

BEEN THERE, DONE THAT

Been There, Done That is an approximately monthly postal gaming zine mostly devoted to the play of Diplomacy and its variants, but including the play of other PBM games. BT,DT has just been liberated from subzinehood in "the Wrapper," or as it is otherwise known, Mark Lilleleht's The Scribblerist. It will, however, continue as an electronically distributed subzine to Ken Hill's The Armchair Diplomat. Got that?

BT,DT is available from the editor/publisher, Tom Nash, who resides at 5512 Pilgrim Road, Baltimore MD, 21214. (301) 254-2836 (don't call between 9 and 10 PM, It's my daughter's bedtime!). CIS PPN - 74676,3310. The cost is .75/issue, or \$6/10 issues. All players and current standbys will continue to get the zine free, for now. Letters and articles will earn sub credit at the rate of .75/page. So play and/or write, and you get the damn thing free! Trades are actively solicited, but I am probably already trading with you for the Zine Register. Hey, that's cool, send me two copies of your zine so I have more for those hungry novices who request the North American Zine Bank sample!

Currently feuding with: Steve Smith, Jeff McKee, Mark Lilleleht, and Ron Cameron. Jason Bergmann and Tim Moore are getting dangerously close! What a bunch of dorks!

Current proof of my insanity: Abandoning the safe cocoon of subzinedom and launching this at the same time I take on the Zine Register AND am one month shy of the arrival of baby number two! What a dweeb!

Unless you one of the 30 or so people who received BT,DT as an independent zine all along, you are getting this as a sample, including those lucky subbers to The Wrapper who've come to rely on it. Hey, I won't hold that against you! Sub, play or trade anyway! I ain't proud!

And concluding the longest colophon I've ever seen, Diplomacy was invented by Allan Calhauer and is distributed by Avalon-Hill, but you already knew that, didn't you?

Oh yeah. I almost forgot. BT,DT is a Brat Pack publication!

Game Openings

Regular Dip: Opening one more. 1 signed up (Hoffman), 6 needed.

Gunboat: Will open one game. 4 signed up, 3 needed.

Railway Rivals: Will open two games. Spain map, 5-6 needed; and the Chesapeake and Ohio map, 3-4 needed. Maps will be provided (I'll get 'em from Connie). Nobody signed up yet.

Postal Kremlin: 4-5 needed.

Purest Dip: 1 interested (Smith), 2 signed up (Hoffman, Reynolds).

Game Fee is \$5 for all games.

Number 6

June, 1989

LETTERS

Al Tabor: "Fugs, hmmm, let's see --- 1) Tuli Kupferburg (who could forget that name.) 2) Ed Sanders (who, among other better known accomplishments, went on to publish a zine himself called, if my memory serves me well, Cattle Killer Digest. He toured around investigating the mysterious midwestern cattle mutilations for a year or two. I kid you not.) 3) I can picture this guy but just can't remember his name."

"It'd be no big problem to track down the third guy but I hesitate. I figure let's do this like free-climbing, ie relying only on what my poor brain itself contains."

((A), two for three ain't bad. Tuli Kupferberg and Ed Sanders are right. Third guy, is, was?, I believe, Ken Weaver. Before the Cattle Mutilation thing, Sanders lived underground in the Southern California area doing research on the Manson family which led to the first fairly authoritative book on the subject, "The Family;" which he saw as a sort of penance since in the mid-60s he advocated the free and liberal use of LSD by anyone and everyone. He later came to see the Manson phenomenon as the dark underbelly of that position. He was also a founder, editor, publisher of the East Village Other, perhaps the first, and certainly the best, 60s underground newspaper (or as we would call it today, zine); and the author of one of the funniest collections of short stories in existence, "Tales of Beatnik Glory." (This is really a great book. Find it, if you can!)).

Kupferberg's main post-Fug claim to fame was a clever book of photographs of famous and semi-famous people alongside childhood photographs, the name of which escapes me now.

Back then, I always thought of the Mothers of Invention as a 3rd rate, west coast imitation of the Fugs.))

