

The Mad Scientists' Club

Bertrand R. Brinley
illustrated by Charles Geer

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After attending Stanford University, where he majored in Economics and Speech, **BERTRAND R. BRINLEY** was a methods and procedures analyst for Lockheed Aircraft's engineering department. He entered the Army in 1944 and served fifteen years in a variety of infantry and public relations assignments, including the position of aide-de-camp to the chief of the United Nations delegation during the Korean armistice negotiations. He retired from active duty in order to devote himself to writing, and held a commission as major in the United States Army Reserve. He later worked in technical writing and public relations positions for the Martin company.

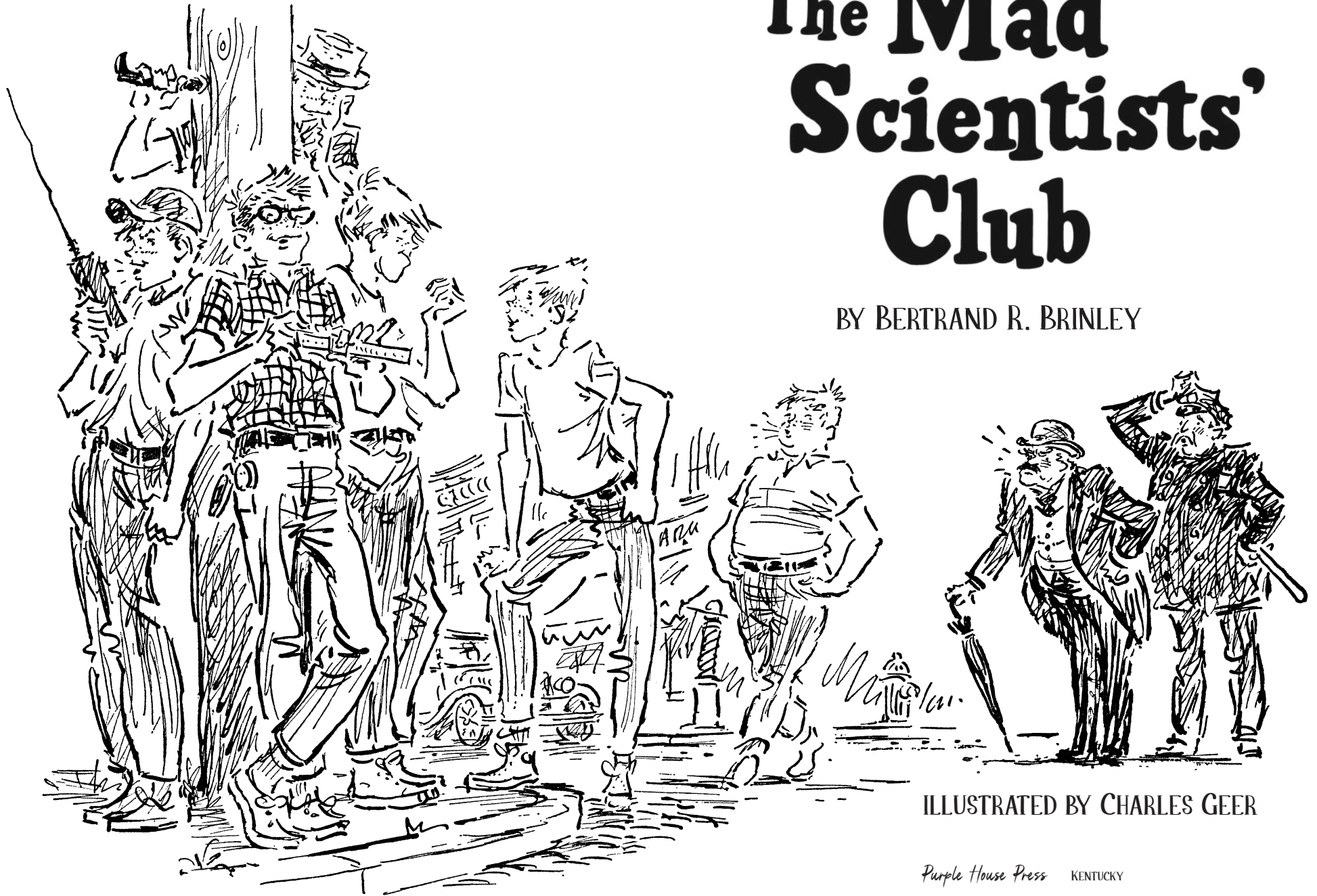
The author of *Rocket Manual for Amateurs*, Bertrand Brinley lectured extensively to schools and civic groups on space age topics. His articles and stories appeared in *Harper's Magazine*, *Boys' Life*, *Family Weekly*, *Woman's Day*, *The Microwave Journal*, *Electronics Illustrated* and *The Book of Knowledge*.

