Solve the Cipher, Find a Treasure

The world of cryptography has many secrets and mysteries. One whose solution would immediately result in substantial material profit is the mystery of the Beale cipher.

In 1817, an individual named Thomas Jefferson Beale and his company of 30 men were tracking buffalo north of Santa Fe. The men were camping for the night in a small ravine when they made an unexpected discovery—gold. For the next 18 months they mined huge amounts of gold and silver from the area, with Beale and 10 of his companions later returning to Virginia to bury it for safekeeping.

Digging a ditch 6 feet deep "in the county of Bedford about four miles from Bufords," the men hid about $13,000 worth of jewels, 1 ton of gold, and a half ton of silver. Beale then returned to the West, leaving behind him a locked box with instructions inside it regarding the buried treasure. The box was given to a tavern keeper, Robert Morris, who was told to open it only if Beale himself had not returned in 10 years.

Twenty years passed without Beale's return. When the box was opened it was found to contain information on the treasure and two papers filled with enciphered writing. Although the key to the ciphers—whose text described, among other things, the exact location of the buried valuables—was not provided, one of the ciphers was eventually broken, the Declaration of Independence having been its key.

To encipher the page marked "paper no. 2," Beale numbered each word in the Declaration and used the word's number in place of the original text characters. Unfortunately, however, the same key had not been used to prepare "paper no. 1." To this day despite repeated attempts by various cryptanalysts and others, the 496 numerical groups have never been broken. And the enigmatic "paper no. 1" has not yet yielded the secret of its cipher key, or of the location of the treasure buried somewhere in Virginia.

"He that falls in love with himself will have no rivals."

—Benjamin Franklin

Note: Births must have taken place within 6 months prior to submitting birth announcements.

★Granville Gilbert of the Telecommunications and Computer Services Organization, and Larry Lindsay of the Operations Organization, both have cross-stitch projects featured in the March-April issue of the Just CrossStitch magazine. Both men have been avid cross-stitchers for several years and have completed a number of elaborate works. Granville's Blue Lady by Lanarte and Larry's Norman Rockwell scene have both been displayed at an area cross-stitch store. Word has it that they may soon be displaying here at NSA, so needlecraft fans, keep your eyes open!

"Any government, like any family, can for a year spend a little more than it earns. But you and I know that a continuance of that habit means the poorhouse."

—Franklin Delano Roosevelt