

# FOUND BETWEEN THE SEAT AND THE CONSOLE

Ever notice how everything imaginable gets caught in that crevice between your seat and the console? Spare change, pens, tools, business cards, papers, loose screws, alien artifacts. This column is devoted to the oddities of the universe that defy normal categorization. Like the odd things lost and sometimes found next to your seat, they don't necessarily have anything to do with cars, but will usually have some topical relevance, at least as a starting point.

Happy New Year! We've finished with 2001, the true first year of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium. Now the year is **2002**, a palindrome year. If you're not familiar with what a palindrome might be, and even if you do know, a palindrome is a word or phrase that spells the same thing backwards and forwards, typically ignoring spacing and punctuation. The last palindrome year was eleven years ago in 1991, and it's doubtful that any of us without truly stupendous advances in medical technology will see the next one 110 years hence in 2112.

If you use European notation, twenty days into February will be the best day for a very long time with the date as 20 02 2002. Especially at two minutes after 8 pm in 24-hour notation. Then it will be:  
**20:02 20 02 2002**

Of course most palindromes involve words instead of numbers, and some are close to gibberish; like,  
**Name tarts? No medieval slave,  
I demonstrate man.**

But there are many that are insightful or even inspired. Here are a few:

**Step on no pets.**

**Pull up if I pull up.**

**A man, a plan, a canal - Panama!**

**Rise to vote, sir.**

**I, man, am regal; a German am I. (Like that Andy?)**

**Are we not drawn onward, we few, drawn onward  
to new era?**

Here are a few that work as sets:

**Marge lets Norah see Sharon's telegram.**

**Norah's moods, alas, doom Sharon.**

**Do, O God no evil deed, live on, do good.**

**Live, O Devil, revel ever, live, do evil.**

That's what I found between the seat and the console.

*Steve Wells*



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*First  
Class  
Glass*



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In the month of February, phonemes get lost down the side of the seat, especially the letter **R**. February is supposed to have two of them, but somehow folks lose the first one. For a language fanatic like I am, it's like nails scraping on a blackboard whenever I hear folks say, *Febuary*, sounding like they never set foot in a library. They can't pronounce *library* correctly either. What I like most when March finally arrives is that I don't have to hear TV and radio announcers butchering that particular part of our language for almost another year.

That R is important. When I *brake* suddenly, my Corvette slows down in a very short time. When I *bake* suddenly, baking powder biscuits go into the oven, because I don't want to wait for yeast to rise. Totally different things.

Hasn't February suffered enough already, being shorter than all the other months, and getting screwed up just about every four years? We should blame Augustus Caesar for some of February's woes. Why him? Well, back before the Julian Calendar, the calendar systems were a complete mess. Many different starting dates, goofy numbers of months, and everybody used a different calendar. Look at our month names with an off-by-two prefix: *Sept*, *Oct*, *Nov*, *Dec* being months 9, 10, 11, 12 respectively. What's the deal with that?

Those come from a 10-month calendar where the last six months were Quintillius, Sextillius, September, October,

November, December. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. Then they slapped January and February onto the front—January after Janus, the god with two faces, one on the back of his head looking toward the old year, and one on the front looking toward the new year. And February with 30 days. Alternating months of 31 and 30 days. Sounded great but the year seemed to be a day too long about three out of four years. Ok, lop a day off February, down to 29, but plan for 30 days on leap years.

This worked well enough for Aristarchus who apparently first worked up this calendar scheme, and Julius Caesar had the Roman Empire standardize on it. But Julius wanted a month named after himself so he grabbed one of those big 31 day months, renaming Quintillius to Julius, or for us, July.

After a quick *Et tu, Bruté* on the Ides of March, Augustus became Caesar, and he wanted a month named after himself, too. So he grabbed the next month, and Sextillius became Augustus, or our August. But he didn't want his month to be a wimpy 30-days, so he swiped another day off the end of February. Only 28 days, and two long summer months with 31 days in a row. So, that's how we got all of that!

And that's what I found between the seat and the console.

*Steve Wells*



Steve Wells

## PUBLICATIONS

Here we are at the second issue of *First Class Glass* under my editorial care. ...

Note that I've also had feedback from folks in the opposite camp who very much like the idea of the newsletter receiving serious editing. For each person who dislikes vigorous editing there's someone else who thinks the

English language is going to hell in a hand-basket, and careless writers need a whack in the side of the head. I will try to maintain the careful balance between presenting good form and not stifling creativity or expression. I'll print complaints or examples against me that anyone sends in, too.

