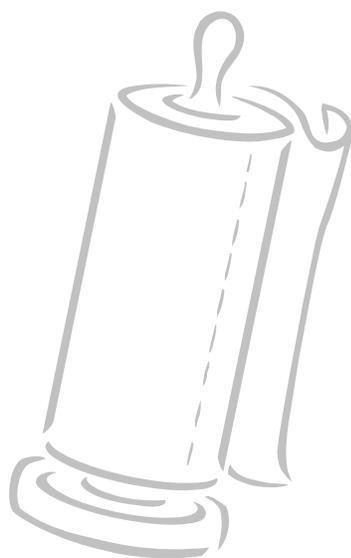


**THE
SAGA
OF THE
GREAT TOWEL
DISPENSER**



TEXAS CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

Hold it, Charlie (Kline), don't press that key...
oh, hell... it crashed!

Lawrence Roberts to Charlie Kline,
when starting the Internet for the first time.
Advanced Research Project Agency (ARPA)
Internet Founder
March, 1969

FOREWORD

Throughout the history of mankind, many notable events have occurred not because of an individual's intentions, but merely from the "slip of a finger." Rarely, however, have the true nature of these events been recorded and, therefore, most have faded into the past.

For example...

History records that on April 12, 1861, an ardent southerner from Virginia by the name of Edmund Ruffin started the American Civil War by firing the first cannon shot on Fort Sumter from the banks of Charleston Harbor. We also know that this pre-eminent Southern nationalist "fire-eater" who had been one of the leading antebellum proponents of Southern secession, chose to commit suicide rather than submit to the subjugation of Yankee bayonet rule.



Edmund Ruffin

Or is *this* what really happened

What history doesn't tell us, is that while being unable to sleep because of the noise of the party-like atmosphere outside his hotel room in Charleston, Ruffin decided to engage in a popular practice of the time -- touring the artillery batteries along the banks of Charleston Harbor.

While discussing the heated topic of secession -- and its affect on the newly invented game of baseball -- Ruffin struck a match on the fuse-end of the nearest cannon to light his pipe so that he could ponder his answer on the concept of free-agency and player unions. Needless to say, the Civil War was started that early morning and we all know what happened to baseball. Was it intentional or was it the mere "slip of a finger?"

For the unfortunate Ruffin, the fickle finger of fate was not yet finished with him. On June 18, 1865 -- while mumbling something about, "not starting that damn war" and "baseball will never be the same" -- the Grand Ole' Man of the South was killed after asking his wife to hold up the butt-end of his rifle while he checked to see why one of the "new fangled minie-balls" was stuck in the barrel. Was it really suicide or was it the mere "slip of a finger?"

It was a cold, winter evening when an innocent email silently slipped into the mailbox of each faculty member at the university. What developed was one of the greatest stories ever told about the history of the towel dispenser. Hence, *The Saga of the Great Towel Dispenser* was born. Was it intentional that this legend fell into the annals of TCU history, or was it the mere "slip of a finger?" It is left for you to decide....

- An anonymous
author unwilling
to sign his name

THE SAGA OF THE GREAT TOWEL DISPENSER

-----Original Message-----

From: B _____, W _____
Sent: Thu 1/16/2003 5:23 PM
To: TCU All Faculty
Cc:
Subject: Paper towel dispenser in Rickel 164

I have turned in a work order for a towel dispenser adjacent to the sink. The standard dispenser that TCU orders is quite large. I wanted to make sure you were aware of the size of this thing before we screw it to the wall. It is about 14" wide, 15" deep, and sticks out from the wall 10" (almost to the front of your upper cabinets)

W____ B_____
Physical Plant
[redacted] desk
[redacted] cell

=====

-----Original Message-----

From: A _____, R _____ J
Sent: Thu 1/16/2003 5:28 PM
To: [redacted]; TCU All Faculty
Cc:
Subject: RE: Paper towel dispenser in Rickel 164

I have always been curious about the dimensions of the paper towel dispensers in the Rickel. I am sure I speak for the entire faculty in expressing my gratitude for being included in this e-mail.

