



BUSHWACKER

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(Our 16th Anniversary Issue)

MARCH 1988

This is the 195th consecutive issue of BUSHWACKER, a Postal Diplomacy* zine dedicated to the play and reporting of variant games, hobby news, and whatever else I come up with. This is a Double Issue for subscribers, since the entire "Bushwacker" story will be enclosed in most copies. Everyone who responded said to get this over with (shudder) as fast as possible.

Edited by: Fred C. Davis, Jr., 3210-K Wheaton Way, Ellicott City, Md. 21043. Phone: (301) 461-1885. Phone calls accepted between 12 Noon and 9:30 p.m., Eastern Time, except during the dinner hour from 6 to 7 p.m. Except for emergencies, I'd like all of you to submit your orders by mail. I can't always come to the phone.

*Diplomacy is a registered trademark for a game invented by Allan B. Calhamer, and Copyright by The Avalon Hill Game Co. of Baltimore, Md. The zine is named for my comic strip character, "Bushwacker," whose picture appears on the masthead above.

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GAME FEES: \$9.00 Flat Fee for newcomers; \$8.00 for current readers. STANDBY FEES: \$5.00 for newcomers; \$4.00 for the rest of you. No requirement for additional sub fees for players. Mensa Diplomacy SIG members receive an additional \$1.00 discount on these fees. SUBSCRIPTIONS for non-players are 12 issues for \$6.00. OVERSEAS subs are \$8.00 for 12 issues, by sea mail. Sample copies are 50¢. We also Trade on an all-for-all basis with many other zine publishers. No Game Openings right now.

This issue contains reports on VACATION DIP III (1985R rm39), TURNABOUT (1986C ca02), BALKAN WARS III (1987A pb06) and CHARACTER DIP (1987AF rm49).

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ON POSTAL DIS-SERVICE. We presume that most U.S. readers have noticed that the Post Office has gone around and scratched all the Sunday pickup times off of the mailboxes. As we understand it, they are not even picking up mail dropped right at the Post Offices on Sundays. This means that if you don't get your orders in the mail by early Saturday (Pickups seem to vary from about 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturdays in Maryland), your letter is going to sit there in the box until Monday! So, to prevent NMR's, we ask everyone to be especially careful about their weekend mailing. On Saturdays, it may be advisable to take your mail directly to your local P.O. and drop it off in the slot in the lobby, to be sure it gets out.

Some P.O.'s are also closing earlier, or on Saturdays, or for half a day in the middle of the week, thanks to being Gramm-Rudmanized by the Administration. We still have Saturday delivery, but that survived by a hair's breadth, and it might be the next thing to go. Seems the richest country on Earth can no longer afford to deliver the mail. Perhaps when the new Postal rates become effective, they can restore some of these services. I would not invest in any great quantity of stamps right now, since the increase could come within the next two weeks.

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OLYMPIC ROUNDUP

We spent a lot of time over the past two weeks watching the Winter Olympics from Calgary. They sure put on a good show. My only complaint was that the big events were sometimes held too late in the evening for East Coast viewers. Whether or not it was masterminded by ABC to hold onto their audience, it seemed that the climactic moments always occurred around 10:30 p.m. or later, beyond our normal bedtime.

I was also disappointed that ABC kept emphasizing the American athletes, even when none of them were in contention for the medals. I understand that many of the other nations' news reports did the same thing with their athletes, but I had hoped for a slightly higher standard of reporting from our people. Some of our people seemed to be surprised that the Americans didn't do any better. Appears they didn't understand that the U.S. is the only country in the world where the national government doesn't at least partially subsidize its Olympic athletes. The day is long-gone when a few rich kids out of Ivy League universities could win the gold medals for Uncle Sam. If Uncle Sam wants some winners, he's going to have to put up some dough.

My favorite spectator sports were the figure skating and ice dancing. The expected battle between the "ice queens" was no contest. However, I disagreed with the judging. If one eliminated the school figures (which may be done for the 1992 Olympics), I would have rated the women skaters as follows: 1. Elizabeth Manley (Canada), 2. Katarina Witt (DDR), 3. Ito Mâdori (Japan), and 4. Debi Thomas (USA). The Canadian and Japanese girls skated their hearts out in the long programs, and brought the house to standing ovations. I hope both will be back for next time.

