

Eternal Sunshine #2

March 2007

By Douglas Kent, 11111 Woodmeadow Pkwy #2327, Dallas, TX 75228

Email: doug_of_whiningkentpigs.com or diplomacyworld_of_yahoo.com

On the web at <http://www.whiningkentpigs.com> – follow the links to the **Diplomacy World** section for this subzine, old **Diplomacy World** articles (and soon – maybe even some full issues in .pdf format), Message Board, Chat Room, and other items of interest.

Quote Of The Month – “Why do I fall in love with every woman I see who shows me the least bit of attention?” (Joel in “Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind”)

Well, we defied the critics and the pundits and Eternal Sunshine has returned for its record-breaking second issue. I'd like to thank the Academy and all the people behind the scenes for making this subzine possible. I suppose that includes Jim-Bob, Heather, and Tigger the cat (meow). Hmm, that's about it actually. You'd think a First Class operation like this would have a bigger supporting cast.

The big news around the Whining Kent Pig household this month is the furious plans for our wedding. The actual engagement is nothing new – in fact Heather was very forceful in her attempts to get married before I left for my term as a guest of the Federal government. I refused to give in on that idea however. My logic was pretty basic at the time: if Heather was going to wait for me, we could always get married when I got home; if things didn't work out, if she decided sitting around depressed and lonely the whole time wasn't for her, and instead got wise and moved on with her life...well, by not getting married we would have saved the trouble of getting a divorce. Even an amicable one (like mine from Mara) is a paperwork hassle and requires court costs and appearances. Now that I am home, our close relationship is stronger than ever. So we will be married – and as Heather has wanted from the beginning, it'll be on Halloween!

Heather is a very non-traditional woman (which should be obvious if she's in love with me, as that requires a certain degree of patience and tolerance, or heavy drinking). So the wedding will follow in that vein. I don't think, in the end, guests will be required to wear costumes (although it will be encouraged in some way), but the entire place will be decorated in a Halloween theme, with witches and ghosts and skeletons and pumpkins. Even the invitations will be Halloween Party invitations, and the cake she has in mind will also be Halloween – from the pumpkin decorations to the “Nightmare Before Christmas” Jack and Sally on top. I should point out that while I am not coming up with any of these ideas, I have no problem with them and in fact I think they are wonderful. They all are extremely Heatheresque, which is exactly the way I want the day to be. I'm already getting the most wonderful woman in the world out of the deal, so I figure Heather should get **something**.

I have never seen Heather so excited. Really it is quite shocking to me, to have someone so wonderful be so worked-up over the prospect of marrying ME. Okay, I still have quite a self-image problem, but I don't see a lot of sought-after qualities in my person. Not only does she want to marry me, but she waited and pined all those months while I was away? Unbelievable. Do you think therapy or medication might help her?

Some have wondered how you can keep a relationship strong over such a distant and depressing separation. I think the answer was pretty simple: I wrote Heather every day I was away. I don't think I missed a day except when I was in transit from one facility to another, or perhaps a day or two when I was locked up in the SHU (Special Housing Unit – where they send troublemakers like me). Actually my writing schedule was pretty much the center of my free time, much to the ridicule of most of the people who knew me. On weekdays in the evenings I would write Heather a twelve-page letter – six pieces of paper, both sides, the most I could safely write and still keep the envelope at one ounce or less. On weekends I would just keep writing and writing, on occasion filling up fifty pages or more, which I would then stuff into a brown envelope and pay whatever it cost. Aside from instant coffee and personal stuff, stamps were about the only thing I spent money on...well, not including phone calls at 23 cents a minute. If nothing else, not only did doing all of that writing keep me feeling closer to Heather (and I hope kept her feeling closer to me), but it helped keep me out of trouble. Writing, reading, and listening to the radio – when I wasn't working or waiting on line (which you had to do for just about everything), that's how I spent my time.

