

Black Frog



Black Frog



May 22nd, 1981

Volume 3, Number 42

42

1st anniversary and birthday issue.

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Since the first issue of Black Frog was dated on May 17th, 1980, this issue--a year and five days later--becomes the 1st anniversary issue. Since the publisher and editor will be having his birthday on May 26th, it also becomes the birthday issue.

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BLACK FROG is a diplomacy 'zine that emphasizes that Postal Diplomacy is fun to play! The publisher is John H. ('Jack') Masters, 25711 N. Vista Fairways Drive, Valencia, CA 91355. (805) 259-2811.

Subscriptions to BF are 60¢ per issue, with a minimum new sub for ten issues (= \$6.00).

Black Frog features postal Diplomacy with the game results normally carried in the sister 'zine entitled East of Eden. There are currently seven games in progress and one new game will be opening up soon. See EoE for details.

Diplomacy is the registered trade marked name for a multi-player war game invented by Allen Calhamer and currently owned by Avalon Hill, Inc.

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Issue #7 of Black Frog, published on May 17th, 1980 was the first issue to carry the Black Frog. The first 6 issues of the 'zine were unnamed. They were devoted to completing 1977HG an orphaned game from Against the Odds.

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So, I've only put out 36 issues in the first year, instead of 42. What other publisher can claim to having put out 36 issues of a main 'zine during this time period? During the past year, I have also published 9 issues of East of Eden, one issue of Roma and the fake Murd'ring Ministers in December. Yeah Black Frog #13 was an in-house "fake" fake. Issue #24 was Pearl and issue #33 was the "original" Europa Express. Could there possibly be anybody out there who hasn't figured out what issue #41 was?

It has been a lot of work but it has been a lot of fun putting these things out. I hope that the bulk of my

readers have enjoyed getting and reading this thing as much as I have enjoyed publishing it.

It has been a lot of work and I will be cutting back to some extent in the future. East of Eden has helped a lot in this respect. With the game adjudication in EoE, I am able to provide very prompt adjudications with somewhat flexible deadlines. Publication of Black Frog can, then, be a bit more leisurely done. The non-game player does not get a 'zine that is primarily cluttered with games, press and other game related material.

I have tried to do two things with Black Frog: (1) to be innovative and try new things, and (2) keep the thing entertaining avoiding personalities and controversy. To a large extent I have succeeded in this. But not completely. Some people seem to take exception to nearly everything I say or do in the 'zine. Charles Letcher, Brad Wilson, Mark Lew and more recently Bruce Linsey. Still I think most people appreciate and like the Frog. I have no intention of ever trying to please everybody.

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BEST SINGLE ISSUE?

Glenn Overby (Jihad!) published an excellent first anniversary issue in May. Included in it were the Jihad First Anniversary Awards. Diplomacy Digest was named outstanding zine and Lone Star Diplomat as best new zine. Black Frog #23 (the Christmas catalog) was named as one of five best single 'zine issues.

I appreciate the mention Glenn. I know that many readers liked the Christmas Catalog but many others were quite unappreciative of it. Personally I thought that #11 (the "fake" fake), #13 (the Linsey-McKibbin-Rodriguez Letters, #21 (with the Pug Bocarsley story), and #24 (Pearl) were all better issues.

JIHAD! is certainly one of the best 'zines out too. It's worth getting just to see Al Pearson take it on the chin in 1981C (the Jihad press game). Write to Glenn Overby, 23096 Tawas, Hazel Park, MI 48030.

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CONGRATULATIONS TO RON BROWN!!

Ron's wife Char has just given birth to the Brown's 2nd son who will go through life with the name of Andrew Charles Brown. "Andy" was named in honor of Ron's favorite Diplomacy adversary, Andy Lischett of Cheesecake fame. Coming in at over 9 lbs., he is a whopping big kid.

A SALUTE TO VAN NUYS CALIFORNIA: FAKE 'ZINE CAPITOL OF THE UNIVERSE

Have you noticed the debate between Marion Bates (Plague Times) and Al Pearson (Just Among Friends) as to whether Kalhaska, Michigan is, or is not, the trout capitol of the universe? Bernie Sampson (Torpedo) has just proclaimed New Jersey as the toxic waste dump capitol of the United States.

I hearby designate Van Nuys, California as the FAKE 'ZINE CAPITOL OF THE UNIVERSE.