Obviously, a little controversy can generate some excitement. At least you're reading the newsletter. So, how shall I proceed? There are many opinions about the right approach to editing.

Strict? Socrates argued:

*... the unexamined life is not livable for a human being...*

Middle of the road? Euripides counseled:

*Moderation, the noblest gift of Heaven.*

Loose? Jimi Hendrix sang:

*Now if 6 turned out to be 9, I don't mind, I don't mind,...*

Verbatim? Popeye threatened:

*If anyone dasses to risk my "Fisk" it's "Boff" an' it's "Wham" un 'erstan'?*

We'll get this tuned ok. It's a gradual process like any Corvette modification.

*Steve Wells*



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March is here, ushering in a half-year long string of months that are sprightly monosyllables and disyllables. Quick to write, quick to say, and nobody ever loses an **R** from March or April down the side of the seat. March is a long month, too, especially after that puny February. It's the month in which we gain daylight most rapidly and spring starts. That's at the *Vernal Equinox*, which sounds like a Corvette part that lets us run on cheap gas at mountain altitudes without pinging. But of course, it isn't.

March is named after Mars, the Roman god of Snickers® bars. They used to say, "The best candies on Earth come from Mars." The *they* who said that were Mars & Murrie, spelled by a magical coincidence just like 1940's M&M's, and they are well known for kidnapping nomenclature and applying it to chocolate products. This is not much different from the Etruscans and Romans who heisted and renamed Greek gods. We automotive aficionados have continued the tradition by taking the Gemini, Castor and Pollux, and renaming them as *Caster and Camber*, the twin gods of wheel alignment.

Back to Mars. In 2003 on August 27<sup>th</sup>, Mars will be the closest to Earth that it's been since 57,537 B.C.E. With a fifty-seven thousand year rarity coinciding with the

Corvette's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we should plan a really big group caravan to Mars with all the major Corvette clubs. Just remember that it's pretty dark most of the way, so be prepared. Make sure your high beams are clean and working. Just like when you're driving to the Sun you need to be sure your air conditioning is working properly so you won't overheat or have to keep cool by driving at night.

After dismissing that useless advice, we can instead plan a caravan to the Ides of March event. The Ides of March, and May and July and October, are on the 15<sup>th</sup>, which is close enough to Saturday the 16<sup>th</sup> for laidback Santa Cruz. But in the other eight months, the *ides* are the 13<sup>th</sup> of the month. That's so goofy, we might as well lose track of all that inconsistent and confusing numbering.

Speaking of confusing, did you figure out that screwy metal ring on page 2 embossed with TOTI EMUL ESTO? If not, here's your final clue: Those who are stubborn lik emul escan usually figure it out.

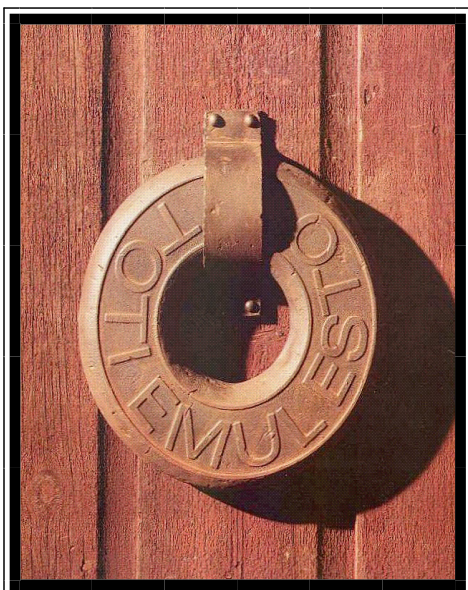
And that's what I found between the seat and the console.

*Steve Wells*



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**A word is worth a milli-picture!** That famous maxim is usually expressed as the converse, with a  $10^3$  factor thrown onto both sides of the equality. Have you puzzled that out yet? No matter. Sometimes things are simpler than they first appear, and that is often the case with language, especially while proofreading the work of others. What looks unusual or difficult to understand can often be made much clearer with just a few small changes to the text.



Now, I will be give you a turn at being proofreaders, and simultaneously save myself some of a writing task by including a large picture in this column. Your mission, if you decide to accept it, is to figure out what the funny object in the picture is supposed to say. It's real, found in the Arizona desert, dating back about a hundred years or so. It served a transportation purpose (fitting for this group), and the illiterate man who forged it copied down letters that had no meaning to him. Time for the standard warning: If you or any member of your forces are caught or killed in trying to solve this linguistic challenge, the Secretary of Santa Clara Corvettes will not only disavow any knowledge of your actions, but will make a poor example of you in the next meeting minutes.

