

# The Box City Bulletin

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If you would like to receive this publication please write to:

Howard Suer, Editor  
The Box City Bulletin  
P.O. Box 7069  
Van Nuys, CA 91409-7069  
Phone - (818) 780-4032  
Fax: (818) 780-2607

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Always remember, this is your Bulletin. If you disagree with any editorial content, we welcome opposing points of view as well as comments on public issues.

We have opinions, . . .but no agenda and will print all opposing points of view concerning any issue we editorialize.

## Happy Valentines Day



### St. Valentine

Patron of Love, Young People, and Happy Marriages

**V**alentine was a holy priest in Rome, who, with St. Marius and his family assisted the martyrs in the persecution under Claudius II. He was apprehended, and set by the emperor to the prefect of Rome, who, on finding all of his promises to make him renounce his faith ineffectual, condemned him to be beaten with clubs, and afterwards to be beheaded, which was executed on February 14, about the year 270. Pope Julius I is said to have built a church near Ponte Mole in his memory, which for a long time gave name to the gate now called Porta del Popola, formerly Porta Valentini. The greatest part of his relics are now in the church of St. Praxedes. His name is celebrated as that of an illustrious martyr in the sacramentary of St. Gregory, the Roman Missal of Thomasius, in the calendar of F. Fronto, and all other martyrologies on this day. To abolish the heathens lewd superstitious custom of boys drawing the names of girls, in honor of their goddess Februata Juno, on the fifteenth of this month, several zealous pastors substituted the names of saints in billets given on this day.

entire really existed because archaeologists have unearthed a Roman catacomb and an ancient church dedicated to Saint Valentine. In 496 AD Pope Gelasius marked February 14th as a celebration in honor of his martyrdom.

Legend has it that he was caught marrying Christian couples and otherwise aiding Christians who were being persecuted under Emperor Claudius in Rome. Since this was considered a crime, Valentine was arrested and imprisoned. Claudius took a liking to this prisoner—until Valentine made a strategic error: he tried to convert the Emperor—whereupon this priest was condemned to death. He was beaten with clubs and stoned; when that didn't do it he was beheaded outside the Flaminian Gate in 269.

Saints are not supposed to rest in peace; they're expected to keep busy: to perform miracles, to intercede. Being in jail or dead is no excuse for non-performance of the supernatural. One legend says, while awaiting his execution, Valentine restored the sight of his jailer's blind daughter. Another legend says, on the eve of his death, he penned a farewell note to the jailer's daughter, signing it, "From your Valentine."

Saint Valentine is the Patron Saint of affianced couples, bee keepers, engaged couples, epilepsy, fainting, greetings, happy marriages, love, lovers, plague, travelers and young people. He is represented in pictures with birds and roses.



### The Origin of St. Valentine

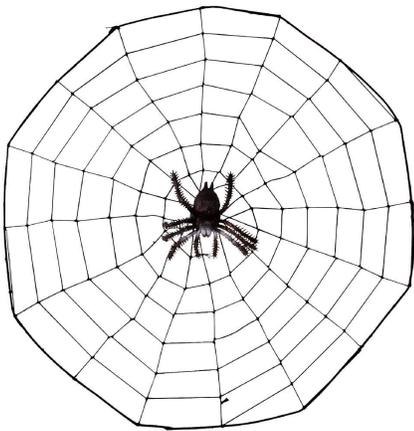
The origin of St. Valentine, and how many St. Valentines there were, remains a mystery. One opinion is that he was a Roman martyred for refusing to give up his Christian faith. Other historians hold that St. Valentine was a temple priest jailed for defiance during the reign of Claudius. Whoever he was, Val-

# The Box City Science Page

## One of The Wonders of Nature

By Howard Suer

**Editor's Note:** This article appeared in the September 2005 issue of The Box City Bulletin. We thought it would be appropriate to reprint it this month,



This morning I walked right through a giant spider web in my back yard. . . No, I wasn't injured by this encounter, as a matter of fact I felt rather guilty for destroying an engineering feat that a rather small arachnid spent much of the night designing and constructing.

