystone's much-vaunted immunology department for approximately six years.

Police detective Tara Millar said that colleagues of Yumin's detected some discrepancies in patient cases for which Yumin offered a consultation, and notified the hospital's administration, who in turn conducted an internal review and subsequently contacted the police.

Hospital spokesman Georgi Stanislav said that the hospital's administration has already turned over all relevant records and testimony to police, and are cooperating with the investigation to the fullest of their ability. "We regret that something like this could occur in our walls, but we are set on making amends as soon as possible, and we are examining policies and procedures to find ways to prevent this type of misconduct in the

future," he said.

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According to Millar, it is not yet clear whether Yumin's errors or his falsification of records resulted in adverse outcomes for his patients. "That matter is under investigation by an independent panel of medical experts," she said. "Nonetheless, it is very clear that Yumin intentionally and maliciously altered patient records in order to make himself look better."

Yumin was unavailable to speak to the press, but his mother, pulmonologist Rosalinda Hobart, also employed at Greycastle, issued an emphatic denial that Yumin acted in any way inappropriately. "My son is a good man, and a fine doctor," she said. "I am certain that a strenuous clinical review will show that he did absolutely nothing out of the bounds of propriety or ethics."

The Office of Public Health has said that Yumin's license to practice medicine has been temporarily revoked, pending the outcome of his trial.

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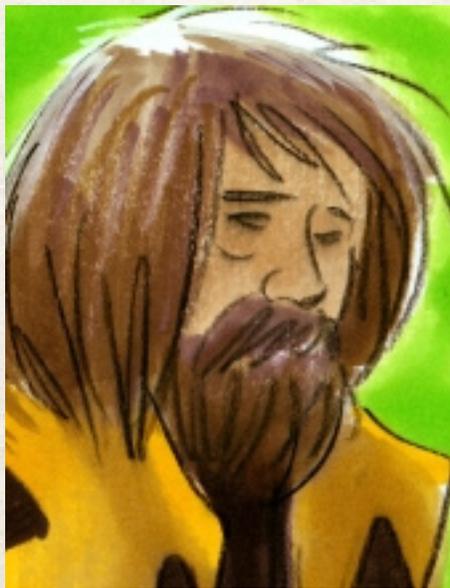
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Fisherman Begins 90-Day Vigil to Protest Council Policies

By GARIMA KING



Leo Banatu

Fisherman and sculptor Leo Banatu began a planned 90-day vigil in Key Square Sunday morning, in protest of the City Council's foreign policy moves in recent months including a loosening of paperwork requirements for foreign tourists and its hospitality toward a delegation from Xia-Hifa. During the vigil he will consume only clear fluids as an act of spiritual cleansing, he said.

"We live in turbulent times," Banatu told reporters. "Ever since the loss of the Cube, our people have lost their self-reliance and independence. Our people have lost our path. I am going to complete this act of construction of a meaningful spiritual space here in the

heart of our government, and hopefully bring back some of the spirit of our people that kept us distinct. We must work to preserve who we are in the face of this spiritual void."

For the next 90 days, Banatu will reside under a small awning in Key Square. A group of supporters have organized to bring him water, broth, and nutrient solutions to keep up his strength. He said he plans to deliver "daily exhortations" to the politicians and government employees who typically use the square for meals and open-air meetings.

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Banatu does not have a history of bold public protests such as this, and some family members expressed "deep pride" that he is making this move. "Our Leo always did have strong beliefs," said his sister, Emerald Baker. "It's wonderful to see him take such a bold action toward what he feels is the right thing."

The Office of the Council issued a statement saying that the city's government takes into consideration all points of view from its citizens, but that dramatic moves "calculated to garner attention from the press" receive no additional weight. "All our policies are carefully measured against the good of the populace, its health and continued well-being," read the statement. Individual members of the council all declined to comment on Banatu's protest.

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Wave 4 Brings About Anticipated Reshuffle

By KATE BREWSTER

It's been a week of explosive action as the release of Wave 4 has separated the traditional leading posse, deposed the former leaders, and ushered in a new hierarchy in their place.

On July 31, Wave 4 cards became available to solve, and the response was massive and immediate. Domroberts commenced proceedings with #160 Fingerprints just three seconds after the system went online, followed by another 20 solves in the first ten seconds and 2,764 overnight. Indeed, a staggering 18,103 Wave 4 cards have been solved at the time of writing.

The onslaught has seen previous leaderboard champion Tally fall from first place to 108th, while much-fancied contender Oliverkeers13 languishes in 143rd. Rumours suggest he is "on holiday," which has proved little consolation to those who fancied a flutter on the puzzling prodigy. Some of the more recent ascendants to the Top 10 have kept pace with the competition, however.

Badbarry, the new leader, has carped more diem than was perhaps originally expected, launching an assault on the leaderboard that has redefined the race according to PCAG analyst Samara Jones. "We've also seen great work from other contenders such as ManleyM, echidna, doublecross and Guin," she said. "It's fantastic to see them building on the solid positions they had established towards the conclusion of Wave 3. As we've seen with other competitors, that's by no means a given."

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Of the Wave 4 cards, only #235 Circuitous, #255 Clinical Explanation and #256 Billion To One remain unsolved. The latter appears to require a collaborative effort from players to track down a man depicted upon the card, a huge task that rumours suggest is already underway. The first silver solvers were Blanchie, solving #239 Persian 45 seconds after Wave 4 went live, while Austin got the better of #250 Manoeuvres after just 3 minutes and 30 seconds. Twixwolf was the overall star of launch day, netting himself 4 first-solves, although he's currently in 59th place overall.

This rampage of point-scoring means that the leading 53 players have now earned the exclusive and previously unavailable black leitmark, while 182 players have reached purple status.

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On the niche leaderboards, echidna is the reigning female champion, but Hunting4Treasur, currently in second place on the ladies' leaderboard, is our highest-placed American competitor. EvilGenius, 20th overall, leads the Canadians.

With the full set of puzzle cards now on sale, newcomers have a better chance than ever of making a big splash. Olilu, who joined the fray last Tuesday, has accrued 3276 points in that time (although alfredhw is marginally ahead in terms of cards solved, at 104). The most notable success story is surely that of almagest, who having registered a month ago today is now 6th on the global leaderboard with 14,855 points and 247 cards solved, a stunning and unprecedented ascent to the top flight.

What next for Earth's elite puzzle-solvers? Will we see the establishment of a new order, or the return of familiar faces? Who will be the first to make the connection for #235, or explain the mysteries of #255? Check back next week to find out!

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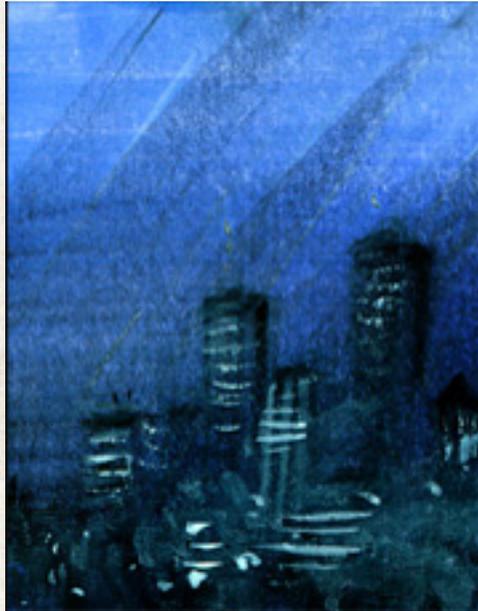
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City Loses Power, Data Connection to Earth Lost for 2 Days

By IONA RODIE



Power was lost to a huge swathe of the southern and eastern parts of the city and the data link to Earth was severed on Thursday in what various sources are calling an act of sabotage or criminal negligence on the part of the Academy. Power was lost in the entire area south of Polygon Park, as well as all along the coast as far north as Frigate Parade.

Earthologists were concerned the loss of

the data link would be irretrievable, as the new fallback link to the city was not yet initialised, and the game the Academy designed to celebrate the San Francisco connection had been designed so that Academy sources could step in to help if the participants ran into trouble. Sources inside the Academy say that the carrier wave for the data link was “mere minutes away” from being lost completely when the data link was restored in San Francisco late Saturday night.

Sarah Covington at the Centre for Reality Research told the Sentinel that “an intentional act of sabotage” irreparably damaged the data link and cause it to shut down. “The blackout was simultaneous, but it’s clear that the data link problem was completely separate,” she said. Covington did indicate, however, that CRR equipment detected an anomaly which it does believe is linked to the blackout. Her group is still examining the data and is not yet prepared to discuss its conclusions. “So far, it’s clear to us that the blackout and the damage to the data link were two completely separate events,” she said.

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City Council member Ruth Sawyer called the incident “incontrovertible proof that the Academy and its projects require more heavy-handed oversight,” and railed against Council Leader Camryn Scott’s more relaxed policy. “We have

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put dangerous tools in the hands of the academics, and it is our responsibility to watch how they are used,” she said. “It is simply too much to believe that the power blackout that affected our city and the data link problem are unrelated in any fashion.”

Power was restored to all parts of the city within about ten hours, though in the interim, chaos reigned in the areas affected. The Perplex City Electrical Authority said that a sudden, massive draw of energy overloaded the entire grid, leaving subways, businesses, homes, and key city infrastructure inoperable. The PCEA has not been able to pinpoint the origin of this massive power draw.

Kiteway is allegedly blaming the problems on a hostile third party, although he was unavailable to speak to the press directly. Information leaked to the Sentinel indicates that a group calling itself the Third Power, presumably to copycat the historic secret society, has claimed responsibility for the blackout and sabotaged the data link. Rumours from highly-placed Academy sources also suggest that the blackout was concurrent with a wormhole to Earth opening and one or more persons transiting to Earth through it.

“That’s just ridiculous,” Sawyer said. “By that kind of logic, I should blame the monster that lives in my closet the next time I make a mistake. ... And if there

was some sort of wormhole, this places the blame clear on Master Kiteway and his lackies, to me. Who else would have the equipment and knowledge to make this alleged wormhole, anyway?”

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View from Earth: Long Distance Friendship

By RACHEL WILD



Aiding the search for the Cube has many motivations for the people of Earth. Obviously the £100,000 / \$200,000 reward money is quite a big one. The opportunity to be doing the right

thing and help others in need is another. However, try explaining this to a person on the street, and unfortunately most Earth people still fail to see the point. Out of the 38,000 registered players, spread all across the globe, what are the odds of any one of us actually finding the Cube and claiming the reward? And where is the evidence to suggest this Cube, or this far off world of Perplex City even exists?

However, for some Cube Hunters, a far greater motivation and benefit from this two-year-long search has transpired. Whatever got us into this game in the first place, be it curiosity, a penchant for puzzles or a knack for card collecting -- a lot of us have found that the community, and the people you meet along the way,

has been a very good reason to stay on board.

The launch party celebrating the release of the Wave 4 puzzle cards was a good example of the social fringe benefits that come from being part of the Earth-based Cube Retrieval effort. Whilst there was card trading, puzzle solving and quiz winning all to be found, there were also drinks to be drunk, fun to be had and friends to be made. A number of us who have spent the past months talking over the internet, swapping ideas, speculation and oftentimes, idle chat have, as a result, become firm friends, confirmed by the opportunity to meet up in real life, brought together from all parts of the country, nay, world, by the common thread of a connection with your fair city.

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It comes as no surprise then, that strong connections can be made over the most ethereal of data links. Just as most of us had not met each other before talking over the internet, we have not met any of our Perplexian friends in real life either, for lack of technology rather than lack of enthusiasm. We have communicated through email, blogs, even telephone messages, but the fact that we have not yet met face to face does not mean that we have not shared some deep bonds. We have learned some profound things about some of the people we have been in contact with, and been there for each other in the direst of situations.

Continued

With this in mind, I would like to express, on behalf of all the Earth people involved in the hunt for the Cube, our deepest regrets on learning of Anna Heath's passing. Some say we did not know her, but we have communicated, we know she was a good person, and we are all saddened by her loss.

Thank you Perplex City, not only for bringing your friendship to our planet, but in bringing us together, on Earth, with people we may have never met otherwise. In times like this it does not bring the happiest of feelings, but I think we all feel that it is better to have lost a friend than never have known them in the first place.

The skeptics and the gamblers are the ones missing out -- for we individually may not gain the Cube or the reward, but we know that there is more to the search for the Cube than that, and I hope that the community may remain even after we have found it.

The View from Earth column is currently accepting submissions from its Earth readership. Please see our submission guidelines for more information.

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40,000 Cube Hunters

By KATE BREWSTER

It's been another week of blistering activity on the leaderboard as the shockwaves of the Wave 4 launch continue to ripple through the ranks. The stats should speak for themselves: Overall, the total competitor count now exceeds 40,000, setting a new milestone for Mind Candy, the Academy, and the Cube-hunting collective on Earth. Over 27,000 Wave 4 cards have now been solved, with 78 players now eligible for the exclusive black leitmark, and 236 reaching purple level.

Following a spell lurking in the shadows of the Top 10, ManleyM has finally ascended to the top spot, with a frightening clutch of 15,400 points. Bragging that “#239 Persian took me all of 5 minutes to solve,” many of our readers will no doubt be interested to note that he is indeed single. However, given the current turmoil amid the upper echelons of the leaderboard, his moment in the sun may not last for long. Indeed, there's a veritable bevy of players with substantial bonuses from special events, who may once again come into their own once they can match the current leaders solve-for-solve.

On the topic of solves, #255 Clinical Explanation was finally explained away by Vivixect earlier today, and has since been joined by twelve luminaries following a series of sly hints on popular discussion fora. Ringtail, currently third on the overall leaderboard, was the first to make the necessary connections and solve #235 Circuitous, and likewise he's since been joined by ten other wired-up puzzlers.

This week's brightest new hope is Mackem, who has already accumulated 83 solves and 2657 points in just six days, while Purdy has staged a tour de force this month, netting himself some 10,119 points and 205 solves in the past two-and-a-half weeks.

Check back next week for more analysis, comment and excitement from the Leaderboard, exclusively in the Sentinel.

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Finlay Abandons Race Amid Spying Rumours

By ROBERTO GOODWIN

After weeks of speculation as to the status of Finlay's quiet campaign office, erstwhile council candidate Douglass Finlay officially withdrew his candidacy today. "I still maintain that the allegations against me are categorically untrue," he said, "but I've been tried and convicted by the press, and it's clear that I should focus on clearing my good name right now instead of seeking public office."

He added that he would not throw his support behind either remaining candidate for the Council Leader post, saying that he would not want to taint his favoured candidate's chances. He also asserted that he would run again in the future: "Once I've got all this sorted out, I'm going to be back. You can't stop me next time," he said.

Meanwhile, sources from inside Finlay's faltering camp have said that Finlay has been notified that the police investigation into his campaign's activities have nearly concluded, and that he could be arrested and charged as early as next week. Finlay has been under investigation for allegedly pledging to use his office to

profit his former business associates, and for planning and possibly executing a spying campaign against sitting members of the City Council. Revelation of these activities came through the leak of documents detailing these schemes to the press from a campaign insider.

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With mere weeks to go before the council elections, political analysts say that the now two-way race for Council Leader should be a close match. "[Sitting Council Leader Camryn] Scott and [Council Member Nathan] Earlywine have to choose now how to go after Finlay's supporters, now," said Finlay's former campaign manager, Anton Kaneda. "It may be that the wisest choice for each of them is do nothing at all. Better not to appear to change positions to attract this new pool of loose votes, and stay true to their original messages."

The new frontrunner for Roy Yolen's council seat, which Finlay had been running for, is Natasha Heme, a neophyte politician who is running on a policy of increasing education spending for younger children while cutting back on physical infrastructure and public works spending.

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OK13 Unlucky for Some

By KATE BREWSTER

It took almost three weeks, and cost the Dream Team Fan Club half its membership, but the doubters have been silenced today -- Oliverkeers13 is once again top of the leaderboard, following a five-and-a-half hour rampage of card solving.

Kicking off at around 5:40 yesterday afternoon, the protege began a systematic solving blitzkrieg, starting with #254 Escape. By 11:08 last night, he'd completed #008 Mind Candy and with it every Wave 4 card solved so far - a rate of around one card every five minutes, not including the noticeable pause around 9:30pm that Samara Jones, resident PCAG analyst, describes as "most likely a late dinner."

The reaction has been electric. Following his deposition from the top spot by Tally and his plummet to 140th place following the Wave 4 launch, his chances were written off by many -- from members of his own DTFC (whose members on one popular key network halved in the past three weeks) to leading pundits such as Jack Gallagher, writer for Perplex City men's magazine Balls Are The New Cubes. "Possessing an unsustainable pace and cockiness beyond his deserve, he remains a sure-fire candidate for

burnout," he wrote, before declaring that "his days are numbered." Yet the former leading competitor seems to have executed a strategy deliberately crafted to challenge the naysayers and re-establish his reign to maximum effect. If anything, his sabbatical has swelled his already-legendary ego only further.

"It was easy," said Keers, when asked for comment. "I just reclaimed my rightful place. I'm not sure whether all the other Cube Hunters are stupid, or I'm just exceedingly brilliant. I couldn't have done it without the support of the OK13DTFC!" In a previous Sentinel interview, he attributed his success to "a combination of effort, intelligence, and rugged good looks."

"I am the best, so it is only natural that people should love me," he continued.

Meanwhile, Steve Faith, who would like to be able to fly so he can "laugh and point", is flying over much of the leaderboard with 91 solves and 2721 points earned in his first four days of play. Tomrivardgoulet, meanwhile, has accumulated some 12,027 points and 225 solves since he joined a month ago yesterday, making him the champion of this month's new players.

Another exciting week of action on the leaderboard, then. It really can all change in the blink of an eye -- and the Sentinel will be here to report on all of it. Check back next week for the latest leaderboard news and analysis!

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Academy Secrecy Harms City, Council Must Intervene Now

Opinion/Editorial

Over a week ago, a terrible blackout struck the city unexpectedly. At the same time, the data link Perplex City enjoys to Earth was severed, and a backup data link was activated thanks only to the quick action of Cube hunters on Earth. Our city has waited patiently for explanations and apologies from Master of the Academy Sente Kiteway, but none have been forthcoming.

Since that time, only rumours have come out of the Academy, each more ridiculous than the last. Even those statements treated as “fact” by Kiteway’s patsy at the Centre for Reality Research, Sarah Covington, are so obviously filtered and heavily spun that one must assume she speaks no words that Kiteway did not choose for her himself. The Sentinel is, therefore, choosing to break from a false objectivity and encourage the populace to take action with us.

It is obvious to even the smallest school children that these events were no

coincidence. Moreover, Covington has claimed that the power blackout was caused by a wormhole to Earth, through which people appear to have travelled, and has since remained silent on the topic. This explanation strains credibility on any number of counts. First, we have long been told that this type of transportation between worlds is impossible. How is it suddenly possible, and conveniently in time to take the blame for an incident that harmed dozens of citizens and caused economic harm to even more businesses and families?

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Second, the Academy claims it was in no way involved in this wormhole. This disingenuous statement belies the fact that the Academy and the CRR together are the only entities in the city capable of performing the types of reality research and development that would presumably be required to create a transworld wormhole. Are we now to believe that the cows at Whipsmart have cunningly designed some sort of portal device in order to commune with their brethren on Earth? There is obviously a deeper truth here that the Academy is keeping quiet, and the city deserves to know what it is.

Finally, it has become clear that nobody, not even the City Council, has been kept aware of precisely what the Academy is working on, nor its progress. This is completely unacceptable. How can we

Continued

leave the recovery of our most precious possession, the Receda Cube, to an unreliable and secretive crew such as this one? Clearly the time is at hand for the Council to pull back on Sente's reins and take these matters well into their own hands.

The Sentinel rarely intervenes directly in matters of public affair, but we feel that when a cause is just, we cannot sit idle and allow it to go unchampioned under the coward's blanket of journalistic objectivity. We, the staff of the Sentinel, are also citizens and taxpayers of the city, and our lives are as affected by the current events we cover as any others'.

Please, take a stand with us. Write to protest@perplexcitysentinel.com and help us demand the truth from the Academy. Help us demand greater City Council oversight of the Academy. We will forward all correspondence to both the Academy and the City Council. The game that Kiteway is playing has proven too dangerous, and we all deserve to know the truth.

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Finlay Arrested, Charged

By *ROBERTO GOODWIN*

Sometime political candidate and prominent businessman Douglass Finlay has been taken into police custody and charged with influence peddling, invasion of privacy, and illegally acquiring unfair and unethical information to influence an electoral race, police say. According to Police Chief Eoin Morgan, the controversial documents leaked to the press by a campaign insider some months ago have been conclusively authenticated. These papers indicated that Finlay was promising favourable policies to business associates in order to garner their support for his candidacy. The police also found evidence in the campaign offices of various City Council members that showing that some preliminary work in setting up covert surveillance networks had, in fact, been completed.

Finlay again insisted that the charges are completely false, despite what the police are calling a “conclusive and indisputable body of evidence.” In a press statement released from prison, Finlay said he planned to use the full force of his wealth and stature in the business community to prove his innocence. “Any spy networks or unethical business deals are news to me, and completely not my doing,” he said.

“I will not rest until I have discovered the truth behind this terrible affair.”

Council Leader Camryn Scott considers Finlay just another casualty of politics. “I feel a deep regret that something like this could happen,” she said. “It can be easy to lose sight of the objective significance of one’s actions when one enters that ultimate game, politics. I do sympathise with [Finlay’s] motivations, he’s only human, just like the rest of us, and just as prone to error. And it can be difficult not to press a perceived advantage.”

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Council Member Nathan Earlywine, meanwhile, had nothing but disgust to express toward Finlay’s actions. “Those who would seek a council seat should hold themselves to only the highest moral and intellectual standards,” he said. “The City Council is no place for those seeking to accrue base wealth or personal glory. ... We who sit here are the humblest servants of the people.”

Finlay had been running for City Council Leader in the district currently represented by Roy Yolen, but dropped out of the race last week to focus on his legal concerns. Finlay has previously resigned from his post as co-founder of Finlay-McLennan, the leading supplier of home and personal care products, in order to seek political office.

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Arbitrary Rivalries Create New, Fresh Leaderboard Drama

By KATE BREWSTER

With the top of the leaderboard beginning to settle with the redemption of oliverkeers13, attention has moved to some of the lesser-known rivalries on the Perplex City leaderboard.