In case you need a clue: imagine a metamorphosis from a 19<sup>th</sup> century Old West rider to a modern sophisticate parking a Corvette in a lot.

If that's still not enough, you'll get one last clue near the end of my other column on page 18.

*Steve Wells*



# FOUND BETWEEN THE SEAT AND THE CONSOLE

April showers bring May flowers, and Mayflowers bring pilgrims. So, let's look at major religious holidays celebrated around this time of year. By my own reckoning, most Santa Clara Corvettes members follow one or more of the three major devotions: **Judaism** ☆, **Christianity** †, and **Nordstrom** \$. Spanning late March to early this month, Jews celebrate(d) Pesach (Passover), which is eight days long and has two Seder nights at the beginning, so you get *two* chances to be there for the first night.

The starting date varies from year to year because the holiday is based on a *lunatic* calendar, oops that's *lunar* calendar, and the moon doesn't run in phase properly with the sun, which defines our *solar* calendar. Passover is usually very nearby Easter, a major Christian holiday that also follows the moon around. The Passover-Easter sync up is hardly surprising; Jesus was Jewish, and the first Good Friday was a Pesach Seder. For most of the nearly 2000 years since then, Jesus has been a very popular guy among Christians, though his ancestral relatives have *not* been all that welcome. Perhaps that's because it takes a Jewish lawyer to figure out when Easter is supposed to be.

You do know how to figure it out, *don't you?* Ok, since *my* ancestors are Jewish, and my brother is an attorney, I'll explain it. Easter falls on the first Sunday following the arbitrary Paschal full moon, which does not necessarily coincide with a real (astronomical) full moon. To find the Paschal full moon, divide the year by 19, add 1 to the remainder, and look up the date in the table below. Easter is the next Sunday.

| Paschal Full Moon |       |    |    |          |
|-------------------|-------|----|----|----------|
| 1                 | April | 14 | 8  | March 28 |
| 2                 | April | 3  | 9  | April 16 |
| 3                 | March | 23 | 10 | April 5  |
| 4                 | April | 11 | 11 | March 25 |
| 5                 | March | 31 | 12 | April 13 |
| 6                 | April | 18 | 13 | April 2  |
| 7                 | April | 8  | 14 | March 22 |

Though it's infrequent, there's the loophole to cover when the Paschal full moon falls on a Sunday: Easter is the immediately following Sunday. So, the earliest Easter can be is March 23<sup>rd</sup>, and the latest is April 25<sup>th</sup>.

Let's take this year:  $2002 \div 19 = 105$  plus a *remainder* of 7. Add  $7 + 1 = 8$ , and the table says that 8 corresponds to March 28. The *first Sunday* after that was March 31<sup>st</sup>, missing April altogether.

Easter missed April, and we aren't supposed to eat pizza on Passover. What *should* we do? Since Corvette owners aren't usually the destitute ones standing in the middle of the road yelling, "Will work for a piece of cardboard and a Magic Marker," many in our group will thus honor the last of the three faiths I mentioned, namely *Nordstrom*. How will we do that? By massive attendance at this month's Hearst Castle Run. We recall that William Randolph Hearst was one of the most renowned extravagant shoppers in history. A virtual prophet of conspicuous spending. Those attending one of the Castle tours will find an amazing architectural achievement and a magnificent art collection. If you haven't been on the tour in a while, it's worth considering a visit to celebrate enlightened acquisition.

And...  
That's what I found between the seat and the console.

*Steve Wells*



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**Mayday! Mayday!** That might be an alarm call. Or an exclamation to tell you it's the first day of the Merry Merry, Month of May. Until about a dozen years ago, it was a celebration day in the Soviet Union for which they trotted out all manner of military hardware to parade across Red Square. Those were the simple happy times, when we could watch Nikita Khrushchev pounding his shoe on the table at the United Nations in order to stress a point using subtle Soviet style. Then in 1991, the mighty American President, *George (It's the economy, Stupid!) Bush*, prodded the Evil Empire with some of his typically dyslexic blather, and the Soviet Union imploded, disintegrating into a pile of large but pathetic republics with terrible winters.

Here in America, May is the month in which we remember our honored departed who had fought for our liberty. That occurs at the end of the month on Memorial Day, and everyone understands the holiday's significance. We also honor Mothers on Mothers Day who toil so hard raising children. Mothers and children propagate the *Mother's Curse*—children behave in the absurd ways their parents did when they were young.