Due to the extremely wet weather we enjoyed last winter, the plant and insect populations are booming. Nature somehow manages to cope with every event. When the insect population explodes— so do the creatures that prey on them.

When the roses are full of aphids, suddenly there is an army of ladybugs to feed on them. When gnats, mosquitoes and flies abound — up jumps the spider and dragonfly population to feast on them.

This year my backyard (and front yard for that matter) abounds with spider webs stretching between bushes, shrubs and trees. The most spectacular of which was an immense web designed by a master architect to stretch between a willow tree and a small

bamboo forest in my backyard. It starts about twelve feet high on a branch of the willow tree and extends across a span of about eight feet to a bamboo stalk at the same height. It is anchored at the bottom to the trunk of the willow tree about five feet from the ground and to the bamboo stalk at about the same height.

If you can visualize this, it is a web approximately eight feet wide and seven feet tall suspended from a height of twelve feet.

The spider is not a giant one, but rather small, about 1/2 inch wide. It is sitting right in the center looking rather proud.

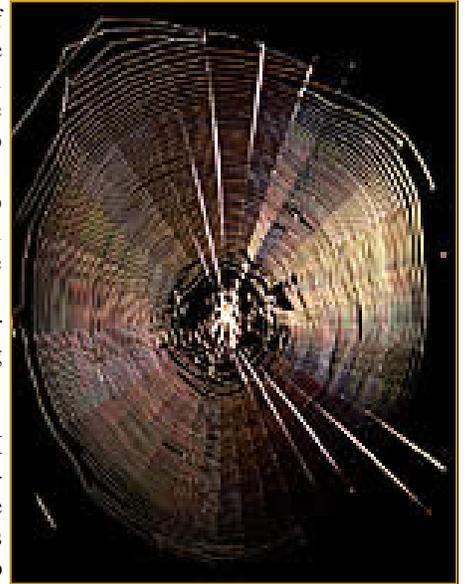
As I observed this architectural wonder I visualized him building it from the beginning. He had to start on the branch of the willow tree twelve feet up. Anchoring his silken thread there he had to slide down to the ground and walk across some ferns and a concrete path. Then climb up a giant bamboo stalk to a height of twelve feet anchoring the other end of that silken strand, and starting a second one. Then climbing back down to the ground he had to repeat his journey to the willow tree, this time climbing only five feet up anchoring the second strand to the trunk. Then, back up to where he started and starting a third thread he repeated the procedure to a height of five feet on the bamboo.

This operation had to continue until he had the framework completed. Then came the tedious task of running spokes from end to end about two inches apart. That was followed by the even more tedious job of winding his sticky silken thread around the outer perimeter of his project. And then repeating the winding, spacing the threads closer together until his perfect spider web was finished.

Now, of course comes the pleasure of stationing himself somewhere in his magnificent works and waiting for an unsuspecting fly, mosquito or moth to enter it.—becoming a well earned dinner.

Spiders have been on earth for millions of

years. . . . Yes, they were here long

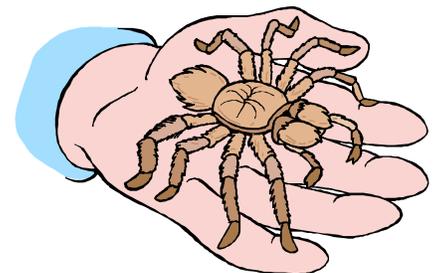


before man.

Spiders are not insects, they are arachnids. However both spiders and insects belong to the largest group of animals on earth . . . The arthropods - animals with hard external skeletons and jointed limbs Greek arthro = jointed, podos = footed.

They have a wide range of sizes. The smallest are the anapids being tinier than a pinhead to the largest, — the South American goliath tarantula, which can be larger than a dinner plate. A fossil of a 300 million year old arachnid one-half a meter long has been found.

Some people keep tarantulas as pets. They live as long as 30 years.



# *The Box City Poetry Corner*

## *Kismet*

By Harry Purcell

Light a wee candle to cheer up the room,  
And a yellow rose bud to chase away gloom.  
The candle is life slowly melting away,  
The flame is a beacon to show us the way.  
The bloom is for friendship to cherish each day,  
For the dear ones now gone or drifting away.  
A bit of the creature to warm up the soul,  
A salute to those who don't answer the roll.  
You pay your respects and silently pray,  
For one of our brothers who has gone on his way.