Bertrand Brinley is well-known for his beloved tales of the Mad Scientists' Club, whose further antics can be found in *The New Adventures of the Mad Scientists' Club*, *The Big Kerplow!* and *The Big Chunk of Ice*.

60TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

The Mad Scientists' Club

BY BERTRAND R. BRINLEY



ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES GEER

Purple House Press KENTUCKY

*These stories are dedicated to all boys—
who like to dream about things they
would like to do—and to my agent,
Carl Brandt, without whose constant prodding
I probably never would have written them.*

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INTRODUCTION

Over sixty years ago, my father sat down in a corner of our living room in the Perine-Billou house on Staten Island and started writing what became the first of the Mad Scientists' Club tales. The house is the oldest on Staten Island, dating from 1662, and one of the oldest houses in the United States. Our family lived there for many years; towards the end of our stay, my father completed the *Rocket Manual for Amateurs*, a book intended to help young people interested in rocketry learn the fundamentals of and safe procedures for building and firing rockets.

The photograph of our living room in the Perine house was taken about six months before we moved in. We brought our own couches, chairs, tables, rugs, and so forth. His desk was a card table, as I recall, with his typewriter—one of those heavy, manual ones (a Royal or Underwood probably)—notes, yellow and multi-copy typewriter paper, pens, pencils, ashtray, and miscellaneous items arraigned on the table. The table sat in the right-hand corner where the armchair is in the photograph. To his right was the large fireplace that heated the room originally. You can see how large it is. Until I shot up in height in my teens, I could stand in it with room to spare. When we got a large log going in it, it threw out a lot of heat. The ceiling was beamed, with the beams boxed in. The walls were plaster, painted white. The exterior walls were stone and quite thick: the window embrasures were about two feet deep. Above and behind his head was a small window and to his left was one of the three main windows that brought light into the room—you can see two of them on right. He had



Photo courtesy of Staten Island Historical Society

a lamp, of course, but during the day could work in the ambient light. Prominent in the corner was a sculptured head with a hood on it—probably a monk’s hood. We called it, *The Head*. You will find that the name occurs in one of the tales in this book.

So this is where he wrote *The Strange Sea Monster of Strawberry Lake*, introducing Dinky Poore and The Mad Scientists’ Club gang. I remember reading the manuscript of the story pretty much as it appeared in the book some years later. I read it sitting at his writing table and thinking how much I liked the story even though I was almost out of high school and my main interest was sports cars and racing. You know, my father admired Edgar Allan Poe’s works, particularly the *Cask of Amontillado*. It struck me how the opening to the sea monster story got you right into it, as does the opening to Poe’s tale of revenge. And, there is an economy of expression in that first tale that makes it tight, moving the action quickly, that I have always liked.

His agent also liked the story and circulated it to likely publications. *Boys’ Life* took the story and in 1961 it was published in the September issue of the magazine. The rest is history. More stories followed in *Boys’ Life*, and a few years later, the first collection of Mad Scientists’ Club tales was published in *The Mad Scientists’ Club*.

Fast forward to 2001 and enter Purple House Press. The long-dormant tales were re-issued in *The Mad Scientists’ Club* hardcover book that has proved to be the most popular of the four Mad Scientists Club books the press has printed. Small wonder, as those seven tales contain, to my mind, the

best of the club tales, with a couple exceptions that appeared later: *Big Chief Rainmaker* and *The Cool Cavern*. Thanks to Purple House, all the tales and the two novels of the gang’s adventures are available to readers, old and new.

This brings us to today, 60 years after publication of the first story. How time has flown, and what changes! Now you can get all of the Mad Scientists’ Club books as ebooks and enjoy a complete collection of all four books in a hefty soft cover volume. Starting with this book you’re holding, we will be reintroducing each book of the series individually in paperback. As the hardcovers sell out, they will become collector’s editions and a thing of the past.

We haven’t really changed anything in this edition. It preserves the stories as they were re-issued 20 years ago by Purple House Press. The font used on the cover is a bit different, however, the only change from the font used originally in 1965 and in 2001. It is a salute to the original Scholastic soft cover edition that introduced thousands of kids to the club and the gang.

Happy reading!

