

ANALYTICALLY SPEAKING

The column of our corresponding editor

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DIGGING AND WONDERING

Do you ever wonder how certain ideas or courses of action get dug up or started? Some seem so crazy or illogical that it defies the imagination to guess how their proponents managed to put them across. Here's an example: a syndicated daily column in many US newspapers is called Ask Andy. Young people write and ask Andy a question; he answers it in the paper and sends a gift book to the questioner. Last fall the question was, "What are the World's Seven Wonders?" Andy explained that there were 3 lists: ancient, modern natural, and modern. Here is his list of modern wonders: Suez Canal, Dneprogress Dam in the USSR, the Atomic Energy Research Establishment at Harwell, England, the Alcan Highway, Golden Gate Bridge, Eiffel Tower, and Empire State Building. Isn't that a peculiar list? I wonder who dug it up and more particularly how Harwell got in there.

Did you ever wonder about how President Zachary Taylor died? Probably half the readers of this never even heard of Zachary Taylor. But an historical novelist

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proposed the theory that Taylor was poisoned by arsenic 141 years ago, so at once Taylor's body is removed from its crypt (dug up or dug out?) and samples taken for NAA a la Napoleon et al. The NAA was performed at the HFIR here at ORNL, but the interpretation - no poisoning - was given out by Kentucky's medical examiner.

Huey Long, known as the Kingfish in the early 1930's, was a powerful politician in Louisiana until an assassin shot him. The assassin was promptly dispatched by bullets from Long's bodyguards...over 60 bullets hit the assassin, which pretty well rules out arsenic poisoning for him. But the grave robbers this time will dig up the assassin's body to see if they can deduce any information about possible mental disorders or drug addiction. Apparently the thought that the assassin just didn't like Long is not viable to these publicity seekers.

Some more revisionists want to study Lincoln's remains to see if he suffered from some disease or other. It seems that all one has to do is propose a theory and the courts immediately allow you to go grave digging. Even skeletons aren't safe: a news report out of the Soviet Union recounts the discovery of nine skeletons and the removal of them from their resting place to ascertain if they are the remains of the last Russian czar and family. Just how they plan on proving this was not stated. This new hobby of digging up bodies and bones is a strong recommendation for cremation, in my opinion.

And speaking of digging, a recent article in C&E News¹ relates how EPA dug up and removed 5500 tons of excavated soil from a house in Philadelphia. A previous owner had made radium filled needles there and had buried waste materials in his yard. Total cost: \$11.5