But very early in the month, comes the incredibly important holiday **Cinco de Mayo**, the fifth of May, when everyone in America (and in Mexico, too) celebrates an often imagined Mexican heritage in commemoration of the many who toiled so hard to establish Mexican restaurants. We also drink a lot of beer, both domestic and Mexican, like Negra Modelo, which is really a Vienna (Austria) style lager.

Ok, Cinco de Mayo doesn't really commemorate tamales and enchiladas. It celebrates Mexico's Declaration of Independence from Spain, right? Well,

**no**, that was in 1810 on midnight of **September 15<sup>th</sup>**. So, was May Fifth perhaps the definitive big battle between corn and flour tortillas?

The morning of **May 5, 1862** about 100 miles east of Mexico City at Puebla, some 4,000 Mexican soldiers mobilized to battle with 8,000 French soldiers, including some traitorous Mexicans, too. **French?** Yes, five months earlier French Emperor Napoleon III, who disliked both Mexicans and Americans, had stashed plenty of troops, and the Hapsburg prince, Maximilian, to rule "*their*" Mexican empire. The French marched west from Vera Cruz to attack the capital while wearing their red and blue uniforms. At the start of World War I they were still wearing the same stupid brightly colored uniforms—the schmucks! They slogged through mud from recent thunderstorms and Indian-induced cattle stampedes only to get slaughtered by the Mexican forces under General Zaragoza, who was born in Texas, and bad-ass Colonel Porfirio Diaz.

With some help from American Union forces under General Philip Sheridan, the French were dispatched from Mexico, and thus could not support the Civil War confederate rebels. (Remember, Napoleon III hated America.) So the United States benefited too, albeit somewhat indirectly. Regardless, Cinco de Mayo is thus worthy of celebration. Perhaps some chili rellenos and a good Viennese Mexican brew.

And...

That's what I found between the seat and the console.

*Steve Wells*



... Finally, as was pointed out during the April meeting, I am not entirely immune from the occasional typo. In the *Events* calendar, I had inadvertently neglected to remove the *Ides of March* location after inserting the *Autocross* event. I offer apologies to anyone who attempted to perform the autocross run on the Santa Cruz Wharf. The board of Santa Clara Corvettes regrets any inconvenience in extracting your Corvette from the Pacific Ocean.



*Steve Wells*



# FOUND BETWEEN THE SEAT AND THE CONSOLE

Here we are at the beginning of June and the summer season. It's summer, right? Well, not quite yet. Although Memorial Day Weekend heralds the beginning of summery weather, the season doesn't really begin until the *solstice*. That's a strange word with too many sibilants, and means the *sun stands still*. It's when the sun is perceived to be furthest north (in the Northern Hemisphere) and marks the true change of season. This occurs on June 21<sup>st</sup> this year, coinciding with the longest day, not to be confused with an invasion of Normandy.

We have the longest separation between sunrise and sunset, but is that also the latest sunset of the year? No! That isn't till about a week later, so we'll actually still be gaining evening sunlight till about the end of the month. Nor is it the earliest sunrise, which comes and goes about a week before the solstice. How can that be? The sunrise and sunset are each on parallel sine curves, but they're out-of-phase, so there are three different dates for earliest sun, latest sun, and the greatest separation between the two curves. By the way, the same situation but with larger two-week excursions occurs with the winter solstice in December, with sunlight

increasing, albeit gradually, in the evening from early in the month, but still decreasing in the morning till about a week into January.

This brings up an interesting idea. If you look at a calendar with seasonal pictures, the winter months typically show snowy summits and the summer months depict blustery beaches. We look at ice when we're feeling cold, and hot sand when we're parched. That doesn't make sense.

Wouldn't we be better off with opposite calendars, perhaps purchased from New Zealand in the Southern Hemisphere where the seasons are backwards from ours? That way when we're sweltering under the hottest midsummer day, we could stare at an icy picture and at least mentally cool down. Then in frigid winter (except here in temperate sunny California) we could gaze upon pictorial heat and warm the cockles of our heart. For nobody would want cold cockles, right?

And...

That's what I found between the seat and the console.

*Steve Wells*



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... There, didn't newsmagazine sound more official than *newsletter*?

Potential Publications Directors will recognize the funny looking punctuation mark (I've used it in earlier issues) at the end of the previous sentence. Do you know what it is? If so, why haven't they locked you in a padded cell yet? Or me? Then who'd do the newsletter? It's an *interrobang* used to punctuate a rhetorical question. The interrobang, a combination ? and !, is for times when neither of them *alone* is appropriate, and though it's not widely used, it's been around since Martin K. Speckter

introduced it 40 years ago. It's included by Microsoft within the Wingdings 2 font where you'd normally find the ']', '^', '\_', and '' characters for serif, serif bold, san serif, and san serif bold respectively. If you can make sense of that, *and* my eccentric use of the archaic &c. to abbreviate *et cetera*, you're a prime candidate for the board position. Please nominate yourself at the earliest opportunity.