Al Tabor, again: "I liked the Ed Sanders update. It was your remarks on music and growing up that gave me the Fug idea. I figured, given proclivities and proximity, they had to be a part of your youth. I grew up in a different world, ie a small town in South Dakota. (Actually the town of 5000 people was considered a decent sized city and is actually the 10 or 12th largest in South Dakota. In high school I was a city kid.) I had to work hard to get music. Strong formative influences were the Mother's Freak Out which we played at all different speeds and, yes, backwards, a painfully weird Spooky Tooth album, lots of Doors, Dr. John's Gris Gris, Velvet Underground's early albums particularly the banana record and White Light, White Heat, and, of course, Bathing at Baxters. I share your opinion of the later. It was the best. And hearing it in SD (though I love the place) was a lot like listening to it in a sensory deprivation tank. For example, it's pitch dark with stars from horizon to horizon above totally flat land of corns fields and your listening to The End from the back seat of a much used 52 Mercury. If your a teenager the only real parts of the environment are the car and the tunes."

"I've been getting Perelandra, and your playlists in the crazy game ((Deviant Dip - Ed.)) have fueled most of my GM oriented press. The music selection was frightening. Setting aside the Bulgarian stuff, you were hitting personal favorites every time. Pere Ubu! Virgin Beauty!? I couldn't believe it. So what's a nice guy like you doing mixed up with a game like this?"

((Well that's a long story. See I dropped out of college in '72 after one semester, and was on my way to Nepal, so I moved to Milwaukee to live with my best friend and work on the docks... oops, wrong story! Well, see, I was computer illiterate, computer phobic, and not happy about it. So in '84 I

bought a PCjr (groan). One day when buying games for it, I picked up Computer Diplomacy. I'd heard of the game before and it looked like fun. But I was never able to find 6 other people so it sat on the shelf for 2 years. Then, in the PCjr Forum of CompuServe, someone organized a Dip game. Lo and behold, we discovered the Dip section of the Gamer's Forum, and The Armchair Diplomat, so the game was housed there and Ken GMed. It was my first Dip game. I got France and won in 1907. Well, this is easy I thought, and signed up for a few more games. Somewhere along the way I became, uh... obsessed, and wanted to read more than "The Gamer's Guide" so I left an innocent message on CIS asking if anyone knew of a magazine devoted to Dip or anything like that. Russ Blau responded with the addresses of Dip World, The Zine Register, and the Zine Bank. The rest is predictable, I guess, and my wife's never forgiven Russ.))

Mike Morris: "Tom - I'm glad my advanced age makes you feel young! Yes, '71 was a wonderful year. I had hair halfway down my back, and not one of them grey! I've been working my mind over the "name the fugs" contest, but all I can come up with are two of the three, Ed Sanders and Tull Kupferberg, and I don't even know if I've got Tull's last name quite right. BTW, I saw the Fugs in person, at the Avalon Ballroom in San Francisco, in '67. Their big hit of the evening was one of the original "rap" pieces, twenty years ahead of it's time, called "Donkey Puke from the White House" (hope this gets by the CIS censors). The Fugs were all right, but hey, the *real* class of the late 60's was Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention. Suzie Creamcheese, what's got into you?"

Alan Tabor (Yet Again): "Mike, I have to disagree. I think that Zappa is by far the best musician and has developed well beyond the level the Fugs achieved. But I thin the Fugs were better right off the line. They used a remarkable range of musical styles. On the Fugs topic. Anyone have any idea if they're reappearing on CD? Lots of the old stuff seems to be. Rhino just released the 1st 4 Kink's records, remastered onto CDs and I just scored a couple of Etta James' early records the same way plus some Mitch Ryder. This is the music forum isn't it?"

((Mike, hah! I stumped you AND Al! You both got Sanders and Tull Kupferberg, but both missed Ken Weaver. Probably the least accomplished, least known, and least weird of the 3. We could probably debate Fugs vs. Mothers for months. I always thought the Mothers were a pale but blatant rip-off of the Fugs true originality. But, obviously, better musicians. I saw them (Fugs) once or twice in '67 at the Village Theatre in NYC, what later became the Fillmore East. The big hits that evening were "Slim Goddess" and "Saran Wrap," the latter an early ode to safe sex with a cheap alternative to condoms. My personal favorite was Ed Sanders' setting of the poetry of William Blake to discordant rock music with a country twist. Of course, the psychopharmacology had to be just right to really appreciate it... Al - I've never seen any Fugs on CD, although all the early Mothers stuff recently came out. My hunch is there isn't enough of a market to justify the cost.))

