



# Natural Selections

A NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

## The History of the Thanksgiving Holiday in America

AILEEN MARSHALL

The weather has turned pleasantly crisp recently. It turns our thoughts to sweaters, leaves turning colors, apples and pumpkins. Along that line comes the Thanksgiving holiday. Most Americans today think of it as a day to have a turkey dinner with family, along with pumpkin pie and watching the parade and football. We decorate with dried ears of Indian corn, various gourds and cornucopias. It wasn't always that way. Various forms of the American holiday go back almost 400 years.

When the Pilgrims first came to this country in the 17th century, it was a new experience for them, trying to survive in a completely undeveloped environment. They didn't know what or how to hunt or plant for food. The winters in the colony of Plymouth, Massachusetts, were a lot harsher than they had encountered in England or the Netherlands. During their first winter of 1620-21, 46 of 102 Pilgrims died. They encountered the Wampanoag tribe of Native Americans. They established communications with them and befriended one called Squanto. The Wampanoag showed them how to plant corn and squash and other vegetables, and how to

hunt for wild game and fish. They were so grateful for a plentiful harvest in the fall of 1621, that they invited the tribe to celebrate with them. They feasted over three days. That first dinner included corn, cranberries and pumpkin, venison and fowl. The turkey is native to North America, but it is not known if the fowl included turkey. The act of thanksgiving was a part of their Puritan religious tradition, to celebrate what they saw as an act of divine providence. The Native Americans also had a tradition of celebrating the harvest. Edward Winslow wrote in a journal called *Mourt's Relation*, a record of the Plymouth settlement, "Our harvest being gotten in, our governor sent four men on fowling, that we might after a more special manner rejoice together, after we had gathered the fruits of our labors. They four in one day killed as much fowl as, with a little help beside, served the Company almost a week. At which time, amongst other recreations, we exercised our arms, many of the Indians coming amongst us, and among the rest their greatest king Massasoit, with some 90 men, whom for three days we entertained and feasted, and they went out and

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killed five deer, which they brought to the plantation and bestowed on our governor, and upon the captain and others. And although it be not always so plentiful as it was at this time with us, yet by the goodness of God, we are so far from want that we often wish you partakers of our plenty.”

There are other claims of a first Thanksgiving. Virginia, Florida and Texas all have claims to an earlier event. But historians say that our current tradition came out of the Pilgrims celebration in 1621. The other claims were not known until the 20th century, and it was common practice in those days to hold a celebration in thanks for some fortuitous event.

From the time of the Pilgrims, until the Civil War, Thanksgiving was celebrated by different states and on different dates. Each state or colony would pass a declaration for its own celebration. At first it was considered a New England holiday. But it slowly migrated as the country grew. In 1777 the Continental Congress declared a national Thanksgiving for all thirteen colonies. This continued until 1784. In 1789, President George Washington issued a proclamation for a national Thanksgiving. Only Presidents Washington, Adams and Madison made Thanksgiving declarations. This tradition continued until 1815, after which, the individual states still declared a Thanksgiving holiday. By the 1850s, almost all states had an annual tradition of having a Thanksgiving holiday. Although it would be on different dates, it was mostly celebrated on the last Thursday in November.

In 1827, a woman named Sarah Josepha Hale began a letter writing campaign to have Thanksgiving declared a national holiday. She was the editor of *Godey's Lady's Book* magazine. She wrote letters to the editor every year, and to governors in every state. During the Civil War, she wrote to President Lincoln, saying that a national Thanksgiving would be a way to reunite the country. In 1863, Lincoln proclaimed Thanksgiving a national holiday on the last Thursday in November. However, he did not make it an annual event, each state still had to declare its own Thanksgiving in subsequent years. Because some of the southern states refused to recognize Lincoln's authority, it wasn't celebrated by all the states until the 1870s.

In 1933, the National Dry Goods As-

sociation asked President Franklin Roosevelt to change the date to the fourth Thursday of the month, in order to move up the start of the Christmas shopping season. At first he refused, then in 1939, Thanksgiving fell on November 30, so he did move it that year. He got a lot of criticism for putting business over tradition. Some states still held it on the last Thursday. In 1941, a joint resolution of Congress put the date as permanently on the fourth Thursday in November, and it's been there ever since.

