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Danbury Museum garden, March 29, 2023

Hello Friends!

As we're assembling this newsletter there's a little chill and we're just waiting for

those sunny spring days! The museum gardens are filled with crocus, daffodils, and tiny grape hyacinths. You'll want to visit as the days grow warmer--the beautiful tulips planted by the Danbury Garden Club will soon be in full bloom. (And we'd be remiss in not mentioning the great work of the Danbury Garden Club Civic Committee all spring, summer, and autumn!)

We're getting back into the programming groove now that weather is (**fingers crossed::touches wood**) less of an issue and we have two great FREE events coming up in April. On Saturday, April 15th, join us as Fran Hendrickson presents "Oh, How We Laughed!" a charming program on humor in the 18th century.

And on Saturday, April 29, we welcome interpreter and re-enactor Eric Chandler for his well-researched lecture on the beginnings of the Revolutionary War. This is part of the museum's annual programming that commemorates the British Raid on Danbury in April of 1777.

Both these programs will be held in Huntington Hall at 2pm, are open to all, and are free of charge.

Keep an eye out for full details regarding our Saturday, May 13 concert with the Danbury Music Centre Community Band. Mark your calendars and plan to join us for a great outdoor concert at the Ives Birthplace Museum or (if the weather is uncooperative) the Marian Anderson Concert Hall at the Music Centre. This event will kick off an entire summer of monthly outdoor music.

And finally, we're pleased to have most interesting essays from both Dr Thomas MacGregor and John O'Donnell again this month. Our sincere thanks to both Tom and John.

Enjoy the longer days and warming weather and we'll meet here again in May!

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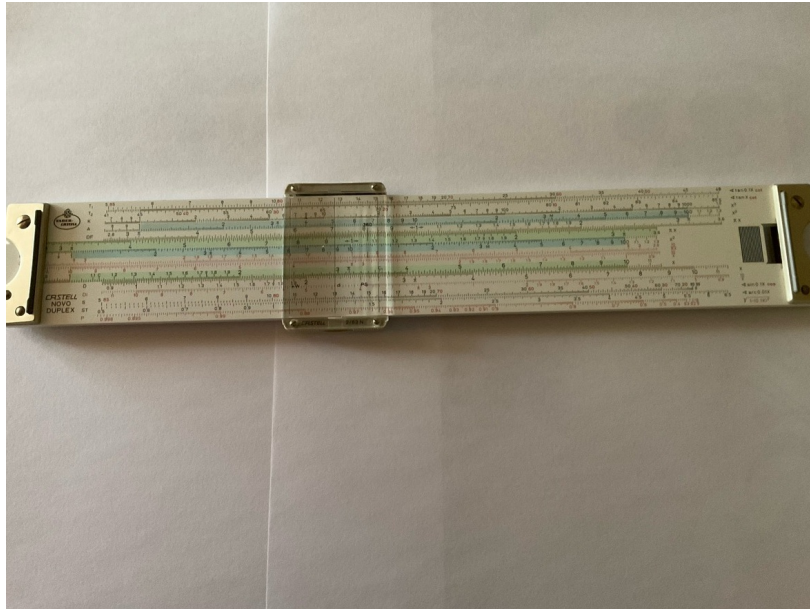


Photo by Tom MacGregor.



Photo by Tom MacGregor.

Math Madness

by Thomas MacGregor

It's the end of March which means number crunching and mathematical gyrations on a calculator or computer to complete those tax forms. As a member of the "chronologically enhanced" human group, I was in graduate school when the first hand-held calculators came to market. I did not own one at first because the calculator retailed for \$295 and could only perform four arithmetic functions (add, subtract, multiply, and divide). Besides, I had my trusty slide rule to solve even the most difficult mathematical mind-benders. The mantra among scientists at the time was "slide rules rule," until engineers with slide rules designed the very calculators that replaced them. I had a long history with the slide rule and was reluctant to

embrace the calculator until, quite rapidly, the economies of time saved and lower cost made calculators in graduate school a “must have.” Eventually, hand-held calculators became so inexpensive that banks gave them out as gifts for opening new accounts. Now the calculator shows up as a free app on your smart phone.

In the fall of 1963, I was a member of a group of 7th graders who asked our middle-school teacher, Sister Mary Alice, if we could form a science club. The space race was neck-and-neck between the Russians and the Americans, and many of us wanted to be either astronauts or engineers making rocket ships. She agreed to mentor our club and asked what we wanted to study. Unanimously, the choice was to learn the slide rule and logarithms. We all saved our money and each of us purchased the Teledyne Post 1414 plastic slide rule just like the ones being used by the senior high school students.

The slide rule has a long and illustrious history. Virtually all bridges, buildings, and other structures built prior to 1990, including the Brooklyn Bridge, the Empire State Building, roadways, cities, and waterways all over the world, were designed with an ordinary 25-cm slide rule. Airplane design, basic and advanced electronic design, and space ballistics were done using slide rules. The 12.5-cm Pickett N600-ES was used on Apollo moon flights to calculate payload distributions and to verify re-entry calculations from Houston, thus giving the perception that rocket science was complicated. From their earliest beginnings with the invention of logarithms by John Napier in 1614, logarithmic slides by William Oughtred in 1622, and the cursor by Isaac Newton in 1675, slide rules were used to wage war, to usher in the Industrial Revolution, and to design fighter and passenger jets with no concern about being hacked, catching a virus, or dealing with a power outage.