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A VACATION GONE SOUR

Right now, instead of typing this damn 'zine, I am supposed to be on vacation in the Steen Mountains of Oregon. I'm not and I don't know when I'll be leaving. Last week I was in Huntsville, Alabama on a business trip. I returned home late and was drafted into giving a presentation at Lockheed this week, delaying my vacation one week. And now, I have developed a bit of a medical problem that might turn out to be somewhat serious. I will be taking tests over the next two weeks and my vacation will be delayed indefinitely.

On my way back from Alabama, I did stop off and spend a night in Memphis, Tennessee. I gained the material for this issues feature story, "The Chimp that plays Diplomacy" during this short stay in Memphis. It is a rather interesting story and although it is long I hope that John Michalski will read it this time. It is a true story and goes a long way toward proving that "truth is often stranger than fiction".

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NAVEL ORANGE?

I have received a copy of a 'zine from Jean Marie Corfeld entitled Navel Orange. It is worth getting just for the cover which has to be the best looking cover on any 'zine yet. I don't know whether to take this thing serious or not. Jean Marie is offering some very unusual game openings and promises to personally reward the winner of each game. I understand that there has been so much demand for the openings in the "bastard" game that she may have to open several sections of it. For more information, write to Jean Marie Corfeld, 5327 Purington, Ft. Worth, Texas 76112.

I have received this note from Bobby Stephens:

"As you probably know by now, my friend Jean Marie Corfeld has started publishing a Dip 'zine appropriately entitled NAVEL ORANGE. Since I do not think that it would be appropriate for me to place my nomination for Jean Marie in her own 'zine, I am sending my nomination to you, asking that you place it in nomination in your own fine 'zine, BLACK FROG.

As the only qualification for this is that the person be female, Jean Marie is extremely qualified. (Boy, is she qualified!) Of course, I realize that there will be several joke candidates, such as deceased persons (Queen Elizabeth comes to mind) or people who never existed in the first place. And, I understand that Linsey, distraught over Trouble losing the Hobby Mascot election, is waging a campaign to have himself elected Hobby Queen. Also, I'm sure that there will be nominations for some of the old hands, so to speak, in the hobby, persons that have seen brighter times, and persons having nothing novel to add to the hobby (Kathy Byrne comes to mind.)

In my opinion, the Hobby Queen should be capable of carrying the banner of postal Dip in such a manner as to bring even greater glory to our hobby. Someone with a novel approach to postal Dip. Someone that commands the respect and admiration of all people, Dip players or not. Someone that you would not be ashamed to take home to meet mother. And finally, someone that possesses the physical attributes that are expected in all queens.

~~For my money~~ In my opinion, there is only one LADY that is qualified to hold such a position and such an honor. That lady is Jean Marie Corfeld.

I therefore submit her name to you for publication.

Thank you,"

((signed, Bobby Stephens))

((And, thank you Bobby, for the nomination.))

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HOBBY QUEEN UPDATE

The deadline for hobby queen nominations was extended until July 1st. I have received three other nominations that will be published in the next Black Frog.

THE CHIMP THAT PLAYS DIPLOMACY

This is another one of those infamous Black Frog special features. "The Chimp that plays Diplomacy" is a true story that I recently uncovered in my travels about the country.

As almost everybody knows by now, I was in Huntsville, Alabama on business for Lockheed during the week of May 11th. On my way back to Burbank, I changed planes and had a short lay-over in Memphis, Tennessee. Memphis is a rather dull place. Of course you can go have a barbeque at Loeb's (as good a barbeque as you can get anywhere) or you can go over to West Memphis (actually in Arkansas) for the dog races. But, outside of that, what's to do? I decided to look up a hobby member who has a Memphis address. ...

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At the end of Martha Cole Lane, I found a faded brick building with fluted columns and high mesh fences. It looked very much like a school building and even had a flag waving at the top of a whitewashed flagpole. I found myself bending to examine the cornerstone as I walked by. "Martha Cole Grammer School, 1939" it read. But a freshly painted sign over the front door read: "TENNESSEE PRIMATE CENTER."

I walked inside, it was dark and cool. I could see nobody. The halls were lined with lockers and watercolors, the linoleum gleamed. I walked a ways down the hallway and then, when I saw the BOYS' ROOM, I stepped in. The urinals were a foot and a half from the floor. Designed for very small kids I thought. Hardly big enough to hold their little peters without the teachers help, I thought to myself with a smile. I situated myself over one of the urinals and received a strong honest scent of Pine-Sol in my nostrils. At that moment, the door banged open and a chimpanzee shuffled in. He was dressed in shorts, shirt and bow tie. He nodded to me, it seemed, and made a few odd

gestures with his hands as he moved up to the urinal beside mine. Then he opened his fly and pulled out an enormous slick red organ, like a peeled banana. I looked away, embarrassed, but could hear him urinating mightily. The stream hissed against the porcelain like a thunderstorm and rattled the drain as it went down. My own water wouldn't come. I began to feel foolish. The chimp shook himself daintily, zippered up, pulled the plunger, crossed to the sink, washed and dried his hands, and left. I found I no longer had to go.