Other countries celebrate a holiday similar to Thanksgiving. Most cultures have had some kind of harvest festival going back to ancient times. Thanksgiving is celebrated in Canada in late October. It is said that Thanksgiving was brought to Canada by loyalists who moved to Canada during the Revolutionary War. Before the Pilgrims came to this country, they lived in the Netherlands for a few years. Many of their births, marriages and deaths were recorded at Saint Peter's Church in the city of Leiden. To remember the hospitality the Pilgrims received during their time in Leiden, a non-denominational ceremony is held in that church on the day of the American Thanksgiving. Germany has a Harvest Thanksgiving Festival going back to early Christianity. This holiday is more religious, but occurs around the same time as the beer festival, Oktoberfest. Japan has an ancient harvest festival celebrating the labor that went into the harvest. Since World War II, Japan has had a national Labor Day Thanksgiving to give thanks for labor and production. The United Kingdom has a Harvest Festival of Thanksgiving. This pre-dates Christianity, when Saxons would offer ears of corn to their fertility gods. It is celebrated on the Sunday of the harvest moon nearest to the autumnal equinox. Churches and schools practice this with decorating and collecting food for the poor. However, because of media influence, a more American tradition is becoming more popular there. In 2014 it was reported that sales of turkeys went up by 95% during the holiday.

No matter what your tradition, it is always good practice to remember to be grateful for all that we have. The American Thanksgiving gives us a four-day weekend to feast, shop, watch football or just relax. Thank you readers for allowing me the opportunity to share this information with you.

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## Tree of Codes and the Park Avenue Armory

PAUL JENG

The first exhibit I attended at the Park Avenue Armory was in the spring of 2012, Tom Sachs's SPACE PROGRAM: MARS, an expansive, irreverent rendition of an imaginary expedition to Mars. From the beginning it was clear that the exhibit was designed with active audience engagement in mind. Visitors at the entrance were directed by a hand scripted sign to view a series of short, PBS-style video lessons on the rules of the Mars enterprise before entering the main floor to observe reproductions of a Mars Rover, mission control station, Lunar lander, and others. The large installation pieces--crafted by sculptor Tom Sachs from modest materials such as plywood, duct tape, foam tubes, and exposed bolts--were deliberate in their oxymoronic simplicity, as if the blueprints to impossibly complicated technologies were stolen from the belly of a NASA engineering laboratory and fed to a local Home Depot instead.

At face value, the concept behind crudely reproducing sophisticated machines seemed only to offer trivial amusement, yet I found the painstaking craftsmanship and earnest appreciation for space exploration underpinning the exhibit to be very affecting. However, to me the success of the show was rooted in its contextualization within the exhibit space itself, a 55,000 square-foot former drill hall with a soaring, barrel-vaulted roof girdled by arched iron supports. The massive hall, one of the largest unobstructed spaces of its kind in New York City, was only dimly lit above the ground level, creating the sensation of actually hovering within the abyss of space. The

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whole experience felt good-naturedly absurd, encouraging the viewer to delight in the cognitive dissonance of challenging an infinite void with flimsy wooden ships. As a relatively new consumer of installation art at the time, I was amazed by the power that a venue could exert over the visitor's relationship with its art. In *SPACE PROGRAM: MARS*, Tom Sachs wanted to explore contrasts--exotic machines made from household materials, bright colors under dark skies, feelings of simultaneous awe and amusement--and the Armory itself was central to the impact of his message.

The Park Avenue Armory was originally constructed in 1880 to serve as the headquarters for the 7th New York Militia Regiment. The building, a national historic landmark since 1986, occupies the entire Park Avenue block between 67th and 68th streets, intersecting the otherwise homogeneous rows of gray apartment buildings with its distinctive red brick and Gothic revival-style towers. As stewards of the building since 2006, the non-profit Park Avenue Armory Conservancy has sought to showcase "unconventional work that cannot be mounted in traditional performance halls and museums." In that respect it has been remarkably successful, playing host to an extensive variety of shows during the tenures of artistic directors Kristy Edmunds (2009-2013) and Alex Poots (2012-2015), including lecture-series, Shakespeare, and immersive audio/visual musical performances.

Since 2012 I've attended several more of these uniquely curated programs at the armory, all of which felt as if they naturally gestated within and sprouted out of the walls themselves. In Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller's *The Murder of Crows*, a room full of speakers projected an auditory installation which utilized the echoing cavern of the armory to create haunting, shifting soundscapes. Anne Hamilton's *The Event of a Thread* saw an enormous, silk white sheet hung on the rafters of the Armory's halls, billowing at the will of audience members who controlled its movements with large wooden swings. Even the relatively guileless annual Art Show by the Art Dealers Association of America, a modular exposition of art hung in cubicle-like booths, felt infused with an air of grandeur under the brooding Armory ceiling.