Take, for instance, the cutthroat bitterness between MikeJ and MikeyJ. One, a fresh-faced 25-year-old who joined the hunt in February this year, the other, a fresh-faced 27-year-old who registered in October of last year. Currently, with his age advantage, extra five months of playtime and additional “Y”, MikeyJ leads 13,545 points to 7908. Many, however, don’t believe we’ve seen the last of this contentious puzzle duel. PCAG analyst Samara Jones summarises: “The two are really chalk and cheese, and no mistake. Of course, from here in Perplex City, we can’t really delve too deeply into the psychological depths of this head-to-head, but I wouldn’t be surprised to find trash talk, gamesmanship, and even warring factions within the community divided along exactly these lines.”

A similar but somehow less compelling rivalry is growing between Chris, 27 and of the UK, and the more geographically-monikered ChrisUK, 31 years old and surprisingly also of the UK. ChrisUK has 585 points and lurks in 5307th place, while the very slightly more energetic Chris, at 780 points, has captured 4619th place. Jones called this rivalry

“comparatively bland if no less fierce,” and remarked that as a general rule, fans are regrettably not interested in activity below 1500 points, no matter how much intense drama might be involved.

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King of this week’s new players is kandyman, who at 6685 points has gone just a Wordspy too far in making a particularly evil first impression, although thewolfboy leads on card solves at 170 to 163. Ixalon has finally got the edge on mathlete to become the best of the month’s new players, with 234 cards solved and 13,384 points earned, a six-card and 577 point lead over mathlete.

Finally, this week, one of the faceless rank of rivalry-free players under 100th place, jazzychad, apparently foiled at 159th place in his climb toward the top, has struck out to seek wider acclaim through other means, namely by providing an array of inventive tools for players to visualise both their own scores, and those of others. His tools so far include a points graph, a stunning array of statistics describing the body of players on the leaderboard, and an absolutely baffling array of statistics on cards and the solving thereof.

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Academy Issues Denial of Involvement with Portal, Blackout

By IONA RODIE

The Academy has issued a formal denial of any involvement in the alleged creation of a wormhole to Earth and the ensuing power blackout that occurred a few weeks ago. A statement on the Academy site flatly denies that the events were related to Academy projects or personnel.

The statement comes as public pressure grows on the City Council to curtail the autonomy of the Academy. “They have money, and they have access to some pretty frightening technology,” said Council Member Nathan Earlywine. “I think it’s pretty clear that the people of Perplex City deserve to know what the Academy is doing right here in the heart of our own city, when they could be putting our very lives and homes at risk.”

He also added that, even though the Academy has issued a denial, he has “grave reservations” about the situation even requiring such a denial. “If the Academy were operating as it should, and the Academy truly were not involved with this incident, the question should

never even have been asked,” he said. “But here we are, asking anyway.”

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Master of the Academy Sente Kiteway said that the Academy is only operating as it has for many hundreds of years. “The people of the city have always entrusted the Academy to hold secrets for the security of the people,” he said. “Our times are not exceptional in this respect.” He added that he sincerely hoped voters would not be swayed by “unreasoning mistrust.”

Academy insiders, though, say that Kiteway is using stronger language in private, calling Earlywine’s remarks “shameless politicking.” One source said on condition of anonymity that Kiteway is increasingly angry that the Academy’s traditional place within the hierarchy of government is being transformed into a political gamepiece. “The sharp line between the council and the Academy is being blurred,” said the source, “and none of us in the Academy think any good will come of it.”

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Wave Length Closed During Repairs

By FOSTER LIDDELL

A segment of Wave Length was closed for three hours yesterday afternoon as emergency crews scrambled to repair a damaged traffic signal. The signal lost function unexpectedly at around 1:45pm, leading to a series of automative near-misses before the city traffic monitoring system discovered the problem during a routine maintenance self-check. Traffic was diverted within about ten minutes.

One motorist, bookkeeper Nolan Milliner, said he was in his vehicle reading the news when his car lurched to a sudden halt. "I guess the automatic safety override turned on," he said. "Next thing I know I see another car zoom by right in front of me, the whole situation was very dangerous!"

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June Owens of the Office of Transportation said that the signal succumbed to a manufacturing defect that had not been detected during normal quality assurance procedures. "We regret the delay this caused some travellers, but we are confident we responded as

quickly and effectively as possible under the circumstances," she said. "We're going to conduct an internal review of the events leading up to this to see if this was a foreseeable problem."

The delays caused by the temporary detour were about 15 minutes long, commuters said, with the worst inconveniences suffered by residents and businesses along the street that were temporarily inaccessible by automobile. Owens noted that parking regulations were relaxed in the immediate area, and foot traffic into the affected area was unimpeded.

No accidents or injuries connected to the incident have been reported.

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View from Earth: The Great Wen

By LAURA E. HALL



Earth's 19th century radical politician and journalist William Cobbett referred to the city of London as "The Great Wen", comparing it to "an abnormal growth or a cyst protruding from a surface especially of the

skin" [1] due to the city's rapid growth in size and changes in its disposition, "embodying the centuries old fear that the city was becoming so large and unruly, so diverse and ungovernable, that it could not possibly survive." [2]

What Cobbett failed to recognize was that this very growth -- even with problems associated with any large city's social development, like crime and policing, education and housing -- has been inherent in London's development throughout time as a unique, fascinating and successful city.

And the same can be said for our own group of Earth-based cube hunters. From the first time we accepted this task we

have faced unique issues, but we were small in number and found that traditional methods of communication, regulation and representation within the Earth-based puzzle-solving community easily suited our needs.

Now that our numbers exceed 41,000 individuals and are spread across multiple countries around the world, we must - - out of necessity -- adapt and grow. Never before has anyone seen a project of this scale and level of success, so it is understandably different to know what will work best for this community.

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The precedents set by similar, smaller efforts are a solid foundation, but they no longer effectively serve our needs. Neither Earth nor Perplex City have seen anything like us before, and every day we grow and expand into something totally unique and distinctive; I suspect we will continue to astound the multitudes as we expand our scope and vision into more fields of interest. Because of this, we must keep our roots in mind as we adapt and reshape them.

What are the best methods of effectively communicating with each other -- and even more, how do we regulate that communication, stay on topic, and not lose ourselves in the squabbles that inevitably arise when such a large group has been together, in such close quarters, for so long? How do we maintain the exchange of ideas, not only within the

Continued

community itself, but with similar, parallel populations, and indeed the world at large?

There is no single correct answer. With so many participating in the Cube Retrieval effort, we must accept that we are still learning -- but we must also agree to keep an open mind, grip as tightly as possible and hang on for the ride, innovating as we go along.

Although the social, economic, and health systems of developing London were developing and expanding rapidly and were seemingly out of control, they were all interconnected, and combined with the foundation of long history, they formed the core of the city's strength, allowing it to withstand "both major catastrophes as well as deal with the day-to-day social problems."

In the same way, we are a successful puzzle-solving community with our own unique, flourishing culture, capable of supporting us through every trial. We are diverse, our interests and expertise varied; we have our own vernacular and a unique menagerie containing tretretretres, wild bears, varied fruits and even imaginary tentacled creatures. And we are lucky that we can put aside our personal differences and join together to serve a greater cause. This is the strength of our community, and an essential part of our group identity and character.

We may fight amongst ourselves. People may criticize us. We will develop new friendships, and cultivate old relationships. We will work from a shared foundation and forge new, previously unimagined ground. And at the end of it, we cannot and will not apologize for who we are.

1: <http://www.m-w.com/dictionary/wen>
2: <http://www.brynmawr.edu/library/speccoll/guides/london/socialeconissues.shtml>

The View from Earth column is currently accepting submissions from its Earth readership. Please see our submission guidelines for more information.

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PCAG Investigating Championship Substance Abuse

By CORWIN JONES

Perplex City Academy Games insiders have told the Sentinel under condition of anonymity that a serious investigation is underway regarding the illicit use of cognitive enhancement during the final three weeks of championship play over the last four years. “Some new evidence has recently come to light,” said the source, “and the way things are looking now, there could be some serious fallout.”

Although no specific names of involved players have been disclosed as of yet, the source said that there could be “very far-flung implications” once the investigators’ information is made public. “There will definitely be charges filed,” the source said, indicating that “very many top players could have been involved, and there may even have been assistance in the cover-up from highly placed officials linked with the games.””

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Paula Ching, director of Substance Compliance at the PCAG, admitted that

the department is investigating possible violations of PCAG substance rules. However, “This is the reason Substance Compliance exists,” she said. “We are always investigating this possibility. ... It’s against our policy to comment on specific cases until such a time as we have evidence that it is anything beyond groundless accusation.””

PCAG Chairman Robert Zhi-Hui, though, said that he was unaware of any far-reaching investigations of that nature. “We have tests and protocols in place to prevent this sort of thing, and they are strenuously applied and observed by multiple parties during the championship weeks,” he said. “Most drug offenders are discovered and dismissed from the games during initial knockout rounds due to these effective policies.””

Reigning PCAG champion Ryan Cahill, when questioned about the investigation, indicated that he had not personally heard anything, but said that he hoped the accusations would turn out to be false. “Everyone at the PCAG works hard to keep the games clean and fair,” he said. “If someone were trying to get an edge with drugs, that just wouldn’t be right.”

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Exacache Releases Third-Gen Janet AI

By CHO KAPLAN

Exacache Software today announced the release of Janet Three, the next generation of the company's popular business-use artificial intelligence software. Improvements added in this release are numerous, and include significantly improved experiential integration, some performance enhancements, and an entirely rewritten pattern analysis algorithm that allows Janet to recognise when an unusual situation is cropping up more frequently so that she can bring them to the attention of human operators.

“Our new Janet Three is as competent as a human employee when she is well-trained, and of course able to take on a significantly higher volume of work,” boasted Exacache President Joachim Felderhoff. “There is no doubt that Janet is the benchmark for computer-assisted corporate customer support, and with her new enhancements, we are confident our customers will begin to find an even wider array of applications for her.”

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Exacache says it is already hard at work

on a fourth Janet release, which would include enhancements to recognise vocal stress patterns and alter Janet's behaviour to suit when the person she is interacting with becomes agitated. Industry analyst Sonja Heme said that this sort of emotional reactivity “will really break open the AI market to a more diverse array of applications,” but said that she does not expect a huge boom in market penetration from Janet Three.

Although Exacache does not publicly release specific sales figures, industry analysts estimate that to date, roughly three thousand separate Janet instances have been deployed, with the majority of those performing simple customer service operations. Exacache shares on the PCX rose to PCL573.20 on the news this morning.

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View from Earth: Technology in Youth

By PAUL WILLIAMS



Our world is a rapidly changing one. Not only naturally, but also artificially. Ever since the first computer back in 80BC (The Antikythera Mechanism) up to the very latest multi-core home computer systems,

using machinery to automate everyday tasks has become commonplace in our world. However, nowhere is it becoming more prevalent than in the young adults of today.

It's rare that you go down the street without seeing at least two or three groups of teenagers on their mobile phones; listening to their MP3 Players (a type of portable music player), or using other various technologies that are the latest "on the street." Or rather, it is getting harder and harder to see them, because they are getting smaller as well! Many more children are also accessing the Internet, both at home and at school, for various reasons.

The Internet is becoming more and more

embedded in youth culture with the advent of what has been termed "Web 2.0" -- the latest movement of the Internet. This is led forwards by social networking sites such as MySpace, which allows the users to interact with each other like never before. Of course, today's youth have tacked onto this revolution in Internet technology - you would be hard pressed to find many teenagers who hadn't heard of MySpace, or other such sites.

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Internet access at school is much more focused on education. Children aged anywhere from 5 to 15 will be taught computer and possibly Internet skills in school, and how to use it to further their education, as well as use it safely on sites they may access out of school time. This is fundamental in keeping the youth technology boom growing. If the children don't learn how to stay safe, the parents will deny them access to the technology that is ever imposing upon them.

A large proportion of youths are in possession of a mobile phone by their teenage years, many even before that. Who in their right mind wouldn't want to have the very latest mobile phone out on the market? The current "new" technology in mobile phones is cameras -- sometimes more powerful than a standalone camera, these allow the holder to take digital photos whenever and wherever they like -- and many can take videos as well.

Of course, all this technology around today's youths comes with controversy.

Continued

Does a mobile phone cause long-term brain damage? Are the technologies being used for the wrong reasons (such as videos of school bullying), or even abused (mobile phones being used in school lesson times)? Youths are always inventive of their own technologies as well. One notable new invention was the "silent ringtone" which claimed that no-one over a certain age would be able to hear it -- making it perfect to alert the user of a new message or phone call whilst in class without the teacher being aware.

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Gone are the days when a teenager would be amused by watching television soap operas, or putting together an Airfix model kit -- now the video game holds supreme as the largest form of entertainment in the world. Running pixellated characters across a screen (although many new video games are using new technologies to make the pictures seem more and more real) may not seem amusing to a Perplexian, but it has caught the youth culture - and many adults too! - by the reins and has held on tight. Now, we are awaiting the arrival of the "next-generation" video game consoles. Who knows what new technologies these will bring? No doubt that the youth culture will embrace them, no matter what they turn out to be.

You can ask your parents what they did "back in their day" for entertainment,

and they will probably reply with such things as going to the cinema, going to pop/rock concerts, and other such things. Of course these are still around today - - who doesn't want to go and see the new blockbuster? -- but these have been surpassed by computer games, mobile phones (for long distance chatting, rather than meeting up), and other new forms of technology. Why go to the new movie when you could download it at home, or play a computer game with your friends? Youth culture has changed to adapt to the ever changing technology of our world.

The View from Earth column is currently accepting submissions from its Earth readership. Please see our submission guidelines for more information.

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Guilty Jumper Cites Extreme Puzzling as Motivation

By GARIMA KING

Stunt enthusiast Raoul Benton was convicted last week on charges of trespassing and public endangerment for his May thrill-seeking jump from Ascendancy Point. During the trial, Benton revealed that he was a part of an extreme puzzling community, which seeks personal bragging rights based on the ability to solve puzzles under extreme duress. His jump was an attempt to gain personal status within this highly competitive community.

Other participants in the hobby, he said, have been known to solve series of simple puzzles in extremes of heat and cold, while deep-sea diving, or during difficult rock climbs. During his Ascendancy Point jump, Benton said, he was working on a number of short anagrams, and he blamed the distraction for the unsuccessful end to his jump. Benton suffered a fractured collarbone and several cracked ribs, as well as multiple scrapes and bruises, after he crashed into the building on the 19th floor.

Judge Lucia Janowicz sentenced Benton to three months of imprisonment, a PCL20,000 fine, and 200 hours of community service. Benton called the sentence “very fair, considering what could have happened,” and said that he is thankful that the only injured party was himself.

Benton was unable to shed light on the identity of a previous jumper, however, who escaped from the scene apparently unscathed, leaving behind only a purple parachute. The purple parachutist was almost certainly a fellow member of the extreme puzzling community, Benton said, but he was unable to provide police with enough information to identify a suspect. Rumours within the community indicate, however, that the purple parachutist successfully solved a particularly difficult sudoku puzzle on his descent.

Residents of Ascendancy Point filed a lawsuit against the building’s management following the pair of incidents. The suit alleges that a series of grave security breaches over the preceding year, including the murder of a resident, prove gross negligence on the part of Eclipse Security. The suit has not yet been heard in court.

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Tally Makes Comeback To Lead Her Board

By KATE BREWSTER

Former leaderboard champion Tally has staged a resurgent comeback to regain what many consider to be her “rightful” place top the Earth Leaderboard. Her ascent has been more relaxed than that of her arch-rival, Oliverkeepers13, but no less dramatic. A spate of silver solves in recent days has propelled her once more to the top spot, with a record-breaking 15,600 points to her name.

Keen observers will note that the current state of affairs closely mirrors that of the pre-Wave-4 situation. PCAG statistician Samara Jones comments: “They say the next big thing is here, that the revolution’s near, but to me it seems quite clear, that it’s all just a little bit of history repeating.”

“We never change, do we? We never learn to leave, so I want to live in a wooden house,” she added.

Rlp6028, not to be confused with the 6027 other rlp’s presumably competing, currently leads the USA board with 15,420 points, closely followed by the rookie-made-good crovax1234 who joined the competition in late April. In Australia, Koala_boy appears to be packing a few extra Ceretin in his pouch,

leading his Antipodean rivals by a slim 190-point margin. Finally, EvilGenius heads up the Canadian competition while cackling madly, with almost 4000 points over 2nd-placed Hobbes.

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This week’s most studious solver is CambridgeDon, who’s solved 93 cards in the past five days and accumulated a veritable Space Odyssey of points. Thewolfboy continues his winning streak as this month’s most moxious member with a breathtaking 12,971 points and 248 solves since registering, and is widely expected to dominate the pack of newcomers throughout his remaining 12 days of eligibility.

“It’s the eye of the tiger, it’s the cream of the fight,” said Jones, reflecting upon the hot-blooded newcomers making a big splash in the competition. Concern remains, however, at the ever-present possibility of burnout. “So many times, it happens too fast -- you trade your passion for glory.” Her advice? “Don’t lose your grip on the dreams of the past, you must fight just to keep them alive.”

These are words that will no doubt also be listened to by the hopefuls currently competing in the preliminary stages of Perplex City’s own PCAG tournaments. Check back with us next week for all the latest action, drama, and maintenance of the status-quo from the Earth leaderboard!

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Earlywine Blasts Scott

By CORINNE HATHAWAY

Nathan Earlywine, Council Member and candidate for the Council Leader post, blasted the current policies of sitting leader Camryn Scott today in one of his hallmark open-air public forums, this one in Key Square. “Camryn Scott prides herself on being an administration of delegation,” he told the assembled crowd of prospective voters. “I am here to tell you that her kind of delegation is just another way of avoiding responsibility for her decisions.”

He went on to chide Scott’s continuing refusal to order the Academy under more stringent council authority, despite mounting public pressure to do so. “The people want Sente Kiteway held accountable,” he said. “On his watch, the Receda Cube was lost. On his watch, and despite the passage of much time, it has not been found again. On his watch, security failures left the data link to Earth vulnerable, and agents of an unknown power have allegedly travelled to Earth. ... How many more failures will it take for this brand of secretive incompetence to finally be held accountable? The people want results, and Scott is not giving the people what they are demanding.”

The crowd cheered Earlywine’s statements, and more than a few in the audience told the Sentinel that they had decided to vote for Earlywine based on his rhetoric today. “Councillor Earlywine has a strong, unified vision for the city,” said Kam Houghton, a trends analyst for Centrifuge. “I wasn’t sure before today, but he’s shown me he’s the right man for the job.”

The strong words mark a new strategy on the part of Earlywine, who has avoided accusing Scott of ignoring her constituency in such blunt language until now. “Earlywine has detected vulnerability from Scott’s camp,” said political analyst Jordan Taylor. “The time is ripe for him to move in and press her weak points.”

Earlywine’s new tactics come at what may prove to be a pivotal point in the political campaign. Popular candidate Douglass Finlay dropped out of the race after revelations about his campaign that have since resulted in criminal charges. Though Finlay had been shedding voters in the weeks before he withdrew his candidacy, his absence has left a significant number of undecided voters that Scott and Earlywine are both wooing heavily.

Recent polls show neither major candidate currently enjoys a marked advantage in the electorate.

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View from Earth: On Dudeney

By DAN CLARK



Only in the last couple of years have we become aware of the existence of Perplex City and your world. Perplex City Academy scholars and historians have had an upper hand in this regard, and have been able to

study our history, cultures, and languages in greater depth than we have yours. Those at the Academy thus wisely chose to reveal Perplex City to us through the universal language of puzzles. Equally wise was the choice to use Earth's own history of puzzles and games to ease us into an understanding of your world.

It was partly through a revival of historical Earth puzzles that we have come to know and work with you. Perhaps chief among the unsung heroes of this puzzle revival is Henry Ernest Dudeney (yes, the Dread Pirate himself). H.E. Dudeney is given direct credit on one of the Academy's puzzle cards (I hope that spider catches that fly), apparent credit on another (his

cursed medallion), but many others are influenced by him though not directly credited (bookworms, etc.). His influence on the Academy in their quest to relate to us in terms of "simple" Earth puzzles (I don't even want to think about what solving the Mimasan Maze entails) has not been highlighted enough.

H.E. Dudeney was one of the most innovative and influential of Earth's puzzle scribes (to use the Perplexian term). An English author and mathematician, Dudeney had an early penchant for chess -- and chess puzzles -- which matured into a love for puzzles of all kinds. He published puzzles first in newspapers and magazines, some under his pseudonym "Sphinx," some in collaboration with his American counterpart, Samuel Loyd, and eventually gained his status as the foremost English puzzler of his time.

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His own column of puzzles published over two decades in The Strand Magazine (alongside an impressive roster of other contributors) was titled "Perplexities," perhaps indicating a preternatural awareness of our two worlds' eventual meeting.

From verbal arithmetic (send+more=money), to Hendrick and Katrun catching their darned hogs, to Magic Squares, to the Five Pennies, his work was extremely accessible (then and now), and refreshingly novel. He published four books of puzzles in his lifetime, and

Continued

his wife and others collected enough of his work to fill two more after his death in 1930 (193AC). His Amusements in Mathematics, written nearly a century ago, is in the public domain for us Earthlings to enjoy (Gutenberg e-text #16713). If interested Perplexians would like a copy, I'm sure the Academy has several dog-eared copies lying around!

It is worthwhile to look back to a time that was perhaps simpler, when enjoyment of logic problems and mathematical amusements could be had without the overwhelming political and social unrest seen today in both our worlds. Our love for puzzles, for tackling and overcoming mental challenges, is deeply human and shared by every inhabitant of both our worlds. This is ultimately the cause for the success in our dealing with your world, and you with ours; it is also the reason we will succeed in returning the Receda Cube to you: we simply cannot ignore an interesting problem.

I will leave the last word to Mr. Dudeney, whose work may be the main reason our two worlds have gotten along so well.

“When a man says, ‘I have never solved a puzzle in my life,’ it is difficult to know exactly what he means, for every intelligent individual is doing it every day. The unfortunate inmates of our lunatic asylums are sent there expressly because they cannot solve puzzles -- because they have lost their powers of

reason. If there were no puzzles to solve, there would be no questions to ask; and if there were no questions to be asked, what a world it would be!”

The View from Earth column is currently accepting submissions from its Earth readership. Please see our submission guidelines for more information.

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PCAG Season Warms Up, Albeit Slowly

By CORWIN JONES

As the second-round knockout tournament comes to a close this week, the Perplex City Academy Games are finally starting to attract the city's interest. Ticket sales to early matches have suffered through a slump this year, a trend that some are blaming on poor marketing. But other analysts say the early knockouts have simply returned to their baseline interest levels, following a disproportionate spike in interest over the last few years spurred by drug scandals, disqualifications, and the unusual case of prodigy player Myra Champaign.