On a more Diplomacy-related note, I have been trying to contact some of my old hobby friends (and hobby acquaintances) by doing internet email searches. Do date I don't think I have gotten a reply from anybody I wrote to this way, but because of the indirect procedure I have to go through, I don't think email failure messages would find their way to my mailbox – only the rare true responses from the recipients. To jump-start my memory I spent a bit of time leafing through my old Hobby Census paperwork, and what did I find right behind that folder but a few old copies of the Garret Schenck-published Zine Register. Ahh, the good old days...a real nostalgia kick. Nearly every review seethes with Garret's anger over various real and imagined hobby slight (such as Jack McHugh and I starting Your Zine of Zines, or the People's Diplomacy Organization Relief Auction board declining to fund Zine Register with any money for the year – I think he asked for \$500 or something like that). Well, not every review is nasty – the FOGs (Friends of Garret) were always given a few backhanded compliments. In particular I enjoyed comparing Garret's review of Abyssinian Prince in ZR #19 – “if you're looking for a well-run game in comfortable surroundings this is the one for you” – with his vitriolic review in ZR #21 – where after bashing Jim for three paragraphs he closes with “the truth of the matter is that this is a pretty good zine.” That sort of attitude was what made the Schenck-published Zine Register issues such fun for me: every review seemed to be either “good, but not as good as my zine Upstart” or “you suck, you suck, you suck, you suck, well I guess it isn't so bad really, but not as good as my zine Upstart.” I guess a Zine Register these days would be like what, 8 pages long at best? Do they publish Mission From God (the ZR for the UK Diplomacy hobby) anymore I wonder?

By the way, there had been some VERY early-stage discussion between Jim-Bob and I on doing something with Diplomacy World. The biggest question, besides one of time limitations and being able to find enough worthwhile content these days, is whether there is a market for a Diplomacy World-style “hobby flagship” zine anymore. What do you readers think? I'd love to hear opinions regardless of which side of the fence they come down on. If you aren't familiar with Diplomacy World, check out some of the old articles which I have on my website in the Diplomacy section. I spent an hour or two cleaning up the Diplomacy section of my website – adding frames and other links, things like that. It should be much easier to navigate now. I use Microsoft Publisher on the main portion of the web site, but for the Diplomacy areas I just use Microsoft Word, and it seems to work fine for the time being.

I should mention that I went ahead and created a Yahoo Group dedicated to this subzine. It's called, not surprisingly, eternal_sunshine_diplomacy. You can access it through Yahoo, or if you'd like to join, the easiest way is to go to my web site (<http://www.whiningkentpigs.com/dw/> is the Diplomacy section) and look for the Yahoo link near the bottom of the page, or the link on the navigation bar. Aside from it being yet another place to find my subzine, it should also serve as a convenient web presence for people to discuss anything Eternal-Sunshine-related, hobby-related...or, really, anything at all you want to talk about. The thing I miss the most about the postal Diplomacy hobby is the special community feeling it had. Maybe a few newsgroups like

this can help foster a rebirth of that feeling. If not, oh well, it didn't cost anything to set up! I see that other Diplomacy publishers have had the same idea long before I did, like Brad Martin who does Western Front. So since smarter people than me are doing it, I feel it must have been a good idea!

Okay, enough Diplomacy comments, on to other things...

The long-awaited Zodiac Killer movie comes out this weekend – I will have a full review next issue, depending on when I publish this thing and (more importantly) when I actually get to go see it. It is based on the Robert Graysmith book, which I own and have read many times. Graysmith was a political cartoonist for the San Francisco Chronicle when the killings started, and he eventually became obsessed with the case. As a writer, he paints a very spooky picture of the crime scenes, including how terribly isolated many of them are...the kinds of places that in today's world you might not feel comfortable, but back in the 60's I suppose people didn't worry about violence or murder quite as often. Given how well-written the book is, Mr. Graysmith's participation in the film (the main character actually plays him), and the strong cast and director choices I am excited about the prospects. My one hesitation is that the movie is over 2 ½ hours long. That sounds like overkill to me, especially since there isn't any resolution to the case. Let me know if any of you see it!

