

## The Geneva Gazette – Issue 2

Bonjour à tout le monde !

The latest from Geneva – this month's top stories:

- Drivers Ed.
- Emmanuel Itier Interviews Physicists About God.
- An Expatriate Thanksgiving
- Special Delivery!

### Drivers Ed



A victory photo of the CMS building and a Jura mountain.

Let me just make it clear – driving a stick shift around these winding French roads was not in the job description. However, I was informed about carting journalists to the four main detectors, positioned on a 27 kilometer loop, so I guess it comes with the territory.

I had driven manual cars before. Maybe once every couple of years, when I decided to try to learn but then never practiced. Luckily, with my family's penchant for dirt-biking, I was quite comfortable with the principles... with the clutch at my hand and the shifter at my foot.

As Katie Yurkewicz is training me to take over her position, it fell to her to take me out driving the CERN press cars. With the imminent arrival of the baby, she was careful to choose a day that she wasn't feeling particularly ill or tired – a good decision since it wasn't a very smooth ride.

Anyway, she only had to coach me once, and after practicing a couple more times, I have drastically reduced the number of times I stall the vehicles (while simultaneously reducing public opinion of CERN drivers). ATLAS is a just ten minute walk from my office, but now I've learned the way to the other main detectors, ALICE, CMS, and LHCb. I no longer expect to get visiting journalists lost in the French countryside.

### Emmanuel Itier Interviews Physicists About God

Last week, filmmaker Emmanuel Itier came to CERN to interview physicists Brian Cox and Vincent Vuillemin. He is working on a documentary called *The Invocation*, which will examine perspectives on God held by individuals of various religions and philosophies.

With questions like, "Scientist seems to agree that we can only figure out 10% of what the Universe is made of, mainly Hydrogene and Helium. The remaining 90% are an unknown 'mix' called Dark Matter, 'hidden matter'...Is this 'God'?" Katie Y was a bit reluctant to find physicists for him to interview, but Brian Cox had been recruited in advance, and Vincent Vuillemin is a zen master. We tried to get the nun who is working on ATLAS, but she is currently in Oslo, Norway.

When confronted with this question, Cox considered it for about two seconds before saying, "No," and going on to explain that dark matter is supposed to be just some scarcely-interactive particles distributed through the universe.

Women from the BBC had recently given a workshop on dealing with the media in the main auditorium. They advised the scientists to stare at the camera as consistently as though they were falling in love with it. Cox was quite capable in this respect, although Vuillemin shot me a rather significant glance when Itier asked the question about whether the energy transferred through human life and death was somehow responsible for the expansion of the universe. People have very strange ideas about energy.

On the other hand, I was taken by surprise when Vuillemin did not dismiss the notion that elementary particles are sentient beings.

*Side-story:* The Brian Cox interview was very nearly a logistical disaster. Itier and I had planned to meet him and Bernard Lebegue, a safety officer who could allow us off the normal tour route, in the ATLAS control room. We had to call Lebegue when we got there, but no one had warned us that he had a tour booked at the same time. Also, he speaks only French and since he was in the middle of the tour, he had little patience for my struggling with the language. Luckily Itier grew up in France, so I handed the phone to him when it seemed like Lebegue was about to hang up on me. He would meet us in ten minutes.

Itier and I had spent about fifteen minutes in the control room by the time Katie Y called and asked where we were as Cox had been there for fifteen minutes. Itier and I exchanged a puzzled glance and proceeded to look for him. We found him sitting outside of the steps. I called Lebegue, who would now arrive in seven minutes, but Cox thought we might as well go in since I have access and all.

Lebegue had said that he was on "niveau quatre" which is the tour route, so I went along with this idea. We did indeed catch Lebegue on the scaffolding, and he told us that we could go a head to the seventh floor to do the filming. Unfortunately, loud clangs of metal-on-metal periodically resounded through the cavern, and Itier's sensitive mic picked them up quite



Top: Zen master Vincent Vuillemin  
Bottom: Brian Cox and Emmanuel Itier

clearly. We wound up leaving after fifteen minutes, headed back to the quiet control room. At the top of the elevator, we met Lebegue, who had just finished his tour.

## *An Expatriate Thanksgiving*

Around 6 pm, Thursday November 22<sup>nd</sup>, roughly 16 Americans and 2 American-friendly physicists gathered at the house of Terrence and Julie Toole for dinner. With two turkeys, twice-baked potatoes, green bean casserole, jello, sweet potatoes, corn, corn casserole, salad, and home-made cranberry relish, we were not lacking in American fare (although a Thanksgiving baguette was new to me). Beverages included wine, juice, and yes, Coca Cola Classic. The meal finished with classic pies: pumpkin, apple, and sweet potato and a round of coffee and tea (more European influence!).



To make up for the lack of family, I called mine over Skype once I got back to the apartment. Gathered at my aunt's house, they put me on speakerphone and tried to play mind games by making me guess who was talking.

## *Special Delivery*

On the morning of Sunday December 2, 2007, Eric Yurkewicz was born! He's healthy, weighs in at 7 lb, 7 oz, 19 inches tall. Katie Y is healthy as well and was released from the hospital Wednesday.

Unfortunately, her due date wasn't until the 17<sup>th</sup>, so we were kind of counting on another week... I know all the basics even if I haven't yet earned the confidence of the press office.

At the end of the Monday meeting, James Gillies looks at me across the table and asks, "Will you be all right?"

"Yeah," I said.



Katie, Adam and Eric Yurkewicz

I received unconvinced stares from him, Sophie Tesauri, and Renilde Vanden Broeck, the senior press contacts.

Then Lizzie Gibney, the press office intern came to my rescue with, "She'll hack into Katie's computer later today to see what all needs doing."

### *Endnote - CERN Safety Training.*

An example question from the quizzes at the end of the online safety courses.

If you see a cloud [of colder-than-ice liquid helium] in the tunnel, what should you do?

- a) Run away as quickly as possible
- b) Walk into the cloud
- c) evacuate calmly and alert the fire brigade.