"That little girl Myra has done more for her sport in putting spectators into seats in her one year than veterans like Klaus Johnson have in their entire careers," remarked PCAG analyst Orville Pomander. "Nothing sells tickets like a full-blown controversy."

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And controversy appears to be brewing again at the highest level of the PCAG. A games insider leaked information to the press not long ago indicating that the

organisation is conducting a thorough review of potential drug violations in recent championships -- news that some are now calling "suspiciously timed and poorly sourced."

"I don't really buy it," said Pomander. "Until I see someone step forward with something more than vague allegations, I'm calling it a publicity stunt." He pointed to a recent 8% uptick in ticket sales and a 32% increase in free attendance as evidence. "The games are exciting on their own, but sometimes people need a little whiff of scandal to get them to pay attention in the first place."

"Zhi-Hui is desperate to revive flagging interest in the games, so he had to manufacture a little drama," agreed PCAG competitor Gabriella Petel, who is currently in the lead in the second-round knockouts. "I can't blame him for it, really, but I think if there were some sort of cover-up, then there would be gossip about it at all levels of play, and frankly I've not heard anything. I'd bet money there is nothing to it."

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Thrills on Leaderboard Decrease in Volume

By KATE BREWSTER

It's been a week of exhilarating action on the leaderboard as "everything remains much the same," according to PCAG analyst Samara Jones. "Let's hope the PCAG here in Perplex City heats up soon!"

However, a large number of players have been stepping up their efforts to complete their solving, with 17,370 cards solved in the last week. Eight players now share 9th place, mostly due to their acquisition of ultra-rare promotional card P01 A Call From The Past, while 26 players are now sharing 18th place with 15,400 points apiece, the basic ceiling for the faceless ranks of those who've solved all the cards (excepting those, of course, that remain unsolved by everyone) but are yet to score any bonus points. The Sentinel, of course, awards bonus points for reader-submitted View From Earth columns and Star Letters of the Week -- details are available here.

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So far, 148 players have now earned the

elite black leitmark, the lowest ranked of whom is alderose, a sharp-solver of the old guard who first heard of the contest via Earth's popular men's magazine "FHM" - and would choose "X-Ray Vision" as his preferred superpower, for reasons best left to the reader's imagination.

Although I_Am_Junior has 111 solves just six days since his debut, this week's new puzzler on the block is kinkajou, with 4141 points (versus 3352) from 109 solves in the past three days. Thewolfboy tops the monthly leaderboard and has now fully completed his ascendancy to the top flight, having solved 252 cards to reach 18th place along with the aforementioned 25 others. Hot on his heels is kandyman, wielding 12,350 points and 224 solves to date.

Come back next week, when we'll be turning the spotlight on some of the most underrated players on the leaderboard, with pundits providing their top picks for the future.

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Prominent Author Ejected from Museum

By JEREMY CLARIDGE

Award-winning author Skip Applebaum and his entourage were ejected from the Maitland Museum late last evening, authorities say, for “rowdiness and disrupting the experience of other patrons.” Applebaum himself admitted the allegations were correct, but said that museum personnel were “making a big deal out of really nothing at all.” The museum’s administration says it has no plans to file charges with the police.

According to witnesses at the museum, Applebaum and a crew of six or seven companions entered the museum early last evening. “They were in high spirits, and I think they might have been tipping the tankard a little much, if you follow,” said Rob Korat, who was also at the museum at the time to meet a dinner companion. “They weren’t actually damaging the exhibits or anything, but they were terribly boisterous and didn’t seem to be paying any attention to the guides or docents. ... You should have seen the cutting looks they were getting.”

Museum officials said that they received

a “large number of complaints” about Applebaum’s party, but that they gave the group several warnings before politely asking them to leave. “We really had no choice,” said junior museum curator Tanya Felter. “We have a policy of encouraging our patrons to respect each other and the quiet, peaceful environment we have created here. ... They were just too loud.” She said that the museum did not know Applebaum’s identity until afterwards, when the guest book was examined.

Applebaum himself said that the group had simply been “enjoying the wonderful exhibits” at the museum, and said that all of the members of his entourage - said to have included Grace Curate, society heiress and disreputable girl-about-town as well as brilliant young PCAG contender Kay Bedling - had made a good-faith effort to keep quiet and leave others in peace. “I guess if we bothered anyone so much, then I’m sorry,” he said. “I’m not convinced, though, that our actions ‘undermined the entire basis of museumship in this city’ as the officials implied as they removed us from the building.”

Applebaum, the author of such benchmark works as the Bryce Prize winning *Failure to Conform* and Winter Mark-nominated *The Idea Race*, has also won the Mintz Award for a series of public-domain columns he wrote over the course of 265.

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KT Weds in Seaside Lighting Ceremony

By JULIUS LOMAN

Roll for Damage bassist Keenan Thoreau wed his longtime companion Ripley Wayans in a dawn Lighting of the Way ceremony on Alchemy Beach. The small ceremony was attended primarily by close friends and relatives. According to the Reconstructionist officiant, known only as “Sister Jaina,” Thoreau and Wayans spent the preceding night on the beach in meditation; they were joined shortly before sunrise by their guests, and the day was celebrated by a surprisingly quiet breakfast on a pavilion overlooking the bay.

“It is an honour and a privilege to join these exceptional people together,” said Sister Jaina. “There is nothing more beautiful than seeing two people commit to building a single life together.” The two followed the strict interpretation of marriage rites advocated by the Reconstructionists, including the symbolic act of construction of a home, in which the betrothed couple must together assemble a small, square hut from simple materials.

Guests present at the event included

Thoreau’s RFD bandmates, Alejo Jackson and Echo West; pop singer Joya, in attendance with Jackson; record mogul Helix Hesh, and his date, former PCAG champion Serena Duncan; prominent artist Randal Tokei; and several highly-placed members of the Reconstructionists. Although some members of the press were present, to all accounts they kept a respectful distance out of consideration to the personal significance of the day.

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Friends of the newlyweds said that Thoreau and Wayans have been together for 13 years, but that they had never before committed to marriage because of religious differences. However, over the past year, Wayans has converted to the Reconstructionist faith. “I think seeing KT come out into the open with it really shifted how they felt,” said a friend of the couple, on condition of anonymity. “Ripley never felt like he could live with a secret like that, and things got so much better between them once everybody knew.”

“I’m really happy for them,” said bandmate Jackson. “KT is the calmest and most responsible of all of us, and Ripley, well, he’s practically another member of the band, always there for us. ... I just hope to deserve that same kind of happiness myself someday.”

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ManleyM Dominates Ranks as Most Erroneous Player

By KATE BREWSTER

Information revealed exclusively to the Sentinel by Earth-based agency Mind Candy has put an interesting new spin on the leaderboard competition. According to the dossier, entitled “Wrong Answers And The Players That Submit Them: A Summary,” overall success on the leaderboard is no guarantee of a spotless solving record. Indeed, the statistics seem to validate the old adage that failure -- preferably in massive quantities -- is a necessary ingredient of triumph.

Take ManleyM, for example. Widely considered a promising challenger and holding ninth place on the Leaderboard, he in fact ranks first for most incorrect solves, with 403 mistakes to his name. Badbarry, another top contender in seventh place, is in second place on what some are calling the “Loserboard,” with 384 near-misses to his name.

Clearly, however, it’s not simply a question of how many wrong answers one enters. Fretty, for example, has 281 failed attempts, but can boast a healthy 248 correct answers, giving a Loserboard ratio of 0.88. Duprasi, on the other hand, is 10th on the Loserboard with 282 erroneous attempts but only 170 solves, giving a ratio of only 0.60.

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So how do some of the leaderboard superstars fare by this new analysis?

* Tally: 69 wrong vs 252 correct, Loserscore: 3.65

* Oliverkeers13: 156 vs 253, LS: 1.62

* UKver2.0: 138 vs 253, LS:1.83

* Guin: 258 vs 253, LS:0.98

* Doublecross: 211 vs 253, LS:1.20

However, PCAG analyst Samara Jones warns against reading too much into the data. “For one thing, there’s no immediate suggestions exactly what these wrong answers are. Rumour has it that many players, stumbling across a particularly intractable and experimental puzzle, are inspired to follow a course of barely-educated guesswork in the hope of stumbling upon the correct answer. Of course, some of the more traditionalist commentators here in Perplex City would think a high Loserboard placement was its own punishment, espousing the values of a more elegant, strategic and restrained approach to competitors’ puzzling.”

The elegance and restraint of power-players KelticFox, richardjclark, Jaikaiman and Gallifreyan remains a mystery, but their speed and enthusiasm are certainly beyond question, being leaders of the weekly and monthly leaderboards respectively.

We’ll be delving deeper into the hidden world of Leaderboard statistics next week - check back then!

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Scott Not Sweating Election, Insiders Say

By CORINNE HATHAWAY

Close advisors say that Council Leader Camryn Scott is unconcerned with the ground Council Member Nathan Earlywine has gained recently in his bid to wrest the executive City Council position from her. “Scott is confident that the voters recognise this is a nuanced and delicate post,” said her campaign manager, Robin Park. “We’re getting our message across, that there are no easy answers in government. Our policy positions are based on balancing many different factors together, and the Perplexian populace really respects that.”

Scott herself said in a public address this morning that it is “easy to paint a picture in black and white, but hard to live in one.” She suggested that Earlywine’s proposed massive sweep of alterations to government administration may indeed cut down on redundancy and cost, but “at the cost of autonomy and flexibility. ... I, for one, would rather see our government be adaptable than monolithic and bound in procedures and rules, even if it costs a little more.”

In the past few days, Earlywine’s poll numbers have even slid downward after a bump in voters following a fiery speech in Key Square a few weeks ago, leaving Scott with a slight lead. The number of undecided voters has disproportionately gravitated toward Scott, these polls indicate. Political analyst Jordan Taylor suggested that Earlywine’s angry rhetoric may be alienating more voters than they attracted. “There’s also the fact that Scott is a proven and familiar value,” said Taylor. “Still, this election is far from won.”

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Earlywine spoke to the Sentinel after Scott’s address this morning, and echoed Taylor’s point. “We have a long way to run in this race,” he said. “We’re over a month out, and over fifteen percent of voters haven’t picked their horse yet. ... I think a lot of the voters are very angry at how things have gone under Scott’s watch, and it’s my job to convince them I can do better. I know I can, I just need to build their confidence in me.”

Scott held an open discussion forum over the weekend in Mercator Square to solicit opinions on her past performance and future direction. The audience was reportedly filled with enthusiastic supporters who have nothing but high esteem for Scott’s performance to date, though some aggressive members of the crowd had to be removed by security forces.

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Mind Candy Releases Stones Game on Earth

By CHO KAPLAN

The Perplex City Academy's Earth-based contacts, Mind Candy, have released a version of the classic game Stone Chase on Earth, available for sale now at online retailer Firebox. The game has caused a growing buzz in the board gaming community for months now, with a pre-release version winning the prestigious Academy Game of the Year Award just last week.

Reviewers have been universally enthusiastic about this fresh take on the timeless game. Sentinel games analyst Tomlin Watters gave it five out of five stars in a recent review, saying: "Finely crafted puzzles, inspired gameplay and beautiful design make this one of the best puzzle games we've ever played. ... A modern take on a timeless classic."

The game was developed, said Academy Master Sente Kiteway, with a combination of a Mind Candy team on Earth and the Academy's own Cube Retrieval Team. "Our traditional Stone Chase game here in Perplex City seemed like a natural tool to further interest in our people on Earth. ... The puzzles have

of course been carefully crafted to appeal to an Earth audience. We're very proud of what we've created."

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The game will have distribution in a wide array of retail stores on Earth; additionally, Earth novelty retailers Earthworks and Hannigan's and the Brain Bender chain of puzzle bars have all contracted with the Academy to sell copies. Earthworks owner Mitchell Alba, who also holds a significant stake in Brain Bender, called the move a "no-brainer." He explained: "I've seen the game, it stands on its own merits, absolutely. ... When you combine a great product already with the fever for anything Earth-related, there's absolutely some magic there."

Still, not everyone is pleased with the announcement. Council Member Nathan Earlywine pressed his ongoing point about lack of council oversight of Academy activities. "This board game is just ridiculous," he said. "Mind Candy should be concentrating only on those activities which might lead to the immediate recovery of the Receda Cube. ... First we have that puzzle site, now this board game. There's no focus here on what's important to Perplexians. What's next, a Mind Candy harbonne mix?"

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Rookies Resurgent In Puzzdaq Attack

By KATE BREWSTER

Leaderboard followers here in Perplex City are adding spice to the competition by speculating on the progress of the newest entrants to the fray. Puzzling pundit Lorimer Asquith recently launched the Puzzdaq key service, allowing users to stake points on the fortunes of Earth's puzzle prodigies in the hope that they'll eventually ascend to the leaderboard's upper echelons.

"There's obviously a limit on the timeframe in which Earth puzzlers are eligible as candidates," says Asquith, indicating the dynamically updating datascreen that occupies the center of his Caldera Street offices. "But the timeframe is itself dynamic, based on solving rates and the quantity of new players joining each day. At the moment, the 15 newest players are all open for betting, which covers the last 90 minutes."

Asquith points out Knat as an exciting early bet. "He's already garnered himself a 206 points in his first hour, which is rather interesting, of course - not to mention the fact that two of his solves are for black cards. That's the kind of

spiffing start that punters will be looking for, having seen the splendid progress made by go-getters like AndyAndyO and ixalon."

Of course, it isn't as easy as simply betting on the player with the most available points. "I dare say we've done a jolly good job of balancing these things out," he notes with a touch of pride. "See, the more points a player's earned, the more one must invest to add them to one's portfolio, so gc27 is an expensive proposition compared to, say, x-Becca-x. Then, of course, we compensate for their respective popularities. And so on. And so forth. It's really rather clever stuff."

How, though, can speculators make informed decisions about these new players so early in their campaigns? "We're encouraging a more intuitive approach to selection here, you see, and indeed, it is based on the very slimmest of data: registration time, player name, and not much else. For example, Knat is, of course, tank backwards, which suggests a rather determined, unstoppable quality to his demeanour, and hopefully we'll see him persevering. And as for gc27, well 27 is both a perfect cube, that is to say, 3 multiplied by itself 3 times, and there are 27 straight lines on a cubic surface - and unsurprisingly, he's proving a popular choice here in Perplex City." Asquith pulls up a jagged and rapidly ascending graph showing Puzzdaq participants frantically invest their points on their

Continued

newest hope.

The Sentinel suggests that this “We also think this gives Leaderboard fans a rather personal, and dare-I-say emotional connection with these new participants. And while we can’t all communicate with Earth willy-nilly, I think it’s rather lovely that there’s people out there rooting for puzzlers who’ve been playing for all of half-an-hour.”

Puzzdaq speculators failing to wager on the enigmatic, question-shunning ilthingore will certainly be emotional - he’s let the solving do the talking, with 3675 points earned in his first three days, which makes him the champion of the weekly leaderboard. Goldberg69, meanwhile, has accrued 11989 points and 220 solves since his momentous signup on September 15th, already ruling the monthly leaderboard after a little more than two weeks.

Check back next week for the latest news and analysis of Earth’s premier puzzle-solving contest, the Perplex City Leaderboard!

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View from Earth: Earlywine in Disfavour

By SCOTT MYERS



The overall sentiment of Earth, regarding the Perplex City Council election, is a general malaise and lack of interest. However, one thing most people agree on, as assessed in an

ongoing survey over the past 3 months: Nathan Earlywine is foolish and ill advised.

A series of surveys were set forth on August 31, July 20, and September 21 of 2006. approximately 100 people were surveyed. The surveys asked, quite simply: Based on what you presently know of the Perplex City Election, which candidate do you feel is most suited for the job?

While an alarming 3/4th stated 'no response' or otherwise felt they were insufficiently informed to give an answer, the remaining one quarter was equally divided between incumbent Camryn Scott and Nathan Earlywine.

However, many participants were also invited to give comments on the election year to date. And it was in this free form section of the questionnaire where opinions began to show true color. Participants were asked if they could be quoted, and were offered anonymity if they chose it.

A few themes ran heavily throughout the survey. One was a tendency to not leap to conclusions about the Perplexian election process. One participant, who went unnamed, stated it best: "To be honest, I think we need to know more to give an informed decision, but I was shocked by the whole Douglass Finlay scandal."

Previous Sentinel contributor Chris Martin quipped "Right now I'm favouring Earlywine, but his piety will get him in the end. He's cruisin for a bruisein." Favouring the excitement of the political three-ring-circus, he went on to observe "You just know it's going to end badly."

Another past Sentinel contributor, Rachel Wild, stated "I can't say I'm too well up on the facts but I don't think they need a change in government at the moment." She went on to refer to a past interview between Iona Rodie and Sente Kiteway (Iona Interviews... Sente Kiteway) "The Cube was lost on his watch and he wants to be the one who finds it as well. If they change government, there'll be too much fuss to allow things to carry on steadily as they are."

Continued

Shaftoe stated plainly “Earlywine is too much of a hothead who shoots his mouth at every opportunity. So, I am going with Scott.”

Wizdumb exhibited wisdom, observing “Running a negative campaign is never good. Scott seems to be more caring and personable, but Earlywine promises change. They both have different things to offer. All in all, I’d probably vote for Camryn Scott. Seems to be a safer choice.”

One person, speaking under condition of strict anonymity, however, took a stance of considerably more severe attitude towards Earlywine. “He has taken every opportunity to blast away at any fault in his competition, calling into question practices and policies of Scott and Finlay, especially when it suited him best. He has threatened to entirely sack major management divisions of city infrastructure if they don’t see things his way. And it’s possible he may have some ties to the Third Power, which Sente talked about. Earlywine can’t be trusted, if you want my honest opinion.” While the evidence of this connection appeared tenuous at best, the implication is certainly severe.

Outside of the main attraction of the leader’s race, Chalco Doror apologized for being somewhat out of current events, having just returned from Asia in search of a certain Satoshi. However he did

observe “Natasha Heme does have fairly good proposals,” then went on to caution “But it isn’t necessarily what will happen once she wins.”

However, amidst the political hubbub, many people like Sara Long express a lack of interest, focusing on their own interests. “As here on Earth, I’ll take the side of the one that’s going to pay doctors the most money at the end of it all. Which one is that?”

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Casino Gambler Flushed with Success

By NATASHA VALLIERE

A fortunate gambler at Casino Recor almost brought the house down Wednesday, when she won two bonuses each worth 10 million lecks within an hour.

Raynor Gladwin of the Artists' Quarter garnered the cash playing poker, when she was dealt two royal flushes in a single session. The casino offers a five million leck bonus for each royal flush at their 'Hi-roller' table.

"I couldn't believe it!" exclaimed Gladwin (47). "I only play once or twice a year, and my husband is the real card sharp. After the first flush, I would have stopped playing, but he said I was on a winning streak. I guess he was right!"

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Casino manager Ralph De Santos said that the odds against two such wins were astronomical.

"Normally, we only see one or two royal flushes a year. To have two in one night - and for a single player - is almost

unthinkable."

Casino staff looked into the possibility of cheating, but the Gladwins were quickly cleared of any suspicion.

De Santos was forced to call PCBC to bring in the extra cash when Raynor Gladwin cashed in her chips at the end of the night.

So what does lucky Raynor intend to do with her new-found wealth?

"We're going to pass some money down to our sons, but then Wally and I are going to take a long holiday in Alchemy Bay. Maybe we'll never come back!"

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Earlywine Denounces 'Culture of Earth Admiration'

By CORINNE HATHAWAY

Would-be Council Leader and sitting Council Member Nathan Earlywine issued a scathing denunciation of the widespread Perplexian fascination with all things related to Earth in a string of media appearances over the weekend. "Why do we hold these violent and valueless civilisations in such high esteem?" he asked in a breakfast keynote address to the Silent Heralds Club on Saturday. He also made similar comments at a press dinner and in interviews with a number of media outlets.

The address included a fiery exhortation for the citizens of Perplex City to take pride in their own city: "We Perplexians have built an amazing culture. We have so much to be proud of," he said. "Yet here we are, allowing our youth to obsess about the inferior accomplishments of a backwards people -- allowing them to grow ignorant of our own heritage and accomplishments."

Earlywine stopped short of suggesting any specific remedies for the situation, though some suspect that this weekend's invective was the beginning of a new tactic in attacking current Council Leader Camryn Scott's administration in the run up to the election in just over two weeks.

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This is the first time any serious candidate for public office has come out so strongly against

the widespread interest in Earth-related merchandise and information. The initial statement at the Silent Heralds Club was met initially with quiet shock, soon replaced by robust cheering as Earlywine pressed his point. And surprisingly, it seems that Earlywine has struck a deeply resonating chord among many other notable figures in the city.

"I think he's absolutely right," said prominent artist Randal Tokei. "Earth is an easy distraction, but let us not replace quality with quantity. ... We should return our focus inward." The Sentinel found broad agreement with this sentiment from Giordana Moore, Senior Managing Director of the PCX; retired PCBC executive Jonathan Smart; and PCAG Chairman Robert Zhi-Hui. "It's the dirty little secret in business right now," said Moore. "Nobody wants to encourage this Earth obsession. It's distasteful. But everybody is doing it because it's the fastest way in town to make a leek right now."

Political analysts are not yet certain how this fresh stance on Earlywine's part will affect the election. Political analyst Jordan Taylor called the move "a daring gamble." Earlywine is lagging behind Scott in the polls in recent days, and "this may be the stone that tips the scales decisively one way or the other," Taylor said.

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Board Leaders Sway Linguistic Habits

By KATE BREWSTER

As the weight of solved cards rapidly approaches the four-ton mark, reports of a wave of leaderboard-oriented slang has inexplicably swept through the halls of the Perplex City Academy in recent weeks. Louis Church, a junior researcher in the Social Sciences department, has been documenting this fresh linguistic phenomenon for his latest paper, “‘Tallytime!’ And Other Popular Earth-Derived Colloquialisms.” The Sentinel publishes the abstract exclusively below.