Steve Smith: "Just got around to reading all of the letters in BT,DT. It looks like you are getting a great cross section of PBM and PBEM players. Its amazing how divergent or isolated the two groups are. I have been seeing several references to Kreslin. Is it any good? Is it well suited to PBM?"

"Who is the Hoffman in the Ello? I am wondering if he is from the Chicago area, if he is the same guy who I played ftf with, the same guy who has never uttered an honest word in his life."

"I think it your idea of starting up your own zine is a good idea though I will admit I would probably only subscribe to the paper version to keep up on the hobby news. Haven't even subbed to Jeff's zine though I might. PBM stuff is too slow for me. Jeff has a good idea in going with 2 1/2 week deadlines though."

"One of these days when I get rich from the popcorn business I will sit down and write some pathetic press for you. Right now I barely have enough time to keep up with all of the necessary diplomatic propaganda."

((Kremlin is to me currently what Dip was for those two years it sat on my shelf and I couldn't find anyone to play it with. After reading numerous positive comments and reviews I splurged and picked it up. That was about 4 months ago and I've yet to play! It was my primary goal at both DixieCon and CloneCon, but both times I was in the wrong place at the wrong time and missed the Kremlin action. I just started a game in Don Del Grande's Life of Monty and it appears to be well suited for PBM. I'll know more soon.

No, the Hoffman in Elio is not from the Chicago area, at least not recently. It's the ubiquitous Karl Hoffman who is to my PBM life what you, sirrah, are to my PBEM life. He's in well over 50% of the games I'm in, or at least it seems that way. Some as an ally, some as an enemy, and some I haven't figured out yet. Karl lives in Allentown, PA, and has a dream. A simple dream really, but no less meaningful for that. Karl's dream, which he will allow no expense, no blow to his already moribund social life, no doubts as to his rationality to stop, is to be in more Diplomacy games than Vince Lutterbie, than John Crosby, than Jim Diehl, than... dare I even say it, yes MORE DIP GAMES than Melinda Holley herself. He's getting closer by the day!))

Bill Hunter: "No Press but a little letter! I'd like to make a few comments on playing Diplomacy with Steve Smith. Playing diplomacy with Steve reminds me of the old joke about the farmer who was on his way home after the wedding with his new bride in their horse and buggy. Part way home the horse stumbled. The farmer said "That's once". His wife just looked at him. A mile down the road the horse stumbled again. "That's twice" the farmer said. Again his wife just looked. Then the horse stumbled again. Without a word the farmer reached behind the seat and grabbed his shotgun. BLAMM, one dead horse. "What was that for?" his wife screeched. "That was a perfectly good horse. Do you know how much a horse costs?" The farmer looked at her. "That's once". C42 ((1988AO)), that's once. Choo Choo, that's twice Steve! <grin>"

((No need to soften the blow with the "grin" in brackets Bill. Once again, as in your decision to help me win C42 against Smith's efforts, you are showing extremely good judgement and wisdom here. Yes, you are right. Absolutely. That's exactly what it's like playing Dip with Mr. Smith, the leisure suit Lucifer. And the more right minded Dip players realize this and can accept it, the better off the Hobby will be. I am doing my part in C53. Other right minded Dipsters should do theirs too.))

Eric Brosius: "Thanks for the last BTDT. I'd be glad to buy it with "The Wrapper" removed, but you aren't gonna fool me would the old "would you sub? At what price?" play! I have ways to counter that, like this: I'll send you \$3 and you send me as much BTDT as you think I should get for three dollars. So there."

"Of course the Poll measures a subjective quality. Is there anyone who thinks otherwise? I think the amount of analysis Bruce prints is less than you think. I counted only 12 pages in last year's Cream, and of that a large part consists of hobby history and zine plugs in disguise. What there

is a lot of raw data, but this allows people who want more info about a zine to get it. For example, it's pretty clear that a zine whose histogram looks like:

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o o o ooooo is more controversial than one that looks like:

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ooooo even if their means are the same."

"The two sections of Cream I could personally do without are the photocopies of all the awards (just print one Bruce, I get the picture!) and the Hobby Health Index. But they don't hurt anybody and I don't complain about them."

"Here's a radical suggestion for postal Empire Builder: triple the movement allowance of all trains! The something odd about a game in which the track construction gangs move faster than the trains. I'd like to hear what you and others think of this. The main effect of the change would be to reduce the number of turns required to play the game. It would also require a bit more in the way of planning, but I don't think this would be bad. Perhaps one could also reduce the effect of disasters by making them apply only to the first third of a train's move. I know this would change the game; do you think it would improve it?"

