

Thank the Creator for creators

by [Martin E. Marty](#) in the [July 14, 1999](#) issue

Question: who are Crombie Taylor, Lyndon Lyon, Paul Sacher, John Tigrett, Waldo Semon, Ed Peterson and James Blades? Do you recognize any of their names? Let's look around us. On almost everyone's list of the ten greatest architectural achievements in America is Chicago's Auditorium Theatre. Louis Sullivan designed it. The years were hard on it, but someone saved it from the wrecking ball. It is now restored—for the ages, one hopes.

On almost everyone's list of favorite houseplants is the African violet. Many favor the single pure-red star-shaped African violet. But there are at least 800 varieties.

As I write this I am listening to a CD of Richard Strauss's *Metamorphosen*. Later I may also replay Bela Bartok's *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta*.

Children now play in safer playpens, thanks to the plastic that has replaced metal mesh. And youngsters can amuse themselves with the Glub-Glub duck; you have seen it seem to drink water and bob its head.

You can store Glub-Glubs in vinyl cases. Some parts of your clothes, your plumbing pipes, your luggage and your car are made of this second-most familiar form of plastic in the world. Ponder this, as you watch your children pop giant bubbles with synthetic bubble gum.

Garbage trucks used to risk backing up over pedestrians in alleys. No more; their automatic beep warns that they are driving in reverse. Were you spared an accident, alerted by the beep? You can tell someone about the close call while strolling around your living room holding a telephone with a retracting cord. No one will trip over it. The world has become safer.

Had you been hit by the truck, the paramedics, ambulance and police would have arrived there more quickly than they could have decades ago, thanks to the two-way radio, a relatively recent invention.

It's time to watch a video of a J. Arthur Rank World War II movie. It will begin with the sound of a huge gong. Later we'll hear the "V for victory" da-da-da-dum from Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, tom-tommed by a percussionist. Someone had to conceive the idea of Rank's use of the gong and notice the fact that Beethoven's notes matched the Morse Code for "V." Someone did.

Now for the answers to our opening question. Crombie Taylor inspired the restoration of the Auditorium Theatre. Lyndon Lyon bred 800 varieties of African violets. Paul Sacher commissioned the musical compositions I mentioned. John Tigrett invented the safe playpen and Glub-Glubs. Waldo Semon patented vinyl and invented synthetic rubber bubble gum. Ed Peterson devised the beep-beep backup alert. James Blades thought up the gong and the V-for-victory motif.

They all died within a week, their obituaries appearing in a week's worth of newspapers that I scanned before putting them out for the recycling truck. I hear its back-up beep-beep now. And I will mumble a prayer of praise to a Creator who inspires discoverers like this four-day's sample of people I'd never known existed.

Whether these marvelously imaginative creators, discoverers, patenters, restorers and patrons acknowledged the Creator or not, they were given long life and saw good days. The obituaries chronicle their ages at death: successively, 85, 94, 93, 85, 100, 78, 91, 97. We should live so long. Thanks to some of their efforts, we just might, and do so with more enjoyment.