“Recently, the educated youth of the Academy, and to a lesser extent those studying at the esteemed colleges of the City, have appropriated the nomenclature of Earth’s most highly-respected leaderboard competitors, and from them developed a new slang stripped entirely of its original context. First, we summarise some of the more memetically successful ‘catchphrases’, such as “‘Tallytime!’”, “‘What A Keers!’” and the many variations on the Guin/”your mother” theme. Secondly, we seek to extract patterns from publicly available usage data (open key channels, discussion fora, and the like) and correlate it with leaderboard activity, and notable reactions to it within the City - for instance, the effect of the OK13DTFC on the resurgent popularity of “‘A scoffing good MikeyJ, sir!’” and “‘That’s a doublecross and no mistake!’” Finally, we examine these linguistic fads within the framework of ingroup/outgroup psychologies, identity politics and post-elaborist methods. All in all, we hope the reader will find this paper not badbarry at all.”

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He continues:

“The fertile minds of the Academy’s boisterously intellectual youths have catalysed the linguistic phenomena documented here, and can each day be observed happily decrying one another with calls of “‘That’s Ringtail talk, now!’” and “‘Isn’t rlp6028 taking tea with your llama?’” Indeed, our studies have shown that the precise meaning of these phrases is not only a mystery to outsiders, but remains somewhat opaque to those who use them. On one key channel at Marmalejo College, they became the topic of much debate. “‘Let’s Just Stop Shouting Ixalon ALL THE TIME,’” pleaded one user, who was met with the swift reply of “‘Ixaaaaalooooooooon!’” by countless others. One participant, when asked, described the meaning of “‘IXALON!’” as “‘it’s just something you say, really -- and only some heinous UKver2.0 would claim otherwise.’”

The full-length paper is scheduled for publication later this month, via the usual key networks.

In other news, 26 kilograms of leitmarks have now been shipped to Earth’s prominent puzzling populace. This week’s sharpest new solver is Hyper2 with 1434 points in his first seven days, while goldberg69 continues to reign supreme on the monthly newcomers board with a weighty 253 solves in just over three weeks.

Check back next week for all the latest leaderboard comment and analysis, exclusively at the Sentinel.

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Foundering Duncan Eager for Rematch

By CORWIN JONES

Former PCAG champion Serena Duncan told the press on Wednesday afternoon that she is looking forward to a rematch with reigning champion Ryan Cahill at the end of this season. “It was a fluke he beat me last year,” said Duncan. “It won’t happen again, I can assure you.” The comments followed her victory against Lucius Jorgensen, a much-needed win after a string of lacklustre matches have brought her down in the standings.

Duncan admitted, though, that her performance has been shabby so far this season. “Matches up until the November knockouts just feel so low-stakes, it’s hard for me to really ramp up for them and apply my sharpest edge,” she confessed. “And sometimes, yes, this means I may be beaten by a player who doesn’t have the same natural ability I do. ... But I’ll see the championship again this year. Put in your bets now,” she said.

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Some PCAG analysts say, though, that Duncan’s confidence is far from warranted. “There’s a broad consensus

that Serena is letting her turbulent personal life get in the way of her game,” said Raina Hollow of The Sporting Daily. “I can’t imagine how difficult it would be to focus on winning games when you’re in the papers every other day with gossip about whether you’re still with your boyfriend,” she said. Hollow referred to Duncan’s very high-profile on-again, off-again relationship with music mogul Helix Hesh of Hesh Records. “That element of distraction can be ruinous, even to a player of her caliber,” Hollow said.

PCAG analyst Johan Reginald disagreed, however, with the verdict that Duncan’s personal life is to blame. “You have to remember that she had a similar slump at about this time last year, and recovered to nearly take the championship anyhow. She’s still in the running, count on it.”

Cahill, when informed of Duncan’s boasts, laughed and shook his head. “You don’t win the crown twice by accident,” he said. “I can’t promise I’ll win it all again, but I do promise Serena won’t be toasted on Ball Night this year without a good fight.” Cahill is currently leading the standings.

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View from Earth: Political Posturing

By NIKKI SLADE



Earlywine's recent proclamation against the people of Earth has brought about any number of reactions in those of the community who have been watching these pre-election

shenanigans with, indeed, as much zeal as their Perplexian counterparts.

Are we truly so 'violent and valueless,' so distasteful? Does your own culture not have as many dark secrets and hidden crimes? Why would we be in contact with you at all if not for the biggest such crime of your age -- the theft of the Cube? How can one man -- any man -- suggest that your society is so much more pure than any of ours, when your own past is so horrifying that you refuse to even discuss it?

In all honesty, it seems that Earlywine's statement is simply a clear, childish retaliation against the views reported in last week's Sentinel. In Scott Myers's

View from Earth, he presented the results of political polls on our side of the connection. While the results of the poll itself were even (where responders felt they could make an informed decision), the comments provided suggest otherwise. Earlywine's negative, defamatory campaign -- first eliminating Finlay from the ranks, then turning his attentions to Camryn Scott -- is earning him few points even where his radical policy proposals are supported.

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Our own politics show similar patterns. Where such a negative, destructive campaign has been used in the efforts to gain electoral power, it has almost always met with failure. Shows of humanity and compassion, in times of peace, are certain to win through. In Australian politics, this can be most seen in the recent case of one Tony Abbot, our current Minister for Health and Ageing. Last year, our media was flooded with stories of his reunion with a long-lost son, put up for adoption when Abbot was a teenager; his son had been working as a sound recordist in Parliament house for years. DNA tests later revealed that the young man was in fact not related to Abbot; however, the sheer personal nature of the drama and Abbot's way of dealing with it provided him with a significant boost in positive opinion of him at the time. Had Abbot used his 'son' to push his fervent anti-abortion views and screamed defamation at those who opposed him, it's easy to see that the reaction would have been far

Continued

different.

Earlywine's apparent need to eliminate all possible rivals for attention, preferably through ruining their lives -- for surely the Finlay scandal, whether true or not, was greatly traumatic to Finlay himself -- presents himself not as a capable leader of any group but as an immature, mud-slinging child who probably, given the chance to affect policies in Perplex City, will quickly develop into a tyrant.

Indeed -- like a young child told to 'pipe down,' Earlywine has turned his anger upon the citizens of Earth. We do not doubt that your technology is superior, and that your fascination with cerebral pursuits is, in the majority, greater than those of the Earth majority. However, your past and present contain as much darkness as any one of ours, and at least our own histories have been thrown into the harsh light of discussion.

Let us not even delve too deeply into the fact that those very people Earlywine and his supporters are currently slandering are the same people your city is relying on to save the Cube for them. In this we continue, despite overwhelming secrecy and, in some cases, betrayal on the part of your own world. It is not for money that we seek the Cube, but to help your own world recover from what has obviously been a great injury.

Yet we did not steal the Cube, and we did

not cause the trail of deaths left by the Third Power, the supposed thieves. Let he who is without sin cast the first stone.

The View from Earth column is currently accepting submissions from its Earth readership. Please see our submission guidelines for more information.

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Academy, Scott Implicated in Human Trials of Wartime Tech

By IONA RODIE

The Academy has been conducting experiments in illegal technologies resulting in loss of human life in a little-known war-era city called Viendenbourg, according to information provided to the Sentinel by the daughters of Master of the Academy Sente Kiteway. Among the documentation provided was evidence that strongly suggests a budget request for the program was approved by Council Leader Camryn Scott herself.

According to documents acquired by the Master's daughters, Violet and Scarlett Kiteway, at least five human subjects and a number of canines were subjected to some form of teleportation experiment at Viendenbourg, an historical outpost in the Tanraga district. All five ended with the loss or death of the human subject. These experiments were conducted under the auspices and supervision of Sente Kiteway himself, who personally gave approval for human subjects to be used, the documents say.

The evidence gathered by the Kiteway women fails to specify the exact nature

of these experiments nor their purpose, though some are speculating that they are related to the ongoing effort to recover the missing Receda Cube. Indeed, further information provided by the younger Kiteways seems to suggest the the Cube was fabricated at a secret Academy lab located in the Lancewood Archipelago under the direction of Academy Master Vianne Adamek -- and that the Cube was intended as a global-scale weapon. The tests described in these historic documents bear a disturbing similarity to this secret program.

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"I feel like it's a terrible betrayal of my father to be telling you all of this," said a subdued Scarlett Kiteway, "but we feel it's important that the city know what's going on. ... No, we don't want to be anonymous. If we feel strongly enough about this to talk at all, then we need to face the consequences."

"I am horrified to learn that we are endangering lives in pursuit of technologies that were part of such a dark time in our city's history," said Council Member Nathan Earlywine, who is campaigning to win the Council Leader post in the October 27 elections. "I can assure you we on the City Council will be addressing this in session on Monday."

As of this writing, the council has been in closed session since late this morning.

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City Grows Dimmer on Leaderboard Stars

By KATE BREWSTER

Following a recent resurgence of leaderboard fever in Perplex City, Perplexian attitudes to the Earth puzzle contest have cooled to permafrost levels this week, following the denouncement of Earth's cultural mores by Nathan Earlywine.

Joey Griffiths, of consultancy Fraction Media, described the phenomenon as “somewhat surprising.” He said: “Earlywine is traditionally seen to be catering to a core audience of mature voters, but our in-the-field research is showing a degree of disillusionment across the board. We're more used to seeing the youth zeitgeist posed oppositely to that of their elders, but this is not the case here. Instead, we're seeing a backlash originating from the counter-cultural perspective of young ‘thought leaders,’ who've been tiring of Earth-related media for some time, coinciding with a similar mood shift in the senior demographic, albeit for more conservative reasons.”

Indeed, when a random sample of 684

citizens were queried on their attitudes towards Earth, and the leaderboard in particular, only 18% characterised their feelings as “intrigued; curiously tingly” while 31% described their opinion as “the embodiment of apathy.” 22% said they felt “nausea, ennui, and a singularly terrifying emptiness” about the matter.

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Jana Westfield, 16, a student at Borfield School, said: “Recently, it just leaves me cold. So very, very cold. ... Truly, a leaderboard replete with idiots, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. Of course, paraphrasing an Earthly playwright only adds to the hollow feeling inside,” she sighed, her eyes focusing on nothing in particular.

Drace (whose information-free profile only contributes to Perplex City's new-found emotional alienation) is this week's noteworthy new puzzler, with 1467 points, while richardjclark just about manages to raise an eyebrow with his 13773 points and 237 solves earned in just under a month.

Check back next week here at The Sentinel, for all the latest, exhausting, relentless leaderboard news, reminiscent of The Myth Of Sisyphus!

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Scott Fails Vote of Confidence, Election Moved Up

By CORINNE HATHAWAY

Council Leader Camryn Scott received a stunning vote of no confidence late yesterday afternoon following an all-day closed session of the City Council. As a result, the upcoming election for Council Leader has been moved forward and will now take place on Wednesday, 18 October. The vote comes after yesterday's revelations that the Academy has been conducting highly unethical experiments into dangerous wartime technologies using human subjects. According to documentation provided by the Master of the Academy's daughters, both Master Sente Kiteway and Camryn Scott knew about the program and personally approved and ran it.

Scott gave a brief press speech this morning addressing the vote and the brewing scandal. "Yes, there is a program at Viendenbourg, and it has used human volunteers for experimentation resulting in some loss of life," she admitted. "However, I assure you that all of the brave young men whose lives have been lost in this effort have been volunteers, and were very clear on the risks they were shouldering. ... I have served the city faithfully and have done nothing out of the scope of my position and responsibilities. I hope that the voters of Perplex City keep this in mind when they submit their ballots on Wednesday." Scott refused to take questions from the press following her address.

Council Member Nathan Earlywine clearly stands to benefit from the scandal, as popular opinion is sure to swing toward backing him. He refused to comment on the exact proceedings of the council's closed session, however, nor on how it will affect his odds in the election on Wednesday.

The political move uses a little-known clause in the city's founding charter providing the opportunity for a swift restructuring of the government when the existing leader's administration has become too troubled to continue to govern. The so-called Yancy Clause can only be invoked by a unanimous vote of the City Council and all of the sitting judges on the city's High Court. Although the measure has been voted on in the past, most notably in 187 at the height of the Rose Crescent Affair, it has never before carried.

It is not yet clear whether Kiteway and Scott will be prosecuted for their roles in the scandal. "We need to shed some sunlight on this situation and find out for sure what is going on," said High Court Justice Georgia Fenton. "I suspect we will see the matter before a grand jury by the end of the year."

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Earlywine Wins Leader Post, Scott Retains Seat on Council

By CORINNE HATHAWAY

Nathan Earlywine won the Council Leader post in yesterday's election by a 3% margin, replacing Camryn Scott after she failed a vote of confidence under the Yancy Clause on Monday. Scott won her district, however, and has retained a seat on the City Council, despite the brewing scandal over Academy experimentation into dangerous wartime technologies. Voter turnout reached a record high, with fully 92% of eligible voters casting a ballot.

Earlywine said in his victory speech that the current situation in government will require "drastic action to remedy," though he did not specify what immediate actions he plans to take. He said that a thorough cleaning-house in various city agencies and offices is necessary, and that he plans to improve the budget dramatically by reducing the amount of waste and duplication of effort both in the city and in townships in the greater Perplex City region.

His most scathing remarks, though, were on the topic of Earth and Perplexians' fascination with it. "The people of Earth have clearly tried to influence our political process, and it is past time to liberate the hearts and minds of our youth," he said. "Of course retrieving the Receda Cube is of primary importance to all of us, but we must make sure that in pursuing this goal, we do not make ill-advised bargains or sully ourselves with shameful associations."

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Scott's concession address was a surprisingly fiery affair in which she vowed to defend her actions as Council Leader and preserve "the crucial work I have spent these last years doing." She thanked the voters in her district for having the confidence to keep her on the council, saying that the result "renewed her faith in the political process."

Still, Scott may have a tough term ahead of her as it is certain that Earlywine will launch an investigation into the so-called "Special Project 487" that she allegedly gave authorization for, and which has resulted in the deaths of at least five people. Scott may yet need to give up her council seat if the investigation results in criminal charges.

In other election news, perennial candidate Shannon Powell took a mere 2% off the vote, as expected. In a more surprising development, former Council member Aben Henniker lost his seat to challenger Gisele Karmin, who is new to the political scene following a successful career as an environmental preservation consultant for big businesses such as Hibbert Industries.

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Earth Link Locked Down by Executive Order

By JOHN CORMORAN

Newly minted Council Leader Nathan Earlywine issued a security lockdown of the Earth-Perplex City data link today, one of his first steps in his term. Executive Order NE-3309 provides for use of the link to be heavily restricted, and beginning at 5:30pm today, all traffic destined to go through the link will be screened for potentially dangerous or subversive material. Earlywine called this his first move in an effort to “reclaim the culture of Perplex City.”

“Our engagement with the people of Earth is understandable,” said Earlywine. “We want to recover the Receda Cube and return it to its rightful place of honour in our city and in our culture. But in the Cube’s absence, our people have turned to unhealthy measures to fill the void in our lives.” He said that limiting access and use of the data link would encourage the city to return citizens’ focus to internal matters.

Council Member and former Council Leader Camryn Scott issued a terse statement calling the order “hasty and premature.” According to the statement,

“Our new Council Leader wants to make a strong first impression in office, but attempting to choke the free flow of information between worlds does not do our city credit.”

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The Sentinel contacted a number of sources directly affected by the order, including Master of the Academy Sente Kiteway, several members of the Cube retrieval Team, and staff members at the Centre for Reality Research, but none were willing to comment regarding the executive order on the record. One CRR researcher did say, under condition of anonymity, that the move would significantly impact the quality of work it would be possible to perform, and expressed a fear that budget and personnel cuts would follow in the weeks and months to come.

The Sentinel has enquired regarding the status and feasibility of continuing its Earth Edition. Sentinel editor Michiko Clark will be meeting with Earlywine early next week to negotiate the conditions under which the Sentinel may continue publishing.

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Earth Answers Often Stunningly Wrong

By KATE BREWSTER

Earth's shambolic hoi polloi of would-be puzzle champions moved a step closer to imploding under the gravitational forces of their own breathtaking stupidity yesterday, as they continued to guess wildly at hideously implausible solutions, causing experts to strike a comparison between their futile, wrongheaded spasms of illogic and a rabble of drunk, blindfolded zombies.

"45," guessed notverytame75 as she attempted to solve #217 Tower Of Cubes - displaying a stupefying failure to comprehend the basic principles of mathematics. "84," she continued, as passers-by openly wept with a mixture of pity and contempt. Meanwhile, Starlightlovers flailed in a hopeless attempt to find the answer to 232 Water Music. "Orange juice," she tried.

"Water," she added, randomly entering words from the puzzle's title in a spectacularly witless guess fuelled by incomprehensible neurological misfirings. Following this, a "deafening whirring noise" was reported throughout the city, as the Academy's founders spun

furiously in their respective graves.

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In the land of the blind, the one-eyed-man is king, and similarly, mac_monkey now leads the 47,000 strong horde of ignoramii, whom analysts agree are not so much "sharp" as "requiring something sharp to drive deep into their eye-sockets, possibly stimulating the otherwise lifeless grey matter beneath."

Samara Jones, PCAG analyst, spat: "I've conducted extensive research into the solving patterns on the Earth leaderboard, and all I can say is: Kill me. Kill me now."

"That said, there were some elegant solves to be found amongst the hideous errata. Elegant, that is, like a brick in the face," said Jones. She continued: "I can feel the bile rising in my throat just thinking about it."

Arabela is this week's least-offensive puzzler with 4647 points in the past six days, while Christian, who has solved 208 cards in the past month, has just about managed to proceed with slightly more purpose than a rabid and flea-ridden dog, hysterically chasing its own tail.

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View From Earth: Food and Lifestyle

By SARAH HUNT



Sarah Hunt In the last two years, we have learnt a lot about Perplex City, but we have never really learnt about the types of food Perplex City eats. It has always been

in the back of my mind: “What is their regional food?” Stoke-on-Trent and neighbouring areas have chips and gravy and Scotland has haggis and other such regional foods.

Earth, as a world, seems ridiculously addicted to this so-called fast food, where we go to food chains and order food that is fast to cook and usually fried, such as burgers and chips. This is usually rather greasy and unhealthy food. Eating this stuff is more and more common and accepted as a regular meal. Instead of cooking your own food, why not head out to a McDonald’s and pick up a Big Mac meal? It’s cheap, and quick! I hasten to add that I am not in agreement with this at all and am against it, as are many doctors, as it is leading to an increase in heart

disease and many other related diseases. It also has been linked to an increase in obesity, definitely found in children that eat these fast foods very commonly. It has led me to wonder if Perplexians have similar food chains, and whether they are finding similar problems to those that we on Earth are facing. I know Perplex City is eerily similar to Earth, as it has restaurants and bars, just like we do, but from what I can gather from the research I have done, Perplex City actually doesn’t seem to have these “fast food joints,” to use a common term of slang that we on Earth use.

Moving on from this topic, onto another that is greatly debated on Earth: Earth is famous for the fad diets that we choose to have control over our eating and our weight. With the increase in the eating of fast food and obesity, more Earth people than ever turn to these fad diets to regain some control and their old figures. They even go as far as to abstain from eating meat, and call themselves vegetarians. There are also people that go further along these lines and abstain from eating meat, and dairy products as well. These people are generally known as vegans.

These are the more commonly accepted diets. There are many others, such as low carbohydrate diets and low fat diets. People spend their entire life stressing about their weight, and switching from one diet to another. It can even manifest itself in various mental disorders.

The mental disorders are very little

Continued

known or talked about. They range from not eating; to eating and then purging your body of the food; to not being able to stop eating. They endanger people's lives, because of the obsession with food and our bodies that has been caused by celebrities.

I cannot help but wonder if Perplexians have similar troubles to us, as Earth and Perplex City are very similar to each other. Are the mental disorders more widely accepted? Is fast food being phased out steadily, along with fad diets? With everything we know about Perplex City, and everything you know about Earth, there are still many things that we can learn from each other every day, both good and bad. It's healthy to do so, and I believe that learning from other races is important to our everyday growth and expansion, whether we agree with the different views they may have, or not. I feel there is so much more that we can learn from each other, and I hope we can continue to expand each others' views.

The View from Earth column is currently accepting submissions from its Earth readership. Please see our submission guidelines for more information.

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Brotherhood Maintains Plan for Restitution

By LUCAS VOORHIES

The Brotherhood of the Six announced today that it is still planning to hold its traditional Restitution of the Cube festival at the winter solstice, quieting the rumours to the contrary that have sprung up in recent weeks. Sister April Flynn delivered a prepared statement in which she said that the Brotherhood will continue to “stand fast to the teachings of Gyvann.”

The festival will not be reduced in scale or spirit, Flynn said, and the expected public meditations, candle-lighting ceremonies, and feasts will be open to all as in previous years. “The season should not be reduced in brightness for any one of us,” she said. “Now more than ever we need the strength of the Cube to carry us through our modern times.”

The Brotherhood and other Cubist orders have been suffering on a variety of fronts since mid-October, when the Sentinel unearthed evidence that the Receda Cube is of man-made origin, and potentially intended for use as a weapon. These facts, if true, would undermine centuries of religious doctrine holding the artefact

as a symbol of peace and an expression of the universal strength of the sacred Cube. Reports show that attendance at religious services have decreased by nearly 20% in the past few weeks.

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Former Reconstructionist Jessica Holyoke said that “loads of people have left the compound” in recent days, including herself. “That place is just bleeding brothers and sisters,” she said. “The higher-ups are sticking it out so far, but the rest of us are wondering what we gave up our keys for.”

Flynn said that the city is currently undergoing a “crisis of faith,” but that the peace that believers feel upon performing acts of construction and observing similar traditions should be sufficient incentive to continue. “As long as people need wisdom and inner strength, we will continue to celebrate the words of Gyvann,” she said.

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Earlywine Planning to Appoint Academy Oversight Committee

By JOHN CORMORAN

Newly elected City Council Leader Nathan Earlywine has announced a plan whereby the council will appoint a nine-member committee to oversee the Academy. “It is clear that under the administration of [Academy] Master [Sente] Kiteway, the Academy has lost its way,” Earlywine said. “It is my hope that the reintroduction of transparency to the highest levels of the Academy will restore the public’s trust in the Academy and in the City Council.”

Few specifics of the plan are established, though Earlywine said that the committee members would be appointed by the council. Nominations for committee members will be made and debated by late next week, and once it has been selected, the committee itself will set its own agenda and timeline. Political analysts agree that the move is the first in what may prove to be a concerted effort to remove Kiteway from the mastership of the institution.

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Former leader and current Council Member Camryn Scott said that it was only to be expected, though she is personally against the plan. “Adding an extra layer of bureaucracy to the Academy’s decision-making processes will have no benefits,” she said. “The Academy will lose some of its institutional agility, and the city will suffer for it. ... The more opinions are brought to bear, the slower and less effective a process becomes.”