*Steve Wells*

[This excerpt is from the November Publications / Editor column.]



# FOUND BETWEEN THE SEAT AND THE CONSOLE

It is now July, Quintillius before Julius Caesar put his name to it, and typically one of the two hottest months of the summer season. There are three important hot events in American history which we might remember for their origins in the month of July. The first took place in 1776 when the Continental Congress, an amazing group including more than a few brilliant hotheads, inaugurated the birth of the *United States of America*. Although the decision to sever the ties with Great Britain occurred on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Fourth of July was the date when the *Declaration of Independence* was adopted in final form, and is thus the birthday of our country.

Nearly two centuries later in 1945, World War II presented unspeakable horrors by profoundly evil monsters in human form. A suitably horrific weapon was under development to bring about a rapid end to the war by an Allied victory. On July 16<sup>th</sup> the first *atomic bomb*, a plutonium based device, lit the sky with the first nuclear blast of brilliant light and blazing heat.

Fortunately, not all July creations involve conflict. At the St. Louis Exposition in 1904, Charles E. Menchees improvised a flower vase from a softened ice cream sandwich wafer, developing the first *ice cream cone*. His invention, was instantly popular as a tasty, edible ice cream holder. Be sure to celebrate the ice cream cone's 98<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. What could be a more nearly satisfying birthday to celebrate?

As a transition from the subject of July heat, major conflagrations in western states remind some of us about fire and arson. However, my recent correspondence with a Santa Clara Corvettes board member reminded me of my

favorite example of a dangling modifier, which happens to deal quite topically with fire and arson. What's a dangling modifier? (Or misplaced modifier, or dangling participle, or dangling phrase?) It's a portion of a sentence intended to modify another part of the sentence, but its placement creates a confusing, and sometimes comical, misinterpretation. That in itself is so confusing, we better look at a couple examples of dangling phrases to clarify the idea:

*The best autocross time was by a man driving a C5 with red hair.*

*An African explorer described seeing cannibals cook and eat a man at the WSCC Convention.*

The man with red hair, and the dining experience in Africa suffer from misplaced phrases. Now that we know what the dangles are about, let's get on to the fire and arson example:

*There is a complete list of fires set by arsonists in the Fire Marshall's desk.*

That could mean the desk contained a listing about arson fires, *or...* the listing covers those arsonists who are residing or hiding inside the Marshall's desk, *or...* the listing covers only the instances when the Marshall's desk was set on fire, *or...* Arsonists in the desk set fires in the desk.

That's too hot for me. I think I'll go get an ice cream cone.

And...

That's what I found between the seat and the console.

*Steve Wells*



# FOUND BETWEEN THE SEAT AND THE CONSOLE

First things first. Last time, discussing important *bot* historical issues for the month of July, I made one error of commission and one of omission. Normally, I write these things in a last minute rush (as is the case now) pretty much from memory, and I don't usually take more than one hour for the whole thing from concept to completion. Thus an occasional error can sneak in. The first error (commission) was my misspelling the name of Charles E. Minches, the man who in 1904 invented the ice cream cone, an important invention for keeping hotheads cool. The second error (omission) was my failure to mention that July 17<sup>th</sup> was the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of modern air conditioning, put into effect in 1902 by Willis H. Carrier at a Brooklyn printing company. Again this was a miraculously brilliant invention for keeping hotheads cool.

That task done, we now begin by looking at the dog days of August. Why *dog days*? This is an astronomical designation—Sirius, the dog star becomes prominent in August. On the first weekend of the dog days, some members of Santa Clara Corvettes attended the tour of the Budweiser Beer facility. How does this relate? Two ways. First, some folks drink beer as a refreshment in the heat of August. Second, if you paid attention to the Budweiser tour *information* and happened to be familiar with the process of brewing beer, you'd know they were *lying like a dog*.