Out in the hallway the janitor was leaning on his flathead broom. The chimp stood before him gesticulating with manic dexterity: brushing his forehead and tugging his chin, slapping his hands under his armpits, tapping his wrists, his tongue, his ear, his lip. The janitor watched intently. Suddenly after a particularly violent flurry of gestures--the man burst into laughter, rich uncontrolled laughter. The chimp folded his lip and joined in, adding a weird nasal snickering to the janitor's barrel-laugh.

I stood by the door to the BOYS' ROOM in a quandry. I began to think it might be wise to sneak out and then come back in again. But I thought the janitor might see me leaving and think I was stealing paper towels or something. So I stood there, thinking I would have a word with the janitor after the chimp moved on--with the expectation that he might give me some grass-roots insight to what was going on at the end of Martha Cole Lane. But the chimp didn't move on. The two continued laughing, now harder than ever. The janitor's face was tear-streaked. Each time he looked up the chimp produced a gesticular flurry that would stagger him again. Finally the janitor wound down a bit, and still chuckling, held out his hands, palms up. The chimp flung his arms up over his head and then heaved them down again, rhythmically slapping the big palms with his own. "Right on! G.C.," the janitor said, "right on!" The chimp grinned, then hitched up his shorts and sauntered off down the hall. The janitor turned back to his broom, still chuckling.

I cleared my throat. The broom began a geometrically precise course up the hall toward me. It stopped at my toes, the ridge of detritus flush with the toes of my Nikes. The janitor looked up. The pupil of his right eye was fixed in the corner, beneath the lid, and the white was red. There was an ironic gap between his front teeth. "Kin ah do sumfin fo yo, mah good man?" he said.

"I'm waiting to see your director," I said. It was the only thing that I could think to say.

"Do ya mean Doctor Leaking or Jane Goodsome?"

"Mz Goodsome," I replied. Again off the top of my head.

"Ohhh, Miz Goodsome," he said, nodding his head. "Fust ah thought yo was thievin paypuh towels outen de Boys' Room but den when ah sees yo standin dere rigid as de Venus de Milo ah tinks to mahself dat yo must be some kinda new sculpture dat de students done made up." He was squinting up at me and grinning like we'd just come back from sailing around the world together.

"That's a nice broom," I said, trying to start up a conversation.

He looked at me steadily, grinning still. "Yo's wonderin what me and G.C. was jivin bout up dere, ain't yo? Well, ah tells yo: he was relatin some of de hoomerous press dat he done wrote for 79HO." He shook his head and chortled. "Yes in-deedy, dat G.C. sure am quite de wit."

I was beginning to feel a sense of outrage coming over me. "You mean to tell me you actually understand all that lip-pulling and finger-waving? And what about this 79HO, that sounds like a postal diplomacy game."

"Oh sartinly, mah good man. Dat ASL."

"What?"

"ASL is what we was talkin. A-merican Sign Language. De-veloped for de deaf n dumb. Yo sees, G.C. is sumfin ob a genius roun' here. He can commoonicate de mos esoteric idees in bof ASL and Yerkish. He can also respond to, write and type in English, French, German and Korean. He is especially proud of dat Korean. Fack, is was Miz Goodsome was tellin' me dat G.C. is workin' right now on a Korean translation ov de works of Victor Hugo. Les Miserables and The Hunchback of Notre Dame into Korean. And dat's some pretty heavy shit, Jackson."

I was now hot with outrage. "Bull!" It was the only thing that I could think to say.

"No need in feelin' personally threatened by G.C.'s chievements, mah good fellow--yo got to ree-lize dat he am a genius."

I turned to leave. I had heard enough of this. The janitor caught me by the shirtsleeve. "Oh yes, he do play dat postal dippy game and he damn good at it too. Pubs his

own 'zine too, ah miht add."

Stunned as I was, I was thinking. G.C. I thought, those are the same initials as the diplomacy player that I had come to look up. "What does this 'G.C.' stand for?" I asked.

"Dats joost his name," the janitor replied. Actually he used to be called Goodsome's Chimpanzee, but we shortened it long ago to joost G.C."

My mind was now turning a mile a minute. I had to find out more. Gradually a plan formed in my mind and I put it to work.