Earlywine fired back after Scott’s statement, calling her words “telling.” He said that “Scott’s administration has been riddled with attempts to subvert democratic processes,” and added that he has no doubt that the committee will prove more effective in furthering the public interest.

Kiteway issued a terse statement saying the Academy would “bow to the council’s decision.” He did not respond to queries for further comment. Earlywine has long been a critic of Kiteway’s tenure at the Academy and often accused Scott of allowing Kiteway too much independence from public oversight.

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Finnegan Overtakes Leaders in Overall Standings

By CORWIN JONES

PCAG veteran Alma Finnegan has taken the lead in the standings for the first time with her brilliantly executed win over Oliver Pohele in yesterday's match. Pohele is not in danger of being eliminated during this fourth round of knockout matches as his score to date is well over the cutoff, but it has left him shaken.

"I've been having the best season of my games career until this," Pohele said in post-match interviews. "This is a real blow to my confidence, not just to lose but to be totally crushed like this. Alma has a lot to be proud of today."

Finnegan was wreathed with wide smiles at her own post-match interview. "I've never been at the top of the board," she said. "I don't think it will last much past my next few matches, but it feels really terrific to know that I can do this. I usually don't hit my zone like that in championship games!"

Analysts were impressed by Finnegan's performance, as she had been widely

expected to lose to Pohele. Some even speculated that the confidence she has built with this victory may sustain her to her highest-ever final rank in the games. "It's highly unlikely she'll win, though, against shrewd competitors like Ryan Cahill," said Raina Hollow of the Sporting News. "I expect she'll put in a boosted showing for her next few matches, but the next time she plays against one of the other top five or ten players, it's all over. ... This is just an artificially inflated ranking based on a quirk of her scheduled matchups."

As the final knockout round progresses, the heretofore slow season has finally unleashed its fair share of surprises. Gabriella Petel has been slowly sinking through the ranks and has become dangerously close to being knocked out despite last year's stellar performance; Ethan Roanoke bested Ryan Cahill in their Tuesday match, though Cahill has since recovered the points; and Klaus Johnson has bowed out of the tournament, citing health reasons.

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Oversight Committee Members Appointed

By GARIMA KING

The City Council has approved the appointment of the nine members of its new Academy Oversight Committee after two weeks of wrangling and negotiation. The members include Senior Fellow Astrid Lindstrom, Senior Fellow Inari Ekeba, Cube Retrieval Team Member Garnet Reed, Centrifuge CEO Halima Bourne, Marmalejo College Dean Thomas Waxwick, Cognivia Director of Research Dale Robarding, PCAG Chairman Robert Zhi-Hui, PCX Managing Director Giordana Moore, and notable philanthropist Paulina Rudon-Birch.

The council was heavily divided over the appointees, according to sources in the Office of the Council. The initial longlist of nominations featured over seventy individuals and included education analysts, city planners, noteworthy artists and urban anthropologists. All of the appointees are themselves Academy graduates, and many have held fellowships. “The council was united in aiming for individuals who want to do the right thing by the Academy and by the city,” said Council Member Ruth Sawyer. “In some ways the Academy embodies

the heart of Perplex City. It transcends politics. It’s important to respect that.”

Council Leader Nathan Earlywine was particularly against the appointments of sitting senior fellows and other academicians, whom he felt might feel a “displaced loyalty” toward Academy master Sente Kiteway. He admitted that he was ultimately swayed from this stance by other council members, however. “We have settled on a moderate group of committee members from all sides of the issue,” said Earlywine. “If true oversight is to occur, the view must come from more than a single angle.”

Kiteway said he had no specific comments on the appointed members, though he added, “A dog on a leash doesn’t care how colourful the strap is.”

The committee is expected to convene by late next week to set its agenda and draft its internal operational policies. The council has granted the oversight committee full authority to investigate all activities of the Academy and its departments and affiliated organisations. It is anticipated that the committee will not take direct action itself, but will draft a proposal to present to the City Council; however, the council’s resolution forming the committee did allow for the committee itself to request authority for unilateral executive action if it becomes necessary.

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Earth Leaders Push Past 25 Million Points

By LAUREN SINCLAIR

It's out with the old and with the new this week on Earth's "puzzle leaderboard," as the combined efforts of 48,000 participants pushed the accumulative point total above the 25 million mark.

Recently mac_monkey seized the top spot with 15,700 points, unexpectedly superceding previous leaders Tally and oliverkeers13 just over two weeks ago. Michiko Clark, editor-in-chief of the Sentinel, commented that "Although other [players] have enjoyed an impressive term of service, it was time for them to move on from their position, and we wish them all the best."

Competitors now await the results of the controversial Extreme Puzzling competition, which saw Earth's puzzle pranksters indulge in reckless homages to the dangerous antics of Raoul Benton, covered previously in the Sentinel. Some critics called it a "tasteless affront to the principles of Perplex City," but others have refused to condemn the contest. As Clark recently said in an unrelated internal memo, "Although we must acknowledge the dignity and wisdom

of our own culture, it is in no-one's best interests to make light of our friends on Earth, even in times such as these - - the bridges between our worlds may be somewhat rickety, but we ought not burn them yet."

The sharp new players of the week are skecky, with 58 solves and 1229 points in his/her first six days of solving action, followed by deeyellow, with 46 solves and 870 points. Meanwhile Methospedia (14,745 points from 253 solves in 30 days) puts the "ember" in November with her smouldering solving skills, and shoots to 11th place -- although Theo Clarke, aka Gauntlet (14,745p / 249s) has put in a wholly impressive showing, too.

Kate Brewster is away.

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Kiteway, Committee Butting Heads

By IONA RODIE

Academy insiders have said that the Academy Oversight Committee is not making friends with Academy Master Sente Kiteway in its first days of investigation. The committee, formed by Council Leader Nathan Earlywine's Executive Order NE-3309, is charged with investigating Kiteway's governance of the Academy and its affairs after his involvement in a government-toppling scandal over illicit and illegal research.

"They want to put in place complete mechanisms for a financial audit of the entire Academy and all of its departments, for time audits of Sente and his assistant personally, and they want access to a number of files and projects that have been considered very high-level clearance," said an anonymous source close to the committee's proceedings. "They've demanded even access to Sente's personal key and files, and he's thus far refused to turn that over on the grounds that he deserves personal privacy even in his position. ... This is not going to end up well, I promise you."

Still, there are reportedly some divisions

even within the committee itself; reports have it that a number of Committee members are against forcing Kiteway to turn over his personal documents and have thus far blocked any resolution for disciplinary action. "It's a group of very strong individuals," said the source. "All of those towering egos are going to clash, so it may take ages before we see anything solid come out of this."

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Earlywine has commented little on the committee's progress to date, though he did say in a Monday interview that the members had been "chosen carefully, and I'm certain they will perform an excellent job of normalising the Academy's relationship with the city and its government."

Kiteway maintained his characteristic silence on the subject.

Camryn Scott was ousted from the Council Leader position but retained her seat on the Council after Kiteway's daughters stepped forward with evidence that the Academy was conducting research into recovering extremely dangerous wartime technologies. The experiments had been performed upon human subjects, resulting in numerous fatalities, according to Scarlett and Violet Kiteway.

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Hesh, Duncan Happy Together Again

By JULIUS LOMAN

Record mogul Helix Hesh and his sometime companion, former PCAG champion and hot contender Serena Duncan, are rumoured to have reconciled after a very public series of spats in recent days. Most recently, the two were spotted at Conundra sharing a dessert very late last night; but earlier in the week, they had been seen conducting heated arguments on Dalia Way and in a taxi leaving the Mobius Strip.

“They had a bit of a scuffle over how Helix was dealing with some of his female artists,” said one source close to Duncan. “Helix has a reputation as a lady’s man, and he wasn’t staying far enough away from temptation. ... She’s feeling less touchy, though, now that she’s had a good start in the fourth knockout round.”

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Friends of the pair claim that the two plan to enjoy a long weekend at Seawatch before Duncan’s next tournament match, calling to mind another high-profile holiday for the two. In May, the two were briefly rumoured to be engaged

before their first public separation; Duncan denied the reports some days later. Since then, the on-again-off-again couple have had several public conflicts and subsequent reconciliations.

“They’re both so high-maintenance that they’ll always have more than a fair share of drama,” said the source. “Really, though, they’re so much alike, and that’s the whole problem. They deserve one another, frankly.”

Duncan is currently trailing in third place for this year’s PCAG championship. Sports analysts have suspected that her tumultuous personal life might be injuring her chances at retaking the championship for this year. Duncan was the 267 champion, but lost the 268 title to current reigning champion Ryan Cahill, who again has the lead.

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Height, Area of Solved Cards Very Large

By LAUREN SINCLAIR

Precisely 767,772 puzzlecards had been solved as the Sentinel went to press earlier today. Stacked one atop the other, these would reach 307m into the air, higher than the Chrysler Building in Earth's New York, for example (although of course still being dwarfed by Perplex City's Ascendancy Point) or, if laid end to end, would form a trail 113km long -- ironically enough, that's further than if you laid the 49,213 registered participants end to end, who would cover only 82.7km collectively.

Alternatively, you could use the solved cards' combined 12,313 square metres of surface area to cover the whole of a football pitch with plenty left to spare.

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This month's most notable leaderboard debutantes include n_nicolaides (9395 points from 201 solves in 30 days) closely followed by heflin61 (9408p/192s/28d), although there are no changes to report at the top of the leaderboard this week.

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Brotherhood Reports Record Participation Going into Restitution

By LUCAS VOORHIES

The Brotherhood of the Six has announced that it is no longer accepting new participants for its annual Restitution of the Cube celebration at its Old Town temple. According to Sister April Flynt, the Brotherhood has received a record-breaking response for the traditional three days of meditation and reflection. “This year, it’s just unbelievable,” she said. “We’ve made new spaces available, and then those have been booked solid, too. ... We hate to turn away anyone who has a desire to be with us during this holy time, but we simply don’t have any more room.”

She indicated that the Brotherhood is working with the Council to add additional sites for community meditation, as an alternative for individuals who could not reserve space within the temple proper. A list of those sites should be available by Tuesday of next week.

Flynt said that the record numbers coincide with a general resurgence of

interest in traditional Perplexian values and traditions that has overtaken the city in recent weeks. “Learning some unpleasant truths about the Receda Cube shook the faith of many,” she said, “but we’ve been working to remind our congregants that our belief is much deeper and older than the Receda Cube alone. The Cube is a perfect expression of squareness, but it isn’t an object of worship. Now the people are remembering that.”

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Her twin, Sister Golda Flynt, added that people often feel drawn toward the faith in troubled times. “This is a hard time for the city, for all of us,” she said. “Now more than ever we need to be here for each other.”

The turnaround in participation is surprising, coming shortly on the heels of a steep drop seen in November. The Flynt sisters say that the dramatic turnaround began in early December. “It makes us very glad we didn’t scale back our expectations for this year,” said April Flynt.

Related reports from Earthworks indicate that sales of replica items for sundry Earth holidays have been anemic this year. “Diwali, Christmas, Hanukkah, none of it is moving this year,” said owner Mitchell Alba. “I’m considering discontinuing those lines for next year, unless something drastic changes.”

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Cahill, Duncan Resume Battle for PCAG Lead

By CORWIN JONES

PCAG star Serena Duncan has retaken the lead in the championship tournament after weeks of trailing arch-rival Ryan Cahill and top competitor Alma Finnegan. Cahill now stands in second place and Finnegan in third, with most analysts predicting either Cahill or Duncan will retake the championship. It would be the third win for either player.

“I’m feeling pretty good now,” Duncan said in interviews. “I feel like I’ve been performing below my own expectations, but last night against Klaus [Johnson], I finally hit my zone again.” Pundits generally speculate that Duncan’s resurgence is linked to her reconciliation with music mogul Helix Hesh. Duncan herself has disagreed, though, insisting that “when I’m in a match, nothing else even exists for me.”

Cahill took his drop from the lead with equanimity. “It’s a long month until the finals,” he said. “Anything could happen before then.” He also pointed out that statistically, only 28% of PCAG champions have held the lead at the end of the fourth knockout round.

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Meanwhile, Paula Ching, director of the Substance Compliance program at the PCAG, is rumoured to be on the verge of filing charges in a drug investigation that has been running since August. PCAG chairman Robert Zhi-Hui admitted to reporters that a “very serious investigation” is in progress, but declined to offer specifics regarding the charges at stake, nor whom is likely to be targeted by them.

“We take failure to comply to our drug testing program very seriously,” Zhi-Hui said, “but we also take seriously our responsibility to avoid tarnishing the reputations of innocent players. When we are confident we have a case, then we’ll reveal the details to the public. Until then, we don’t want to undermine the public’s trust in the games in progress.”

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Kiteway Implicated in PCAG Drug Fraud Investigation

By CORWIN JONES

Sources in the PCAG say that Academy Master Sente Kiteway may soon be facing charges of fraud for allegedly aiding PCAG champion Ryan Cahill in avoiding drug testing shortly before his 267 win, and possibly again last year.

The source says that information turned over by Kiteway from his personal key data to the Academy Oversight Committee late last week includes tracking information and correspondence. This previously-unavailable data ‘heavily suggests’ Kiteway was feeding Cahill information on when and how drug testing would take place. “Of course the committee saw what had dropped into its lap and turned this information over to be investigated by the proper authorities,” said the source.

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Kiteway has always had a closer relationship with Cahill. Kiteway awarded the PCAG star with the Beaumont Scholarship for Excellence, and personally oversaw Cahill’s academic career, even going to

the unusual length of listing himself as Cahill’s academic advisor. Shortly after Cahill’s win of the 267 championship, Kiteway remarked, “I couldn’t be prouder of Ryan if he were my own son.”

Kiteway was unavailable for comment, though his assistant, Patrick Azadian, said that he is confident a vehement denial will soon be issued.

Paula Ching, the PCAG’s Director of Substance Compliance, said that she could neither confirm nor deny the allegations. “You’ll know if you’re right when you see somebody thrown in prison, and not a moment before,” she said. “Justice isn’t done by rumour and fourth-hand gossip.”

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Earth Link Infiltrated, Academy Says

By GARIMA KING

The data link with Earth has been infiltrated and subverted by an unknown party, according to Academy security experts Henrik Tanner and Garnet Reed. According to Tanner, “It is clear that some communication has been happening without authorisation, and for some time. ... We fear that this communication has been going on at least since the [executive] order [NE-3309] went into effect, and possibly even quite a bit longer.”

Tanner, who is the Academy’s Security Director, said that they were unable to decipher the bulk of the captured communiques. One recent message was decrypted, reading only, “Phase 3 complete. Happy birthday.” “We aren’t sure what this means,” said Tanner, “but this is by definition suspicious activity. We simply can’t let this go.”

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Council Leader Nathan Earlywine has been briefed on the discovery, and said that he also finds the matter “very disturbing.” He said that he is planning an all-day session with his predecessor,

Council Member Camryn Scott, to discuss the matter, suggesting that he may be open to a change in policy on the handling of the data link and interworld relations.

Scott declined to offer comments on the matter, though she did confirm that she is scheduled for an all-day private session with Earlywine on Monday.

Reed in particular said he would use all of his considerable government connections to get the matter investigated as soon as possible. “The fact that this was able to happen right under our noses, it’s just unthinkable,” Reed said. He is a commander in the Perplex City Defence Forces, on top of his position on the Cube Retrieval Team and the Academy Oversight Committee. “I shudder to think about what this could mean for the Cube, and for our city.”

The data link between Perplex City and Earth was locked down in October of last year by Executive Order NE-3309, spurred by Earlywine’s concerns that the people of Perplex City had developed an unhealthy relationship with Earth culture.

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Sentinel Scrapes Barrel for Fresh Trivia

By LAUREN SINCLAIR

More than 50,000 puzzlers are now participating in Earth's puzzle Leaderboard, it was announced last week. The 50,000th player to join the competition appears to be Sashka57, registering on December 18, and going on to solve Rickety Old Bridge and Gravity in quick succession. Perhaps unaware of her deeply significant entry to the competition, she has since ceased to solve any further cards, although some analysts believe she remains destined for "big things." Indeed, the number of participants in fact reached the 51,000 mark today, but this has attracted far less attention.

In other developments:

* The Leaderboard Ladies are edging ahead of the Puzzling Patriarchy with 1875 points on average versus 1838 for the fellas.

* Many leading puzzlers seem to be representing obscure countries in their bid for leaderboard glory. The Aaland Islands, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Antarctica, The Seychelles,

Cayman Islands, Pitcairn, Heard Islands, and the Cook Islands are all represented in the Top 50. In fact, the Aaland Islands, with a population of only 26,711, has more points-per-person (0.59) than countries like the United Kingdom (0.24) or the United States (0.02). Jack Joule, a leading puzzle pundit on youth-oriented key networks, said: "They're archipelagoing all the way to the top!"

* As the Sentinel goes to press, 6699 players have registered as representing the United Kingdom, an ambigrammatic number known in some traditional Perplexian crafts as a "double-quotes worth."

* 197 players have now gained the 13,000 points necessary to earn a black leitmark. No silver leitmarks have yet been awarded, although a Mind Candy representative said they felt it would be "tasteless to do so before our work is completed, and the Receda Cube safely returned to the people of Perplex City." Of course, many in Perplex City have become skeptical that this will ever come to pass, with Earth-Perplex City communications now heavily restricted under the Earlywine Council administration, although an Academy spokesperson said: "We continue to have every faith in the investigative ability, courage and perseverance of our friends on Earth."

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Earlywine Reversal: Earth Data Link Opened by City Council

By JOHN CORMORAN

In a surprising reversal of policy, the City Council has reopened the data link to Earth effective immediately. The Council called it the first step in a “renewed and concerted effort to retrieve the Receda Cube quickly.”

Council Leader Nathan Earlywine said that the change in policy was a necessary action in light of the infiltration of the link, reported in the Sentinel previously. “It’s clear that the firewall has not deterred certain parties from relaying information,” he said. “We fear that an unknown entity - possibly the Third Power - is searching for the Cube with unsavoury motives, and the firewall has not prevented these communications.”

Just a week and a half ago, Academy security experts Garnet Reed and Henrik Tanner came forward with evidence that the data link was being used for short, cryptic messages between unauthorised parties on Earth and in Perplex City. Since that time, the City Council has

been closeted in marathon sessions with a number of individuals including Reed, Tanner, and police detective Helena Frye. Earlywine also scheduled a private policy discussion with his predecessor, Council Member Camryn Scott, which Earlywine later called “productive and illuminating.”

Scott declined to elaborate on Earlywine’s comments, simply stating that “the policy change was a unanimous decision by the council.”

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Reed, who is a commander in the Perplex City Defence Forces, on top of his position on the Cube Retrieval Team and the Academy Oversight Committee, expressed “relief” over the lightening of Executive Order NE-3309. “Now we can refocus on the important task of bringing home the Cube,” he said. In a separate statement, the Academy announced that an internal inquiry into how the link was infiltrated was already underway. Sources for the Sentinel have informed us that the suspension of a key individual in the Cube Retrieval Team is being considered.

The data link to Earth was heavily restricted and subjected to intensive monitoring in October under Executive Order NE-3309, in an effort to discourage the city’s preoccupation with Earth.

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Champaign Takes the PCAG Championship

By CORWIN JONES

PCAG prodigy Myra Champaign defeated Serena Duncan to take the PCAG championship last night. The 16-year-old player has become the second-youngest champion on record in the modern era of the games, following only Monday Garrett in 232. Champaign was stunned by her victory, repeating “I don’t believe it,” over and over, before rushing over to embrace her father, Klaus Lowrie. Once she calmed, she described the win as “the best moment of my life.”

“You dream about winning the PCAG, but I never expected I’d actually take it at my age,” she said. “This is so amazing.” Champaign beat out last year’s champion, Ryan Cahill, in a stellar performance during their one-on-one knockout match on Saturday.

“I’ve worked hard to be here, and it really doesn’t seem real,” she told reporters. “I’m dreaming, right? And in a minute I’ll find I’m not wearing any clothes and I’m running late for an exam!”

When she was informed that teen heartthrob Alejo Jackson is likely to be present at the Victor’s Ball, to take place later tonight, Champaign blushed and said that she hoped they would be introduced. “I’m such a big fan,” she gushed.

Duncan, visibly furious over her loss, refused to engage in the expected press interviews following the match. As she left the match, she told reporters, “Just don’t start writing about my retirement.”

Champaign has been the subject of much controversy, and required special permission from a PCAG committee before being allowed to play last year due to a number of drugs she received as a cognitive treatment when she was a small child. Based on the evidence presented to the committee, the PCAG ruled that she no longer had a special advantage because of the treatment she had undergone several years before. The decision prompted a number of disruptive protests from the Alliance for Clean Players. Alliance member Jonas Sawgrass has indicated that the group will be seeking to overturn Champaign’s title.

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Kiteway Arrested at PCAG Victor's Ball

By CORWIN JONES



Academy Master Sente Kiteway was arrested during the Victor's Ball late last night, witnesses say. Speculation on the scene ran rampant, with many believing that Kiteway was being arrested for playing some part in the theft of the Receda Cube three years ago, or for war crimes related to the Lancewood revelations last fall. However, police have insisted the true charges are significantly more mundane -- assisting former two-time PCAG champion Ryan Cahill in breaking the tournament's cognitive enhancer ban. Cahill was also arrested at the event.

Kiteway's two daughters, Violet and Scarlett Kiteway, were both present at the ball, and police say Violet came within a hair's breadth of being arrested herself for obstruction of justice before being restrained from interfering with police by others. Violet refused to give a comment to press, but an emotional Scarlett told reporters, "This is all my fault, isn't it? Everything is my fault."

Also in tears was newly-crowned PCAG champion Myra Champaign, whose win was being celebrated at the ball. PCAG officials tried to calm her and revive the festivities, but reports from partygoers say that a significant number of attendees left after the arrest, and the ball had a "very subdued" feeling for the rest of the night. "It was a relief when the thing was over," said last year's PCAG champion, Serena Duncan.

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Sente Kiteway, in police custody, chose not to issue any statements to the press.

The arrest comes as little surprise to news-watchers. Last week, a leak from within the PCAG's Substance Compliance division indicated that Kiteway's personal key files held incriminating information. Those personal files had been turned over to the Academy Oversight Committee as part of the comprehensive investigation into Kiteway's administration of the educational institution. Committee member and Academy Senior Fellow Inari Ekeba said that the committee had "no choice" but to turn over the evidence. "It was the only ethical move to make, despite the deep loyalty many of us hold for Master Kiteway," she said.