## *An old Soldier*



~

## **The Little Dimpled Ball**

Author Unknown

In my hand I hold a ball,  
White and dimpled, rather small.  
Oh, how bland it does appear,  
This harmless looking little sphere.

By its size I could not guess,  
The awesome strength it does possess.  
But since I fell beneath its spell,  
I've wandered through the fires of hell.

My life has not been quite the same,  
Since I chose to play this stupid game.  
It ruled my mind for hours on end,  
A fortune it has made me spend.

It has made me yell, curse and cry,  
I hate myself and want to die.  
It promises a thing called par,  
If I can hit it straight and far.

To master such a tiny ball,  
Should not be very hard at all.  
But my desires the ball refuses,  
And does exactly as it chooses.

It hooks and slices, dribbles and dies,  
And even disappears before my eyes.  
Often it will have a whim,  
To hit a tree or take a swim.

With miles of grass on which to land,  
It finds a tiny patch of sand.  
Then has me offering up my soul,  
If only it would find the hole.

It's made me whimper like a pup,  
And swear that I will give it up.  
And take to drink to ease my sorrow,  
But the ball knows . . . I'll be back tomorrow.



A recent study found the average golfer walks about 900 miles a year.

Another study found golfers drink, on average, 22 gallons of alcohol a year.

That means, on average, golfers get about 41 miles per gallon.

Kind of makes you proud. Almost feeling like a hybrid.

# A Box City Furry Tales

## When Snowball Melted

By Bonnie Compton Hanson

**L**ovebirds. That's what all our friends called us when we first married.

I guess Don and I deserved it. Money was tight because we were both full-time students, working to pay our way through school. Sometimes we'd have to save up days for just an ice cream cone. Still, our tiny drab apartment seemed like a paradise. Love does that, you know.

Anyway, the more we heard about "lovebirds," the more we thought about birds. And one day we started saving up for a couple of lovebirds of our own: the feathery kind. We knew we couldn't afford to buy both birds *and* a nice cage, so in his spare moments, Don made a cage himself.

We set our cage in front of a shaded window. Then we waited until the crumpled envelope marked "lovebirds" was full of bills and spare change. At last the day came when we were able to walk down to our local pt store to "adopt" some additions to our little family.

We'd had our hearts set on parakeets. But the minute we heard the canaries singing, we changed our minds. Selecting a lively yellow male and a sweet white female, we named the youngsters Sunshine and Snowball.

Because of our exhausting schedules, we didn't get to spend too much time with our new friends, but we loved having them greet us each evening with bursts of song. And they seemed blissfully happy with each

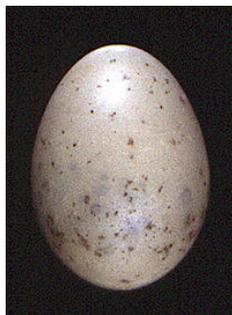


other.

Time passed, and when our young lovebirds finally seemed mature enough to start a family of their own, we went ahead and prepared a nest area and lots of nesting material for them.

Sure enough, one day they began to find the idea very appealing. Snowball was a very exacting supervisor in designing and decorating their nest just so, while Sunshine, his face aglow with love, bent over backward to put everything just where she ordered.

Then one day an egg appeared. How they sang! And a few weeks later when a tiny chick hatched, their happiness seemed to know no bounds. I don't know how it happened genetically, but the baby canary was bright orange. So right off we named him Punkinhead.



The sunny days passed. So proud all of us were when our fledgling tottered out of the nest onto a real grown-up perch!



Then, one day, Punkinhead suddenly plunged headlong from his perch to the bottom of the cage. The tiny orange bird just lay there. Both parents and I rushed

to his rescue.

But he was dead. Just like that. Whether he'd had a heart attack before he fell or broke his neck in the fall, I'll never know. But Punkinhead was gone.

