

Universitat de Leikeis

Terran Archaeology Project _____ Site 146

21 Dec T.E. 843 (2996 Old Style)

Tem Oric to his colleague Zad Temis, Greetings!

Zad, you sure picked the wrong time to leave! You wouldn't believe what we've found in the past few tendays. First of all (and you'll be reading this in the journals shortly), we've officially established that Site 146 was the location of legendary Meerkat Meade. Not only that, but we've located the site of the original house and are down to the year 1996 (Old Style). That's just two years after the founding of Meerkat Meade.

There is evidence of a great blizzard at the beginning of that year. We've found papers (actual *papers!* Can you imagine?) with the repeated inscription, "I'm so sick of all this snow." Apparently some kind of religious appeal to the gods. The most exciting thing is, the available evidence suggests that these papers were written by Dan ("Renfield") Corcoran himself. Who'd have thought it: Saint Renfield, the Hero of Amalgax Minor, saying that he was sick of snow?!

There are also plenty of records that deal with Meerkat Meade's other two founders, Thomas (Atkinson Stardrive) Atkinson and Don (Nobel & Pulitzer Laureate) Sakers. Even in those long-ago days, Thomas traveled quite a bit. In the year 1996 we have records of his excursions (alone or accompanied by Don) to places called Boston, Blacksburg, Manassas, Los Angeles, and Lynchburg. Our research has revealed that all of these are (or were) inhabited planets within 20 parsecs of Earth, thus indicating that Thomas had already installed his prototype Stardrive in the fabled Atkinson Van.

Dr. Vor-Amblis has already solved one of the most puzzling mysteries about Meerkat Meade: she has positively identified 4 March 1996 as the date on which Frankenstein, the First Hamster of Meerkat Meade, passed away. (As you remember, it was Frankenstein's demise that drove Thomas to discover the cure for death.) Further, she's also managed to date the arrival of Gundoon, the Hamster Who Walks Through Walls, at 8 March 1996. To think, only a few years later, Gundoon would incontrovertibly show that hamsters were as intelligent as human beings, leading directly to the Hamster Liberation Wars of the 2030's.

We found a cache of materials from the Andover High School Class of '76 reunion in October of 1996. It was at that reunion, according to the legend, that Don and his high-school friends banded together to fight injustice and bring about the first world government, just in time to avert World War Three.

Evidence of the monthly Symposiums at Meerkat Meade is also abundant. We have discovered fossilized crackers and dip that seem to bear traces of DNA from Amanda (Nobel Peace Prize) Allen, Sharon (SL Designs) Landrum, and Deborah (Feaster Decimal System) Feaster. It's exciting to think that I might be standing on ground touched by the feet of these living legends.

So many elements of the Meerkat Meade myth, which we thought were fictions, turn out to be based on real artifacts and events. I've touched the mid-1996 vintage computer called Orac, which contains the original code for the galaxy-famous Meerkat Meade web site at <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/MeerkatMeade>. I've seen the Cavalier, the Atkinson Van, the Rabbit, and other vehicles fabled in song and story.

Thomas, Renfield, Don, and Grundoon . . . I feel that I know them, now, know them as more than just figures on the history disks or statues in the capital. I've touched the things they touched, walked the ground they walked, and it's made them more real to me. And here, on a bitterly-cold, dark night, out on this world that is now only a forgotten outpost on the fringes of galactic civilization -- I fancy that their spirits are here still, in this place they loved. And I can't help but think that, if they *were* indeed here, they would want to send one message to all their friends and family:

Happy Holidays and All the Best in 1997!