There are some key issues about which the Bud marketers mislead their drinking customers. Most notable are filtered water, their fifth ingredient, rice, beech wood aging, and Born On dates. Let's realize that people have been brewing beer for at least 5,000 years (really!), so quite a few folks have learned a lot about the process over that time. Beer has four (yes 4) essential ingredients: water, barley malt, yeast, and hops. Water is the wet part, barley is a grain that's malted (heated and mashed) to break down complex carbohydrates into fermentable polysaccharides, yeast is a microorganism that ferments sugars into carbon dioxide and alcohol, and hops are the flowers from a plant providing preservative alpha acids, bitter flavor, and aroma. If you're waiting several thousand years for Mr. Carrier (above) to develop refrigeration methods to help keep your water supply potable, converting your water into beer for sanitary purposes has some real merit.

So, what about filtered water? Yeast doesn't like filtered water. It produces better, tastier beer when the water

has lots of minerals, especially calcium. Visit Burton-on-Trent in England for some of the best brewing mineral water in the world. Or at least listen to the Coors folks about their mountain spring water. That one isn't just marketing hype.

What about rice? As a food grain, it's fine. In beer, rice is something called an adjunct: flavorless cheap trash to bump up the alcohol content without the flavor of malt or especially malt's much greater cost. You will *never* hear a microbrewer say anything good about rice, corn, or other such adjuncts.

Beech wood *aging*. What a misnomer! Budweiser is a lager, which means laying down, usually for at least several months to get good fermentation as the beer ages, perhaps for 6 months. Bud's use of beech wood is a way to force the yeast to ferment the beer extra fast so the beer will carbonate (saturate with bubbles) and they can get it out the door as rapidly as possible. Their secondary fermentation process lasts only 21 days. That's not very different from the way one might age Alka-Seltzer in a glass of water to get carbonization.

Finally, we get to *Born On* dating, a marketing ploy to make you think you're getting a *fresh* product, and to get you to drink any Bud you've purchased quickly so it doesn't get old. Alternatively, beer which is *not* pasteurized contains living yeast, and like fine wine, gets better and more subtle with age. During pasteurization, the yeast in Budweiser is killed. The bottle should be labeled specifying the *Embalmed On* date.

Ok, Budweiser and Bud Light *are* the biggest selling beers in America, but that's not saying much. The American public is a market with remarkably indiscriminating taste. Have you noted that Budweiser says *best selling*, but never mentions the "ten million flies can't be wrong" argument.

I'll conclude by mentioning that after the Budweiser tour, we went to the nearby Jelly Belly factory where they *age the jelly beans for a full week* to get them to the right texture. A week aging jelly beans! I'll toss that Bud away, and have some Jelly Bellies instead.

And...

That's what I found between the seat and the console.

*Steve Wells*



# FOUND BETWEEN THE SEAT AND THE CONSOLE

A few weeks ago was the Santa Clara Corvettes annual Chili Cookoff. Along with many different styles of chili, some of us brought along some assorted go-withs and snacks. I brought along my homemade Salsa Verde, and so many folks liked it and asked for the recipe that I'm placing it below for your potential enjoyment. The salsa (really it's a *Pico de Gallo*; salsa is cooked, and this is not) is quick and easy with a food processor, and lots of work otherwise. I ask that if you pass the recipe on to others, please give me credit for its creation, as this recipe is my own from-scratch invention.

## SALSA VERDE

### A fresco Pico de Gallo from Conceptworks

- |   |        |                  |                                                 |
|---|--------|------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Lb     | Tomatillas       | Take off the outer paper and stems. Rinse well. |
| 1 | Medium | White Onion      |                                                 |
| 2 | Cloves | Garlic           |                                                 |
| 3 | Large  | Jalapeño Chilies |                                                 |
| 1 | Bunch  | Cilantro         |                                                 |
| 1 | Large  | D'Anjou Pear     | Remove stem and core.                           |
| 1 |        | Lime             | Juice and pulp                                  |

This is very easy to make in a food processor using pulse mode on the tomatillas, onion, and pear to keep a chunky texture, since running continuously produces a mushy result. Process each ingredient separately in turn, and stir into a separate large bowl.

Tomatillas may produce a lot of liquid depending on their moisture content. Process to a medium coarseness and pour off excess liquid.

Process the garlic and chilies till minced fine. Increase or decrease the quantity of jalapeños for spicier or milder results, respectively. Leave out the chilies for a batch suitable for children or others with low capsicum (spice heat) tolerance.

Mix in the lime juice promptly after processing the pear to preserve its color, as it will otherwise tend to turn brown. Stir all the ingredients to mix well. Enjoy.

And...

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*Steve Wells*



# FOUND BETWEEN THE SEAT AND THE CONSOLE

Here we are presenting the month of October, but in late September. The Germany trip will occupy many members during our usual first Wednesday of the month meeting period, and in light of our calendar rearrangements, this column will honor our unusual September hybrid by looking at September remembrances in this October issue.