Speaking of Robert Graysmith's Zodiac book, I love to read even though I don't have as much time to do it as I would like. Heather and I buy new books, old books, classics, used, just about anything. Yet there will always remain certain books that I will read over and over again. Zodiac is one of them, and realizing this, I wanted to jot down a list of those I could think of off the top of my head. I'd love to see a similar list from any of you – what books have you read multiple times, and expect to read them again and again as the years go on? For me, the list would include (in no particular order – and I'm sure I am leaving out quite a few too):

Kurt Vonnegut's Cat's Cradle, Welcome to the Monkey House, Slaughterhouse-Five; Robert Graysmith's Zodiac; Dune and The White Plague by Frank Herbert; Any books in the "Calvin & Hobbes" or "Get Fuzzy" series; Maus I and II by Art Spiegelman; Allan Eckert's The HAB Theory; the collected Sherlock Holmes stories; HOUSE of Leaves by Mark Danielewski; Jay Anson's The Amityville Horror; Salem's Lot, The Bachman Books, and The Dead Zone by Stephen King (and maybe Night Shift); Starship Troopers by Robert Heinlein; all "Peanuts" books; Beatles Forever by Nicholas Schaffner; Saturday Night by Doug Hill and Jeff Weingrad; all of the Paradox Press "The Big Book of..." series ... and I am sure I could (and should) add about 20 other titles to this list. Odd to find so many science fiction titles here, since I really don't read much Sci Fi anymore. Lately I've been concentrating more on biographies, history, and often modern essays like those by David Sedaris or Augusten Burroughs.

As long as I am making lists, I plan on publishing my list of the 100 favorite movies in an upcoming issue. This will be a list with the titles in no particular order – and it isn't a list of what I consider the BEST 100 movies ever, just the 100 I love to watch again and again. Start working on yours so we can compare! I'm interested to see what movies appear over and over.

Before I forget, a relative of a friend is suffering from her SECOND rare disease. She was diagnosed with Mastocytosis in 2002, and now after giving birth to her son, she has been diagnosed with a Desmoid Tumor. Two rare diseases in the same person, what are the odds? Anyway, she has a blog where she talks about dealing with all of these issues, and I promised I would mention it. They're looking to put a banner ad on it, so they can earn a couple of cents for each pageview. Every little bit helps. If you'd like to read it, or post a word of support, I am sure she'd appreciate it. When her counter went to just "7" she got excited, because it helps her to know she isn't completely alone in all of this. It doesn't cost anything, and I think she finds it very therapeutic (I know when I write about emotional topics in my blog, like my father's death which I wrote about recently, I feel better afterward). You can see the blog at:

<http://www.soulcast.com/Inolan876/>

In Sports, baseball season is finally upon us. In fact, as I write this my Texas Rangers are set to take the field for their first Spring Training game in about 8 minutes. Hmm, let me see if I can get it on the radio here ... yup, must be the Rangers, they stranded a runner in scoring position in the top of the 1st. Since the season is upon us, this seems like the perfect time to give you my Major League Baseball predictions. I'm not concerned though – by the time the World Series rolls around none of you will remember what the heck I predicted in the first place. Unless somebody goes to the trouble of downloading the old pdf file of this issue – and I think we both have better things to do with our time, don't you?

National League East – New York is the favorite to win the NL this year, or at least the NY-dominated media has those expectations. Philadelphia should contend for the division, except of course for the fact that they are the Phillies. We finish NY, Atlanta, Philly, Washington, Florida.

National League Central – This is the most exciting division in the NL. Young and improving Pittsburgh and Milwaukee teams going against the Cards and the Astros - even the Reds could start to gel. Oh, I forgot, the Cubs are in here too, aren't they? Never mind about the exciting part. We finish St. Louis, Houston, Pittsburgh, Milwaukee, Cincinnati, Chicago.

National League West – The Barry Bonds circus has me so disinterested in this division. Ho hum! Really the five teams aren't that far apart, so this is sort of a crapshoot (as opposed to the other divisions where my choices are clearly scientific and highly technical). Let's say LA, San Diego, Arizona, San Francisco, Colorado.

American League East – Oh, the hated Yankees. Even when I lived in New Jersey or Connecticut, I was never much of a Yankee fan. The last time I rooted for them was 1976 I think. So let's hope my predictions will help keep them out of the top spot. Heck, maybe we can get them to miss the playoffs altogether! Toronto (yup, the Blue Jays take the division this year), Boston, New York, Tampa Bay, and the sad-sack Orioles occupy the cellar spot.