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Jane Goodsome was out for the afternoon, but I was able to talk to her by phone. I told her that I was in Memphis on behalf of the TV show That's Incredible and was checking into a story we had heard about G.C. I wanted to check out the story and if it were true we might want to run it on That's Incredible. I absolutely had to be back in Burbank tomorrow, so it would be mandatory that I see her that night. Jane seemed to be anxious for possible exposure of her chimp on TV and agreed to meet me for dinner that night.

I had to phone Lockheed and invent an excuse for staying over. I phoned and said that I had stumbled onto an important contact for graphite prepreg in Memphis and needed another day to check it out. Ultimately I would have to do a lot of explaining, but in the meantime I had another day to check out G.C., Jane Goodsome and the Martha Cole Lane connection.

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Mz Goodsome met me for dinner at Justine's, which is probably the finest French restaurant in Memphis and quite a change from Loeb's Barbeque. I met her in the lobby and she was quite familiar at first sight. It was not until somewhat later that I realized that she was the same person who had been illustrated as "Martha Cole" posed with the hobby mascot candidate named "Lepanto" as a promotion in the mascot election.

Jane was a very attractive woman, but displayed little or poor grooming. She wore no make-up whatsoever. Her black hair was long and coarse and showed only the very slightest indications of combing. Then there was this strange odor. I finally placed it, she smelt like the San Diego Zoo.

It turned out that Jane was a vegetarian, or fruitarian as she preferred being called. It was a bit discomfoting to down a half-bucket of cherry-stone clams and then an excellent entre of cog-a-vin in front of her. But she didn't seem to mind. She dined on a fruit salad that was served in half of a small watermelon with an apricot glaze.

As for the information that I wanted from her. Well it was hard to pull it out. It seemed that the Tennessee Primate Center was operating on limited funds and that she was anxious for any sort of publicity or cash remuneration that the foundation might get from exposure on That's Incredible, but she really didn't want to release very much information about G.C. and particularly about his involvement in postal diplomacy.

She wanted to talk about G.C. certainly. Even told how he was working night shifts in the Memphis Post Office to help make ends meet for the Primate Center. She also wanted to talk about his Korean translations of Victor Hugo, about the revisions he was doing to Darwin's classical study, The Descent of Man, about how he was an accomplished pianist and had scored several operas. But, I didn't want to hear all of this, I wanted to learn about his involvement in postal Diplomacy and kept bringing the subject back to this.

Over the course of dinner and dessert (crepes ala dixie en flambeau) I was able to get quite a bit of information, e.g.: G.C. has been in the postal hobby since 1979 when he first started in a strange variant "radio" game where the seven players did not know each others identity and negotiated with each other in code. G.C. thought that this was best at the time because his communication skills were not as developed at the time. Since then, however, he has improved considerably in communications and competes in regular Diplomacy games. He has done fairly well in all his games and even prides himself that he has never been eliminated from any position. In the past year he even developed a computerized voice synthesizer and can talk to the fellow players over the phone. The voice he has synthesized was patterned after Mr. Gibbons (the janitor at the Primate Center) and utilized a very heavy "southern" accent. After the Primate Center had received a Xerox machine as a donation last fall, G.C. became very determined to pub his own 'zine. Before he actually started pubbing his own, however, he produced a couple of "fakes" of other 'zines. Presumably doing this in order to prove to himself, Jane and Dr. Leaking that he was capable of

publishing a 'zine, before he started on his own. Jane, also told me that G.C. really loved the "press" aspect of his games and once got very angry with a GM who deleted his press for one season. But beyond these revelations, I could not get much out of her.

The main question that was burning in my mind was what name (or names) did G.C. use to play and publish in the hobby. (I was dead certain that nobody was currently playing under "G.C." or even "Goodsome's Chimpanzee".) Jane would not divulge this information to me, other than the fact that G.C. was playing under an assumed name. For one thing he was afraid that his positions might be irrevocably damaged if the other players were to find out they were playing against a chimp. For another he could not offer proof of identity for his assumed name and he was a little paranoid about this. This was especially so because he had once been accused (or rather his assumed name was accused) of being a pseudonym of Bernie Oaklyn. As it turned out this accusation was all in fun and appeared in a "fake" issue of Brutus Bulletin--never having been intended to be taken seriously. But G.C. suffered by it and became a bit paranoid as a result. John Boardman actually threw him out of Graustark as a result. Jane then quoted one of G.C.'s favorite expressions: "John Boardman is the only one in the hobby who is a bigger monkey than myself".