((There's only one way to find out... someone will just have to GM, or is the correct expression TM, a game played that way! The nice thing is it won't take 3 years to find out. The game would go fast, so we'd know soon if it was a success or not. Especially for PBM play I think the rule would make it a better game simply by speeding it up so much. Choo choo games (not to be confused with the game Choo Choo Coleman) don't require much negotiation, so the faster they go, the more my attention is maintained, and thus, the more fun I have. Paul Gardner's 10 day deadline "speed games" of Railway Rivals are wonderful in this regard.))

"Would your Gunboat opening have press? ((yes.)) I agree with Jeff that Gunboat is much less work than Dip, and I agree with you that it's not the same game. But GB with press is an odd hybrid I'm not sure I like as much."

Jimmy Williams: "Hey, McKee, the poor dear, did do us all a BIG FAVOR and print something at length by you in MetaDip. Ya know, I've NEVER SEEN anything by you where you "hold forth" upon a subject - you did very well and I am moved on that account to write you about how splendidly you came off. Really, Littleliver never pubs much by you, and BTDT well, somehow... well ya know, McKee makes more sense outside his zine... know whatta mean? Maybe its the deliberate attempt to get a point across."

((McKee makes no sense anywhere, anytime. Get that straight, eh Jim? By printing ex subzine, "Nash Rants," and the editorial you mention on "Why I hate Gunboat" he has made The MetaDiplomat palatable. Barely. Problem: in return I am coerced into printing his drivel, "McKee Raves" here. Oh well, no free lunch and all that. MD #2 will feature my opus "Why I hate Tournament Diplomacy."))

THE WAKE UP CALL FOR RUSSIA COMES A BIT TOO LATE! GERMANY, ITALY, AND TURKEY BURY THE HATCHET... UNFORTUNATELY FOR JEFF, IT'S IN HIS BACK! ENGLISH AND FRENCH STRUGGLE ON, BUT ONE ENGLISH FLEET GETS A BIT LOST.

England (Bill Hunter): A BRE-Pic; F NAT-Eng(lap).
 France (Mike Morris): F Por-MID; F SPA(sc) S F Por-Mid; A GAS-Par.
 Germany (Steve Smith): A Ber-PRU; A SIL S A Mun-Boh; A Mun-BOH; A Swe-FIN;
 A TRL S A Ven-Tri; A Den-SWE; F NTH S A Lon-Yor;
 A Lon-YOR; A PAR-Pic.
 Italy (Susan Welter): F Nap-TYN; A Rom-APU; A Tus-VEN; A Ven-TRI; A SER S
 A Ven-Tri; F Tri-ADR.
 Russia (Jeff McKee): A Arm-SYR; A SEV-Arm; A BUD S A Rum; A RUM S A Bud;
 A VIE S A Bud; A WAR H; A StP-LVA; F NWY H; F EDI H.
 Turkey (Al Tabor): F AEG C A Gre-Say; A Gre-SMY; A BUL-Rum; F Ank-ARM;
 F BLA S F Ank-Arm.

Units By Owner, Summer, 1905:

England: A Bre F Nat
 France : F Mid F Spa(sc) A Gas
 Germany: A Pru A Sil A Boh A Fin A Tri A Swe F Nth A Yor A Par
 Italy : F Tyn A Apu A Ven A Tri A Ser F Adr
 Russia : A Syr A Sev A Bud A Rum A Vie A War A Lva F Nwy F Edi
 Turkey : F Aeg A Say A Bul F Arm F Bla

Bill Hunter has returned as England, as expected. Thanks to Jason Bergmann for standing by.

PRESS:

(Con-all) Pressed to justify his lack of communication, the Turkish Minister of Information cited the lack of presiprocity, said the world situation seemed depressed in general, and promised to improve presently if given the opportunity.

GM-Con: I can dig it. Man. I get lazy too sometimes.

Ber-Mos: Wake up Jeff, it's time to get up. Am I going to have to come in there and drag you out of bed? Come on sleepy head, it's time to wake up. It's hard to ally with a guy who never responds to any of his mail.

GM-Ber: So hard, I take it, that you decided to forego the effort?

Fall/Winter 1905 moves are due July 1, 1989.

