

## ***OXYGEN DAY - AUGUST 1st***

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**M**embers of the ISMM are invited to celebrate "Oxygen Day" on August 1. It was on this day in 1774 that Joseph Priestley heated some red mercuric oxide with a 12 inch burning lens and found that a remarkable gas was evolved. He wrote *"But what surprized me more than I can yet well express, was that a candle burned in this air with a remarkably vigorous flame ... and a piece of red-hot wood sparkled in it."* He went on to show that a mouse could survive longer in this gas than in ordinary air, and actually surmised that it might be useful for people with disease, stating, *"This pure air ... might be peculiarly salutary to the lungs in certain morbid cases."* He reported that he breathed some of the new gas himself in the following words: *"My reader will not wonder, that, after having ascertained the superior goodness of the dephlogisticated air by mice living in it, and the other tests above mentioned, I should have the curiosity to taste it myself. I have gratified that curiosity, by breathing it, drawing it through a glass-syphon, and, by this means, I reduced a large jar to fit to the standard of common air. The feeling of it to my lungs was not sensibly different from that of common air; but I fancy that my breast felt peculiarly light and easy for sometime afterwards. Who can tell but that, in time, this pure air may become a fashionable article in luxury. Hitherto only two mice and myself have had the privilege of breathing it."*

I suggest we all celebrate "Oxygen Day" by taking a very deep breath.

*John West*