I asked Jane if G.C.'s assumed hobby name might have those same initials--G.C. But she would neither confirm nor deny this. It was clear that she was going to supply no more information in this direction.

In regard to the name of G.C.'s 'zine, she was even more silent. My questions in this area were getting me nowhere. In addition, I had stretched several cups of coffee as far as I could after dessert. Jane was getting impatient and anxious to leave. I couldn't keep her here any longer. Reluctantly I paid our \$42.84 bill, left \$2.16 as a tip and followed Jane out.

Tomorrow, I would be flying back to Burbank--without the information that I wanted unless unless. Yes, a plan had formed in my mind. I would seduce Jane and, while I was at it, I would get the rest of the information I wanted from her.

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I got Jane back to my hotel room at the Admiral Benbow (did you think I would be staying at the Holiday Inn) by suggesting that she might want to look at one of the standard contracts for appearances on That's Incredible.

Back in the room, I called room service for two orders of asparagus tips vinaigrette and a bottle of Pomerol Sauvignon Blanc. Jane sat before the air conditioner, her hair like a urinal mop, stinking. She was dressed in jeans and sweatshirt--undoubtedly her work cloths--there were yellow stains on her sleeves. I looked at her and thought of the lower depths of animal cages, beneath the floor meshing. "Would you like to take a bath and freshen up while we are waiting on room service," I asked. "I don't take baths," she answered. "They make you smell like a coupon in a detergent box. It's unnatural, unhealthy."

Room service arrived, but I had lost my appetite. I glanced at the tab; \$42.00. I couldn't help but wonder how I was going to cover all of this on my \$20.00 per day per diem from Lockheed.

I poured a water glass of wine, held it to my face and inhaled it. A moment later, I took Jane by the hand and pulled her over next to me on the bed.

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Jane turned out to have some kind of animalistic instincts and was not bad at all. Damn good as a matter of fact.

Later, we layed together on the bed, my hand was across Jane's belly. I was suddenly startled to see an insect flit from its cover, skate up the swell of her abdomen, and bury itself in her navel.

"My gosh," I said as I quickly sat up.

"Hmm?" asked Jane, aroused by my actions.

"A bug .. er vermin of some sort," I said. "It just went in your navel."

Jane sat up, plucked the thing from its cachette, raised it to her lips and popped it between her front teeth. "Louse," she said, sucking it down. "Went down to the old age home in Collierville to pick them up," She noted the strange expression on my face and then added, "There for G.C., so he can experience a tangible gratification of his social impulses during the grooming ritual. You know; you scratch my back, I scratch yours."

I layed back down and tried to sleep. I thought about Jane and imagined that I could hear the lice crawling across her scalp or nestling their bloody little siphons in the tufts under her arms.

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Pounding at the door aroused me from my slumber. I noticed that it was still dark as I pulled some clothing around me and went to the door. "Who's there?" I asked. No answer. I turned the latch and the door exploded in my face knocking me back and into the table. Then I saw G.C. He was dressed in a pair of baggy BVDs. In an instant he was on top of me and then hit me like the grill on a Mack truck. I spun across the room, tumbling lamps and chairs as I went. I ended up in a corner, under the TV. G.C. jumped on the bed and made frantic gestures at Jane who was by now very awake and appeared frightened. She pulled a sheet around her and followed G.C. outside.

I tried to pull myself up, but fell back unconscious.

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My face felt cold and wet. I opened my eyes and looked up. The man's face was very wrinkled, his hair was snow white, he looked so very old. He was dabbing my face with a wet washcloth. "You must be Dr. Leaking," I said.

"Young man," he began. I sat up, I hadn't been called "young man" for a long long time. "Please leave Memphis and never return," he went on.

"What?" I was wide awake now.

"It is very possible that you have destroyed five years of my research efforts."

"Just a minute," I tried to protest.

"All of the great things that we have been able to accomplish with G.C.," he continued, "are because of the trust that he was able to develop for Jane Goodsome. Do you have any idea how hard it is for a chimpanzee to fully trust a human being? Well it took Jane over four years to develop G.C.'s trust. I may not have another five years in me in order to do it again. Now do you have anything to say for yourself, young man?"

"Maybe you shouldn't have let him play postal Diplomacy," I countered. "It is a very violent game."

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Well I made it back to Burbank and even home to Valencia. The story of G.C., Jane Goodsome and Martha Cole Lane will have to end at this point. I can pursue it no further.

As to G.C. identity in the hobby? Well, I think I know who he is, but the evidence is all circumstantial and I am not going to point an accusing finger. However, the reader may, if he so desires, make his own judgement about that from the clues in my story.