

ous, dirty, and exasperating. For the  
 torced, the tricks of the trade are only  
 ed once each trick has been played.  
 ng to logic at first too simple to be  
 gnized, things often require doing  
 e. And throughout is the abiding fear  
 despite a man's best efforts, the pro-  
 will fail anyway, leaving him humili-  
 , and even worse, without anyone to  
 ne for his failure but himself — an  
 fashionable circumstance in this liti-  
 is age. So much easier on the ego to  
 a professional.

t all seems so easy on "This Old  
 ise," from which the pious observer  
 as to confront the real challenges of  
 : geometry problems, design issues,  
 materials choices. Somewhere in the  
 kground saws buzz off just those  
 nks of wood they are supposed to,  
 umberblows strike each nail squarely,  
 sheets of drywall are trimmed pre-  
 y to join on screen like Lego bricks  
 pping perfectly together, whereupon  
 t-levels confirm perfect trueness.

No bent nails, miscut boards, or  
 obbing digits make it to the screen,  
 for good reason: The professionals  
 he show rarely miscue. Such consis-  
 y depends in no small way upon hav-  
 the right tools. He who lives by his  
 ls can afford only the very best. A  
 hanic relies on his Snap-On wrench's  
 ty slenderness to reach the enigmati-  
 y placed bolt, on its close fit to not  
 nd off the bolthead's precious hexag-  
 l corners, and on its incomparable  
 ing not to break under all the force he  
 apply to it. The carpenter counts on  
 Estwing hammer's thick grip not to  
 ue his hand after a day of pounding  
 , and depends on its balance, requir-  
 ust two strikes to drive the nail home  
 a firm tap to bring it flush, where-  
 n the precision-ground face leaves the  
 pounding wood undamaged.

ut ever fewer people care about such  
 gs. While they have been refined,  
 s have not changed much since the  
 hammering rock struck the first  
 osable thumb. What is changing is  
 kind's sense of accomplishment or  
 ing up to watch all of a "Star Trek"

marathon, or moving mountains of  
 microchipped dollars from one computer  
 to another. Future anthropologists will  
 puzzle over the tool kit of late-twentieth-  
 century man. "What good," they will  
 wonder, was the little plastic card? "What  
 could he make with it?"

### GAWAIN AT FENWAY

We sigh to see his mighty clout  
 Go smash against the looming wall.  
 Virtue is not enough. The ball  
 Caroms into the final out.  
  
 All summer long, monstrous, green,  
 The wall will prove that purity,  
 Grace, teamwork, discipline —  
 Nothing perfects the game, save pity.  
  
 They say: *this park is paradise;*  
*Time is redeemed in summer's game.*  
 Only the wall will make him wise,  
 Only our love recall his name.



"THIS IS YOUR PILOT SPEAKING!"

**SNACK FOR SUCCESS**  
 Japanese toilet technology may be  
 one of the wonders of modern  
 Japan, as lately reported here. But it  
 can't help explain the Japanese code for  
 success. I think I can: vending machines.  
 In the US, a visit to the vending  
 machine occasions a break from work, a  
 moment's repose. In Japan, however, a  
 100-yen coin (roughly 70 cents) buys an  
 array of high-powered refreshments  
 promising even the longest day a good  
 shot in the arm. Witness the Die Hard:  
 "Containing calcium and iron, the Die  
 Hard energizes your body and soul."  
 This slogan for a popular soft drink epit-  
 omizes the gung-ho marketing of  
 Japan's super snacks, with the Cheerio  
 company, makers of Die Hard, leading  
 the way. Cheerio also produces Life-  
 guard, a "bionic drink" in a distinctive,  
 green-camouflage can, and Desert  
 Storm, "the new carbonated beverage  
 for active people with fighting spirit,"  
 which sports the more current desert-  
 camouflage motif.