Though both parents grieved, his little mother was inconsolable. She refused to let either Sunshine or me get near that pitiful little body. Instead of the joyful melodies I usually heard from Snowball, now she gave only the most excruciating cries and moans. Her heart, joy and will seemed completely melted by her sorrow.

Poor Sunshine didn't know what to make of it. He kept trying to push Snowball away from her sad station, but she refused to budge. Instead, over and over she kept trying to revive her adored child.

Finally, Sunshine seemed to work out a plan. He convinced her to fly up and eat some seeds every so often, while he stood duty in her place. The each time she left, he'd quietly place a piece of straw over Punkinhead's body. Just one. But in a few days, piece by piece it was completely covered over.

At first Snowball seemed disoriented when she looked around, but she didn't try to uncover the chick. Instead she flew up to her normal perch and stayed there. Then I was able to quietly reach in and remove the little body, straw shroud and all.

After that, Sunshine spent all his time consoling Snowball. Eventually she started making normal sounds and then one day, her sorrow melted and she sang again.

I don't know if Snowball ever realized the quiet labor of love and healing Sunshine had done for her. But they remained joyously devoted for as long as they both lived. Love does that, you know.

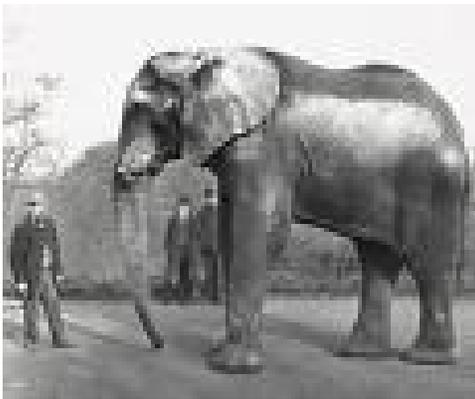
Especially to lovebirds.

~

# Interesting Word Origins

## JUMBO

Most of our vocabulary is Latin in origin, stemming from ancient Latin, as well as other European languages. The word *jumbo* is unique in that it originated from an animal—a very large elephant named *Jumbo* to be exact



*Jumbo*, an African bush elephant was born in 1861 in French Sudan. Captured as a baby, he was sold to a Zoo in Paris. He lived there until 1865, when he was sold to the London Zoo.

*Jumbo* flourished in the London Zoo and achieved immense proportions—a height of 11.5 feet, weighing 6.5 tons. Because of his gentle nature he was fitted with special seats, giving rides around the zoo to

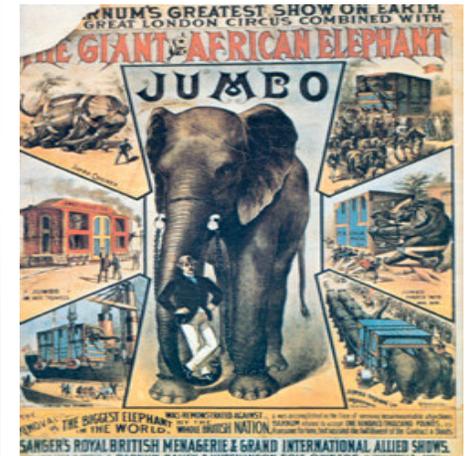
children and adults as well. Among his celebrated riders were Theodore Roosevelt, Winston Churchill and Phineas T. Barnum.

P.T. Barnum, recognizing the value of such a magnificent creature offered the Zoo \$10,000 for *Jumbo*. His offer was declined, however sometime later *Jumbo* exhibited a very uncharacteristic temper tantrum. The zoological society, fearful that it might have a potential danger on its hands decided to accept Barnum's offer. Barnum, being a most clever showman, and in order to prove to Americans what a prize was coming their way, set about convincing the English that they were being tricked out of a national treasure. Once those seeds of discontent had been planted, the loyal British from the man on the street to the Prince of Wales were outraged. . . . "Jumbomania" swept across both countries. Letters from England poured in to the showman begging him to reconsider, but Barnum would not change his mind. A deal was a deal and after all *Jumbo* was not born a British citizen. Huge sums were offered to Barnum. Parliament and the Queen practically begged, and lawsuits were brought against the Society's officers for making the sale. But Barnum stood firm.