R_____ A_____
Radio-TV-Film
[redacted] desk

=====

-----Original Message-----

From: C _____, R_____
Sent: Fri 1/17/2003 7:59 AM
To: [redacted]; TCU All Faculty
Cc:
Subject: RE: Paper towel dispenser in Rickel 164

According to SACS guidelines, all towel dispensers MUST be at least 13" wide and 14" deep. The guidelines do not state how far the dispensers may stick out, so I think we'll be okay...

R_____ C_____, Chair
RTVF

=====

THE SAGA OF THE GREAT TOWEL DISPENSER

-----Original Message-----

From: E _____, N _____
Sent: Fri 1/17/2003 9:09 AM
To: [REDACTED]; TCU All Faculty
Cc:
Subject: RE: Paper towel dispenser in Rickel 164

Because of the obvious importance of this issue, I suggest that we add to the new CUE a 3-credit required course in "Paper Towel Dispenser Awareness."

--N _____ E _____
Associate Professor
Department of English

=====

-----Original Message-----

From: R _____, E _____
Sent: Fri 1/17/2003 11:56 AM
To: [REDACTED]; TCU All Faculty
Cc:
Subject: RE: Paper towel dispenser in Rickel 164

Actually, towel dispensers loom large in Methodist history. John Wesley established a little known ritual that is considered by scholars to be a combination of the "Hanging of the Greens" and a hand washing (in lieu, of course, of the much maligned foot washing ritual), in which the dispenser is hung, hands are washed, and the towel is shared by the community. Charles Wesley wrote a little known hymn to accompany the festival, entitled, "Now Let Us All Dispense With Thee." To my knowledge, only two of the original 18th century dispensers remain (none of the original cloth towels are extant): one is in service in the Rylands Library in Manchester; the other is held by a private collector, adjacent, or so I've heard, to the very sink used by Wesley while in Georgia.

E _____ R _____
Assistant Professor of Theology
and Methodist Studies

=====

-----Original Message-----

From: B _____, D C _____
Sent: Fri 1/17/2003 1:58 PM
To: [REDACTED]; TCU All Faculty
Cc:
Subject: RE: Paper towel dispenser in Rickel 164

Towel dispensers have figured prominently in modern U.S. history. During the Depression, Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes would carefully use only one towel after washing his hands, following his philosophy to hold down government spending. By contrast, the head of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, Harry Hopkins, would purposely waste towels, using as many as 15-20, to dry his hands. Hopkins felt it was best to spend money lavishly as a means of stimulating the economy.

C _____ B _____
Chair
History Dept.

=====

THE SAGA OF THE GREAT TOWEL DISPENSER

-----Original Message-----

From: G_____, L_____
Sent: Fri 1/17/2003 2:06 PM
To: _____; TCU All Faculty; _____
Cc:
Subject: RE: Paper towel dispenser in Rickel 164

Paper towels are available in a variety of colors and decorator motifs. One may use the appropriate design to accentuate the mood, "feel," or even to reinforce a brand identity, or to create empathy.

For example, the executive washrooms in a bank would be likely to sport muted gray tones, whit tasteful pinstripes, denoting elegant stability. The restrooms at a fast food restaurant would be more likely to have loud, gaudy colors and designs, to encourage people to move faster, eat faster, get out faster...therefore creating a better turnover by making space for new customers.

In any case, what better place to repeat the company logo, having a captive audience and all.

:)

L_____ G_____
Graphic Design
=====

-----Original Message-----

From: K_____, P_____
Sent: Fri 1/17/2003 2:12 PM
To: _____; TCU All Faculty _____
Cc:
Subject: RE: Paper towel dispenser in Rickel 164

Doesn't 14" deep imply that the dispenser should stick out 14" from the wall rather than 10"? Either we're talking about a trans-dimensional dispenser (TDD) here or someone is not communicating clearly.

P____ K____, busybody
Speech Communication Dept.
=====

-----Original Message-----

From: F_____, R_____
Sent: Fri 1/17/2003 2:16 PM
To: _____; TCU All Faculty; _____
Cc:
Subject: RE: Paper towel dispenser in Rickel 164

Of course, the Mission Statement could be printed along with the TCU logo.

