

## What If

Have you ever stopped to think about these two words?

Sure. We all have.

We 'What-if' ourselves all day long. We 'What-if' I had a million dollars. We 'What-if' I'd answered question two differently.

We 'What-if' I'd gone ahead and played football in college. Would I be All-Pro this year? But there's a lot more to a 'What-if' than meets the eye.

There's the caveman.

See?

Over there by that rock, watching the rain fall.

There's the lightning bursting the tree to burning twigs. The man's seen it before. He knows of its warmth.

He also knows of the chill in his cave.

He reflects.

"What if," he mutters.

"What if I could convince the fire to glow in my cave?"

He walks over to a branch that burns at one end.

"What if I carry it there?"

He wonders.

"What if I pick up the fire?"

The answer comes fast: He burns his hand.

"What if I pick up the other end?"

"Will the fire stay on the stick?"

Again a fast, but affirmative, reply.

Next winter, after chopping six cords of wood, he may 'What-if' himself further south.

"What if I could fly?"

"What if I could fly to the moon?"

This answer was longer in coming. The 'What-if' was passed on from generation to generation until in 1969 Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin, and Michael Collins arrived at the moon.

A lot of smaller 'What-ifs' went into that big 'What-if'. Scientific 'What-ifs' shared by all. But now, it seems, public 'What-iffing' has somehow gotten a bad name.

'What-iffers' are now called dreamers. A term which has also changed in meaning. Two thousand years ago dreamers were often called Prophet and were revered. Even a few short centuries ago 'What-iffers' held great respect. They were called Philosophers. They 'What-ified' us a Declaration of Independence, a Bill of Rights, and a Constitution. A small part of this heritage is still with us. It is hidden behind a very common moniker; Doctor.

Doctor?

Doctor.

Not a 'fix-up-your-body-for-a-buck' doctor.

They're M.D.s.

But a Ph.D. type doctor.

You see Ph.D. stands for "Doctor of Philosophy."

Bona-fide 'What-iffers.' But today it is frowned upon to 'What-if' in public. If you, yourself, don't have the means of proving your 'What-if' with your own data, you're ostracized for 'What-iffing.' Your 'What-ifs' don't get inherited.

These doctors must 'What-if' in the privacy of their own home, occasionally with a few trusted friends, but never before the children.

Mostly in the closet; by themselves; in the dark; alone;

'What-iffing.'

An individually satisfying pastime.

But,

"What if we let them out?"