



Thanks for joining us for Junior Blasts. We hope you enjoy this quarterly column. Stay tuned for some great stuff!



by Alan Garbers

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# The New Junior Blasts



## Kids Who Made History

To Sam, the mighty Mississippi was a wondrous playground. The caves that laced her bluffs were caverns that might hold pirates' treasure or stolen gold. The dark backwaters and swamps held mysteries untold, like runaway slaves and outlaws. Along with exploring the wild areas along the river, Sam enjoyed listening to the many stories that folks told of bad men, ghosts, and mysterious events along the river. So powerful was the draw of the river that Sam would do anything he could to skip school, even climbing in bed with an ill friend hoping that he too would get sick.

Once, after playing hooky from school, Sam was afraid of going home and facing his parents, so he climbed into the darkness of his father's business office to sleep for the night. Unknown to him a man had been killed that day in a knife fight and had been placed in the office until the body could be attended to. As Sam lay there in the dark-

ness trying to sleep, he grew aware of the body lying close to him. As the moonlight fell on the dead man's face and the gaping knife wound, the scary stories came flooding back. Sam leapt out the window, taking part of it with him as he ran for his life!

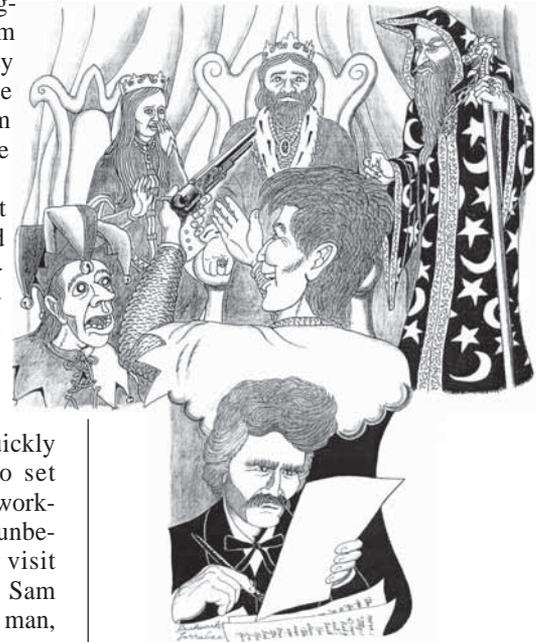
Sam also had to run for his life one winter night. He and his friend Tom were ice skating on the river when they heard a deep rumbling sound from the ice. They were a half-mile from shore when they realized the ice was breaking up! They raced for solid ground, dodging open water, and jumping from one block of ice to the next. As they neared shore Tom fell through the ice! The freezing water caused him to become ill and permanently lose his hearing.

Most of the time Sam thought his life was boring and he dreamed of exploring far-off places and having grand adventures. Almost every day a riverboat would stop at the town and transfer cargo and passengers. It was an exciting few minutes as the deckhands hurried about doing their work, but as quickly as they came, they left again to set course for other towns. The life of working on board a riverboat seemed unbelievably exciting as they got to visit places the boys only dreamed of. Sam wished that he too could be a river man, but for now life had other ideas.

Sam's father died suddenly. Without his income to feed and house them, Sam and his family had to find work. At twelve years of age Sam became an apprentice to a printer. As an apprentice he received no pay, but he was *supposed* to get food and clothing. Unfortunately Sam's master was very cheap and gave him little to eat and few clothes to wear. But Sam did learn how to set type and become a-

porter and assistant editor. And because of his job, Sam started learning classic literature, whether he wanted to or not – and he liked it!

When Sam was sixteen he went to work for his older brother, who owned a small newspaper. While at the newspaper Sam started writing local stories and humorous pieces. At times he even made up stories about local folks. Often the stories would get him into trouble and make folks mad, but it did sell newspapers! Sam also sent his work to other



larger newspapers and they liked his writing and published the stories.

After a few years Sam decided he wanted to explore the world. In time he fulfilled his dream of working on a riverboat and became a river pilot, a job that took all his skill of guiding the big ships up and down the Mississippi. While Sam never returned to live in his hometown of Hannibal, he did remem-

ber the sleepy town and his adventures in his writing. The people and events that made up his childhood became wonderful tales that are still enjoyed today in books like *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Fin*. You see, Sam Clemens, the boy who longed for adventures, became the famous author Mark Twain.

## The Flag Raising Race

### Items needed:

Five six-foot-long poles approximately 1" in diameter.  
One 3' by 5' flag (an old sheet works well.)

Three stakes

One hammer or hatchet

Three 20' long sections of ¼" rope

Eight sections of heavy twine

This race tests a team's ingenuity and woodsman's skills.

To play, the team lashes the five poles together to make a flag staff approximately 20-25 feet long. After attaching the flag, the team raises the staff and holds it in place with the three guy ropes and stakes.

The fastest time to raise the flag wins. In case of a tie the tallest staff decides the winner. If materials are in short supply, have each team use the same material over and time their efforts. Keep teams that have not yet competed away so they don't have the advantage of learning from others' mistakes.

## Firearm Safety:

**Never Mix Gunpowder** – Never mix black powder with modern gun powder, Pyrodex, Triple Seven, or any other propellant. Your firearm could blow up and hurt you or people around you!

**Never Use Modern Gunpowder in a Muzzleloader** – Modern gunpowder burns differently from black powder. Using the wrong gunpowder can cause the firearm to blow up! Use only real black powder or approved substitutes in muzzleloaders.

**Never Use an Unknown Gunpowder** – This is true no matter what type of shooting you are doing. If you don't know what type of powder it is, dispose of it in a safe manner. Get help from an adult.

## What's That?

Here are some terms you may hear around the shooting range, campfire, or hunting. You pick out the correct definition.

**1. Discharge** – 1. The puss-like fluid that comes from a pimple. 2. Getting fired from a job. 3. The firing of a firearm.

**2. Anti-Splash** – 1. The name of a punk rock band from Greenwich Village. 2. The new rule down at the pool that forbids splashing. 3. A barrier at a firing range that keeps bullets from ricocheting about.

**3. Drag** – 1. To pull something about. 2. A type of car racing. 3. The air resistance that causes a bullet in flight to slow down.



H A R R E P O R T E R Y W  
R E G O L D N A H K C E D  
E E A C T R E A S U R E D  
T V P P L I T R A T U R E  
A H A A P A D V L G A B D  
R D G L P R S E P G O A I  
I P P I S S I S S I M C S  
P O U T L A W N I I A K C  
S K A T I N G E T C S W H  
K N I F E W O D N I W A A  
X R I V E R B O A T C T R  
L L O H C S R U M B L E G  
E V A C A D V E N T U R E

ADVENTURE	HEAP	RIVER
ANTISPLASH	ICE	RIVERBOAT
BACKWATER	KNIFE	RUMBLE
CAVE	MISSISSIPPI	SAM
CLASSIC	MOONLIGHT	SCHOLL
DECKHAND	NEWSPAPER	SKATING
DISCHARGE	OUTLAW	SLAVE
DRAG	PIRATE	TREASURE
EDITOR	PRINT	WINDOW
GOLD	REPORTER	

Puzzle answer on page 69

## Riddles!

1. If a farmer combines two straw heaps with three straw heaps, how many straw heaps does he have?
2. Why was George Washington buried at Mt. Vernon?
3. I am the beginning of eternity, the end of time and space, the beginning of every end, and the end of every place. *What am I?*

Answers:

1. One straw heap.
2. Because he was dead.
3. The letter e.

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