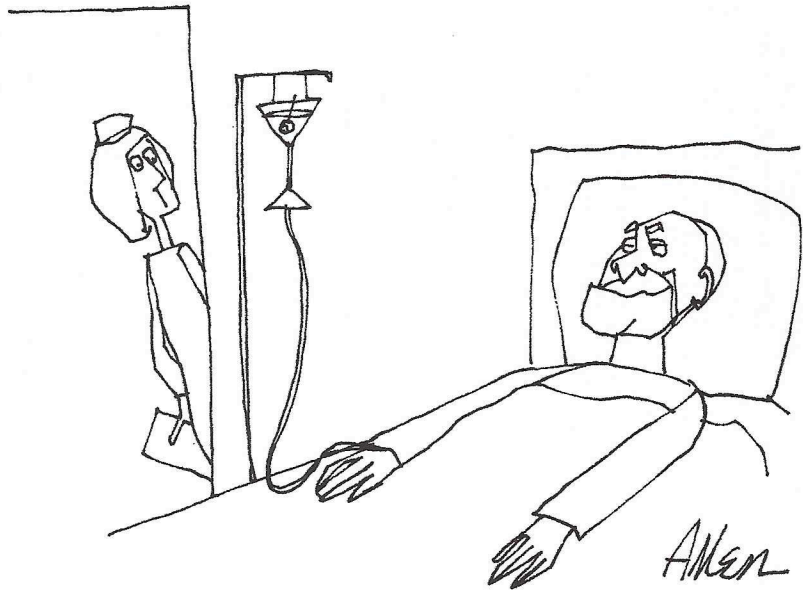
For those who don't have time for  
 bubbly soft drinks but still want a quick  
 energy boost, there's Argine Young,

Regain, and Real Gold, beverages so concentrated in caffeine and nicotine that they come in small bottles such as might hold prescription medicine. These drinks mean business: "Refreshing, Vital, Energetic, Powerful," reads the label of Argine Young.

As in the west, coffee and tea are also popular midday pick-me-ups in Japan. However, Japan's major beverage companies have taken the tradition a step further. Convenience isn't the only thing that makes these drinks special. The UCC company's The Coffee, for example, is the "ultimate growth — featuring blended coffee," while Pokka's Blue Mountain 100% credits a "ceramic, far-infrared roasting method" for its "extravagant semi-black coffee for the discriminating palate." The Oriental Company has positioned its Cocoa as the right refreshment for every combination of time and climate, be that "during a relaxing moment on a fresh morning, while taking a short rest on a shady afternoon, or over quiet conversation on a cool evening." Asahi's J.O. coffee is more exclusive: "coffee with the tasty aroma solely for refined adult people."

Even a cigarette, it would seem, is more than a smoke in Japan — and a good buy at 220 to 250 yen a pack. For the Sometime Lights smoker, "a fresh menthol breeze of pleasure awaits you in every stylish box of flavorful satisfaction." A pack of With Class cigarettes makes a more convoluted yet not unappealing statement: "Defined as an expression of true sophistication, intellectuality, and appreciation for quality by trend-setting, independent people creating new customs for life enjoyment." Those who think smoking should be a less complicated matter may prefer Peace Lights, with low tar and "Peace" flavor. (One wonders what Hope cigarettes taste like.)

A host of isotonic sports beverages, such as Aquarius, Pocari Sweat, and NCAA, as well as yogurt drinks like Calpis Soda, Yodel Soda, and Yogurje, offer to replace ions, calcium, and precious bodily fluids that may have been



lost in the course of a busy day. And for late nights at the work place, the Campbell's, Kirin, and Knorr companies are all at the ready with canned corn potage, perhaps competing with UCC's canned cream cheese soup (yum, yum).

For hard-core sustenance, however, nothing rivals the Calorie Mate Block, made by Osaka Pharmaceuticals Co. LTD:

The Calorie Mate Block contains a breathless list of ingredients, most of which are protein in one form or another, "naturally suited for people on-the-go who need an easy source of energy and nutrition — at breakfast, work, sports, study, or any busy time.

Not bad for 200 yen. Calorie Mate comes four bars to a box, each bar resembling something one might find in the reject bin at a Snickers factory and tasting, as one five-year foreign resident of Japan described, "like gym socks and cheese." Calorie Mate also comes in canned-drink form for the same price.

But advertising products sometimes takes a back seat to educating consumers in Japan. "Taking afternoon tea is a unique custom which is said to have started in the early 19th century," reads

the label of Kirin's Apple Milk Tea. A can of Kirin's Jive coffee informs that "The origin of the word 'jive' came from playing or dancing to jazz."

Even when the day is done, a chance to unwind is only as far away as the nearest vending machine. Beer, wine, *sake*, whiskey, and *shochu* (a very strong grain alcohol drink) can all be purchased from machines, usually for no more than the normal retail cost. Unlike nonalcoholic beverage vending machines, however, booze machines are on timers that shut them down at a certain hour, usually 11:00 p.m.

Would making alcoholic beverages available to anyone with a pocketful of change make America more competitive? One can't help but wonder though: Do we Americans not ask too little of our snack foods and vices?

Commonwealth Avenue welcomes contributions from skilled writers. Submissions may be on any subject, but should be brief. They will be published anonymously and are subject to editing. Outside contributors to this Commonwealth Avenue are Matthew Austin, Josh Davidson, Barbara Penney, and Erik E. Eskilson.