Elio Chacon

1989J

Fall 1902

AUSTRIANS, FRENCH, NOT TOO HAPPY. MUNICH STAYS GREEN, BUT GERMANS DON'T MIND AS THEY TAKE SWEDEN INSTEAD. TURKEY MOVES WEST. ENGLISH FLEETS CONFUSED AGAIN. RUSSIAN PORNOGRAPHIC PRESS MACHINE COOLS OFF. BALKANS REMAIN HOT SPOT.

Summer 1902:

English F Nwy retreats to Nrg. Italian A Mun retreats to Ruh.

Fall 1902:

Austria (Jim Nickel): A VIE-Tri; F Gre-Bul(sc); A Ser S A Vie-Tri;
 (ret: Alb, OTB); A Gal-BUD.

England (Bill Hunter): F NRG-Nwy; F NTH S F Nrg-Nwy; A BEL S A Kie-
 France (Tim Moore): Ruh(NSO); F ENG S A Bel-Pic(NSO).
 F Mid-IRI; A SPA-Mar; A Pic-BRE; A Bur S A
Spa-Mar(ret: Gas, Pic, Par, or OTB).
 Germany (George Rifle): F Den-SWE; A Kie-DEN; A HOL S (English) A Bel;
 A Mun-BUR; A MAR S A Mun-Bur.
 Italy (Vince Lutterbie): A RUH S (German) A Mun-Bur; A TRI S (Turkish).
 A Bul-Ser; A VEN S A Tri; F ION-Gre; F Tyn-LYO;
 F WES-Spa(sc).
 Russia (Jimmy Williams): A STP S F Nwy; A War-GAL; A Mos-LVA; F NWY S
 (German) F Den-Swe.
 Turkey (Karl Hoffman): A Arn-SEV; F BLA S A Arn-Sev; A Bul-SER; A RUH S
 A Bul-Ser; F CON-Bul(sc).

Centers By Owner, Fall 1902:

Austria: Loses Ser. Has Vie, Gre, Bud. 3 (-1)
 England: Gains Bel. Loses Nwy. Has Lon, Lvp, Edi. 4 (even)
 France : Has Spa, Por, Par, and Bre. 4 (even)
 Germany: Gains Swe. Has Mar, Hol, Ber, Den, Kle. 6 (+1)
 Italy : Has Rom, Nap, Ven, Mun, Tri, and Tun. 6 (even)
 Russia : Gains Nwy. Loses Swe and Rum. Has Mos, War, and StP. 4 (-1)
 Turkey : Gains Ser and Rum. Has Ank, Con, Smy, Sev, and Bul. 7 (+2)

Winter Adjustments due:

Austria removes 1, or retreats A Ser OTB and even.
 England is even.
 France is even, or retreats A Bur OTB and builds one.
 Germany builds one.
 Italy is even.
 Russia is even (was playing one short).

PRESS:

Fra-E/G/I: Three invaders, one throne... who will get to sweep the stables?
 Fra-Ger: Come on George! Germany can't vacillate forever.
 GM-Fra: You're quite right. He didn't. Too bad.
 Fra-Ita: Is the Iberian Compact in place? What kind of exotic anesthesia
 did you bring with you?
 Fra-Eng: Your silence angers me! Prepare.
 Italy-Austria: This is almost painful - if you want sanctuary just let me
 know how and where - you've got it.
 Vince-Jimmy: I'll bet you've really pissed England off this time and no
 amount of well oiled and supple talk will get you out of his mind. What the
 hell do you mean you will raise VIENNA and buddies above all nations? Are
 you willing to be the first to be lowered? C'mon Jimmy - go for somebody's
 home center - just once - it'll give ya a thrill and then you get to figure
 out how to keep it.
 Tom-Vince: Home centers just don't do it when ya got your mind set on well-
 oiled and supple ... uh... well, whatever, as long as it's well-oiled and
 supple.
 Italy-France: How about this Rifle guy? Is he tough or what? ((GM: that's
 what living off the Jersey Turnpike does to ya)) He's got absolutely no one
 totally pissed at him - heck, you might even have to kiss his butt to keep
 a dot ((provided it's well-oiled and supple, of course)). He's no novice -
 he's the Bad Boys in disguise using nice press and good diplomacy.
 Italy-Germany: You realize Munich's gonna change hands more times than a
 whore's tits, don't ya? ((Vince, Vince... this is family zine! None of that
 kind of language, unless it's well oiled and supple)).