Not even Barnum knew quite what he had. Thousands of New Yorkers met the ship when *Jumbo* arrived on April 9, 1882, and

more thousands followed the circus procession through packed and cheering streets to the Hippodrome (now renamed Madison Square Garden) where the circus was about to open.

During the first 10 days of the circus opening *Jumbo* pulled in over \$30,000 and ultimately many millions of dollars in receipts.



On September 15, 1885 24 year old *Jumbo* was killed in a tragic accident as the circus's menagerie was being loaded for transportation to its next location *Jumbo* was struck by a fast moving freight train in St. Thomas, Ontario, Canada .

The name *Jumbo* has entered our vocabulary to mean anything extra large such as a *Jumbo* jet. Now that **you** know this, *Jumbo's* memory will continue to live on.

## About Smoother Roads

Tarmac, the most widely used road surface in the world, gets its name from a Scottish engineer who did not really invent it.

The engineer, John Loudon McAdam (1756—1836), invented a road building technique called Mcadamizing in the early 19th century. Over a bed of large tightly packed rocks, McAdam put a dry layer of smaller



stones. This he topped with fine gravel or crushed slag to make a smoother surface

The idea for binding the surface together with tar was devised in 1854, 18 years after McAdam's death, by a Nottingham surveyor named E. P. Hooley, who named the new surface tarmacadam in McAdam's honor. The name was later shortened to tarmac.

# Editorial Take A Lesson From Nature

## Take A Lesson From Nature

By Howard Suer

Recently I received a magazine containing an article titled, *"The Roll of Cooperation in Nature."*

—*"Symbiosis—An introduction to Biological Associations."*

The article pointed out the symbiotic relationship that exists amongst the most unlikely animals and life forms. For example; Those gray or green blotches you often see on rocks and tree trunks. They are called Lichens. Some sources say there may be up to 20,000 varieties! Lichens may look like a single organism, but in reality they are a composite of a fungus and an alga.

Why do the two organisms unite? Funguses cannot produce their own food. So by means of microscopic threads, a fungus embraces an alga, which uses photosynthesis to make sugars. Some of these sugars leak out through the walls of the alga and are



absorbed by the fungus. The alga in turn, receives moisture from its host and is protected from excess sunlight.

With a touch of humor, one scientist summed up lichens as *"fungi that*

*have discovered agriculture."* Lichens cover ten times as much of the earth's surface as tropical rain forests. They live from the Arctic to the Antarctic and even thrive on the backs of insects.

Certain ants also enjoy a symbiotic alliance with plants. In exchange for nest sites and food, these insects might pollinate their host, disperse its seeds, help provide its nutrients or protect it against herbivores.

On the other hand some ants prefer animal husbandry, herding aphids like cattle. Milking them for food and protecting them from predators.

Have you ever seen birds perched on the backs of antelope, cows, giraffes, or oxen, pecking at their skin? These birds are not a nuisance, but rather are doing their hosts a big favor by eating lice, ticks and other parasites.

The hippopotamus gets cleaned by birds and fish as well. A fish called black labeos, in the carp family, "vacuums" away algal, dead skin and parasites. While birds pick off parasites above the water level.

Baboons and Impalas form a mutual alarm system when predators are in the area. The



impala's extraordinary sense of smell combined with the baboons keen eyesight make it hard for predators to approach undetected.

Thousands of years ago King Solomon who was a student of nature observed the lowly ant. He wrote, *"Go to the ant, you lazy one; see its ways and become wise. Although it has no ruler, it prepares its food even in the summer; it has gathered its food and supplies even in the harvest."*

Then I looked at our own species—the Homo-sapiens and I am ashamed. —We seek out the most beautiful of animals and kill them for sport. We fight amongst ourselves for greed, or worse yet out of ignorance over differences in religion or politics.

We jealously guard our abundances of food and natural resources in one area while elsewhere, others are starving.

We divert enormous amounts of energy and wealth to the development of more and more powerful weapons of war instead of *"looking to the lowly ant for wisdom."* Sure, it's necessary to defend yourself when threatened by a predatory enemy. But you'd think, over the millennium we have existed as a species we would have discovered ways to communicate our mutual wants and needs and learned how to get along as well as some of the other animals that populate our planet.