The weather was a big surprise. The second week, the temperature in cold Calgary reached 61° F. (16° C), while here in sunny Maryland the highs were around 42° (5° C). Canada just blew its image of igloos and polar bears! Incidentally, I found it difficult to type and watch TV at the same time (shades of Gerry Ford).

* * * * *

THE 1988 RUNESTONE POLL will be starting soon. This is run by Bruce Linsey. Diplomats will be asked to rate the zines and subzines they receive, plus those Gamesmasters they play under, on a scale from 0 to 10 (10 being the very best). Ballots listing most North American zines and subzines will be printed in most zines in an effort to reach nearly everybody in the hobby. Last year, 441 people voted, for an all-time high in participation, despite a partial Canadian Postal strike occurring at the same time.

Any zine which has published at least one issue in 1988 is eligible for the Poll. You may rate any zine for which you have seen at least two issues since about April, 1987. The same applies for subzines. Full details will be included with the ballots. I think the top and bottom 5% of the votes will be discarded to avoid "grudge" and booster votes. The Poll results will be published by Bruce in his annual opus, THE CREAM SHALL RISE. Also, many zines will list the Top Ten or Top 20 finishers.

I've heard a rumor, which I'm not sure was meant for real or as a joke, that the Martins may be running a rival poll "under the Covenant." Well, that's the nice thing about our hobby - anyone can do anything they want. But, I can assure you that Bruce Linsey has not resigned as Director of the Runestone Poll.

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NORTH AMERICAN VARIANT BANK NEWS

I've completed UPDATE NO. 1 of the 1987-88 NAVB Catalog. This includes all of the new variants received between mid-September 1987 and mid-February 1988. Many of them are from Australia and England. Some came just one week too late to include in the Catalog proper. Anyone who paid for a Catalog in December or January may have a copy just by sending me a SASE (business size, please). A copy will be included with every new Catalog sold, at no extra charge.

There is an error on the UPDATE. "Somewhat Demiurgic Dip" should be classified as CN "rc02/07," Players change rules during game, rather than "rm55/07." The "rc" is a new category. The Catalog sells for \$4.00 (\$4.50 Overseas), including both an Errata sheet and the Update.

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ANOTHER COMMERCIAL "DIPLOMACY" VARIANT - "KAMAKURA" (ej02/02-5)

We've just been presented with a photocopy of "Kamakura," a West End game, by Frank Cunliffe. Frank had asked me why this game wasn't listed in the NAVB Catalog, and I had to confess I'd never heard of it. Seems West End Games produced this in 1982, somewhat in the manner of "Machiavelli" (i.e. Getting as close to the Diplomacy rules as possible without attracting the attention of Avalon Hill's attorneys). Set in Medieval Japan, this is a series of five possible games, ranging from two to five players, all played on the same board. The original board is in four colors, but the photocopied board can't show this, of course.

If you can overcome some of the tongue-twisting names, you may enjoy this different scenario. I understand that West End has stopped manufacturing the game, so it may be difficult to find in the stores. I can't sell it from the N. American Variant Bank until I'm assured that it's completely out of print, but at least I've given it a Catalog No., and will list it in the next Update to the Catalog.

There are a few differences from regular Dip rules in Kamakura. There are three moving seasons between each Winter adjustment season. There are double armies and fleets, but only in limited numbers. And an unsuccessful attack on a unit which is giving support does not cut that support. There are also possibilities of earthquakes, famines, and typhoons (kamakaze), which can devastate units in certain provinces. So, this is not your run-of-the-mill game.

Has anyone else ever played this game? I'm surprised that it's never been mentioned before in connection with the variant sub-hobby.

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WE ALSO NOTICED in the toy store that the "Risk" designers have now come out with a variant called "Castle Risk." This is played on a map of Europe, which, when you look at it, will remind you of our favorite game. Apparently, anywhere from three to seven players can participate. One change in the Risk rules is that each Power owns a Castle, which is placed in his most important space. Loss of his Castle can be devastating. If anyone cares to draw a copy of the Castle Risk map and/or send us a photocopy of the rules, we'd be glad to place it in the NAVB files. It seems to me that a genuine Diplomacy variant could be played, incorporating the Castle rule, upon this map. Comments, anyone?

CLARIFICATIONS OF THE "MOVE OVER SEAS WITHOUT CONVOY" RULES

For Players in Vacation Dip and Character Dip.