The traditional October holiday is Halloween with its orange and black color theme. It is derived from *all hallow even*, and the hallowed or holy origins of the holiday make an ideal segue to the key September event of this century, the attacks last year on two of our cultural and architectural edifices. In case you are beginning to expect something traditional on this topic (from this forum?) I will dispel any such notion by presenting geometric, and philosophically linguistic ruminations.

With perhaps a very few exceptions, most of the Santa Clara Corvettes members have had limited personal rapport with the buildings lost or damaged last September 11<sup>th</sup>. I am originally from the New York metropolitan area, and I commuted almost daily from my home in New Jersey to graduate school along the western shore of the Hudson River, which is the geographic boundary separating New Jersey from Manhattan Island. During my commute I first noticed a large square, an acre in size, gradually rising from a base in lower Manhattan. Over time this square extended in a vertical direction, but unlike the tapered forms of the Empire State Building and the Chrysler Building, this incredible right prism, a monolithic parallelepiped, grew skyward with amazing linear form. I was in awe of how this fantastic structure grew, a tribute to the greatness of human ability to conquer both the ground and sky. What made this vision more astounding was the gradual appearance of a twin, lagging behind in time in its growth, but visually identical in wonder.

Eventually the two tallest buildings in the world stood together completed. I rode in the trains that went underneath the **World Trade Center**. I defended (very successfully) a tax audit in the mid floors. I dined at *Windows on the World*, the top floor restaurant. I stood on the roof, gazing over incredible views of buildings, towers, and multiple states—on the ground and in the sky simultaneously. A perfect square, risen in 3D to be magnificently a mass, a mountain, a monument. My sense of loss to the flaming madness last year was

intensely personal, for the buildings and I had grown up together.

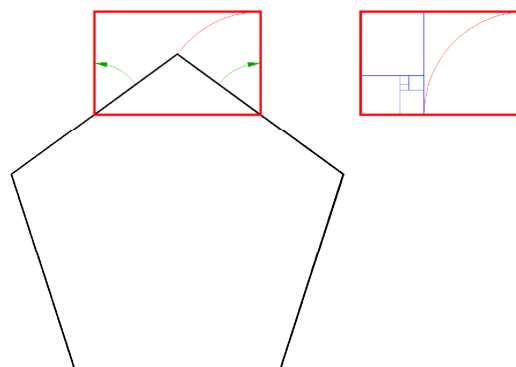
Less personally tragic, because the building survived, was the attack on the **Pentagon**. Still, there was some measure of personal attachment, for I had driven past this building, and saw that even a single side is enormous and mighty. Members of my family have worked within its great walls. A pentagon is, of itself, a special geometric form. Extend the edges until they intersect, and a five-pointed star results—the star shape appearing on our national flag. Breach the middles of two adjacent sides of a pentagon, and create a line connecting the bisection points. That line and one of the bisected sides are proportioned in the *golden ratio* which is the basis of the *golden rectangle*, both revered by ancient Greek philosophers, modern architects, and the natural forms of myriad living creatures.

Let's now pass from the geometric to the linguistic. The attacked buildings were literally *War and Peace*. The Pentagon is a seat of military coordination, in defense of our freedom as one of the truly proper functions of our government. The World Trade Center, though not quite the internationally focused center originally envisioned, was defined as a center of *trade*. Trade is a most important concept. In a trade, both parties are in agreement and in peace. Each receives the best side of the deal. Both sides win. Nobody is a victim. Free trade is the essence of civilized interaction and civilization. What is the goal of those who try to destroy a world trade center? They want to eradicate civilization, so that all must revert to a prehistoric stone age and cower in caves, where subhumans reside in fear and terror.

And...

That's what I found between the seat and the console.

*Steve Wells*



# FOUND BETWEEN THE SEAT AND THE CONSOLE

The month of November is here—a month famous for the ubiquitous turkeys. They're everywhere! Turkeys getting elected, turkeys getting re-elected, and turkeys flushing our future economy down the toilet by approving all those Giga-buck pork-barrel bond propositions. But election day will be past by the time this is printed, so from here on, we'll concentrate on the turkeys served for food at the end of the month.

There's another brief holiday that deserves mention, *Veteran's Day*, when we honor the fighting men and women of wars past and imminent. The armed forces will be quite prominent in the news shortly, and since that's a topic of some distress to many, let's move along to that very festive holiday, *Thanksgiving*.