*"No organism is an island—each one has a relationship to other organisms, directly or indirectly."*

# Why We Say It — (Phrase Origins)

## The Eleventh Hour

**T**his expression is so ancient it dates back to biblical times. Greeks and Hebrews adopted the use of sundials from the Babylonians. Sundial faces were divided into 12 segments, the day being divided from daylight to dusk, with darkness coming at the twelfth. A famous new testament parable (Matthew 20:1-16) expresses the idea of lateness by saying some would-be laborers came at the eleventh hour of sunlight.

Today, the clock has been so modified, but we continue to say that the eleventh hour is the last possible time to make a decision or to take action.



## Slush Fund

**T**he food supply was a major problem during the great age of sailing. Refrigeration had not been invented yet. A ship's master wouldn't leave port without taking aboard as much salt pork as he could buy. When fried or boiled, that all important meat yielded grease in such quantities that special storage vats were used for it. Slush, as it was called was used to grease timbers. On many voyages the stuff accumulated faster than it could be used. Once back home a vessel might have hundreds of pounds of slush. Long established tradition provided that the slush was sold to buy extras for members of the crew. So popular was this sea-going slush fund that its name became attached to any surplus sum of money from an operating budget to be used for extras, in come cases bribery or corrupt practices.

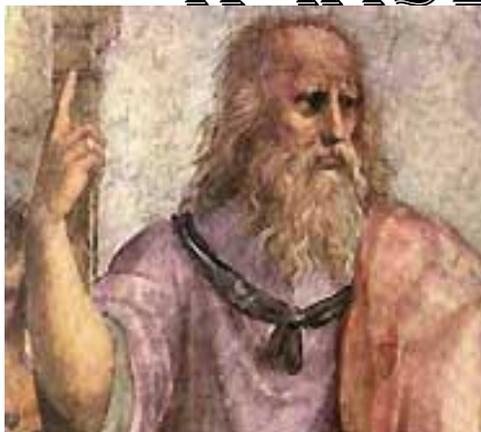
## A Bitter Pill to Swallow

**M**any years ago physicians did not have the luxury of the candy coated pills we have today. For centuries, physicians administered a pellet for sicknesses. The bark of a New World tree, the cinchona, was effective in fighting malaria. The pellet came to be known as a "pill". But the quinine it contains is extremely bitter. Yes, it was the original *bitter pill to swallow*. Doctors tried to mask the bitterness with honey and spices, but it was still a bitter pill. Today, any disagreeable circumstance or reversal is termed, a *bitter pill to swallow*. We owe thanks to the cinchona pellets for giving us this expression.



Cinchona

# A WISE MAN TELLS YOU



*"Any society that would give up a little liberty to gain a little security, will deserve neither and lose both."*

—Benjamin Franklin, 1706-1790

*"If you would not be forgotten as soon as you are dead and rotten, either write things worth reading, or do things worth writing."*

—Benjamin Franklin, 1706-1790

*"Remember man, as you walk by,  
As you are now, so once was I  
As I am now, so shall you be.  
Remember this and follow me."*

—On a Tombstone in England

*"To follow you I'll not consent,  
Until I know which way you went."*

—Written underneath that tombstone

*"The bubbling brook would lose its song  
if you removed the rocks,"*

—Author Unknown

*"Here is a test to see if your mission on  
earth is complete:*

*... If you're alive, it isn't"*

—Richard Bach, 1936—

*"Never approach a bull from the front, a  
horse from the rear, or a fool from any  
direction."*

—Danny Saradon, ?

*"The value of an ideal has nothing to do  
with the sincerity of the man who ex-  
presses it."*

—Oscar Wilde, 1854-1900

*"Against criticism a man can neither pro-  
test nor defend himself; he must act in  
spite of it, and then it will gradually yield  
to him."*

—Johan von Goeth, 1749-1834

*"He who praises everybody praises no-  
body."*

—Dr. Samuel Johnson, 1709-1784



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# Cartoons of The Month