American League Central – What used to be the worst division in the American League is becoming the best. But pphpht to Detroit, I'm not a believer! Minnesota, Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, Kansas City. How many more years before the Royals put together a team than plays .500 ball?

American League West – Bullpen strength and chemistry help my Texas Rangers win the division for the first time since the Johnny Oates regime. Now if we can just sign Ian Kinsler and Mark Teixeira to long-term contracts like we did with Michael Young. Texas, Los Angeles of Anaheim, Oakland, Seattle.

Wild card teams will be, let's see...San Diego and Chicago. Let's have fun and say neither the Yankees nor the Red Sox see the post-season. League Champs are Los Angeles Dodgers and Minnesota (sorry Rangers, love will only let me fanatize so far, eventually reality has to set in). And let's give the Twins the World Series victory just for the hell of it. There you go – it's all set in stone, so there is no reason to watch any baseball this year since you already know how it is going to end.

A final Sports note – why do my Dallas Mavericks get so little respect by the national press? Does it all go back to their meltdown in the finals last year? Or is it because Dirk isn't a flashy player like LeBron or Wade? Either way, they just seem to find new ways to win night after night. Watching them blow the finals last year was painful, that's true, but I never expected them to get that far in the first place. The fact that they did is a positive, not a negative. Now they have the hunger to get back...let's see if they can beat San Antonio and Phoenix when the playoffs roll around again!

The Dining Dead - The Eternal Sunshine Movie Reviews

Pretty light going this issue (aside from the movie-related comments you'll find in the prior section). Heather has been too busy obsessing on every detail of our wedding (35 guests, no money, and eight months away...but that's Heather for you) for us to get out of the house much. The near future doesn't look much better, as she started her Algebra class on Saturday (she needs three more classes for her Associate's Degree, taking one at a time in weekend college), and we've got some kind of social commitment for me to meet some of her friends on St. Patrick's Day which pretty much eliminates that weekend. But here's what I've got for you!

The Departed – As I write this review, in less than twelve hours we'll discover if this movie wins Best Picture at the Academy Awards, or if Martin Scorsese wins his first Best Director. I need to be careful with this review, because the plot has a lot of twists and turns, and I am sure many of you have yet to see it.

If "The Godfather" gets a 10, and if "Goodfellas" gets a 9, this movie is more like a 7. I don't know what I expected, but with all the hype surrounding the film perhaps my expectations were too high. It feels overlong, and to be honest this was NOT Scorsese's best directing work. The performances are decent, but you've seen all these actors better in other films (except Mark Wahlberg, this is the best I've seen him). The story focuses on mob boss Jack Nicholson, and the efforts of the State Police to infiltrate his crew and bring him down...and, likewise, Nicholson's efforts to infiltrate the SIU with a mole. Who lies, and for what reason, and when is it okay to do so? These topics are tread upon but the necessities of the plotline keep us from really going deep into them.

To be honest, while I wanted to see how the story tied up its loose ends, I didn't care for any of the characters one way or another. Succeed or fail, live or die, it didn't matter to me. I don't know if my personal experiences clouded my views too much or not. Suffice to say, I enjoyed the movie but I didn't LOVE it. Let me know what you thought!

Also Seen on DVD: Big Fish (B+, see my feelings on that film and how it made me really miss my father on my blog); Strangers With Candy (B – funny but not as funny as the departed TV Show), The Life and Death of Peter Sellers (B-); Owing Mahoney (B, not as good as I had heard); Confessions of a Dangerous Mind (B+, another great Charlie Kaufman script but overpopulated with George Clooney's friends).

Meet Me In Montauk The Eternal Sunshine Letter Column

Andy York: I gave "Last King of Scotland" a B (saw it last November). I think Whitaker did a once in a lifetime performance and deserves the awards. Children of Men is reviewed in my latest subzine. I gave it an A+.

Whitaker certainly has come a long way since "Fast Times at Ridgemont High," hasn't he? As for "Children of Men," I liked it, I just wasn't as blown away by it. Maybe it is just where I am coming from. A few scenes stay with me though – the one where the bus first pulls into the Camp and they yank the woman off in particular. And of course the whole staircase scene during the heavy fighting was exceptionally well-done.