J____ A____, I hope you are taking notes on all these creative ideas and the rest that are sure to be submitted. Perhaps TCU Press could publish a book on the history, size, color, and use of paper towels and their dispensers.

R__ F_____
Religion
=====

THE SAGA OF THE GREAT TOWEL DISPENSER

-----Original Message-----

From: G _____, T _____

Sent: Fri 1/17/2003 2:24 PM

To: _____; TCU All Faculty; _____

Cc:

Subject: RE: Paper towel dispenser in Rickel 164

I understand that J ____ is taking notes and currently consulting a media company regarding her new "books-on-a-roll" concept.

-----Original Message-----

From: B _____, W _____ R.

Sent: Fri 1/17/2003 2:25 PM

To: _____

Cc: _____

Subject: RE: Paper towel dispenser in Rickel 164

Obsessive thoughts and ritual compulsions associated with hand washing, hand drying, and towel dispensers are often associated with anxiety disorders.

-----Original Message-----

From: B _____, A _____

Sent: Fri 1/17/2003 2:25 PM

To: TCU All Faculty

Cc:

Subject: RE: Paper towel dispenser in Rickel 164

I can't speak to the importance of paper towel dispensers in geologic time (Australopithicine fossil sites are notoriously free of dispensers of any sort) but it is common knowledge that they were developed, along with the first garden weasels, by the Etruscans and were 'stolen' by the Romans in about 420 BC. 10 inch forms, much like those discussed here, lined the entry to Nero's Domus Aurea and figured prominently on the second floor of the House of the Vestal Virgins. They remained important until the Ostragoths sacked Rome and then were forgotten for over a thousand years.

-----Original Message-----

From: D _____, R. N _____

Sent: Fri 1/17/2003 2:48 PM

To: TCU All Faculty

Cc:

Subject: Paper Towel dispenser

R _____ A _____ is quite right; inspiration can come from amazing sources! He is currently writing the first episode of a made for TV serialized docudrama: "The Great Dispenser." This potential Emmy award - winning epic will star W. H. K _____ in a dangerously true to life title role. It is rumored in Purple Zone gossip circles that this will be his last act before throwing in the towel.

Dr. R. N _____ D _____

Moncrief Chair of Geology |Voice _____

Department of Geology |FAX _____

TCU Box _____

Texas Christian University

Fort Worth, TX 76129

THE SAGA OF THE GREAT TOWEL DISPENSER

-----Original Message-----

From: Q _____, S _____
Sent: Fri 1/17/2003 2:49 PM
To: _____; TCU All Faculty
Cc:
Subject: RE: Paper Towel dispenser

As long as we are on a roll... Economics tells us that we need not worry. If the invisible hand wanted a paper towel dispenser in Rickel 164, then it would put a paper towel dispenser in Rickel 164.

S _____ Q _____
Department of Economics
TCU Box _____
Fort Worth, TX 76129
p _____
f _____

=====

-----Original Message-----

From: F _____, G _____
Sent: Fri 1/17/2003 3:22 PM
To: _____
Cc: TCU All Faculty
Subject: RE: Paper towel dispenser in Rickel 164

E _____'s account, while fascinating, is completely apocryphal. The Methodist hymn was in fact entitled, "Now Let Us All Dispense with Glee," reflecting, of course, a fundamental tenet of Protestantism. The problem with her hasty interpretation, as is so often the case in religious scholarship, is one of insufficient attention to the original documents. Let me call attention in particular to the sentence in Bruner, "I wanted to make sure you were aware of the size of this thing before we screw it to the wall." Some might also take this to be a veiled reference to a supposed conversation reported in The Books of Adam and Eve. But in fact it is a partial quotation from an early Florentine interior decorator noted in the History of Real Large Italian Art.

G. F. _____

=====

-----Original Message-----

From: G _____, D _____
Sent: Fri 1/17/2003 3:28 PM
To: TCU All Faculty
Cc:
Subject: Re: Paper towel dispenser

Actually, as usual the Bible can claim priority. It is not well known that what Moses received on Mount Sinai were not stone tablets, but a papyrus roll dispenser (Hebrew luhot ha'even [tablets of stone], an obvious scribal corruption of Egyptian *lohetha 'e[w]en [dispenser of writing material]. Moses dispensed and God then wrote upon the papyrus with fiery fingers (sometimes mistakenly termed "the invisible hand") the ten commandments. This mistake about the tablets is the one small flaw in Cecil B DeMille's film depicting the event.