There are slightly different rules covering this type of movement in the two games. In Vacation Dip, there are cards permitting an Army to pass over one, two or three spaces without Convoy. In a one-space move, the Rule supplement states "the sea space used must be empty" at the start of the turn. In a two or three-space jump, "all of the spaces except the one nearest his Army's starting point must be empty at the start." "The space adjacent to the Army may contain one of his own Fleets."

I misinformed one player on the phone, telling him the first space always had to be empty. (I can never find the proper form or paper when someone phones, it seems. It's always best to send your inquiries in writing.)

There are no standoffs in the use of these Event Cards in Vacation Dip. The Rule goes on to say: "The subsequent move of any F into a sea space through which the A has moved will be deemed to have occurred after the A passed through."

In Character Dip, Card #17 empowers a unit to "cross one sea space without need of convoy. Theoretically a 2-space move, but may be done without regard for any units or mines in the intervening sea space."

So, it's easier to make a one sea space without convoy jump in Character Dip than in Vacation Dip. There are no 2 or 3-space jumps in Character Dip, but a unit gets to keep the same "character" for the rest of its life, so chances are it will get to make more than one such jump during a game.

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SEVERAL PEOPLE SENT ME additional comments on the comic strips rated in the last issue. More nominations for the Worst comics were included. Jeff Breidenstein downrated "The Phantom" and "Spider-Man" for moving so slowly. When I was a kid, I was fascinated by The Phantom, but now it seems quite boring. We haven't had Spider Man in our paper for years, so I hadn't thought about it. Jeff also says that all of the "Soap Opera" comics "should be in book form and not taking up space on the funnies page." He's also angry because his local paper has dropped "Crock." I'd be angry, too, if that happened here. "Crock" is really funny.

Brad Wilson nominated "Henry," "Catfish," and "Hartland" to my list of Five Worst. I didn't know Henry was still around, as I hadn't seen it in years. Always was pretty dumb. I never saw "Catfish." "Hartland" occasionally has something interesting in it, so I wouldn't put it down as far as Brad. Another party wrote to say that only three of my Worst Ten appeared in his local paper.

I thought that with the disappearance of so many newspapers, the menu would be pretty much the same throughout the country, but, apparently, there are still significant differences between what is offered in the various papers. No American city now has more than two newspapers carrying comics (The New York Times still doesn't carry any), but the comic sections are much larger than from what I remember as a kid. What really annoys me is the way the papers keep dropping and adding comics with no advance notice. I pick up the paper and run into "strangers" nearly every week, it seems, and it takes a while to make their acquaintance. As a matter of curiosity, I wonder if any other papers carry "Moose," a local comic set in blue collar Baltimore. I find it very funny, but the references are always to Baltimore locations, so I don't know whether it would play in Peoria. How many still get "Tank McNamarra"? We get it weekdays, but they took the Sunday page away from us. And everything in the Sunday paper is jammed into too small a space.

TURNABOUT DIP - 1986C ca02WINTER 1908

REINFORCEMENTS ARRIVE, WITH SPRING FOLLOWING ON THEIR HEELS

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Andy Cruickshank (SLAVS), 98-402 Koauka LP, #907, Aiea, Hawaii 96701 (Effective immediately).

There was an error in the Fall report. BENELUX does not own Barcelona. Ireland took Barcelona in Spring 1908. So, Ireland went up two, and Benelux stayed even.

		<u>Current Strength</u>
BALKANS (Dousette):	A Languedoc (R) France.	11 (—), took France to stay even,
	Build F Greece	was 1 unit short
BENELUX (R. Brown):	Build A Brussels	10 (—), was 1 short
IRELAND (Reges):	Build A Belfast, A Cork	13 (+2)
SLAVS (Cruickshank):	No change	5 (—)

SPRING 1909

IRISH FLEETS & ARMIES POUR INTO NORTH AFRICA AND MIDDLE EAST. DUTCH AND BALKANS FIGHT FOR CONTROL OF CENTRAL EUROPE. SLAVS LOSE THEIR APPEAL (TO GM).

BALKANS (Dousette): A Milan-Switz. A France (S) A Milan-Switz. F Naples-Tyrr Sea. (11)
 F Central Med-Eastern Med. F Greece-Central Med. A Austria (S)
A Milan-Switz. A Hungary (S) A Austria. A Romania-Galicia.
 F Libya-Alexandria /d/, (Annihilated). F Turkey-G of Iskenderum.
 A Caucasus (S) SLAVIC A Mesopotamia.