Lutterbie-Nash: We are the new Bad Boys - just sneakier...

Nash-Lutterbie: Huh? I haven't used any illicit drugs in over 10 years. I don't own a Mac, I think how Michael Hopcroft spends his time and money is nobody's business but his own, and I'm only lukewarm on New Order. How can I be a Bad Boy? No, Vincent, I am not a Bad Boy, I am a member in good standing, the best standing in fact, of the ubiquitous Brat Pack. And like it, or know it for that matter, or not, so are you! But hey, the water's fine, and so's the company: Moore, Reynolds, Jaxon, Gabel, Bergmann, Todd, Klein, Kent, Ericson, Shenck, even McKee and Littleliver. We're taking over, so tell the old farts to move over and move out!

Mos-((unspecified)): In Dip, it's not what you know, but who you know, and you gotta kiss ass with your mouth open.

Mos-Par: Soon, my Lord France, we will clasp each other in brotherly embrace at Mun and Ven. But first we must settle who gets Con.

Autumn retreats, Winter builds, and Spring 1903 moves are due July 15. Seasons can be separated by request of a majority of players.

The BT.DT Interview: Conrad von Metzke

Since the idea of doing what started out as a subzine came to me, it was linked with the idea of celebrating the personalities of Dipdom. What better way than with some brief interviews to let people get to know some of those personalities better. The first BT.DT interviewee was supposed to be Ken Hill, editor and publisher of The Archair Diplomat, but he never sent back his answers to the questions. My next choice was Uncle Connie, around almost from the beginning of the hobby, someone who's played virtually every role that there is to be played, who's gotten over involved and burned out in a flame of mixed glory and disappointment, only to reappear later in yet a new role. Connie sent the answers back along with the announcement that he has folded Costaguana, again. It is the first formal fold I have suffered through as a member of the hobby, and one that would have probably saddened me considerably, if it weren't for the fact that one of the things I've learned since being around is that somehow, in some way, Connie, and probably Costa too, will be back.

BTDT: How did you get into the Postal Dip hobby?

CvM: I'm certainly glad you brought that topic up Tom, because it touches on one of the major issues confronting us in the world today.

As far as I've been able to figure out, my postal involvement derives from a letter I wrote to the then manufacturer, Games Research of Boston, asking for a rules clarification. Apparently they kept my name in their files - either that or Allan Calhaver did, as he's the one who replied to the letter. Anyway, it seems that in late 1964 Steve Cartier, a sci-fi fan and would-be games publisher in Los Angeles, wrote to Games Research or Calhaver asking for help in developing a mailing list, and when he got their mailing lists he sent out sample copies of the first issue of WILD 'N' WOOLY. I was utterly fascinated, and three months later launched COSTA.

The only problem with this story is that Steve insists he did not write GRI for names. I think he's lying. There is no other possible way he could have heard of me. But I can't prove it, and if Steve really is snowing me, he's been doing it consistently with a straight face for quarter of a century.

BTDT: What's been the most enjoyable part of it for you?

CvM: The people - most of them anyway. The meeting of fine minds; the creation and maintenance of a forum for sharing ideas and disagreements in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Sounds pompous, but it really isn't. To

me, the games are merely a reason for being present when the personalities reveal themselves. I've made some lifelong friends through this hobby, and of course it's always nicer if we get to meet once in awhile, but it isn't always essential. In any case, whenever things drift toward mere gamesplaying, I quickly lose interest.

BTDT: How about the most frustrating aspect?

CvM: Two things: 1) The occasional disruptive person who seems hell-bent on causing trouble where none is needed; 2) My own inability to maintain a consistent publishing presence.

BTDT: How were you first introduced to Diplomacy?

CvM: In late 1961 I saw a classified ad in the old SATURDAY REVIEW offering to sell the game. My friend Rod Walker was fascinated when I showed the ad to him, and he ordered a copy; when it arrived, it caught on immediately and pretty well took over my life from then until about 1978.

BTDT: Say a few words on your view of the "State of the Hobby." What are the major problems we face?