D _____ G _____

D _____ M. G _____
A. A. Bradford Chair of Religion
Texas Christian University
Department of Religion _____@tcu.edu
TCU Box _____

THE SAGA OF THE GREAT TOWEL DISPENSER

-----Original Message-----

From: H _____, A _____
Sent: Fri 1/17/2003 3:32 PM
To: TCU All Faculty
Cc:
Subject:

I've got far too much work on my platter
For this bathroom, dimensional chatter
Besides I'm confused
And my ego is bruised
Because I thought that size didn't matter

A _____ H _____,
KTCU

-----Original Message-----

From: B _____, W _____
Sent: Fri 1/17/2003 4:17 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: TCU All Faculty; [REDACTED]
Subject: Get Your Own Paper towel dispenser! Like those in Rickel 164

I didn't realize how many people cared as deeply as I do about paper towel dispensation. There must be a business opportunity here. Please see <http://tandy.sbu.tcu.edu/~bridges/resources/dispenser/dispenser.asp>.

W _____ B _____
Lecturer in E-Business
M. J. Neeley School of Business
Texas Christian University
Box [REDACTED]
Fort Worth, TX 76129
Phone: [REDACTED]
Fax: [REDACTED]

-----Original Message-----

From: G _____, R _____
Sent: Fri 1/17/2003 4:26 PM
To: [REDACTED]; TCU All Faculty; [REDACTED]
Cc:
Subject: Re: Paper towel dispenser in Rickel 164

Folks,
Perhaps the best place to display the logo and mission statement is not on paper towels, but on another even more important paper product usually in close proximity to the paper towels in the grocery store. And it certainly would fulfill the "captive audience" criterion, as well as provide a deeper meaning for Steve Quinn's reference to the "invisible hand."

THE SAGA OF THE GREAT TOWEL DISPENSER

-----Original Message-----

From: M_____, L_____ (Faculty)

Sent: Fri 1/17/2003 4:33 PM

To: _____; TCU All Faculty; _____

Cc:

Subject: RE: Paper towel dispenser in Rickel 164

Colleagues,

While I have thoroughly enjoyed what is generally a fairly quiet afternoon and been amazed and impressed at the number of us actually here on a Friday, I must revert to my calling and ask the bigger question: What about the well being of OTHER paper towel dispensers on campus? Are we forgetting about them and their needs? Where are they hung and are they excluded or ostracized because they don't meet the expectations of the Physical Plant? How can we, as ethical leaders, empower all dispensers, especially those that are vulnerable or oppressed for reasons beyond their control? Maybe we should focus on those individual dispensers for the betterment of dispenser society as a whole. Together we can help help millions of paper towels challenge their circumstances and bring meaning to their dispensers by fulfilling the needs of people. And R_____, you are right on the money!

L_____ M_____

-----Original Message-----

From: L_____, L_____

Sent: Fri 1/17/2003 4:46 PM

To: _____; TCU All

Faculty; _____

Cc:

Subject: RE: Paper towel dispenser in Rickel 164

I have enjoyed this chat, but what is really on my mind is non-usable towel dispensers. The costume studio has antique towel dispensers and we covet new models--so after the decision re; Rickle Bldg. we will accept modern dispensers if they cannot be used in Rickle.

-----Original Message-----

From: A_____, G_____

Sent: Fri 1/17/2003 4:51 PM

To: TCU All Faculty

Cc:

Subject: Paper towel dispenser in Rickel 164

In what I certainly hope is the last word on the subject; I must add on behalf of all my biologically inclined colleagues; that the amount of paper used up by these much analyzed dispensers results in the destruction of acres of Amazonian rainforest. The area is comparable in size to 8.75 football fields of wood products per day. (Brazilian football fields, each one of which as you all no doubt know is equivalent to 0.75 American football fields.)

G_____ A_____
Department of Biology