A thought point, is the subzine going to be original material (i.e. devoid of reprints of what's on your website) or a "print" version of the best of the website?

It will be mostly new material, but my movie reviews in particular will appear on both. I imagine the things I write for the subzine will be generally targeted to a different audience – the web page is more for family and personal friends, although the movie reviews I try to spread around (they are the only things I bother putting on my MySpace page anymore, for example).

Jim Burgess: I kinda liked "Children of Men" a bit more than you did.... that really is a comment. I think many people didn't "get it" and you do get a big dose of "28 Days Later", don't you, but without the flaws (I hate the scene in 28 when [right after they stock up on everything they might want in a supermarket] the guy goes in the creepy gas station so he can get attacked.... just nonsensical and there were a few "zombie movie" moments like that). But in Children, I liked that it was [deleted as plot spoilers] and did you notice [spoiler]? Not anything you can write in a review before people see it, of course.

...which is why I deleted it. But yes I noticed all of that, although in my mind it didn't necessarily mean what it sounds like YOU think it means. That didn't bother me though – I don't require an instructive, complete ending. I actually would have liked it if they chose to leave out the last scene altogether, or at least the last 60 seconds.

Graham Wilson: I remember having a great time playing Colonia in Fred Hyatt's old zine. I also recall pulling off a solo victory as France (I and/or Fred called it the "Colonia-50" club, as 50 centers were required for victory). It is questionable whether I have time now for such a commitment, but don't let that stop you from adding me to the list ☺

I still miss Fred, I have fond memories especially of a few VERY long phone calls we shared.

Much in life has changed. I've changed jobs (twice) and addresses (twice) since I used to get your zine. New cat (all the others died). Same wife :-). But the baby is now 9.5 years old. I recall you used to live in NJ. What brought you to Texas?

Oh boy, that's a long story...short version, the company I had worked for since 1986 went out of business in 1994, and my boss at the time secured us BOTH employment with a national company which was opening a new Dallas office. My wife Mara was looking for an excuse to move away from her relatives, so it all fit. Six months later my boss and the company parted ways, but I stayed on until they closed down in 1998. So here I am, 13 years later, divorced and now engaged again. And I still have one of the same cats – Tigger, who is 18 years old now but thinks she is a kitten. She'll probably be the last cat for a while. When she is gone we'll take some time off from pets, and then look to get a dog. Heather really wants one; she goes crazy over every dog she sees, making baby talk and goo goo eyes. In fact, it has become a running joke where she works: when a car pulls up to the window and Heather starts oohing and aahing, the other women have finally learned that doesn't mean a baby in the car, it means a dog!

Mike Barno: Hi, and thanks for including me in your subzine recruiting. Just send me the link and I'll read it, probably every issue. I'll probably just be a lurker but I might sign up for Dip, or a silly game if you decide to run one. I might pop in for your letter column when I see something to comment on.

Hmm, I'll have to figure out what strikes your nerves (Jim-Bob?) and then needle you until you make an appearance.

TAP is a good place to be hosted. Most folks from the old days who have even a little Dip activity are at least on the TAP mailing list.

Not only is it a good place...heck, these days it is the only place!

We were never close but we saw each others' names and might have had a little game contact such as Railway Rivals. I was a big con traveler in the Eighties but all were east coast or upper midwest except a Pudgecon in Kansas. In 1993-98 I was out of Dip except a few postal zines because I worked in Yellowstone National Park. Since moving back northeast (programming for geodemographics house Claritas, part of VNU-now-Nielsen, the whole nine years), I've been going to Dip cons in MD/DC, NC, PA, and MA, and multi-game cons in upstate NY, plus WBC/WDC 2000. I still play in Jim-Bob's games and David Partridge's subzine, plus a Canadian zine NORTHERN FLAME v2. When Edi Birsan put together "The Diplomatic Corps" organization, I volunteered to build a website, and wound up expanding it far beyond his original goals, and I edited it (researching lots of stuff from foreign websites) for almost five years.