BENELUX (R. Brown): A Novgorod-Minsk. A Archangel (H). A Warsaw-Galicia. A Rhine- (10)
 land-Lux. A Brussels (S) A Rhineland-Lux. A Prussia-Austria.
A Switz-Milan /d/, (Annihilated). A Languedoc (S) A Switz-Milan.
 F Baltic-Rhineland. F Riga-Baltic.

IRELAND (Reges): A Cork boards F MAO, A/F MAO-Western Med, A disembarks Algeria. (13)
 F Western Med-Gulf of Lions. A Belfast boards F NAO, A/F NAO-
 High Ocean, A disembarks Arabia. A Arabia-Jordan. F Persian
 Gulf-Persia. F High Ocean #1-Persian Gulf. F Tunis-Libya.
 A Alexandria (S) F Tunis-Libya. F Red Sea (S) A Alexandria.
 F Morocco (H). A Barcelona-Aquitaine.

SLAVS (Cruickshank): F Jerusalem (S) BALKAN F Central Med-Eastern Med. A Damascus- (5)
Jordan. A Muscovy (MS) A Kiev. A Mesopotamia (H).

NOTE: After these orders were typed, Andy Cruickshank phoned on Monday to ask for a separation of seasons. I informed him that it was too late to do so, since no one else had requested a separation, and the game was "set," barring receipt of any last-minute orders on Tuesday.

PRESS:

BALKANS to Benelux: So, now is the hour of truth... Your "reliable" sources are no better than your excuses!

BUSHWACKER: The starting lineup for this game was announced in March 1986, so it is now two years old. We've only lost two players along the way, and one of those was for reasons beyond his control (i.e. being transferred overseas). Hey, do you guys realize that this has now become an All-Mensa game?

DEADLINE for the FALL 1909 orders will be FRIDAY, April 8, 1988. The telephone deadline will be Thursday, April 7th, at 9:00 p.m. Eastern Time.

CHARACTER DIP - 1987AF rm49

WINTER 1902

RUSSIA FAILS TO BUILD. GERMANY RETURNS TO THE FOLD.

		<u>Current Strength</u>
ENGLAND (Baty):	Build 4F Edinburgh	5 (+1)
FRANCE (Acheson):	No change	5 (—)
GERMANY (McHugh):	Discloses that 3F Helgoland is Free unit. No removal required.	5 (—) (Owns 4 SC's)
ITALY (B. Wilson):	No change	4 (—)
AUSTRIA (Suchard):	Build 6A Trieste	7 (+1)
RUSSIA (Rice?):	NBR. Will play 1 short	6 (+1) (only 5 units)
TURKEY (Cheek):	Remove 1A Con	3 (-1)

All players getting builds will receive the Characteristics of their new units with their reports. I wish to thank Lane Hess for submitting back-up orders for Germany.

Once again, I'm going to ask Bob Gossage, Jr., to submit back-up orders for Russia for Spring 1903. 1A Galicia is a Heavenly unit. 2F Sev in double-strength. If you take over Russia, I'll give you the other Characteristics. Bob's address is: 9201 S. Central Park, Evergreen Park, Ill. 60642.

PRESS:

AUSTRIA to World: I wrote a letter to each and every one of you before Fall 1902, and I received only two replies! If I'd wanted to play Gunboat I wouldn't have signed up for this game. Please respond. Hey Germany? Hey Russia?

AUSTRIA to Italy: Thanks, but I didn't have an Army in Constantinople. Would you like to help me get one there?

GERMANY to England: Okay, okay. I agree to your plan. Now will you be friends?

GERMANY to Italy: Help is on the way.

GERMANY to Russia: Peace for Denmark and Sweden, okay?

DEADLINE for SPRING 1903 is FRIDAY, April 8, 1988. I have tentative orders on hand for England, Germany & Italy. Telephone deadline will be Thurs., April 7th, at 9:00 p.m. Eastern Time. Dave Rice, please drop me a line

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BALKAN WARS III - 1987A pb06

WINTER 1915

TWO POWERS REQUEST SEPARATION OF SEASONS.

The Winter and Spring moves are supposed to be made together under this game's rules, but since two players made the request, and this is such a big issue anyway, I played the softie and granted it. Warning: Always include Spring orders when you request a separation. One person didn't. If it hadn't been for the second request, he would have been given an NMR for Spring. It will take two requests to grant a separation.