On September 7th I visited the Armory again for the opening night of *Tree of Codes*, a contemporary dance collaboration between choreographer Wayne McGregor, visual artist Olafur Eliasson, and producer/composer Jamie xx. Probably like much of the younger



PAUL JENG/Natural Selections

Audience members walking to their seats before *Tree of Codes*.

audience demographic, I was drawn to the show as a fan of Jamie xx. He is a member of the well-known indie rock band The xx and an accomplished solo musician in his own right. He just released his critically-acclaimed debut solo-album *In Colour* earlier this year. I have had very limited experience watching live professional dance, so my expectations of the show were informed primarily by my love for Jamie xx's music—textured, pulsating dance anthems spun out of equal parts melancholy and joy.

The show derived its name and thematic premise from a hybrid book and sculptural artwork by Jonathan Safran Foer. He systematically excised words from the pages of *The Streets of Crocodiles* by Polish writer Bruno Schulz (the title *Tree of Codes* is itself merely the original Schulz title with 11 letters cut out). The work compels a visceral feeling of rhythmic disorientation, forcing the reader's attention on both content and negative space. This theme was apparent upon entering the show, where a stage, exposed on all sides, was filled initially only with shifting colored lights, through which audience members walked past in order to reach their high rise seats at the opposite side.

As Jamie xx's beats began to churn, the hall fell into darkness and one by one human shapes began to twirl on stage in black costumes dotted with white lights. After a few minutes of dim contortion by the dancers, the stage exploded with a roar of color and sound, exposing a brightly lit mirror which served to double the dancers' numbers throughout the show. The stage was a dynamic element throughout the performance, parading out colored neon lights, half-circle mirrored

doors, and glass cages in dazzling succession. In one scene, a partially transparent, reflective sheet was lowered in the middle of the stage between two rows of dancers and a large rear mirror, creating the illusion of infinite columns of bodies.

The dancers in the show were composed of members from the Paris Opera Ballet and as well as McGregor's own Company Wayne McGregor, and all (to my untrained eye) seemed technically flawless with their hypnotic, impossible movements. At several points it seemed as if my attention was purposely being drawn away from the central action. In one section, rotating lights appeared from within the stage and cast the dancers into giant shadow puppets on the side armory walls. At another point, a spotlight began panning through the seats and singling out audience members, as if to remind the crowd of our role in the performance. With all of the different elements at play and no core storyline, it felt at times like the collaborators were at odds with each other. Were the visuals showcasing the dancers, were the dancers' props for the stage design, or were we all just players in an elaborate music video? The entire performance was riveting, so perhaps it didn't matter.

In an interview with *The Creator's Project*, Olafur Eliasson described *Tree of Codes* as a "reversal of normal theater", where the audience is not "here to consume, passively," but is instead a part of the broader "relationship between the dancers, the audience, the stage...the music." I left the show that night feeling that *Tree of Codes* could not have found a better home for its week-long run than at the Park Avenue Armory.

# Twenty-four visits to Stockholm: a concise history of the Rockefeller Nobel Prizes

## Part XIII: Albert Claude, 1974 Prize in Physiology or Medicine

JOSEPH LUNA

On December 7, 1970, the moon-bound crew of the final Apollo mission swiveled their camera toward earth, some 28,000 miles distant, and took a picture. Three weeks later the resulting photograph revealed a delicate blue orb suspended in space, painted with swirling clouds above the African continent. When released to the public in time for the holiday newspapers, this picture became instantly famous, serving as a visual capstone for humanity's sojourn beyond our planet, which appears simultaneously majestic and intimate. It is perhaps for that reason that this picture was dubbed "The Blue Marble," and is among the most iconic scientific photographs known.

I wonder what our next three prize-winners thought of the Blue Marble photo that winter. Whereas astronauts helped make the world small with spectacular portraits of earth, by the 1970s our next three Scandinavian visitors, Albert Claude, George Palade, and Christian de Duve, had been using images for over 25 years to show that microscopic cells were organized worlds unto themselves. Starting with the first electron microscope image of an intact cell in 1945, these three (and many others) helped launch the modern discipline of cell biology. For a comprehensive history of cell biology, particularly at Rockefeller University, I refer the reader to "Entering an Unseen World" by our very own Carol Moberg. For the next three installments of this series, we'll specifically profile how each of these three men contributed to found a field as a distinct RU creation. And we'll begin with Albert Claude.