CvM: I am desperately worried about recruitment of newer people. I have the nagging feeling that Avalon-Hill is going to chop the game from their lists soon, and when they do, I think this hobby's days are numbered. We have never developed (and frankly, I'm not sure it's possible to develop) an effective recruitment program for "new blood" that does not rely on flyers in the game sets and, obviously, the continued availability of game sets in the shops. To make matters worse, I see a trend away from the popularity of so-called "war" games in general, such that convention attendance is down sharply, clubs are fewer and membership thinner, and the fascination seems to be with financial and "participation" games. Maybe that's inevitable, considering how long it's been since we had a war; I really don't think it's coincidence that the high-water mark of postal Dip came during the Vietnam debacle.

I also have problems with some of the viciousness and vituperation that comes from certain hobby quarters, but this problem has been with us (with different participants) for twenty years. Probably I worry too much, because most of the people who indulge in this sort of thing lose interest and drop away once they stop getting the attention they crave. But I know full well that any number of people have washed their hands of postal gaming when the acrimony got to be too much for them, and that's too bad. For whatever reason, most postal hobbies are not routinely afflicted by this syndrome; why ours is, is a great mystery to me, but my feeling is that in fact all postal hobbies have their moments, (given the nature of humans) but have better mechanisms to deal with them. Whatever, I feel this element will always serve to keep the hobby ranks a little thinner than they need to be.

BTDT: Advice to the novice to the hobby?

CvM: Disregarding the "how to play the game" advice, my thoughts are: 1) Don't get obsessive and overdo it at first; join a maximum of two games and don't join another until the first have gone to at least 1905 (or you're out). There is a great built-in frustration here if you're really having fun, but unless you are absolutely sure you know that you have a great deal of free time and that the situation won't change, you really need to learn from experience how time-consuming a good game can be. 2) If you're inclined to write a lot, and thus have fantasies of publishing, don't. Instead write letters to your allies, letters to the zine editors, and perhaps do something with a press saga in one game. These are things which can be restricted quite easily if your time gets shorter. Try these for awhile and see how they fit into your life; if after a time it seems comfortable, then you might consider publishing. 3) Keep in mind when contemplating doing a zine that the actual typing and adjudicating is roughly one fourth of the total time required. 4) Be realistic about your

money. Most games require a fee (one-time) and a sub (continuous); be prepared to renew those subs. As to publishing, nobody makes a profit; it is best to be stingy and say no to requests for free copies or trades than to get overloaded and go broke. 5) Gear yourself up for the fact that sometimes the hobby is not a nice place; a few people can, and do, get personally nasty. Come hell or high water, do not take these characters too seriously; no matter how you may think you won't get hurt, this stuff mushrooms. If I were you I'd stay completely out of peripheral matters until I had a pretty good feel for what's happening, and that would include writing to a few of the "victims" to see how they handle it. Fortunately, if you stay away, this stuff doesn't splatter you. 6) If after a while you find you've lost interest and want out, that's no big deal; it happens constantly. But please have the courtesy to say something to somebody, e.g. resign from your games rather than just disappear. It makes things so much easier for the rest of us.

BTDT: You're folding Costa?

CvM: Yep, it's done, and with tremendous regret. However, I can't afford it any longer. Moreover in spite of all my friends telling me how wonderful the issues are, the fact is that I think I've gone stale. Please note that it makes no difference whether I'm right or wrong; that's how I feel, and that makes the production of each issue something of a bore and a burden. That's no way to live. Now if I could come up with some new "gimlick" to make me feel better, maybe I'd start seeing what could be done about the funds. So what I've done is to fold with an option to resume, and in the interim I think I'm going to try floating a few odd "special" issues from time to time, just to see what happens. For instance, 10 pages of Issue 191 (the one after I folded) are already done. I dunno; the truth is I don't want to do it any more, but I also don't want to stop doing it. One of those endless dilemmas. Well, we'll see....

BTDT: What's the big appeal for you with Railway Rivals?

CvM: When I looked over your questionnaire, I immediately focused on this issue as being the real killer. I have not got one whit of an idea why I like that game so much; all I am prepared to say is that, with the possible exception of chess, it is the most pleasant game I've ever encountered. Maybe it's all those neat maps (there are almost 50 of them), providing almost endless scenarios without ever having to pore over a batch of new rules. Maybe it's the shifting strategy, and the fact that the game has provided for this. Maybe it's just that I like choo-choos. One thing for certain is the fact that it fits nicely into available time without ever overwhelming; unlike Diplomacy, it is not an evening's undertaking just to make one move, because there are no ally or quasi-ally letters to worry about, no boards to set up, etc. Was this an answer? If not, try this one: I like it.