I actually think I might like to attend a Con here in the Texas region if I can find one. Andy York is probably a good person for me to ask about that. Back in the old days I never went, mainly because of my wife Mara's poor health physically and mentally. But life has calmed down a bit, and sometimes I would like to put faces with names. Or, given a few more years of freedom, I might even go out of state and back to the northeast if it meant getting people like Flapjack to show up too.

Jack "The Sack" McHugh: Paul Kenny, my new toady, sent me your subzine announcement. I guess this means I'll have to consider bring back my sub-subzine, since I was the best part of your zine.

Well since you are and have always been my toady, Paul must be my sub-toady. The ranks of my minions continue to grow. Still, I won't hold my breath on you writing up anything for a sub-subzine...you're too unreliable, too slow, and too much of a Sackie-poo for that. Besides, your Phillies drain all the strength out of you – they are your kryptonite.

I'm a the IT guy for a small firm that makes boat/atv/jet ski trailers. I just got this job after working two years for Cooper University Hospital in Camden, NJ. Now I work just north of Philly - I'm only a few miles from Trenton. I got a house in South Jersey last year. I'm just over the bridge from Philly, when are you going to come up and visit?

Glad to know you're doing well, now where are Bwad and Mike G and Little Tommie Swider and the rest of the clan? As for a visit from me, you should probably ask your wife for permission first before you invite a convicted felon to your house, don't you think? As your best friend Garret would have said – "Heh."

Mark Nelson: Great to hear from you. It has been several years. The last time we were in contact I was producing a zine for an APA, but when I moved to Wollongong I no longer had the time to produce that. I have some comments of yours about Star Wars that I was going to run in the next issue.

What frightens me more, than you remember I sent those comments, or that you still have them?

Technically, I suppose that I am still "involved" in the Hobby as I subscribe to Tom Howell's OTS but I no longer play any games and only write locs on a very infrequent basis.

As long as Crazie Markie is still around in SOME form, all is right with the world. Hmm, actually, there is a lot wrong with the world, so it must be your fault somehow.

Game Openings

Diplomacy (Black Press): Graham Wilson, needs six more.

Balkan Wars IV (Black Press): Signed up: Jack McHugh, needs six more. Rules and map on request.

Colonia VII_B (White Press): Fred Hyatt's worldwide variant. Signed up: Jim Burgess, Graham Wilson, needs 7 more. Rules and map on request.

For other multi-player games, I'm considering offering Acquire or Kremlin if there is any interest from the readers.

Would anybody be interested in a game of African Diplomacy? How about a bourse game? Suggestions are welcome. I'm also interested in getting a PBEM game of Avalon Hill's Advanced Civilization going (using their old PC software). I just found mine in my storage unit, and got it to work on XP with a DOS emulation program. Somebody on use net directed me to <http://advcivladder.net/> which I have signed up on, but so far I haven't gotten a response from whoever maintains the list.

Diplomacy Zine Plug

Joakim Spångberg publishes Corps Diplomatie, which is also a subzine to The Blue Nose Special. His zine has openings in lots of games, including Diplomacy, Britannia, Breaking Away, Puerto Rico, and Top Ten (which is a creative word game with a popularity feature). You can receive CD by email, download it from the internet, or even get a copy postally. The easiest way to find out more would be to email Joakim at "Joakim of konfliktspel.com" [remember the TAP "of" email format we use to avoid spamming] or check out the web site at:

<http://www.konfliktspel.com/corps/>

By the way, if you know of a Diplomacy or gaming zine which you think I haven't seen before, whether it is print, email, or on the web, please feel free to give me the details. I'm trying to get a better feel for what is out there – both for playing and reading, and simply to develop better toes with the various hobby factions. Right now I receive three print zines – TAP, off-the-shelf, and Damn The Consequences – and if there ARE any others out there anywhere in the world I'd love to know. Yes, there's Graustark (which I will sub to soon) – is Cheesecake still around? I'm also now seeing the aforementioned Corps Diplomatie and The Blue Nose Special, plus Western Front by email and Boris the Spider on the web...and I've sent an email to Robert Lesco about Northern Flame v2. What else am I missing?

**Deadline For The Next Issue of Eternal Sunshine:
April 5th, 2007 – See You Then!**