Last Words

Dear Reader,

Some of you, I am certain, are fond of history. You know all about the Boot-Sock war, the Sock manifesto, the populating of Slodoop, and all the associated historical hullabaloo. Others, I have little doubt, are completely unlearned in these matters, knowing a little of the history of your own slo and perhaps the names of a few dozen others, but having no concept of that there even could be a history of Slodoop as a whole. This difference places me in a very difficult situation.

The fact is, I have basically exhausted the historical records about the giant. There are a few others about SIGS, but not many even there. The fact is, our records have entered a time known as the Fogs' Age, so named because it is almost impossible for a historian to see into the events of that time. The journals shut down, the press halted, even the war stopped producing documents as it became increasingly chaotic and unorganized. Retrospectives of that era rarely have any commonalities; it is, in short, a lost time, obscured by the fogs of doubt and historical blindness.

The historians among you already knew that. You were surprised and impressed I got as far as I did. The rest of you don't really believe it even now. You are certain that any tale I start, I also have to end, and you even have fairly set ideas about what that ending will be like. To you, all I can say is, sorry, real life isn't like that.

However, all is not completely lost. There is one more record I can share, in the form of a letter written by the giant to some unidentified person. It was probably written many years after the rest of the records in this compilation, but it is not unrelated, as you will see. And so, here it is, the last of the writings regarding the giant that I can share.

Dear Mrs. M.,

It was a pleasure to receive yours of the 12th and hear from you again. Congratulations on your first child; I hope he will bring much joy and be more like his mother than his father. What you see in that berk is more than I'll ever know, but you seem to be happy and that's good enough for me.

You asked me what I thought of the strange reverse-derivation of the words "slo" and "doop". All I can say is, what could be more human? A strange and irrational species, of which I am proud to no longer be a part (for an official definition of what still *is* human, see the Sock manifesto, book VI, section 38b, part A75.456[1]). Now, what I want to know is how they came to the arbitrary distinction between a burg and a metropolis!

In regards to the speed scale for M-rod travel, allow me to explain. Yolk, and I were, as you know, working on M-rods during a break with the letter sticks. We had been quite unable, up to date, to discover why the letter sticks worked. Why was it that a letter 7 stick could reduce weight by 11.2%? Shouldn't it be a constant force, not related to mass? Why was it that a letter 8 stick could fling me about just as easily as it could Corky? Perhaps, we thought, there was some connection between the mass-neutralizing effects of the M-rods and the mass-related force generated by the letter stick; so we tried them together.

At first, we thought that the combination neutralized the letter sticks, but then we noticed a faint but measurable motion. After building larger and larger letter sticks, we discovered the letter 11 stick, coupled with m-rods, gave us a constant speed of about two miles an hour. A letter 12 gave us pretty much any speed we wanted, but when pushed too high the m-rod, without warning, disintegrated, leaving the inertial letter-stick effect which completely smashed our test vehicles.

After a large number of tests, we determined that we could model m-rod influenced letter-stick effect by stating that some of the molecules in the effected material would briefly blink out of existence and reappear slightly displaced in the direction of travel. Further, the increasing speeds were modeled by a decreased ratio of restabilization time (while it was present) to blink time (while the molecule was gone). This ratio turned out to be very handy, varying from just over 20 for letter 11 sticks to somewhere around 2 at m-rod disintegration. We later

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[1] The Sock manifesto is not longer extant in its full form. Although many fragments remain, most of them have no attached references; as such, we can only speculate at what VI 38b A75.456 contained.

discovered this model was incorrect and proposed the one you are familiar with, but the scale was easily measured, unitless, and convenient, so it stuck.

As an aside, it is incorrect that we switched to "letter 6" because we couldn't agree on what came after epsilon. After alpha, beta, and gamma we realized that the progression of letter sticks had no theoretic upper limit, so a finite naming sequence was unwise. We never made any delta sticks or epsilon sticks either.

You speculated that letter twelve ships will replace pipods and possibly even rival the motens' method of transportation. Not to be contrary, but in my opinion letter 12's are already doomed. I have a proof (though of course nowhere to publish it. . .) that it is impossible to detect and control for space curvature in m-rod aided travel. The letter eleven sticks will probably do better, since they can be escorted by more standard transportation which can measure the curvature. And of course, letter eight sticks without m-rods, though exceedingly dangerous, are far too simple, potent, and fun, and will remain popular for the foreseeable future.

By the way, I noticed reference to the widely-circulated view that Yolk and I met while he was doing rift metrics. This is false. He was presenting a paper on m-rods as a body-tension relieving bed design at the same conference where I presented my prototype well-behaved curve meter, the year after Kohg smashed Slodoop into the world. Ah, what a conference that was! Too bad it was the last of its kind; I really loved that old Society.

I am thrilled to receive your work on the topological invariance of hardsmord, though I am amazed you had time to work on it during your pregnancy. I guess the idea of changing shape without changing topology would be fairly obvious during pregnancy, and the concept of an absolute minimum width never seems far from a woman's mind, but still. That that minimum width for hardsmord should be, as you put it, "a size $6\frac{1}{2}$ ring" is peculiar, but very convenient since it is a readily available measure.

However, your research leaves one thing out. To see what I mean, try putting a hardsmord torus in a frap oven.

As for what I have been doing since I moved out, you remember your mother and I talking about the doubling-life of human population and observing that slos seem to accelerate the warpage of space and push themselves apart, and how we wondered how big slodoop could get? Well, I've been researching that idea for the last few years, and I think that, within a century or two, the number of slos in existence will be growing faster than it is possible to visit them. One of the consequences of this is that, while there is a common history of Slodoop, there will never be any more of it[2].

I went to Dr. Cowbird Green's funeral the other day. You knew he came to visit me last summer, right? A very interesting fellow. A touch self-absorbed, perhaps, and lived most of his life in denial of the things his senses told him, but a more resourceful man better able to ask revealing questions I have never met. Plug, of course, preceded him in death by a couple of years, so I was protected from his disconcerting probes by being unable to respond, but it was enjoyable to watch him grill others. At the funeral Mayor Kateph paid him a fine tribute, stating that Dr. Green was the most competent politician the burg had ever known.

What happened to Barley? Is he still squatting that site over by the geysers?

Well, dear one, I suppose I need to close this letter now. Its time for my turn on the watch, and it wouldn't do to be late and make some poor sleepy watchman grumpy. But do write again and keep in contact; I don't make friends as easily as I did when your parent's generation was still around, and it is good to hear from someone who knows about the old times.

I remain,
your affectionate GF

p.s. You neglected to mention the name of your new son. I suppose that means you decided not to name him Tin Tummy, as I had requested you do. Ah well. One day you'll understand why you should have.

p.p.s. No, I'm not about to die. Whatever gave you that silly idea? Just you watch—one day I'll be raising you grandkids, same as I did you.

p.p.p.s. The most I can get with three weighs is 8; how do you get the other 4? I thought about puting some known duds on the scale, but that doesn't seem to help much. . .

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[2]Not quite true. What was left out of the computation is that news moves in branching fashion, much like population growth does. For example, the Nebulonic Brotherhood grew to have footholds in roughly 40% of large slos in only two generations, despite the innumerable slo-count. History like the Big Sock, dominated by a single personality, are not really doable on the full Slodoop scale anymore, but history itself is quite a real thing to this day.