BTDT: What was your most memorable game of Dip?

CvM: There was one, but you'd have to have been there; it loses a lot in the retelling. Let's must say it had nothing to do with the game itself. It was in 1971 in Walkerdine's MAD POLICY over in England, and as far as the game itself went, John Piggott won and I helped him by eventually giving him my centers. What was memorable was the press between John and myself, with Richard jutting in now and then. It strikes me as the finest example of a true and unlimited "press war" with John responding to me and then expanding, my response to the expansion and my own further expansion, etc. By game end we had a chain of restaurants built throughout the known world, and Albania, serving at least 50 different styles of crottled greeps....

Nah. That is not an answer for the public. This is my memory and if you weren't part of it you can't possibly appreciate it.

So what else did you expect - "How I won as Germany in 1967QQ?"

BTDT: Anything else?

CVM: Sure. I'll think of it as soon as I mail this out...

Actually, I'll add only this: if any other hobby member manages to scrape just one-tenth of the fun out of it that I've gained, they'll not have wasted their time. It's a good place to be.

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A Brief DixieCon Report

Ah yes. Diplomacy in the deep South. I'll skip the usual... report on the games and tournament. You can get a far better sense of that from David Hood's Carolina Command and Commentary. Suffice it to say that aside from a first game two way draw that had me convinced I'd show them good ole boys a thing or two, I got stomped. Hey at least I won the Intimate Dip Tournament (one game played with a hung over guy who'd never played before and had to quit to get a ride back to school). Instead, my memories:

Driving down on Interstate 95, by myself. I love long hauls alone in the car, the windows down, the music loud. I'd planned to come with wife and 2 1/2 year old, for them to vacation and sight see whilst I dined. But at the last minute my wife backed out, saying she'd already seen Chapel Hill, and she'd rather spend the weekend at the pool. So I was alone, single, and charged up!

First stop... a gas station on the south side of D.C. Holiday traffic out of D.C. was abominable. I'd gotten out of work a bit early, 3:00, but now was stuck in bumper to bumper traffic. I faced a 5:00 PM deadline for the most intensely negotiated game I'm in now, 1989HF, the CompuServe Winner's Game. I'd ben on the phone the night before with my ally, who was supposed to get in touch with another crucial player during the day, then call me at work before I left in case we needed to change our plans. I hadn't heard by the time I left, so I wanted to pull off at a gas station, call my ally, call anyone else I needed to, and call in any order changes I needed to make. But now, stuck in this traffic, it looked like 5:00 would come and go before I got to an exit! Finally, at 4:50 I got off and found a phone. It was loud. The air was heavy with humidity and gas fumes. It was real hot. I marvelled at my obsessiveness, nay insanity, as I stood there, on my way to a Dip con, pulled off at a gas station making 6 attempts at long distance calls to negotiate a game. Nobody was available, so at 4:59 I called the GM. No problem, if he's not home, his answering machine's on. McKee has already alluded to what happened next in his subzine, but his room mate at the time, who alleged to play Dip, answered, volunteered to take the message, and clearly did not know Vie from Ven, Say from Syr. I did my best. Some orders took 3 attempts to get right. I had nightmares all the way to Chapel Hill about losing the game due to transcription errors.

Going through Richmond... the giant phallic cigarette monument outside Philip Morris corporate headquarters. And the bumper sticker seen 3 minutes later: "I support Smokers' Right." We're in tobacco land now!

The oldest station I picked up near the VA-NC border. Cranked on coffee, giddy with a weekend's lack of responsibility, hot humid breeze blowing through the front windows and in my face, I heard 4 in a row that nearly blew me out the car: "Louie, Louie" by the Kingsmen, "Can I Get A Witness" by Marvin Gaye, "Midnight Hour" by Wilson Pickett, and "Papa's Got A Brand New Bag" by James Brown. Whew! I'm cranked!

And finally the late night gab with David Hood and Larry Peery the last night of the con. High point - Larry free associating on the hobby, memories, events, people. Low point - looking at hundreds, literally, of Larry's photos of his trip to Europe last summer, and getting a VERY DETAILED description and explanation of each one. I still wake in a cold sweat some nights screaming... "no more, Larry, please. I get the picture!"