Sheridan Brinley
Arlington, Virginia 2021

Continue on with the Mad Scientists in

The New Adventures of the Mad Scientists' Club

The Big Kerplow!

The Big Chunk of Ice

THE MAD SCIENTISTS' CLUB

THE STRANGE SEA MONSTER OF STRAWBERRY LAKE

Dinky Poore didn't really mean to start the story about the huge sea monster in Strawberry Lake. He was only telling a fib because he had to have an excuse for getting home late for supper. So he told his folks he'd been running around the lake trying to get a close look at a huge, snake-like thing he'd seen in the water, and the first thing he knew he was too far from home to get back in time.

His mother and father greeted this tale with some skepticism. But Dinky's two sisters were more impressionable, and that's how the story really got out. They kept pestering him for so many details about the monster that he had to invent a fantastic tale to satisfy them. That's one of the troubles with a lie. You've got to keep adding to it to make it believable to people.

It didn't take long for the story to get around town, and pretty soon Dinky Poore was a celebrity in Mammoth

Falls. He even had his picture in the paper, together with an “artist’s conception” of the thing he had seen. It was gruesome-looking—something like a dinosaur, but with a scaly, saw-toothed back like a dragon. Dinky was never short on imagination, and he was able to give the artist plenty of details.

It was the artist’s sketch in the newspaper that got Henry Mulligan all excited. Henry is First Vice President and also Chief of Research for the Mad Scientists’ Club and is noted for his brainstorm. Neither Henry nor anyone else in the club actually believed Dinky had seen a real monster, but we were all willing to play along with a gag—especially when Henry suggested that we could build a monster just like the one shown in the newspaper.

“Build a monster?” Freddy Muldoon’s round face was all goggle-eyed. He liked the idea, but he just didn’t know how Henry proposed going about it. He rubbed his button nose, which was always itching, and asked, “You mean a real monster that can swim?”

“Don’t be a dope,” said Dinky.

“I ain’t a dope. But who ever heard of a monster that can’t swim?”

“The one we build will float,” said Henry, rubbing his chin and looking up at the rafters of the club laboratory the way he always did when he was speculating on a new project. “All we need is some canvas and chicken wire and Jeff Crocker’s canoe.”

Jeff Crocker is President of our club—mainly because his father owns the barn that we have our lab in, but also because he’s just as smart as Henry and maybe a little more

scientific. Henry dreams up most of the schemes that we get messed up in; but it is usually Jeff who figures out how to do everything or how to get us out of what we got into.

Since Henry’s plan to build a lake monster seemed like a good one, we held a formal meeting of the club that night to take a vote on it. Naturally, we all voted in favor of building it and three days later we had most of the monster finished. We didn’t know what to call it. Some of us referred to it as a sea monster, and some of us called it a lake dragon. But mostly we just called it *the beast*.

We built it on a small piece of dry land hidden ’way back in the swampy end of the lake that only we knew how to get to. Henry and Jeff had designed a frame of light lumber and laths that had the shape of a big land lizard and we suspended this across the gunwales of the canoe. Then we hung chicken wire on the frame and stretched canvas over it. With a little paint and a few shiny tin can lids spotted here and there, we soon had a loathsome-looking creature guaranteed to scare the life out of anyone a hundred yards away from it.

Jeff had to keep putting the brakes on Henry’s elaborate ideas for the beast, because he was afraid if we made it too fancy people wouldn’t believe it was a real monster. But he did let Henry outfit the head with a pair of gleaming red eyes—which were just flashlights with red lenses stuck out through the canvas. Henry installed a switch and circuit-breaker in the canoe, so that the “eyes” could be made to blink. After two days of practice back in the swamps we figured we could handle the beast well enough to make a test run out on the lake. The monster’s profile

stuck up about four feet out of the water, and it was a cinch for four of us to sit upright in the canoe to do the paddling and steering.

Meanwhile, the town was still excited about the possibility that there was a real, live sea monster in Strawberry Lake. A reporter from one of the big city papers had been in town to interview Dinky Poore, and when folks heard this, a lot of them began to recall seeing strange things on the water. Everybody wanted to get into the act, and pretty

soon all sorts of people were volunteering information. Daphne Muldoon got her picture on the front page, not because she had seen the monster, but because she lived in Mammoth Falls and had a good-looking face and pretty legs. Daphne is one of Freddy Muldoon's cousins. Her younger brother, Harmon, used to be a member of our club. But he got kicked out for conduct unbecoming a scientist and for giving away secret information.

The first night we took the beast out was a Saturday,