At my home, I always commemorate the holiday with a traditional food from the (apocryphal) first Thanksgiving dinner on February 22, 1630. Supposedly, Massasoit's brother, Quadequina, brought several bushels of *popped corn* to the English colonists, their first introduction to this delightful food. Every year since then, or at least for about the past century, movie theater owners have given thanks for this essential snack food profit center, as welcome to them for inaugurating the holiday season as the upcoming crop of *Harry Potter*, *James Bond*, *Star Trek*, and *The Lord of the Rings* pre-Christmas movies.

During Thanksgiving dinner, we should ponder the wonderful inventions of modern civilization, and give appropriate and hearty thanks. Each has an honored place, our existence elevated far beyond that of the participants at that first Thanksgiving. As we wash our hands, we enjoy the marvel of running hot water. A few centuries ago there was the common belief that washing was a

harmful activity, a potentially surprising notion until one thinks what a winter bath might be like without hot water. After our meal, the delicious turkey is consumed, but its somewhat fibrous meat gets impacted between adjacent distal and mesial tooth surfaces. Then we pull out a length of the next miracle, waxed nylon dental floss. No hunting around for vines, long hairs, or bits from stringy plants. Dental relief in moments.

Hours after overeating at dinner, how do we really spell *relief*? No, it's not that antacid mint. It's that most impressive porcelain seat of relief, the modern flush toilet invented by the famed 19<sup>th</sup> century British plumber, Sir Thomas Crapper. We honor his accomplishments whenever we use his innovations, yet in a strange bit of irony, the name of one of society's greatest benefactors is used to describe inferior quality. If only it were easy to dispose of those *crappy* Election Day misfits with a quick flush of the *crapper*.

Well, there's a neat twist. With that last thought, it seems we've come full circle to the verbal imagery of the first paragraph.

And... that's what I found between the seat and the console.

*Steve Wells*



# FOUND BETWEEN THE SEAT AND THE CONSOLE

It's now December, a month known for festivities, holidays, and spending too much money, so let's recall again those major devotions: **Judaism** ✡, **Christianity** ✝, and **Nordstrom** \$. Before December even began, however, the *Festival of Light* had already started. Vulcans all over the Alpha Quadrant began lighting their Chanuka candles on the evening of November 29<sup>th</sup>. You probably didn't know that Vulcans were Jewish, but we know that's so from the Vulcan hand sign that goes with the greeting, "Live long and prosper." Ever wonder where that sign came from? Leonard Nimoy, the first Vulcan, (and definitely Jewish) recalled the gesture from his childhood experiences at the synagogue, where he observed the hand sign used during holy ceremonies. The sign represents the Hebrew letter ש (Shin, with an SH sound) which is the shape of the hand held up with those spaces between the thumb and index finger, and between the middle finger and ring finger. It is meant to remind us of El Shadai, a name for the Almighty.

That's from more than five thousand years ago, but there are other more recent religious traditions to ponder for the month. Let's look for the famous Christmas Star that appeared at the time of Jesus's birth at Christmas in the year 0. Well, it wasn't exactly a star, and it certainly wasn't in the year 0 of our calendar, if for no other reason than that there was no year 0. The Gregorian calendar ran from 1 BC (= 1 BCE) to 1 AD (= 1 CE). That CE is the Common Era for those who don't mix religions with their calendars. So what was the *star*, and why didn't regular folks notice it, only wise men? The star was the triple conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in

7 BC (BCE). Historic records of other events strongly suggest that Jesus was born in the springtime. So why is Christmas in December? Let's recall that early Christians were not treated well in the Roman Empire. Nero used to put them on crosses (often X-shaped), douse them with pitch, and light them on fire, just for his amusement at seeing Christians give off light. With treatment like that, the best time to celebrate Christ's birth was during the Saturnalia around the winter solstice when all the Romans were celebrating and not paying attention to other people's rituals. So it's Merry Saturnalia and a Happy New Year.

Let's not forget that most modern religion, Nordstrom. However, in these tough economic times, the less devoted celebrate at Costco, so here are a couple of good buys there for Corvette owners. For those who participate at Santa Clara Corvettes events, there is the Motorola Talkabout TS-410 two-pack for \$49.99, *batteries included*. They're great for caravans, autocross, and many other uses. To keep your Vette clean, there's the Kärcher 395M pressure washer for \$149.49. It's a special OEM version made just for Costco, and is a much better unit than anything nearly comparable in price on Kärcher's website. The washer is great for keeping your Corvette clean, and great for all kinds of other cleanup jobs. A way to keep things looking great in this holiday season.

And...

That's what I found between the seat and the console.

*Steve Wells*