Kiteway and Cahill have had a close relationship going back several years.. Kiteway awarded the PCAG star with the Beaumont Scholarship for Excellence, and personally oversaw Cahill's academic career, even going to the unusual length of listing himself as Cahill's academic advisor. Shortly after Cahill's now-contested win of the 267 championship, Kiteway remarked, "I couldn't be prouder of Ryan if he were my own son."

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Academy Security ‘Sievelike,’ Says Expert

Opinion/Editorial

Academy Master Sente Kiteway has been arrested on the Academy grounds on the very night of the third anniversary of the Receda Cube’s theft. This, then, seems like a good time to reflect upon the status of the missing Cube, the state of security at the Academy, and the measured deliberations of the Academy Oversight Committee.

Part of Kiteway’s argument against prosecution for the Lancewood revelations, a matter still under investigation, is that the Academy is historically entrusted by the City Council with weighty matters that are best removed from the public’s prying eyes. This argument, though, belies the poor vigilance with which Kiteway’s administration has been marked. Officials from within the Academy have repeatedly assured the public that security has been addressed.

The Academy Security Director, Henrik Tanner, once said of his security system that “Our job is to make it as difficult [to bypass] as possible within the constraints

of realism and budget.” But in the past three years, the Cube has been stolen, a slow trickle of automotive parts has been making its way from the Academy to the black market, and the data link to Earth has been both sabotaged and subsequently infiltrated. Hardly the profile of a security system “as difficult as possible” to circumvent.

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Indeed, security at the Academy is so poor that Kiteway’s own home on Milamont Parade has reportedly been broken into and ransacked, just last night, though the Master’s daughter, Scarlett Kiteway, refused to offer comments to the press regarding it. Security for the house falls under the same blanket as does campus security.

Senior Fellow Inari Ekeba of the Academy Oversight Committee has said that the group is taking these factors seriously. But some now believe the committee, heavily salted with Kiteway loyalists, is incapable of taking the actions that are now necessary. “The Academy needs a clean slate,” said Locus Technology’s Gregory Dempsey. “The only recommendation I see the committee making is to sack Henrik and the rest of this sad lot and bring in fresh eyes. ... No professional organisation would permit those behind such a sievelike security arrangement to continue in employment.”

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Academy Students Wage Epic Annual Snowball Battle

By ANTONY CLAPHAM

The Academy had its annual snowball championship this weekend, with the Languages department emerging victorious for the first time since 240. “This is a proud day for us,” said Languages Senior Fellow Estelle Sedgewick. “The honour of our



Annual Academy Snowball Championship

victory will be the brightest gem in the crown of my tenure as senior fellow.”

The event, held after the first major snowfall in the new year, has been historically dominated by the Natural Sciences department. “Our superior physical engineering skills, especially as related to building defensive structures and reliable weaponry, usually serve us in good stead.

This year, it was not enough to defend us from the barbarian hordes of the Languages Department, however,” said Natural Sciences Senior Fellow Inari Ekeba.

Traditionally the winning team is awarded a leitmark by the Master of the Academy, but as Master Sente Kiteway is currently in prison, the ceremony was conducted by his assistant, Patrick Azadian. “I know I speak for the whole of the city when I say that all of you young men and women have acquitted yourselves well, and we are proud of each and every one of you,” he said. Kiteway is

facing charges of fraud and conspiracy for allegedly assisting former PCAG champion Ryan Cahill to evade drug testing.

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The Perplex City Academy has had a traditional snowball tournament

between its departments running annually for at least five hundred years, with some interruptions, mainly due to insufficient snow. The event is held on the Academy’s Great Lawn, with each department defending its assigned territory. The event is judged and scored by the newly-crowned PCAG champion, in this case 16-year-old Myra Champaign.

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No Reason For Second Season, Say Commentators

By LAUREN SINCLAIR

With the data link to Earth reopened, leaderboard followers here in Perplex City eagerly flocked to examine the latest changes to Earth's premier puzzle contest - only to find that things remained much the same. Xavier Kettering, of popular keycast Puzzles Today, said "the slight sense of disappointment has been sorely missed, and now we cling to it, like a child to their favourite quilt."

However, rumours emerge that Mind Candy, in association with the Academy, is now working on a second "season" of puzzles to raise Perplex City's profile on Earth. It's a revelation that has bitterly divided the puzzling classes in recent days.

"Frankly, it's crass," commented Kettering. "Although we fully understand Earth's hunger for our generally superior puzzles, and would appreciate fresh competition, it's yet further distraction from the higher aim of finding the Receda Cube. How many scribe-hours have already been sunk into this project? How many more will it take until our Earth-

based friends get their act together? This could just go on and on, and it's distasteful to simply 'move on' from the core purpose of the project. ... How does this help the average Perplex Citizen on the street today? We've become nothing more than a distant, idly entertaining pastime for the people of Earth, and it cheapens us all."

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Hans Ve, of the Institute For Contemporary Puzzling think-tank, is more supportive of the scheme, however. "Clearly, this is a desperately-needed extension of the Academy's existing efforts. With such high stakes, we have no choice but to keep our cause at the forefront of Earth's puzzlers' minds. ... Does Kettering really think we can expect the average participant - or even the stars of the leaderboard - to maintain their interest in our people without any further investment whatsoever? That would be madness, and whether it requires another 256 puzzles or 25,600, we'll continue to support this bold initiative until the Cube is finally found - and beyond."

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Fistfight in Crowd Ends Ooze Performance

By JOYCE HARRINGTON

Up-and-coming band The Ooze had their performance at The Gnarly Fox ended abruptly last night when the crowd began fighting. The standing-room-only show erupted into violence when additional fans tried to push inside. Four people were treated for injuries on the scene, and eight were arrested for assault.

Gnarly Fox proprietor Dice Brown called the incident a “regrettable security lapse” and insisted it wouldn’t happen again. “The band is so popular, see, that the fans were shoving and all to get a closer look.” Police say Brown has received citations for inadequate security and for breaking fire regulations, as the fire department has cleared the bar for one hundred eighty occupants and well over two hundred twenty were present when police arrived.

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The band’s front man, Evelyn Crowley, said that the band had just begun playing its new single, Faberling, when “they all just went insane,” he said. “I saw in the back some regular pushing and cuffing,

nothing serious, and then all of a sudden there’s fists up and howling for blood. Now I know how [Roll for Damage singer] Alejo [Jackson] must feel all the time.”

Some crowd members, though, insisted that the brawl had more to do with the weather than the performance. “The Gnarly Fox is my regular hangout,” said 23-year-old Laura Yao. “But it was so cold last night, I think it set some kind of record or something, and we all just wanted to get in where it was warm. ... I guess The Ooze is pretty good, too, though.”

While The Ooze does not have a formal recording and distribution deal, they recently pushed out Faberling for free distribution.

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Joya Announces New Album in Spring

By ROLAND GERBERA

Pop diva Joya has announced that she has completed studio work for her next album, *Deeper*. Early reviewers say the album features the “more mature and passionate” sound promised in the early days of recording. “This is going to be Joya’s career-defining album,” said Hesh Records’ own Helix Hesh. “We’re proud to have her back in our talent stable, and we just know *Deeper* is going to be a big win for all of us.”

Joya said that she is “supremely proud” of the work she has done on this album. “This is the music of a strong, independent woman,” she said. “It has a little regret, a little sorrow, but mostly it’s about being a woman and a mother, and being strong enough to live your own life.” The album also includes a love song to her fans, entitled *There for Me*. “My fans give me so much love, so much,” said Joya, “and I thought I should let them all know how important they are to me.”

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Other songs on the album will include the moody, lyrical *Disappearing Act*, and a

lullaby for her daughter, *Allegra Melody*. The title track, *Deeper*, is a driving, emotional anthem about finding hidden inner resources.

The album’s release date has been set for April 23, according to Hesh Records. Joya will be taking a break from performing until then, but once the album is launched she is planning a tour.

Joya fans are thrilled that the album is being released so quickly. Although Joya announced in June she was returning to the studio, many feared that the work would take over a year to complete as she focused on her new baby, who turned one year old in late December.

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6 Killed in Deadly Police Raid on Point

By ALWHIN COPI

A police raid on Ascendancy Point killed six people, left at least three injured, and interrupted power to hundreds of residents and business. The operation was led by Detective Helena Frye as part of an independent group of specialists targeting the so-called Third Power, a secret organisation which Frye says may have been involved with the theft of the Receda Cube three years ago. Cube Retrieval Team members Caine Johansson and Kurt McAllister, as well as Academy Master Sente Kiteway's daughter, Violet, were also involved with the raid.

"This was a brave and important operation," said Chief of Police Eoin Morgan. "My heart goes out to the families of Petra Fishcook and Patrick Harrison, who gave their lives in the service of all of us in Perplex City. ... Thanks to the hard work and courage of all the men and women involved, we believe we have broken the Third Power once and for all."

The strike on the Third Power was intended to decapitate the organisation, and also to rescue Kiteway's younger daughter, Scarlett Kiteway, who had allegedly been kidnapped and held by the group for several days. Scarlett Kiteway was subjected to torture during her imprisonment, though police declined to speculate on why she had been singled out. She is currently being treated for serious injuries at Phuah Hospital.

Police say that over three dozen Third Power members were detained in the raid, and believe nobody in the base of operations successfully evaded the police net.

The police found information at the Ascendancy Point location revealing the identities of scores of additional Third Power operatives, and dozens were captured in a series of dawn raids. "We caught these monsters completely unawares," said Morgan. No further injuries were reported from this second wave of raids.

Four of the dead were Third Power agents present at the scene, police say, including Academy Languages Adjunct Senior Fellow Roberto Solitano. His specific involvement with the Third Power is unknown. Frye was shot by a Third Power Agent during the attack, but is expected to recover uneventfully.



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View from Earth: Bring Season Two



By AFFY PERSON

Regarding the feelings of Xavier Kettering and the others who don't care for impending arrival of the second season, I have to ask them how else they

plan on getting the word out to Earth's residents regarding the missing Receda Cube.

The puzzles that the puzzle scribes have sent to Mind Candy for Season 1 have had two noticeable effects on Earth citizens that I've seen. First, they become more aware of the City's culture through the puzzles, and then become concerned about the Cube. We receive solicitations and media at a nearly constant rate, all of it asking for our money, time, and attention. We can't realistically give all of our money, time, and attention to everything we see, and as such we become jaded to new petitions for our investment.

The puzzle cards manage to overcome this mental block by offering us something first, and then asking for help. The small

sampling of your culture gives us an appreciation for your trouble, and then (possibly led by greed at the thought of more puzzles), we're willing to put our previously mentioned money, time, and attention into finding the cube. And the more people we have on the lookout, the more likely we are to find the Cube.

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The second effect is in the mental state of the players. Even if we knew to look for the Cube, there's no guarantee that we'd be in the mental state to locate it. There's a difference between being smart and being clever, and even if we have dozens of smart people searching, they might not be in the clever state of mind necessary for Cube retrieval. The cards allow us to see puzzles everywhere. Packing items into a box, timing the ebb and flow of traffic as we head to work, the rules of etiquette when travelling in crowded public transportation, ordering a budget-smart meal that will still please everyone...the puzzle cards are the spark that can ignite our imagination when faced with the challenges surrounding us.

While I can appreciate the fact that you'd prefer for your puzzle scribes to work on puzzles at home, Xavier, I ask you to help us in helping you. You're not a "distant, idly entertaining pasttime," you're the beginning of what promises to be a great inspiration.

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Cahill Confesses, Sente Sprung

By CORWIN JONES

Master of the Academy Sente Kiteway was released from prison earlier today as the PCAG has withdraw all charges against him. His freedom came because the former PCAG champion, Ryan Cahill, has issued a full confession detailing his use of drugs to reach his first championship title in 267. All charges against Kiteway have been dropped.

Kiteway said that he has maintained his silence even while being held on drug charges out of conscience. "I discovered Ryan's drug problems by virtue of my personal relationship with him," he said, "and though my duty as an official of the Academy would have been to turn him in, he never spoke to me about it as the Master of the Academy. ... I'm more than my office. I knew he would do the right thing, in time."

Cahill's written confession is nearly 30 pages long, and details a conversation he had with Kiteway the night he was formally crowned. "Sente accused me of cheating, and urged me to step forward," he said. "I never meant any harm to anyone, but the pressure to succeed at that level of play is enormous." According to his confession, his second championship win was achieved with no chemical

assistance whatsoever.

Police say Cahill has agreed to work with authorities to locate and bring to justice his drug sources. In his confession, he writes about first being approached by a dealer selling cognitive enhancers guaranteed to be scrubbed of their characteristic markers in testing. "He just said that his goods came through Gloria," he wrote.

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When the Academy Oversight Committee checked Kiteway's personal key records against the Academy's own security systems, they discovered that the Academy systems had been tampered with to erase any record of that meeting. According to Garnet Reed, the member of the committee who discovered the discrepancy, this was the red flag that led to Kiteway's and Cahill's arrest. "Intentional tampering like that shows someone has a secret," Reed said. "Given the evidence the PCAG had already accrued against Cahill, it was no big leap to guess what that secret might have been." Reed also said he has "personal regrets" about his role in the case.

Paula Ching of the PCAG Substance Compliance department said that it is continuing its investigation to determine the accuracy of Cahill's account. It is also looking at further punitive actions, including the possibility of stripping Cahill of one or both of his PCAG titles.

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Receda Cube Found on Earth

BREAKING NEWS

Just a few weeks past the third anniversary of the Receda Cube's theft, the Cube has been found on Earth. Mind Candy has confirmed that the Cube has been located and been turned over to them by one Andy Darley, from Feltham, Middlesex, in the United Kingdom. According to Darley, the Cube had been buried in the Wakerley Great Wood, a public forest in southern England on Earth. He found it Sunday afternoon, he said, and contacted Mind Candy on Monday. Mind Candy did not release news of the find until now for fear of perpetuating a hoax, but Mind Candy now reports that Darley has visited their offices and the discovery of the true Cube has been confirmed.

Andy Darley, 39, is a freelance designer and writer from Feltham, Middlesex. His hunt for the Cube began in December 2005. Since then, he's solved over 252 puzzles, achieving a rank of 49th on the Perplexcity.com leaderboard.

Darley says found the Cube, he said, with the assistance of a mysterious person he calls "Combed Thunderclap," who allegedly took the Cube to prevent its theft by the Third Power. This anonymous person has for some time been altering

the puzzle cards sent by the Academy to include clues to the Cube's location; one in particular sent Cube-hunters on Earth to a secret web site, invisible from Earth, called the Library of Babel, which told the story of the theft and including increasingly urgent hints as to the Cube's hiding place on Earth. Cube-hunters on Earth, following these clues, narrowed the Cube's hiding spot to an 80-mile footpath in England called the Jurassic Way.

"I went there on the Thursday, just thrilled to be helping, but I still never imagined that I'd find the Cube. On Friday, I went there at 4am -- and it takes a lot to get me out of bed at 4am," Darley said. "'I wanted to give it my best shot, but when I left on Friday evening about 9pm, with my trowel in my bag and fork over my shoulder, knowing that I was walking away from £100,000, I still thought 'well, I gave it my best shot, I never *really* had a chance of finding it', you know?"

"I imagined that someone would come along and keep digging in the hole I'd started and find it three inches deeper, but I thought, hey, that's the way it goes.

"I spent the Saturday at home with a thumping migraine, thinking - I know where I went wrong. I know where it is. But somebody's digging it up right now... and when it became clear that nobody had got it on Saturday, I couldn't believe

Continued

that I had another chance. So on Sunday, I got up at sunrise again, and that was the first moment when I thought I had a real chance.

“I spent 3 hours digging in the wrong place. I’ve had some archaeological training, and a professional archaeologist would have been proud. It was the most beautiful trench you’d ever seen - lovely vertical sides, with cut-sections so you could see if there was a hole in it... but yeah, completely the wrong place.”

He concluded: “Of all the 50,000 players, from all these different countries, I never thought for a moment I would be the person to find The Cube. ... It wasn’t until only a few days ago that I thought I was in with a chance. As I pulled the Cube from the sticky, wet clay, and even after I’d found it, as I was waiting to return the Cube, all I could think about is how bizarre the whole thing really was.”

At the news of the find, Academy Master Sente Kiteway reportedly broke into boisterous and decidedly undignified cheering. “It’s been hard to keep faith for this long,” he said, “but I knew the fine men and women of Earth would not fail us in the end.” There are reports of jubilation all over the city, including fireworks over the temple of the Brotherhood of the Six in the Old Town, and reportedly people are gathering to talk about the thrilling news all over the city.

The City Council has issued a brief proclamation congratulating Darley on his achievement. “We, the City Council, would like to thank Andy Darley for his work on behalf of Perplex City. As a token of our gratitude, not only will we bestow prize money of one million lecks, but we will also commission a monument to preserve the memory of this historic day. ... On behalf of each and every citizen of Perplex City, we thank you.”

In return, Darley had some advice for Perplexians: “Take more care of it next time.”

The Academy has not yet disclosed whether or how it intends to bring the Cube back to Perplex City.

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Council Speaks on Cube, Third Power

By JOHN CORMORAN

The Office of the Council today issued a final report on the secret group calling itself the Third Power, finding that the group has been rendered harmless. The report recommends the police detective Helena Frye be awarded a citation for her “immense contributions” toward finding the Third Power and bringing them to justice.

“The Third Power was a significant risk to the security and populace of Perplex City,” according to the report. “The group and its members have been implicated in a number of murders, the high-tech theft trade, sabotage of the data link to Earth last year, and even a plot to steal the Receda Cube, though that was apparently unsuccessful. ... With the Jan. 31 raid on the Third Power’s headquarters in Ascendancy Point, this dangerous terrorist organisation has been soundly dismantled.”

The report explores the relationship between the Third Power and the Reconstructionist religious group in significant detail (the Reconstructionists themselves being a splinter group of

the much larger Brotherhood of the Six religion), concluding that the two are mostly unrelated. The Third Power, the report suggested, “at most recruited the more militant members of the Reconstructionists.”

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Council Leader Nathan Earlywine commented, “It has become clear to the City Council that the Third Power was an extremely dangerous group, and we authorised the police to spare no expense nor leave any stone unturned in their work to protect us all. ... Now that this danger has passed, we can strive to put this divisive and frightening time behind us and return to the work of building a better Perplex City.”

In light of recent events, the Council has also urgently convened a special committee to examine the circumstances surrounding the theft of the Cube and its subsequent recovery. It expects to hear testimony from Violet Kiteway, who has come forward today admitting that she took the Cube to prevent the Third Power from obtaining it, and Kurt McAllister, who offered her significant material aid. The investigation is not expected to result in any criminal charges.

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Sentinel Exclusive! Iona Interviews... Violet Kiteway: “I Stole the Cube”

By IONA RODIE

It may be the story of the century, but Violet Kiteway looks remarkably cool as she confirms the rumour that has been circulating in the Sentinel offices, and around the city, for the past 24 hours.

“Yes,” she says, “I stole the Cube.”

I’d been prepared for her to say this, and had written a list of questions to ask her. But, in the face of this bald statement I am momentarily silenced. Kiteway smirks, stands up and offers me a coffee, “as I’m making.”

But why did she steal it?

“Thereby,” she replies, “hangs a tale.”

Violet Kiteway greets me at the door of her Mobius Strip apartment in grey sweatpants and an oversized T-shirt.

Her hair pulled back into a ponytail, she empties a handful of popcorn into her mouth and conducts a loud and apparently angry conversation on her key while motioning me to follow her into the spacious living room. She wanders into the bedroom, still irritably informing the person on the other end that she “won’t come, no matter how much they beg, and don’t even think about trying to contact Scarlett,” giving me the opportunity to examine her home more thoroughly.

The living room looks out over the Strip itself, with views of the coast road and the ocean -- it’s one of the most prestigious addresses in the most stylish part of town. The room itself is furnished boldly: two large purple sofas, bookcases on three walls, a Hutchins print, Warren’s iconic projection map of the City, a turquoise Lara Braebun rug. The room is also scattered with an apparent miscellany of objects: empty takeaway food containers, papers, scarves and gloves, a leather-bound edition of Varkin’s “Wanion: the tale of a saucy butcher boy” with a playing card serving as a bookmark, stained coffee cups and a heap of Ceretin and Saptivan on the coffee table.

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One absence strikes me immediately, and I ask about it as soon as she returns, having abruptly hung up on her caller. No pictures on display?

Continued

“Ah,” she says, and beckons me into the bedroom -- a scene of even greater domestic chaos than the public rooms - - “I have a bunch on my key, obviously. And this.” Next to her bed is a tiny photo frame with a group picture at least 20 years old: her father, Sente Kiteway, Master of the Academy; next to him the red-headed Lily, her mother, holding the infant Scarlett; and between them, the young Violet. Is that all the reminder she wants around her of her family and friends?

“Hey, I get reminders of my family and friends in the daily newspapers, OK? It’s not like we’re in any danger of disappearing from the headlines.”

That’s certainly no overstatement. Sente Kiteway has never been far from the headlines since he took office, while Scarlett’s kidnapping by agents of the shadowy Third Power and her subsequent rescue made the news only last week. And Violet Kiteway herself? Since yesterday, when the safe return of the Cube to Mind Candy was confirmed, she’s been deep in discussion with Michiko Clark and the publishers of the Sentinel. My visit here is the end result of those discussions. Violet Kiteway has something to tell us.

“Yes,” she says, “I stole the Cube.”

When she’s settled herself back on one

of the sofas with another cup of strong black coffee, she begins to tell her tale. “It started with a coincidence, really.” She smiles. “Is there ever really such a thing as a coincidence? After everything that’s happened with the Cube, I start to suspect there isn’t. But it felt like a coincidence at the time. A coincidence of three things: I like bars, I like history, and I like taking risks.

“So, like all the best things, it started in a bar. Not the best bar, though. The Five of Cups, in the Old Town, a bit of a dive. Hadn’t been there before, but one of my friends had mentioned that they have a good game some nights and I thought I’d turn up, on the off chance. And it was while I was waiting that the first thing happened, the thing that started everything else.”

She pauses, clearly for dramatic effect.

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“I arrived too early -- kind of a first for me, right? So I sat down at the bar, ordered a drink. And the barman sidled over to me and said: ‘Are you... K?’ Which I had no idea how to respond to, so I said nothing. He looked at me in a meaningful way, and drew a symbol on the bar in spilled beer. Two interlocking squares. And... well, I recognised it.”

I interrupt her. How did she know what it was?