It is the Scottish mathematician, John Napier, that we can thank for logarithms – the bane of high school algebra. The use of logarithms reduced multiplication to addition and division to subtraction. This revolutionized mathematics (the first “New Math”) and was adopted by the 17th-century astronomer, Johannes Kepler, to calculate the orbit of Mars. When William Oughtred, an Anglican minister, lined up two wooden sticks with identical logarithmic scales on them, he discovered that sliding the sticks sideways resulted in multiplication, but users didn’t know why this worked. According to the 1850 British mathematician, Augustus DeMorgan, most persons had hundreds of times more power in their hands than in their heads. This statement is very true today in regard to the smart phone or hand-held calculator. When Peter Roget (yes, the thesaurus inventor) invented a log-log-scale slide rule in 1814, it permitted engineers and chemists to easily calculate fractional powers, exponents, squares, cubes, and roots of increasingly complex mathematics. This more sophisticated slide rule generated a boom in slide rule production around the world with many companies providing additional scales and features to engineers and scientific researchers. The top-of-the-line slide rule (Faber-Castell 2/83N) was a log-log duplex engineering slide rule that easily handled sine, cosine, exponential, and hyperbolic trigonometric functions on a 32-colored-scale, double-sided device. With the advent

of the calculator, slide rules went on sale for pennies on the dollar to collectors, such as myself.

My best college friend was an engineering student and my interest in slide rules peaked as I watched this real pro at work when he did his homework. When I inherited several slide rules from my father-in-law, a mechanical engineer, my collection nearly tripled. The beauty of chained mathematical calculations arriving at a final answer produces both satisfaction and a sense of confidence as one roughly estimates what the answer should be and, then, there it appears to three decimal places. Satisfaction and confidence with a slide rule initiated my long career in research in the pharmaceutical field.

After 33 years at Boehringer Ingelheim, Dr. Tom (UConn '85) retired to his garden and piano.



Georg Konrad Morgen

Georg Konrad Morgen

By John O'Donnell

The historian John Toland, who lived most of his adult life in Danbury, wrote a magisterial two volume biography of Adolf Hitler which was published in 1976. Toland spent a long period of time researching and writing this biography. One of the notable features of the books was that Toland was able to interview many of the people who had served Hitler and were still alive. One of the people that he interviewed was Georg Konrad Morgen, a fascinating man who took his job very seriously.

Morgen was born on June 8, 1908, in Frankfurt-am-Main. He was the son of a

railroad engineer. He was interested in the legal profession and graduated from the University of Frankfurt and the Hague Academy of International Law and became a judge in Stettin. He joined the Nazi Party in 1933 and subsequently the Schutzataffel- -better known to us as the SS--the most elite organization of the Nazi Party. It was led by Heinrich Himmler and his ruthless deputy, Reinhard Heydrich. It was a monolithic organization with a multiplicity of responsibilities including internal security, concentration camps, economic undertakings, and even had a military arm, the Waffen SS, which was the most loyal, well-equipped, and fanatical units in the German military. The organization was so monolithic that it had its own judiciary. Of course an historian would think it unlikely that this judiciary would be willing to really police the organization carefully and take this mission seriously. One of the few people known to have done this was Judge Morgen who had been appointed an SS judge. His tenacity in prosecuting cases earned him the nickname "the Bloodhound Judge." His specialty became rooting out corruption and he did a masterful job of rooting it out.

Morgen was posted to the Main Office of the SS Legal Department in Krakow and began searching for signs of corruption. The way he became aware of the scale of corruption in the SS is a revealing one. He was called in to investigate a package sent via military post by a medical assistant at Auschwitz to his wife in Germany. It had aroused the suspicions of the postal authorities because of its weight. It was turned over to Morgen. It contained several kilos of high carat dental gold. Morgen realized immediately the large number of people who must have been murdered to obtain gold in this quantity. Morgen was appalled by the extent of SS criminality that this seizure of gold indicated. It energized him in a dramatic way to begin a crusade against the corruption. And he would not be satisfied with prosecuting low level criminals. He was willing to prosecute the higher-ups who were behind this corruption regardless of the personal consequences for him.

He was unable to prosecute the mass extermination of Jews which was outside his sphere of inquiry because this was legalized by order of Hitler. But he vigorously went after the corruption that even Himmler knew was rampant in the concentration camps. His first major investigation began with Karl Otto Koch who was the Commandant of the Buchenwald and Majdanek concentration camps. The charges against Koch included theft, military insubordination, and murder. Morgen successfully proved these charges and Koch was tried, convicted, and executed before the end of the war. His wife, Ilse Koch, known as the Queen of Buchenwald, was also tried by Morgen. But she was acquitted for lack of evidence. However, she was tried several times postwar and was eventually convicted and received a life sentence. She committed suicide in 1967. Morgen claimed that the stories of Frau Koch's fetish for lampshades made of human skin were untrue. He personally searched the Koch home and found nothing of the kind. He told John Toland that he persisted in denying the story, in spite of being threatened with beatings.

Morgen successfully prosecuted many other concentration camp officials. Morgen

sought an arrest warrant for Adolf Eichmann, but his request was rejected. A successful trial of Eichmann could literally have changed the course of history. Morgen was so dogged and successful in his investigations that they were eventually halted by order of Himmler who assigned Morgen to a different position. Some SS officials had wanted him sent to a concentration camp.

Morgen survived the war and testified at the Nuremberg Trials of Nazi War criminals and also at the 1965 Auschwitz trials as well. He appeared in the television series "World at War" and he said in that interview that he could not understand why Germany kept fighting when it was obvious that the war was lost and blamed this on the leaders of the regime. He also claimed that his prosecutions were an attempt to impede the mass exterminations. A worthy effort on his part to challenge such a monolithic organization and survive.

John O'Donnell first became a history devotee while in elementary school. He was raised in Brooklyn and frequently went to Prospect Park which has a Revolutionary War monument. He was hooked!

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