Last month's Bulgarian order "A Varna (S) A Serbia" should have read "A Varna (S) A Sofia".

(more)

BALKAN WARS III (Cont.)

		CURRENT STRENGTH
BULGARIA (Dousette):	No change	5 (--)
GREECE (Cheek):	A Valona (R) Epirus. Remove A Cilicia	3 (-1)
ITALY (Baty):	Build A Crete, A Tirena	9 (+2)
SERBIA (Kenry):	No change	4 (--)

PRESS: GREECE to Italy: Greed, like the love of comfort, is a kind of fear.

DEADLINE for SPRING 1916 will be FRIDAY, April 8, 1988. I already have orders on hand from three countries. Phone deadline is Thurs., April 7th, at 9:00 p.m. Eastern Time.

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VACATION DIP III - 1985R rm39

FALL 1912

WORM TURNS, AS ITALY PLAYS CARD #90 AGAINST GERMANY, CALLING MOST WERMACHT UNITS HOME!
TURKS POUR INTO EMPTY SPACES. ENGLISH TAKE MAO, LOSE EDI. AUSTRIANS MISS THE BOAT.

AUSTRIA (Rice): NMR. VF Portugal (H). VF MAO (H) /d/, (R) NAO (only space open).
(1)(2 units)

ENGLAND (Chang): F Gascony-MAO. F's Irish Sea, Eng Channel & Brest all (S) F Gascony-MAO. A Paris-Gascony. F N.Africa (H). F America (S) F N.Africa.
(8)(9 units) A Siberia-Persia (IMP. Persia not yet open). VF Sicily-Naples (IMP. Space Calabria intervenes between Sicily & Naples). Plays Card #44 on Tur

GERMANY (Young): ITALY plays Card #90 against Germany, giving him right to order all key.
(14)(14 units) German units in exchange for having own units Hold. A Silesia-Berlin. A Vienna-Bohemia. A Bohemia-Silesia. A Tyrol-Munich. F Iceland(H). F Helgoland-Kiel. F Norwegian Sea-Edi. A Burgundy-Belgium. A Moscow-Livonia. A Sev-Moscow. A Ukraine (H). A Galicia-Warsaw. A Budapest-Galicia. A Rumania (H) /d/, (R) Serbia (o.s.o.)

FRANCE (Wilson): Says hello.
(0)(0 units)

ITALY (Hoffman): Plays Card #90 against Germany. All of own units (H). A Piedmont(H).
(3)(2 units) F Marseilles (H).

RUSSIA (Cheek): Plays Card #41 against England, but no English units dislodged.
(0)(0)

TURKEY (Kenny): Plays Card #96, making CRETE passable and a S.C. F Aegean-Crete.
(13)(13) F Western Med-N.Africa. F Tunis (S) F West Med-N.Africa. F Tyrr-West Med. A Venice-Tyrol. A Rome-Venice. A Serbia-Budapest. F Adriatic-Ionian.* A Bulgaria-Rumania. F Black Sea (S) A Bulg-Rum. A Armenia-Sev. A Trieste-Vienna. F G. of Lions in C.D. *Blocked by England's play of Card #44.

NEITHER PROPOSAL for ending the game passed. Neither came anywhere close to passing (Concession to Germany, and a 4-way Draw between A-E-G-T). The vote on making these votes public was 3 Yes, 2 No, and 1 Not voting (+1 NMR). I had ruled that two "No" votes would defeat this motion, so the Proposition votes remain unpublished.

PRESS:

TURKEY to Russia: You weren't fired, you quit.

ISOLATED TURKEY to France-in-exile: Right now, isolationism is the only policy. However, I may experience exile soon.

ITALY to Germany: Once in a while you happen to get a useful card.

(more)

BUSHWACKER, MARCH 1988, Page 8

BUSHWACKER: I think this has been the biggest effect that Event Cards have had on the game. Just be glad that Card #90 appears only once in the deck!

TURKEY to Germany: Ten German armies to five Turkish ones. You sure you have enough? I think you should go home and get more.