Claude's early life was difficult, and a bit momentous. After losing his mother to breast cancer at the age of seven, Claude moved around with his family before dropping out of school to care for an ailing uncle. He never finished high school. He worked in a steel mill during World War I, and volunteered as a teenager to aid the British Intelligence Service. By the war's end, Claude was a decorated military veteran, and his first lucky break came when Belgian education authorities made it possible for veterans to pursue higher education without a diploma. This made it possible for Claude to go to medical school in 1922 and he graduated six years later.

It was then that Claude turned his atten-



An International Equipment Corporation, Model B size 1, circa the mid-1930s, of the type used by Claude for cell fractionation. RU historic instrument collection, accession number 342.

tion to the cancer problem. At the time, The Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research (RIMR) was an epicenter for the debate on the origin of cancer. On one side was Peyton Rous, discoverer of the first transmissible sarcoma in chickens that bears his name, as the chief proponent for a viral origin of cancer. On the other side was James Murphy, who in short believed that a chemical or environmental insult was responsible for inducing cancer in otherwise normal cells. What exactly the Rous sarcoma agent was could only be speculated, since few had tried to purify it. Claude, freshly read up on the subject, wrote to then RIMR president Simon Flexner and proposed isolating the sarcoma agent. A year later Claude found himself in Murphy's laboratory in New York, charged to do just that.

Claude initially attempted to purify the tumor agent via chemical means, but met numerous problems. The basic idea for each

experiment was to test if the tumor agent could be concentrated, which, if so, meant that it should be more potent at inducing tumors. But chemical means didn't work consistently. Taking a cue from researchers in England, Claude opted to try and physically separate the tumor agent using newly available centrifuges. By taking ground up cancer cells and placing them in a centrifuge, Claude was able to physically separate cell contents on the basis of differing size and mass. He could then carefully test each layer of liquid (called a fraction) in the centrifuged tube to see if it could still induce tumors. By tinkering with the speed and order of spins with a centrifuge, Claude could thus physically separate known subcellular structures into four rough fractions: large and heavy nuclei, medium-sized mitochondria, a smaller fraction he eventually termed "microsomes," and the

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freely soluble cytoplasm. Moreover, he could subject each fraction to a battery of chemical, biological and microscopic tests. This achievement, to fractionate cells on the basis of differential centrifugation, became the first essential technique for cell biologists, since it allowed one to test where a particular activity (like that of an enzyme or a virus) was roughly located in the cell. And as a control, Claude also fractionated normal, non-cancerous cells, and achieved similar results. Since these normal cells had no tumor agent they couldn't cause cancer. On the basis of how similar they fractionated compared to cancer cells, Claude and Murphy reasoned that what they first needed was a definition of a "normal" cell. What was initially a biomedical question on cancer, had turned into something much more basic: what did normal cells look like and how did they work?

With his fractionation technique, Claude broke open cells and did his tests, which often included observing the contents of each fraction in the microscope. It stood to reason that for smaller and smaller things, from mitochondria to microsomes, he would need a more powerful microscope. Upon publishing an article in 1943 on what he observed in cytoplasm using his fractionation methods, Claude received a letter from the Interchemical Corporation in New York, proposing the use of their new electron microscope to observe Claude's cell fractions. The rest as they say, is history: the unusual collaboration between academic scientists and a commercial research laboratory yielded extraordinary dividends that culminated in cell biology's own Blue Marble: the first EM picture of a whole cell in 1945, taken by Albert Claude, Keith Porter and Ernest Fullam.

As much as we'd like to think otherwise, the primary purpose of the last Apollo mission was to do the painstaking work of furthering lunar geology and testing the limits of human hardware in space; the Blue Marble was a stirring but side outcome. Just the same, even though we credit Albert Claude in part for taking the first EM picture of a cell, no less stirring, it was the meticulous fractionation methods he pioneered that formed his key contribution to new and exciting views of the world inside cells.

