

Solomon

by Jim Schicatano

“What is the meaning of life?”

Solomon replied without hesitation. “There is no logical answer to that question. You may try rephrasing it.”

Chuckles emanated from the audience and Dr. Francine Stewart grew red with embarrassment. She had assembled the world’s media to this demonstration and it had been with great fanfare that she had introduced the world’s largest, most sophisticated computer – Solomon.

Solomon: a lifetime of work and a staff of hundreds had built the building-sized, government-backed computer over the course of twenty years, integrating the most advanced logic units ever designed, the most sophisticated software ever written, and storing the entire history of the Earth and all of mankind’s knowledge within its data chips.

Stewart and her supporters had hoped to unlock the secrets of life and the universe.

But the first question – the one that had been asked by mankind for thousands of years – could not be answered even by the knowledgeable and capable Solomon. Somewhat unnerved by the initial embarrassment, Stewart gazed at the second question on her list with less confidence. It read: “Is there a God?” She decided that such a question would now be too controversial in the absence of an answer to the first question.

She dropped the list to her side and, with renewed determination, faced Solomon’s video screen. The speech line remained horizontal. Solomon was silent. It held no real significance except to provide the press with something to photograph.

Doctor Stewart smiled. She would not be humiliated by a conglomeration of metal, plastic, computer chips, and wires.

Sensing her mood change, the press grew silent in anticipation, and an eager world audience awaited the expensive, powerful computer to earn its publicly financed pricetag.

If the people only knew the power that Solomon possessed, she thought to herself. If they had any idea the ability that she had programmed into it, she would receive acclamations comparable to Copernicus,

Galileo, and Einstein. She was determined to show the world that she had finally created a tool of mankind that was capable of virtually anything.

She just needed the right question. And now she knew she had it. Stewart cleared her throat and quickly asked, "What is mankind's purpose in the universe?"

Without hesitation, Solomon's speech wave moved as it stolidly replied, "It is to serve me."

Before anyone could respond or anything could be done, in a length of time that no human being could mentally measure, it happened. All machines, all human thoughts and actions, and all that encompassed mankind's civilized world was instantly under the awesome, all-encompassing control of Solomon – mankind's ultimate and final creation.