Continued

She sighs, picks up a pencil from the detritus on the coffee table and starts playing with it. "I've done a lot of research into the history of the city. For my own reasons. I didn't know the full meaning of the symbol then, or the history of the Third Power, of course. But I'd seen it before -- in my Uncle's house for one thing -- and I knew enough to know that what he'd drawn was incomplete. I looked at it for a moment. The guy behind the bar was staring at me expectantly. I dipped my finger in the wet beer and completed the mark, with a third square overlaid on top of the other two. And that was when he started talking.

"He leaned over, kept his voice low, and said, 'Everything is arranged for the party on the fifteenth. The hardware is all prepared. All I need is your retinal print to key the systems to you.'

"Now, it was pretty clear I'd stumbled onto something both exciting and interesting. And I knew enough to keep quiet and let him talk himself out. I said, 'Yes, the party on the fifteenth. I'm looking forward to it.' He looked at me slightly oddly and said, 'Looking forward? It could be dangerous. I thought you were experienced at this sort of thing.'

"'Yes,' I said, 'that's why I'm not afraid.' He nodded and seemed satisfied. He said, 'I can't believe we're finally going to touch it. I mean, I'm not into all that

mystical stuff like my wife is, but still... what do you think it'll feel like?'

"And this was where I made a mistake, right, because I finally worked out what he was talking about and I said, 'The Cube?' He startled like a spooked rabbit, stared at me and said, 'Wait. If you're K, who am I?' I thought for a minute and said, 'J?'

"Which, clearly the wrong answer, and I'd been thrown out of the bar faster than I could think."

Violet is edgy now, tapping the pencil on the table, fidgeting and leaning forward. Why, I ask, didn't she just go to the police with the information she'd discovered?

"I was an idiot," she replies candidly. "But hindsight's 20/20, right? I was an idiot, I didn't understand how serious what I'd stumbled on was, I thought it was a sort of joke. I made a very minor attempt to raise the issue with my father -- along the lines of 'So, dad, how good is the security for the Cube?' and didn't take it any further. I wish I had. Maybe, probably," she sighs, "I tell myself that even if I'd said anything, no one would have believed me. And that's probably true. I have to keep telling myself that, for my own sanity. Too many people have died for me to believe anything else now.

"In any case, that was what I decided.

Continued

I thought the police wouldn't believe me. I didn't even know if I could trust them -- and that doubt's proved to be not too inaccurate. And, to be honest, I was excited then. Gyvann, I was so naive. I wanted an adventure, that's the truth. I didn't know how serious everything could get."

She runs her hand across her forehead, then gets up to make another cup of coffee. When she returns, she seems calmer. I pose my next question. So, if she didn't talk to the police, what did she do?

"I did," she says, "what I always do at times like this. I talked to Kurt."

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Sentinel Exclusive! Iona Interviews... Violet Kiteway: “I Was Wrong”

By IONA RODIE

Kiteway smiles as she recounts her conversations with puzzle scribe Kurt McAllister about her suspicions over a plot to steal the Cube. She clearly thinks of McAllister with a great deal of affection, but my attempts to probe a little deeper into the nature of their relationship are met with a brick wall.

“We’re friends,” she says, “that’s all it is. He’s a really good and wonderful friend. Although... well, I must say that everything that’s happened has just emphasised for me what a truly amazing friend he is. There aren’t many like him. I don’t know if there are any like him, really.” She grows silent for a moment, then catches herself, pours another half-cup of coffee and continues with her story.

“I told Kurt everything I’d heard and everything I suspected. Like me, he wasn’t sure what to think. It seemed so preposterously unlikely -- a plot to steal the Cube?” She smiles wryly. “We

never believe anything truly awful could ever happen until it does, do we? But, because Kurt’s thorough, he went and made a careful survey of the security systems at the Museum. He said it was actually pretty tight, but he could see how someone might potentially be able to crack it. It would be really difficult, but it’d be possible. I remember chatting about it with him - when the whole thing still seemed like a game we’d made up.

“So,” I said, “you reckon it’s possible, theoretically, for someone to use the weak points you’ve found to make an attempt to steal the Cube?” He agreed that it was. “Well then,” I said, “how about if we conceal ourselves somewhere in the museum on the night of the party and if anyone tries anything we... foil their dastardly plot? Or just, you know, raise the alarm?” He smiled, and gave me a typical Kurt response: “Sounds fun. Or at least, less worse than dying.”

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“So we laid our plans. There’s an entrance to the catacombs inside the museum, and I happen to know the catacombs pretty well -- spent a lot of time playing in them when I was a child. I had an invitation to the Academy Ball, but Kurt and I decided that it’d draw far too much attention if we were both to disappear at the same time, so I should pretend to be ill and then make my way to the museum through the catacombs.”

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Kiteway leans back and smiles, toying with a pencil. Am I right to think she enjoyed this escapade?

She grins, but her face falls abruptly. "Oh, then," she says. "It felt like an amazing adventure then. I can't think of it like that anymore. Or at least, I think of it that way at times, moments when I remember how I felt before I knew any of this. And then I remember everything that's happened since and..." She trails off. "It's amazing how hard things can start so easily." She draws a breath, composes herself and carries on. "Anyway, the plan was for Kurt, who arranges the fireworks at the ball, to set them to go off automatically and join me at the museum. It all went like clockwork.

"I left my house at 6pm, walked through the catacombs from an entrance in the Old Town to the museum -- I've walked that route many times before, but never in the dark. The flashlight made everything seem strange, I remember that. Like a different city, another place. Once or twice I thought I heard voices or sounds, but nothing was ever distinct enough to follow up. I still don't know whether anything I heard was real. I came up through the entrance in the museum at about 7:15pm -- Kurt had set my key to be recognised as a security tag by the sensors -- and put myself in the position we'd chosen. Behind the exhibit of prehistoric Hausam art, in the gallery

next door to the Cube.

"I was in position and reading a novel on my key by the time the other guests started to arrive. I remember it felt like a waste of time right then -- sitting in a dark, empty museum when my friends and family were having fun at the ball. I have a message on my key I sent to Kurt, complaining that it was 'a whole lot of nothing followed by further hours of nothing at all.'" Kiteway tips her head to one side. "I look at that message sometimes, to remind me who I was before... before all of this.

"Kurt kept tabs on the museum security while wandering through the party, chatting to the people he had to talk to. At about 9:30pm he seemed to see some kind of flicker in the system, thought it was probably nothing, but excused himself, found a quiet place in his faculty, pulled up a dozen security feeds and sat down to monitor the museum. We were in audio contact the whole time and still there was... nothing. The flicker didn't reappear. We'd almost decided that the whole thing had been a waste of time, were trying to work out if I could get home and back to the party in my evening gown in time for the last dance when it happened."

Kiteway, clearly unnerved by retelling this portion of her tale, pours herself more coffee and begins to fiddle with a pencil again. She looks down as she continues.

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“I couldn’t hear anything but Kurt’s sudden, sharp intake of breath in my ear. I said, ‘What’s going on?’ Kurt paused for a moment and said, ‘I don’t know. Something, there’s some process running...’ Then another pause. ‘It’s going faster than I can keep up with.’ He sounded scared, which is rare for Kurt. ‘Someone’s coming, Vi. Just like we thought, someone’s coming and I don’t know how to...’ I kept asking him what he was seeing, who was coming, but he didn’t answer me, and then all of a sudden he was shouting in my ear, ‘They’re coming your way through the main entrance. Run. Run!’

“So I ran. I ran up the long gallery, and into the Cube room, where it was sitting on its plinth. There were no sirens blaring, no sign that the security had been breached. Could I really leave it here to be stolen by whoever was coming? Whoever it was who’d kill to get their hands on it? ‘Kurt,’ I said, ‘are you sure they’re coming? I can’t see anything.’

“But as he was telling me that yes, he was certain, yes he was sure, I heard the noise of footsteps -- loud, confident steps marching toward the Cube room through the gallery I’d just left. And I thought, I can’t, I can’t leave it here for them. So I picked it up. And then I was... elsewhere.”

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Kiteway requests a brief pause at this point in the conversation. She fills a glass with water and drains it, then calls a nearby restaurant to order some sushi to be delivered. In the meantime I glance again around her apartment; if the religions are right and the Cube holds some special spiritual significance, there’s no sign in the clutter and detritus that Kiteway’s been enlightened by her experience. What was it like to hold the Cube, to travel with it?

“What was it like? The closest I’ve got to it is in what I wrote in the Library of Babel site I made for the people on Earth. The whole experience felt like a dream. Arriving in New York, the seamless way the arrangements were made. The Cube must have done it, but how, and why doesn’t it do it more often? The flight to London and the car out to Wakerley Great Wood all felt unreal. I think perhaps I wanted it not to be real. It would have been easier. But it wasn’t a dream, as I discovered when I found myself back in Perplex City.”

And why didn’t she tell the proper authorities about what had happened to her then?

She sighs.

“I thought about it. I talked about it with Kurt. He’d thought I might be dead, certainly didn’t know if I’d ever get back

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to the city. But he'll have to tell you about that himself. Our reasoning went like this. To get the clearance and know-how to launch that theft of the Cube, whoever had done it had to be both powerful and deep within many organisations in the city. I didn't know who I could trust and who I couldn't.

"Moreover, if I confessed to the theft, who'd believe I'd done it to save the Cube? I'd certainly have been arrested, possibly convicted of the crime. In either case I'd have been a sitting duck, a target for any Third Power operatives in the criminal justice system to kidnap and try to get the information out of me. The only way to keep safe was to keep silent. And it wasn't just my safety I was thinking of, it was," she stops, pushes her hair out of her eyes. "Well, look, I thought I'd keep everyone safe if I just kept quiet. But I was wrong. As much as I don't like to think so, I find I'm wrong quite often."

So why the clues, the elaborate dance with the people of Earth to give hints at the Cube's location?

"That started as a safety net really, or..." she pauses, choosing her words carefully, "maybe it'd be better to say a failsafe. Kurt and I had talked a lot about the possibility that the Third Power might have agents on Earth, that they might start looking for the Cube or have methods to find it like those we could use here in the city. And one thing was clear to me from

the start -- we didn't want those people digging the Cube up and getting hold of it.

"We wanted to be able to get a message to the good guys, the players on Earth, but we were worried that the Third Power might be listening in, so we couldn't just tell them the location. When the Cube Retrieval Project was launched, it seemed like the perfect way to get messages to the people of Earth if we needed to. Kurt was on the team, and could alter the cards in such a way that it was only visible from the Earth end of the feed, not in Perplex City.

"We decided to put really tough cryptic clues on the cards. That way, only a big group of smart people could find the Cube. Our thought was that a big group of smart people who'd have the interests of Earth at heart were more likely to be able to follow those clues than a small group of smart-but-evil people." She sighs, then smiles slightly, "it was a desperate move, but that was all we had. And, thanks to the hard work of the people of Earth, our desperate gamble's paid off. I'll never be able to express fully how grateful I am to all the Cube hunters who worked so hard to solve our clues -- the fact that the Cube's safe now... well, we can't know how many lives that's saved."

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And does she have any regrets?

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She toys with her pencil again, tapping it on the coffee table and chewing the end.

“Some days... some days I have nothing but regrets. What I did, well, it might have been the right thing to do, but it was at the expense of the people closest to me. The people I love. And all the lying.” She passes a hand over her forehead. “I’ve been lying and lying for the past three years. I’m a good liar, a good poker player, but not to be able to talk about the biggest thing that’s ever happened to you? That changes you; I’m not even sure I know how yet. I wish I could have told the truth a long time ago but I just didn’t see how I could.

“And there are the people who died -- Bernardo Holyoke and Monica Grand, well, they got in over their heads before I ever appeared on the scene. But Isaac Cymbalistic? Anna Heath? And what happened to Scarlett... Perhaps things could have gone differently if I’d made different choices, and I’m not sure I’ll ever be able to forgive myself for that. I’m not sure I want to.”

Her head lowered, she bites her lip.

“So yes,” she says at last, “I think it’d be fair to say I have regrets.”

The doorbell rings; it’s the sushi and the interview time is almost up. One final question -- what next for Violet Kiteway,

thief and saviour of the Cube, the only Perplexian ever to travel to Earth and return safely? Kiteway looks up from her toro sashimi and grins: “I don’t know what’s next. But I’m sure I’ll think of something.”

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Sentinel Exclusive! Iona Interviews... Violet Kiteway

In this third and final part of our exclusive Sentinel interview, Violet Kiteway answers questions submitted over the past several days by our readership.

Not to sound bitter about it, but given the kind of deceptions necessary over the past few years, (starting with, for instance, claiming to be unable to reach the Academy on the night of the theft) what else have we been misled about? What do we or have we known as fact that was simply not true?

Justin Peeples

Thanks for your question, Justin. I have tried to be as honest as I could, within the bounds of trying to keep myself, Kurt and my family safe. (Since I unarguably did not keep us entirely safe, I may have failed. Since most of us are alive and the Third Power haven't been able to use the Cube to do whatever they were planning to do with it, perhaps I succeeded. I'll have to leave you to judge that for yourselves.)

My search for the Third Power was entirely genuine -- I had seen their mark before, but other than that I had no idea

who they were or what they wanted. Let me put it this way: there were two sets of intruders on the night, and together I and the people of Earth were looking for one of them. Everything that we did to find that second set of intruders, to learn about their motives, to disrupt their plans was real. I'm sorry that I couldn't tell you that I was part of the other set. I'm sorry if you feel betrayed or hurt. I did what I thought was right, which is all anyone can ever do.

Will you be nekkid soon?

Jet2themax

Jet2themax, I will be naked several times today -- for example, when taking a shower or getting ready for bed. However, you will never, ever witness this.

I was wondering. A message was intercepted by the police, as well as being filtered to us on Earth. The message reads:

Electric splash

BB, 21 to 24

4: C, V, K, Q

20, V to 24

We have come to know the "C, V, K, Q" refers to the 4 people hired to steal the cube. What was the electric splash, and what does "BB, 21 to 24" refer to?

Scott Myers, Earth

Thanks fFor your question, Scott. Helena fFrye, the police detective working on

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the case, has suggested that BB meant the Buttered Bridge, an ancient feature of the Academy. 21 to 24 probably meant the gate numbers through which the Third Power group were to enter the Academy complex. As for the electric splash -- it's the name of one of the fireworks Kurt used in the display on the night the Cube was stolen. He's produced the fireworks for a lot of Academy events; the Third Power probably used the electric splash as a signal to meet up.

We now know that the Cube was buried in Wakerley Great Wood, but how did you decide on that location?

Sean Gavan (Onionring)

The Cube itself chose the location, Sean, as I tried to explain in the Library of Babel site. Evidently it has some kind of sentience. But, like everyone else, I have no idea why it doesn't do this more often. There's a lot we still don't know about it.

I would like to ask Violet about what time she returned to Perplex City: Was she gone the same amount of time as she was on Earth, as time appears to pass at the same rate in our two worlds? Did the Cube send her back in time so she wasn't missed? Or did Kurt cover for her absence? Also relating to this; where did the Cube return her to? The Academy Museum? Just it seems unlikely that no one noticed the Master's daughter

suddenly appearing in the spot the Cube was taken from a couple of days after its theft.

Good luck with part 3 of your interview. Could you pass on to Violet that I for one don't blame her at all her decisions, it's the only course of action she could take to ensure the Cube's safety.

Izzy Martin, an ex-Cube Hunter

Thank you so much for your question, Izzy, and for your support. The answer is that time did pass at the same rate -- I arrived back in Perplex City a couple of days after I'd left. It was such a crazy time in the city though that no one really noticed I was missing. I wasn't supposed to be at the party at all, after all, and Kurt just told anyone who asked that I was still feeling ill. As for where I returned... it would have been handy if I'd turned up back in my apartment, but for no reason that's clear to me, instead I found myself in the middle of a clump of bushes in Polygon Park. Covered in mud. And had to walk home. So much for the all-powerful object, eh?

Could you ask Violet: Just how did she get back from Earth to Perplex City? She seemed to rather skip that point.

Tally

Well, Tally, I got back pretty much the same way I arrived, which is to say... a

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quasi-mystical experience, a sensation of seeing the entire universe filtered through one point, and then the above-mentioned bushes, mud, wondering what that thing was I'd just trodden on. The Cube works in mysterious ways.

Could you send a signed photo of yourself in a business suit to me? See above for address.

isca

No. But because I am feeling very generous, see below for a picture of me in a business suit.



Violet, a lot of us have been following your blog over the past 2 years, right back to when you infiltrated the Reconstructionists compound to investigate Jessica Holyoke. However one thing still perplexes us -- on the evening of May 30th, 2005, as we were waiting for you to return and tell us how things had gone on, the following message appeared on your blog:

“Well. That was weird. You know how sometimes you can think you understand something, and suddenly everything swings round and it looks completely different? Like, one of those pictures which you think is a rabbit and then looks like a duck? Or, like your life, which you thought was all about one thing, turns out to be something else? Or... actually maybe I'm too tired to go into this right now.”

A few minutes later, it disappeared. We feared for a lot at that time, we worried that you had been brainwashed, or kidnapped, or perhaps you had merely changed your mind. In hindsight, maybe you were about to tell us something that would have given the game away as to your hidden involvement in the Cube theft. Did you write this message? Why did you take it down?

Rachel Wild, Earth

This is a great question, Rachel, thanks for asking it. You're quite right when you

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say that revealing what happened in the Reconstructionist compound would have revealed my involvement in the theft. What happened was really quite simple... and then again not. I'll try to explain it as simply as I can. I arrived at the Recon Compound as I said, took the tour, as I said, spoke to Brother Tomas, as I said. And then -- one thing I didn't say. It was toward the end of my visit, when each of us had a brief private audience with one of the elder sisters, Sister Shlishi. The other tourists said that she took their hand and told them some piece of Gyvann's wisdom, so I didn't think anything much was going to happen. But when I went into the room... it's funny. Maybe when you spend all your days meditating and contemplating an object which seems to be able to do almost anything, maybe you really do manage to get in touch with it. Who knows?

Anyway, the old lady took my hand, turned it over, smiled at me and said: "My child. The Cube works in mysterious ways. If it has chosen you, who are we to question?"

Which, so what, right? I mean, she probably says that to everyone. Except then she said: "Your hands know that they have touched it. They know that they dug a hole so very far away in which to bury it. Your hands will not forget the Cube and the Cube will not forget you. We will do our best to protect you, as far as we are able."

And that was that. Which, frankly, freaked me out. And so I wrote the post you saw and put it up, but then immediately thought better of it and took it down because I felt I'd revealed too much. To be honest, this was the one thing I was concerned might lead you to suspect I'd had more to do with the theft of the Cube than I'd told you.

And did the Recons do anything to protect me? I don't really know. I wonder if this was the reason it was so easy for me to find the information about Aiko being a Recon which drew the heat away from me for a while. I don't know though. So much remains mysterious.

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Pair to Receive Award for Foiling Third Power

By GARIMA KING

The City Council today announced it would be awarding Violet Kiteway and Kurt McAllister with the rare Perplex City Silver Solve for their roles in preventing the militant terrorist group, the Third Power, from acquiring the Receda Cube. Council Leader Nathan Earlywine gave prepared remarks at the announcement, saying, "It is rare for one individual to contribute so much to the greater safety and well-being of the entire populace of Perplex City. ... We have long known the Cube is a potential danger, and it is only through the work of Miss Kiteway and Mr. McAllister that the Cube has remained out of the hands of a deadly and malicious group." The Council reached its decision after hearing the report of a special committee formed to investigate the circumstances surrounding the Cube's disappearance and subsequent recovery.

Though the City Council had to officially agree unanimously to award the Silver Solve, insiders in the Office of the Council have said that the decision was reached only after an acrimonious dispute as to its propriety. "The move only passed because Nathan and [Council Member] Camryn [Scott] agreed on it, and pushed the others into it. In particular, [Council Members] Armand [Levi] and Gisele [Karmin] were both convinced that the two should be brought up on charges of theft and obstruction of justice, and put in jail until the stars burn out. ... In the end they followed ranks for political reasons, but I assure you they aren't the only ones who feel this way." The source suggested that the current

administration's handling of all of the recent related events may prove to be divisive in the next election cycle.

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Earlywine refused to speak on the matter behind his prepared comments, but Scott admitted that the Council and the city are not completely united in gratitude. "There are some who think that they should have come forward three years ago," she said. "But if they had done so, the Third Power would still be a potential threat to the city today. These two have worked tirelessly, and at great personal cost, to protect the Cube and Perplex City, and deserve our deepest thanks and gratitude."

Kiteway's and McAllister's story has captured the public imagination, so data networks were buzzing with approval of the award. Nonetheless, mirroring the City Council, a small but vehement segment of the population is bitterly opposed. "This is just theatre and politics, not justice," said Bill Rhampion, a judicial anthropologist.

The Silver Solve has only been bestowed four times in the last century, and is typically awarded posthumously. Most recently, it was awarded to Gemara Welter after she was killed while foiling a plot to assassinate the entire City Council and a number of other major governmental figures during the Council's annual regional mayoral summit.

The ceremony to award the pair will be held on the afternoon of February 24 in Key Square.

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Academy Plans to Bring Receda Cube Home

By WILHELMINA BEST

The Academy Master, Sente Kiteway, announced today that the Academy has devised a method to open a small portal between Perplex City and Earth in order to retrieve the Receda Cube. The Cube is currently being held under heavy guard on Earth, in the London offices of Mind Candy. He declined to say on what specific day the transfer would occur, but he did say that he expects the Museum will have the Cube back in its possession “well before the Silver Solve ceremony on the 24th.”

“We have completed testing of our portal, and we are fully confident the transfer will happen safely and successfully,” he said. “I am overjoyed to be able to bring the Cube back to its rightful place, here in Perplex City, and restore it personally to its plinth in the Museum.” He added that significant new security measures have been implemented to ensure that the Cube will remain safe in the future.

In order to keep the population of the city safe, Kiteway said, the transfer will happen in an unpopulated area outside the city. The specific location will not

be disclosed to the public for security reasons. For similar reasons, once the Cube has been recovered, the portal device will be dismantled, he said, and the parts for it destroyed and dispersed.

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When pressed, Kiteway admitted that this technology was related to the portal formed by the deadly secret society, the Third Power, in August, which knocked out power to a large part of Perplex City for several hours. The Third Power portal was allegedly built from parts stolen from Kiteway’s own portal project in Viendenbourg, which has been the subject of the Academy Oversight Committee’s scrutiny in recent weeks.

The Receda Cube, stolen from the Academy Museum during the annual PCAG Victor’s Ball three years ago, has been found buried in Wakerley Great Wood in England, on Earth, by amateur archaeologist Andy Darley. It had been hidden there by Kiteway’s own daughter, Violet Kiteway, who acted to keep the Cube out of the hands of the Third Power.