## Culture Corner

### Reading Ancient Texts: The Campaigns of Alexander in the Landmark series

BERNIE LANGS

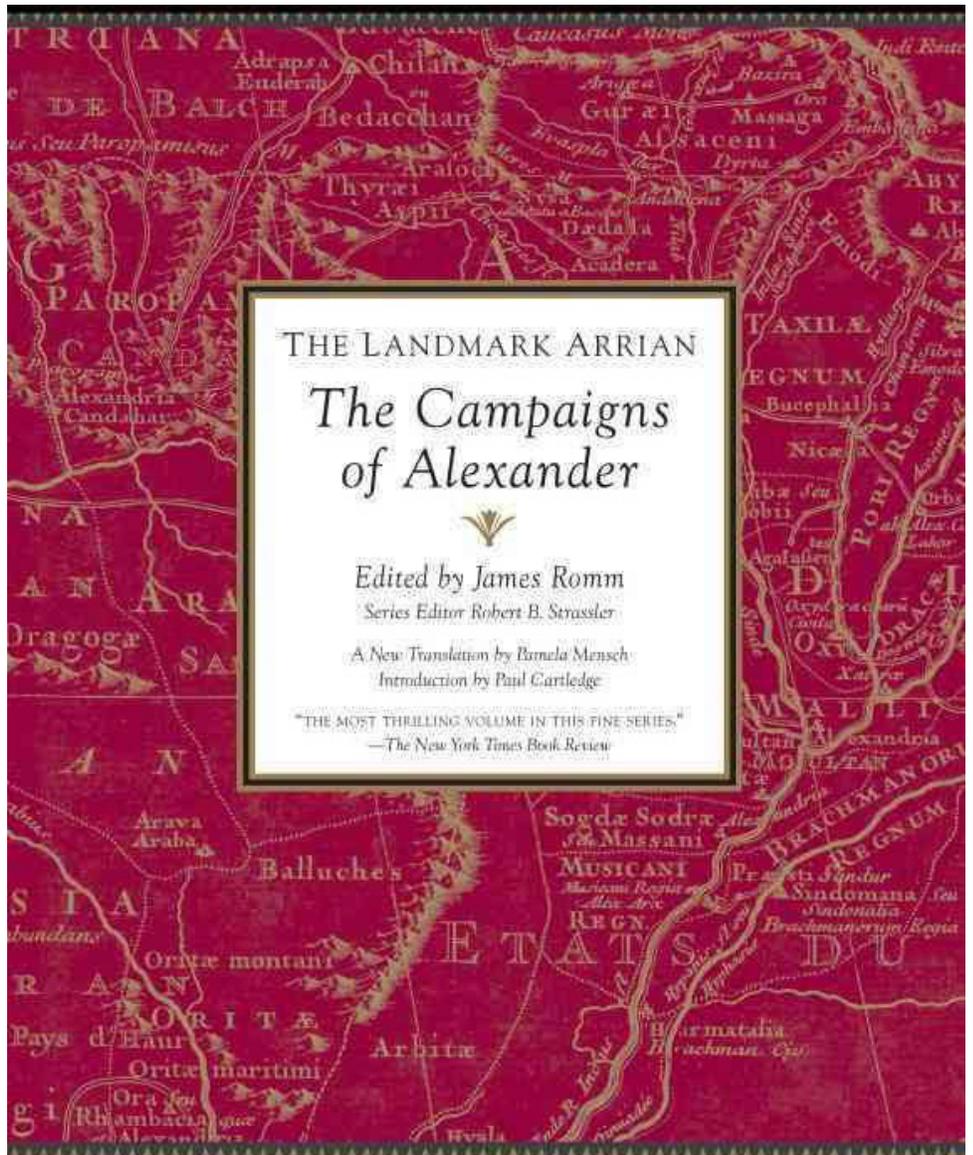


Photo Courtesy of THE LANDMARK ANCIENT HISTORIES

*"Alexander returneth to dust, the dust is earth, of earth we make loam—and why of that loam, whereto he was converted, might they not stop a beer barrel? Imperious Caesar, dead and turned to clay, Might stop a hole to keep the wind away. Oh, that that earth, which kept the world in awe, Should patch a wall t' expel the winter's flaw!" - Hamlet, Act V.I*

Shakespeare wrote several plays featuring heroes and heroines from ancient Greece and Rome and often, as in the quote above from "Hamlet", waxed poetic on the myths and history of the ancient world. The idea that there is much to be gleaned, through a serious approach, from the empires of Greece and Rome was the

impetus behind Italy's surge in the arts, literature, and study during its Renaissance. In addition, a look at handwritten monastic Medieval texts from across Europe quietly exuded such curiosity centuries earlier as well.