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All the Earth Deserves the Thanks of All of Perplex City

OPINION/EDITORIAL

Much has been made in our pages and elsewhere of Andy Darley, the hero who found and returned the Receda Cube. We at the Sentinel share in the jubilation, for we, too, are Perplexians, and we are as overjoyed as the rest of the city to have the Cube restored to its rightful position in the Academy Museum. There are times when our shield of journalistic impartiality is meaningless.

In recent days, however, rumours have been trickling into the city about the long hunt for the Cube. In these whispered tales, Violet Kiteway and Kurt McAllister led countless Earthlings in a quiet crusade against the Third Power, and an even quieter mission to see the Cube recovered by safe hands on Earth. Corroboration for these claims has been appearing little by little in statements from the two, in email sent to the Sentinel, and in a broad re-examination of many of the events of the past few years.

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We at the Sentinel, therefore, feel that while Darley will be receive his reward, and Kiteway and McAllister will receive

the Silver Solve from the City Council tomorrow, the true heroes of this journey are the Cube Hunters who generously gave us their time and personal resources, for no compensation beyond satisfaction in a job well done. Tens of thousands of individuals heard our plea for help and were moved to action by nothing more than our shared humanity. Darley's discovery was nothing more or less than the culmination of the selfless work of these thousands of people, all banded together.

We admit that we at the Sentinel had grave doubts along the way regarding Academy Master Sente Kiteway's scheme to recover the Cube, and his management of the Academy during these troubled times. Indeed, for all that the elder Kiteway and his daughter are both heroes today, we are all too aware that the political winds may shift again, leaving them both accountable for numberless questionable actions they have taken in the name of protecting others. But now, in this time of celebration, we should not be wasting our time second-guessing their ultimately successful plans.

Let us not forget the magnificent achievement built for the sake of this three-year quest; for the peoples of two worlds have worked in co-operation to achieve a noble goal, an historic event that is not to be overlooked. To the Cube Hunters on Earth: Thank you, from all of us. We will never forget you, the unsung heroes of this tale, and we hope you will never forget us.

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View from Earth: On the Journey

By DANIEL LYON



So, it's been over three long years since the Receda Cube came from your world to ours, and the hunt is finally over. And what a hunt it's been. I think I speak for the majority of Earth's Cube hunters when I

say that it's been an amazing experience. The experience of communicating with another world is quite incredible, and it seems that many a Perplexian has greeted Earth's curiosity with open arms.

Recently, of course, Violet Kiteway [daughter of the Master of the Academy, Sente Kiteway] emerged as the one to have stolen the Cube. And before I begin what I am about to say, I would just like to say this: Violet, you did what you had to do. I agree with everything that Violet has done -- from heroically protecting the Cube, to gallantly communicating with Earth, putting herself and those near her at risk of discovery by the Third Power in her quest to keep them from the Cube.

Still, there has been discussion on this

side of the link on Violet's actions -- were they justified? What would we have done better were we in her place? Has she been lying to us for the last three years, and is she still lying to us now?

One thought that keeps appearing is that, were one of us in Violet's shoes, we "certainly wouldn't have strung people along for three years." I've been thinking about this, and I think it's a ridiculous statement. Violet had to "string us along" -- it was the only way she could remain undercover. Any communication with us on Earth was too dangerous, with Third Power agents listening in.

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If just one Third Power agent got a hunch that Violet was the one that thwarted their plans, that would be the end. I shudder to think what could have happened, and I, for one, am glad that she is safe. Therefore, the only way that she could communicate to us was the way that she did, with meta puzzles contained on the puzzle cards, without risking everything that she had worked for the last three years to keep secret. Meta puzzles that only we could solve, as a team.

Still, people on this side of the link do not see this, believing Violet to just have played us for fools, having lied to us for the past two years... Frankly, I think that she is a hero to Perplex City, having rescued the Cube from the hands of the true thieves in the plot to steal it. And I wish that more people on Earth would see

Continued

it from my point of view -- she had to do what she did.

Violet, if you ever read this.. Congratulations. You should be proud of yourself for what you've done for Perplex City. And don't let anybody tell you otherwise.

The finding of the Cube seems to spell the end for Season 1 of the puzzle cards over here, with Season 2 starting in less than two weeks. Then, the next wave of puzzle cards is released, and we Earth-based Cube Hunters make a mad dash for the nearest shops to buy as many cards as we can. This will be followed by weeks... if not months... of solving -- the thrill as each of the cards slowly fall to the onslaught of many people, frantically puzzling away to claim the glory of having a first solve.

The next few weeks will be filled with joy. And it is all thanks to the communication link set up between our two worlds.

I'm certain that I speak for almost every single Cube Hunter here on Earth when I say... Season 1 has been awesome, and we hope that the good relationships between our two worlds will continue, forever.

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View from Earth: After the End

By THE THUSQED TEAM



Like many Earth-based Cube Hunters, we have watched and worked to find the Cube. Indeed, most Cube Hunters have probably been extremely engrossed in Perplex City affairs. And yet, now that the

Cube has been found, what happens? Since the Cube has been found, will Perplex City find no further use for inter-world communication?

Nathan Earlywine's and the Perplex City Council's policies have made it clear that Perplex City internal affairs supersede Earth and he is justified in those actions since focus on another country's actions are of little importance compared to the foes at home. Yet, to what extent will Perplex City disappear from Earth? Will the link between our worlds be cut?

An even more imperative question would be: What of the danger that is present on Earth? Evidence from Earth Cube Hunter collaboration has shown the existence of

Third Power agents on our world. Indeed, those same agents have repeatedly interfered with Cube Hunter endeavors. While the Third Power threat has been assumedly neutralized in Perplex City, the agents here still maintain active status, albeit without the leadership core that was present in Perplex City. Regardless, the most dangerous agents are now on Earth. Indeed, past experiences have suggested that the Third Power agents on Earth can act separately from a main body, existing



as a separate entity with an unattached command structure that may not be restricted to Perplex City. Although the Perplex City Council is more likely to deem said agents irrelevant to Perplex City citizens, it is possible that on Earth, the Third Power may make a desperate power play (especially considering their losses) for the Cube before it can be placed into safekeeping. The most obvious time for such a ploy would be during the transfer of the Cube from its current owner to Mind Candy.

From a tactical standpoint, the Third Power has lost most of its numbers, yet still commands anonymity and in some cases superior individual resources and training. Earth Cube Hunters maintain

Continued

numerical superiority and, in some cases, superior intellect (evident as a Cube Hunter first found the Cube). But most of our strength came from collaboration between members and with the Cube Retrieval Team. Indeed, free-flow information (albeit in the case of the CRT, heavily strategically doctored information) between members increased our dominance. Yet that strength is our weakness, for there is no doubt that anyone on Earth can access Earth Cube Hunter information, and that includes the remaining Third Power agents. The only true way to equal the playing field would be for the Council to divulge to Earth any information garnered from the raid of the Perplex City Third Power. Of course, such information would be already known to Third Power agents, but it gives us Cube Hunters a chance to locate and thus possibly prevent any Third Power interference before the Cube is transferred back to Perplex City.

Thus it is even more pertinent, now than ever, to uphold Earth-Perplex City relations and communications. True, many Earth Cube Hunters (does the name even apply since the Cube has been located?) are eagerly awaiting Season Two, but we must be cognizant that the Cube could still be lost, leaving our work in vain. At a time of confidence, we are perhaps at our weakest and only in solidarity with our inter-dimensional neighbors may we maintain the peace that we have obtained.

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A Note for the Sentinel's Earth Contributors

At this jubilant and celebratory point in relations between Perplex City and the people of Earth, the Sentinel would particularly like to offer our sincere gratitude and praise to all who have contributed to our View from Earth column and our Letters to the Editor page. Through your passionate letters and insightful articles, the Sentinel has had the unique opportunity to share the thoughts, feelings, hopes and dreams of our friends on Earth with our readers here in Perplex City. In the process, you have not only afforded us the chance to learn more about your cultures, but blessed us with a unique perspective upon our own.

Thank you, once again,
The Sentinel Staff

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Menzana Sues City, Cognivia

by Alwhin Copi



Menzana Senior Counsel Marvin Torino

Boutique pharmaceutical firm Menszana has filed a lawsuit against the city and its heavyweight competitor, Cognivia, claiming that Cognivia is unfairly using its massive resources to offer free drugs to the city under the Spearhead Scheme. As a result, Menszana attorneys say the market for competing drugs has bottomed out, and in time the company will have no choice but to file for bankruptcy and shut down.

“The city’s agreement with Cognivia under the Spearhead Scheme is directly aimed at putting smaller pharmaceutical businesses such as Menszana out of business, which will ultimately stifle scientific innovation in

the industry,” said Menszana Senior Counsel Marvin Torino. “Cognivia is leveraging their massive sales of casual cognitive enhancers to underwrite a scheme that will lose them billions of lecks. ... Smaller medical pharmaceutical companies can’t compete with those resources, but why should the city do business with us when they can get alternative products from the competition for free?”

Cognivia spokesman Lawrence Kim rejected the lawsuit as baseless. “Cognivia is reaching into our pockets for a net positive result to the community,” he said. “We are confident that the court system will reject these claims out of hand.”

The lawsuit is demanding an immediate halt to Cognivia’s Spearhead Scheme, plus 12 billion lecks in compensation and punitive damages. Initial hearings in the case have not yet been scheduled. Sources from within Menszana indicate that the lawsuit is merely a tactical move, with the company ultimately seeking leverage with the Council to quickly gain testing approval for a new medical device that will analyse and interpret complex neural activity.

The Spearhead Scheme was announced at the end of March. Under the program, Cognivia is providing all medically necessary medical drugs from its product line to city health authorities for free.

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Brotherhood Plans Syzygy Jubilee with Beauty Alliance

by Lucas Voorhies



Sister April Flynnt

The Brotherhood of the Six has announced their long-anticipated plan for a jubilee celebration this year to commemorate the Syzygy, an astronomical event considered to have great religious import. As part of the jubilee, the Brotherhood has partnered with the Beauty Alliance, an artists' group, to construct a fitting monument, the specifics of which are yet to be worked out.

“This alignment of celestial elements is nothing less than a reaffirmation of the tenets of our faith,” said Sister April Flynnt of the Brotherhood. “The heavens themselves are demonstrating proof of the fundamentally orderly nature of our universe. This is the most appropriate time imaginable to build in the name of the Builder himself.”

Randal Tokei, founder and leader of the Beauty Alliance, said that he was “honoured and deeply touched” to be approached by the Brotherhood for such a task. “Art is the expression of the soul through an act of construction,” he said. “For the Syzygy, we will express nothing short of the soul of Perplex City in our art.”

Some naysayers, though, are suggesting that the Syzygy would be better left unremarked. “The last time we had a syzygy of this magnitude, 270 years ago, wasn’t exactly a happy time,” said historian Lucius Andorian. “Remember, we were at war and the populace was suffering. ... For all we know, this alignment of stars or planets or comets or whatever was the trigger for the catastrophe that carved out Catbite Gorge and razed the city.”

The jubilee celebration is to begin at Solstice Day and continue clear through to the New Year, though the Syzygy itself will only occur on a single day.

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Earlywine PRAS Initiative Rejected by City Council

by Corinne Hathaway

Council Leader Nathan Earlywine suffered an embarrassing setback late yesterday when the City Council voted unanimously against his comprehensive Public Resources Allocation Scheme. Under PRAS, the city would lay out an estimated 780 billion lecks to upgrade and integrate all government offices in the Greater Perplex City region into a single centralised system.

Earlywine called the defeat “incredibly disappointing,” and insisted that he would revamp the proposal and resubmit it to the City Council within a few weeks. “My plan would vastly reduce wastage and streamline government resources, freeing taxpayer lecks to go toward improving quality of life for all of us,” he said. “I’m absolutely still committed to pressing for a leaner, faster government.”

Opponents of the system say that the centralisation plan would cost more money to implement than it would save. Other theoretical drawbacks, according to the group Citizens Watching Government, could include unfair

allocation of resources; improper sharing of information between governmental offices; and a frustrating increase in layers of bureaucracy required to participate in popular government programs. “The government has grown up with these separate offices and agencies for a reason,” said CWG’s Katya Yarrow. “Throwing away all of these distinctions without a second thought, just for the sake of saving a few lecks -- that’s practically criminal.”

The PRAS was one of Earlywine’s primary campaign promises in 269. This dismissal of his plan, though, seems to indicate that Earlywine’s sweep into office was much more a rejection of former Council Leader Camryn Scott’s policies, rather than an endorsement of Earlywine’s.

Political analyst Jordan Taylor speculated that the City Council vote could prove to be a watershed moment in Earlywine’s tenure. “When he became Council Leader, there was a lot of ill will toward the Academy, and toward Scott, among voters,” he said. “But now that the Receda Cube has been returned, people are seeing them in a positive light again. ... In this climate, Earlywine will face an uphill battle to get anything done in the coming months.”

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Djinn Designer Unmasked

By AMBER MAI-WAN

The Perplex City Police announced today that they have captured the designer of the Djinn Worm after a covert operation lasting several months. Fifteen-year-old Redward Price has confessed to creating the key virus which has caused an estimated PCL 750m of damage. Price's mother, Imelda Price, is a senior executive with Centrifuge.

"Redward feels he has a grievance against the Academy," said Garnet Reed, a senior security adviser to the Academy. "He has approached us on several occasions to be admitted as a researcher in the field of software design, [the kind of position] which would typically go to an applicant with a great deal more experience. ... We believe that he was spurred on to design the Djinn Worm after being rebuffed by Professor Kiteway earlier this year."

Reed explained that Price had approached Sente Kiteway, Master of the Academy, on the night of the Academy Ball at the beginning of this year. Price had hoped to show Kiteway, a former Centrifuge employee himself, his analyses of the weaknesses of the Academy's security systems. According to Reed, Kiteway responded that such an analysis would

have to be submitted through the proper channels. Price was then allegedly spurred to take matters into his own hands, creating the Djinn Worm to "prove the point," Reed said.

Speaking through his lawyers, Price issued a statement reading in part: "I deeply regret any damage I have caused to personal property in the city and the distress I have put its citizens through. I wanted to show up the security flaws in the Academy's systems, but I just didn't think through the implications of my actions."

The Djinn virus takes advantage of a particular vulnerability in modern key hardware, called Magic Lamp, to infiltrate and attack. Analyst Cora Llewellyn, of independent technology consulting firm TechNow, declared herself "amazed" that the software could have been written by a 15-year-old. "The level of expertise shown by the designer of this virus is broad as well as deep. You'd have to be an expert in at least three separate types of system to bring this together. This boy could have had a bright future in software design."

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on The Puzzle of Thought

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on Playing Games with Game Theory

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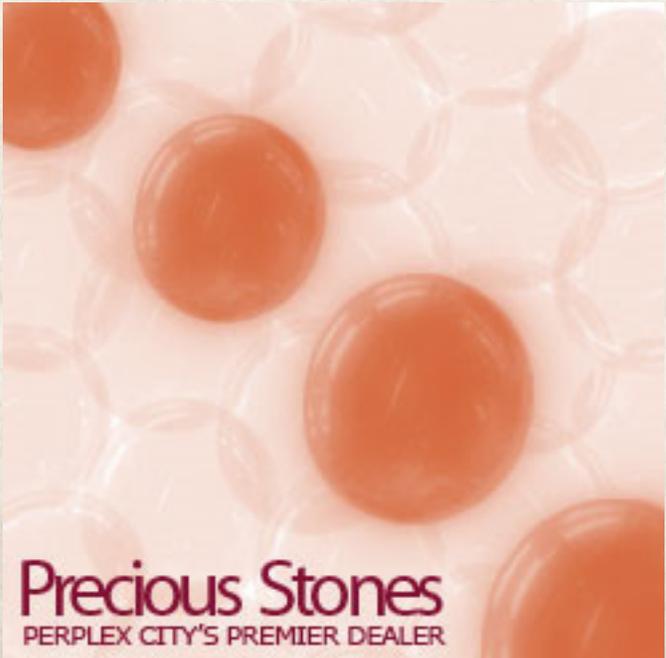
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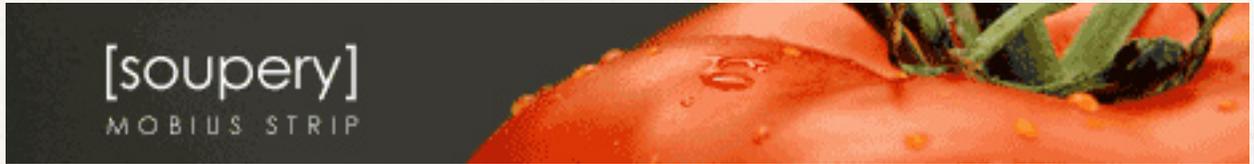
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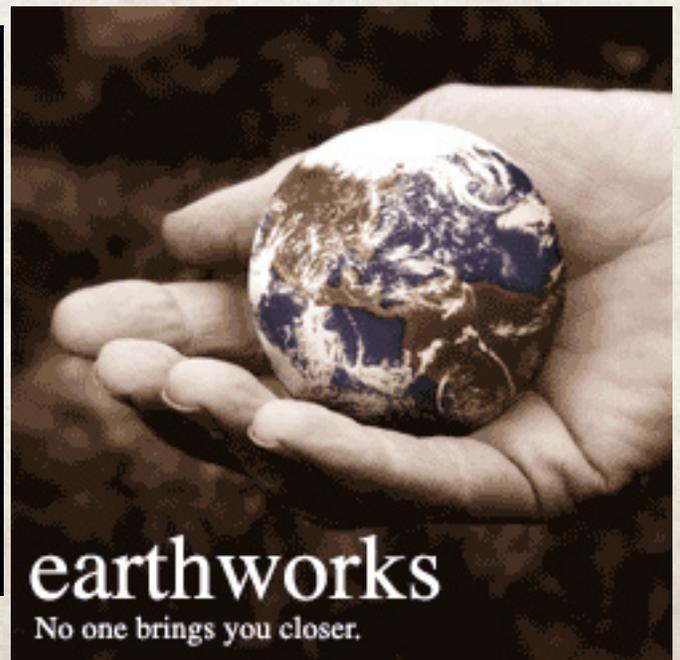
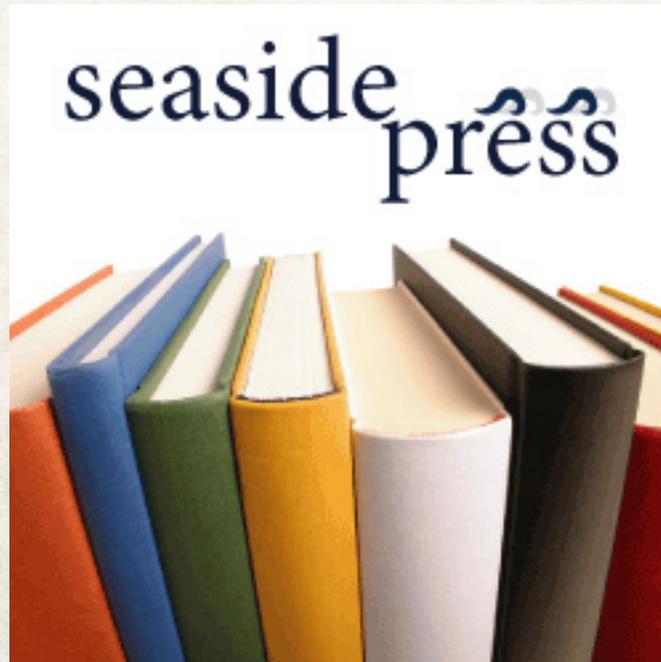
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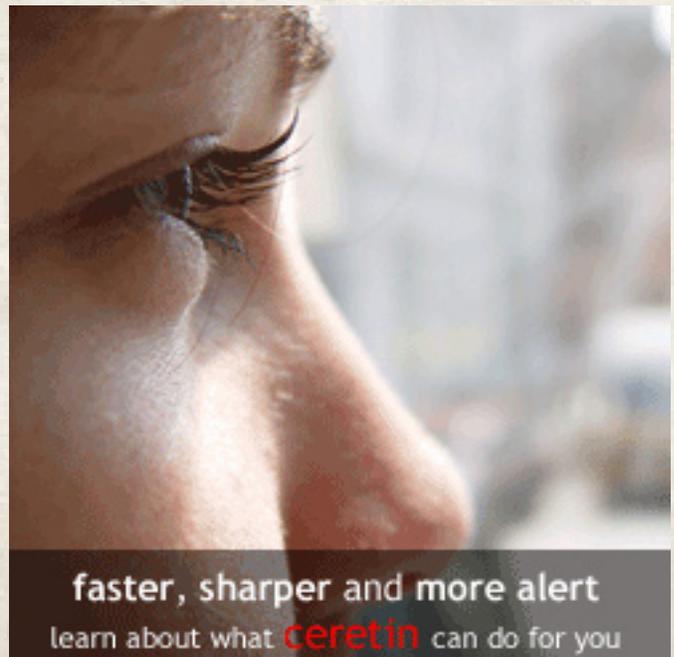
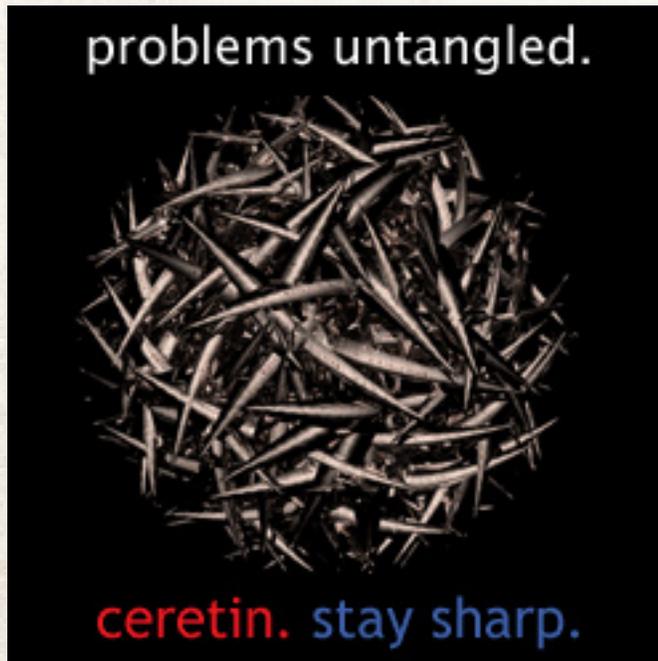
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