From up high upon the perch of our world today, we have a wide chasm to cross back to the ancient world, divided as we are by not just time itself, but the changes in culture and mores in the millennium in between. When reading Cicero's or Seneca's letters or Livy's histories or Plato's dialogues, one of the initial shocks is that the conversations, philosophies, and the general tone is not at times so very different in how we write, think and

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converse today. It is my contention that such familiarity is partially a mirage and an attempt to cross the years back to the very day in which these texts were written and try to “see” with the eyes of the ancients the world in which they lived, is to experience an exhilaration on par with a mystery wine-soaked celebration honoring Dionysus.

The actual physical artifacts, wall paintings, architectural ruins, sculptures, vases and so on, are on display in the countries of the ancient world, locally in New York City museums, and grace the pages in photos in countless books. These are the essential supplements to the study of books from past epochs. The Landmark series is publishing a handful of ancient texts accompanied by detailed maps, photos of the lands discussed and other artifacts of interest, and extremely helpful footnotes and sidebars to further elucidate the details of the written word. I am just starting the patient endeavor of reading the series’ “The Campaigns of Alexander” written by the ancient Roman Arrian hundreds of years after the time of Alexander. The edition is edited by James S. Romm, translated by Pamela Mensch, and the series editor is Robert B. Strassler.

While reading, I try my best to visualize the mind-set and the times of the Roman world where Arrian stood as well as the Greek and Asian lands where Alexander trekked – no easy task of course and only, at best, a loose subjective experience.

I am reminded that the French philosopher Michel Foucault wrote how a time period is experienced as if its culture is gleaned in collective moments that have been created by historical forces converging from a vast multitude of varying directions. Alexander is often dissected and analyzed in terms of his military strategy, but he also took time to honor the gods in the tradition in which he lived. The way we stand in a forest and look and experience nature is not the very same way that a soldier or general of the ancient world would have seen it. The stars, sky, heavens and earth were in their minds as living breathing forces with real implications for how their lives would unfold. A constellation, for example, would reflect a tradition of myth deeply embedded in the soul of the individual and the collective consciousness (and unconsciousness) of their time.

In the 1970s television situation comedy “Three’s Company,” Jack (John Ritter) opens a restaurant and is furious when a famous newspaper reviewer takes only a

few bites of the meal he has cooked and quickly leaves the establishment. Jack is shocked when the newspaper column comes out and the review is glowingly positive. He is later told by the reviewer that he knew in just those few chews that the restaurant’s food was great. In such a way, I have only read 30 or so pages in the Landmark “Alexander” and know it is going to be a long but fabulous trip through time. One might think that juggling maps, footnotes and photos may be too much of a burden for the reader, but you get into a rhythm with it and the excitement of the text is greatly enhanced by what the translator and editors have put together. One can only imagine the time and effort, mixed with a heroic dedication, they have put into these books.

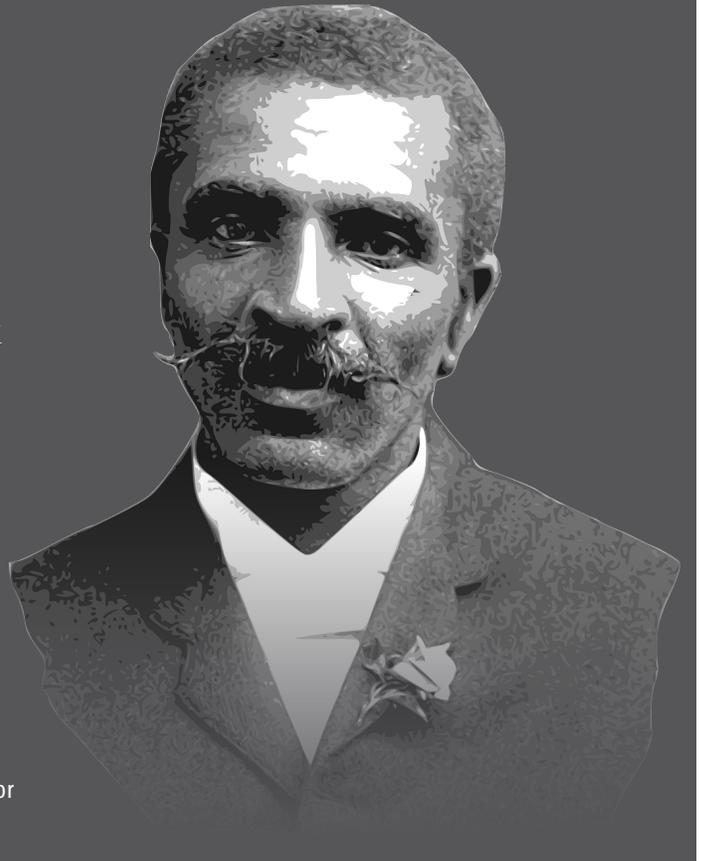
While reading Arrian, I’ll take time to visit the Metropolitan Museum of Art and once again stand before the Greek bronze helmets and spears, attempt to decipher the messages and myths and stories painted on the many vases from the period, and look in wonder at the vacant, yet expression-filled eyes and faces of the ancient statues, and contemplate this mighty Alexander, who has now “returneth to dust” only to be resurrected by readers of his story to this very day.

## Quotable Quote

“How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving, and tolerant of the weak and the strong. Because someday in life you will have been all of these.”

**George Washington Carver**

1864 – 1943



Send in quotes to be included in future issues to [nseditors@rockefeller.edu](mailto:nseditors@rockefeller.edu). Quotes can be philosophical, funny, clever, anecdotal - but NOT too salacious or outright unpublishable - and short enough not to need copyright permission.

# Fast Ball

GEORGE BARANY

George Barany is a Rockefeller alum (1977) currently on the faculty of the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. He still remembers a watershed moment at the interface of American culture and sports that occurred fifty years ago ... October 6, 1965 to be exact. For more about this specific puzzle, including a link to the answer, visit <http://tinyurl.com/fastballpuz>. More Barany and Friends crosswords are at <http://tinyurl.com/gbpuzzle>

## Across

1. With 19-Down, October 6, 1965
4. Passion
9. Breathless
14. Sch. attended by Reggie Jackson and Barry Bonds
15. Prepare for winter takeoff
16. Catchphrase
17. El \_\_\_
18. Pitcher on October 6, 1965--not!
20. 10,000 square meters
22. Birth control method, for short
23. Movie promo
24. Stretch out
27. Word with up or off
28. Geezer
29. Stable staple
31. Mythical beast that was turned into a peacock
33. Vegan's protein source, sometimes
34. First Bond flick
35. Kvetch
36. Promise
37. Categories
38. LAX postings
39. Little foxes
40. Some babies' first words since gay marriage was legalized
41. Family room
42. Spare parts?
43. Dale and Tim, to Yogi
44. Prepares potstickers, perhaps
46. Heartbreaking headline
49. Leo the \_\_\_ (Durocher nickname)
50. Originating country for much spam
51. Pitcher on October 6, 1965
56. Fingers, e.g.
57. "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" playwright Edward
58. Surmise
59. UFO crew
60. Escort, for appearance's sakes
61. Heaps kudos on
62. Like a wallflower

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60										61				62

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3. Pitcher on October 6, 1965
4. Magazine department
5. Brought up
6. Alice's restaurant?
7. Cause of some repetitive behavior, in brief
8. Spanish king
9. Liaisons
10. Big wheel at a supermarket?
11. Fed. law enforcement org.
12. Bus depot: Abbr.
13. "A \_\_\_ on both your houses!"
19. See 1-Across
21. Traffic jams
24. Remote spots?
25. It started on October 6, 1965
26. Sri \_\_\_
28. Well versed people

30. Pitch
31. Served perfectly?
32. Hotel posting
33. They played on October 6, 1965
34. Feinstein or Wiest
36. Meager
40. They played on October 6, 1965
42. Like Noah's passengers
43. Left port
45. Tribal leader, often
46. Military mess?
47. Height's companion
48. Pert
51. Apply gently
52. Corrida cry
53. Org. for Anthony and James
54. The "S" in R.S.V.P.
55. Chain letters?

## Down

1. America's Cup vessel
2. Basket material



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## ***Life on a Roll***

ELODIE PAUWELS

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The building of the Louis Vuitton Foundation, in Paris, France, was designed by Frank Gehry (who also designed the IAC building and 8 Spruce Street in Manhattan). This boat made of glass was inaugurated in 2014. The building itself is worth a visit as its 12 huge panels of glass, sails of a peculiar sailboat, will make you dream of vastness compared to your tiny person. And if you ever come back to reality, go visit the contemporary art museum located inside!



ELODIE PAUWELS/Natural Selections