SUPPLY CENTER COUNT, VACATION DIP, WINTER 1912: GAINS, LOSSES

AUSTRIA:	Portugal	1 (---), Build 1 (No room to build)
ENGLAND:	Lon, Lpl, America, Brest, Ireland, St. Pete, Sweden, EDINBURGH , SICILY	8 (-1), Remove 1 N.C.
FRANCE:	(None)	0 (---), No change
GERMANY:	3 Home, Bel, Den, Hol, Iceland, Mos, Nor, War, EDI, SERBIA, BUDAPEST , ADAMIA , SEV , VIENNA	12 (-2), Remove 2
ITALY:	Piedmont, Mars, Paris	3 (---), Build 1 (No room to build)
RUSSIA:	(None)	0 (---), No change
TURKEY:	3 Home, Bulg, Greece, Naples, Rome, SEV , Spain, Trieste, Tunis, Venice, BUDAPEST, CRETE, RUMANIA, SEV, VIENNA, SEV	16 (+3), Build 3 (Room to build 3)

Austria has 2 Vacation units, England one. Italy's was annihilated. The other powers have none. There are now 40 SC's. The V.C. rises to 21.

Event Cards #31, 41, 90, 96 & 44 were played this year.

Your next Event Card is: _____

DEADLINE for Winter 1912 will be FRIDAY, April 8, 1988. With all the adjustments, I feel it is better to play only the Winter season. The phone deadline will be Thurs., April 7, at 9:00 p.m. Eastern Time.

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BUSHWACKER
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Ellicott City, Md. 21043
U.S.A.

FIRST CLASS MAIL

THIS HAS BEEN an extremely busy week for me. First, I had to get the "Bushwacker" story printed and collated (and found the printer had not printed enough copies of Pp 9-10, requiring a return trip). Then, I was doing my Income Tax forms (Ouch!). I tried starting to adjudicate some of the games where everyone had his orders in on Sunday evening, as I knew I'd be busy all day Monday. I was home for only two hours Monday afternoon, and then I had to go to the local Public Broadcasting TV station, where the Maryland Mensa club manned the phone bank for that night's membership appeal. It was fun, but those TV lights are so hot. Then, Tuesday was Election day, as Maryland joined the Super Tuesday club. Inge was on the ballot as a Babbitt delegate, but Babbitt had withdrawn before we could vote. Nevertheless, I'd planned to stay up late to watch the election returns. On top of this were all sorts of phone calls. So, it was hard to find time for the games. I had not realized in January that March 8th was our election day, or I would have changed the deadline. Well, I hope the games somehow got reported correctly!

P.S. Inge didn't win a trip to Atlanta, but she did get my vote. Gov. Babbitt should be pleased to know that here in the Maryland 6th Congressional District he had practically an All-Mensa slate.

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INTRODUCTION

This was the first of a series of stories written by me in the period from 1944 to 1946, when I was a very bored egghead high school student. I had previously put Bushwacker's adventures in comic strip form, but that was too slow for the ideas I was coming up with. In fact, the first chapter of this story was first drawn as a comic strip, before I shifted to text.

Bushwacker was President of the Bushwacker Republic and General of their army. They lived on a planetoid which they had put into a good location for themselves shortly after they had perfected the spaceship in the late 1930's. Thus, the Bushwacker adventures shared with "Flash Gordon" the concept of spaceships and ray guns existing in the here and now, rather than in the distant future, as in Buck Rogers. I was able to rationalize this by declaring that the existence of these spaceships was a military secret known only to top Allied leaders. Initially, no other Earthlings had this secret, although eventually a foul fellow called the Black Knight obtained the secret and was able to build ships for the Third Reich and for his own nefarious purposes. There were also other civilizations in the Solar System and elsewhere with their own rocket ships. Some were good guys, but many were evil, with no redeeming virtues, in the typical manner of villains in the comic strips and movie serials of the time.

Fortunately, Bushwacker and his army were able to protect the Earth from these villains. They were aided by some other strange characters, including a fellow called Uncle Tom who always wore a face mask and a dark business suit, and a hard-shelled creature called Turtleman. Among their leading allies were three apparent teen-agers named Batbrain, Dopey and Slobo, who operated under the joint name of "The Fearless Three." The Fearless Three had actually crash-landed on ^{from another stellar system} Earth about a century earlier, and, having no way to get home, had established themselves in the U.S. to do research. Although this was never stated, it is possible that the Fearless Three assisted the Bushwackans to develop space travel, perhaps with a long-term goal of getting back to their own civilization sometime in the distant future. Because the Fearless Three aged only one year for every 100 Earth years, they appeared to be only about 16 years old in 1944-46.

In truth, the Fearless Three were the alter egos of myself and two of my closest friends, Curtis Kaufman and Jack Ullman. I was Batbrain, Curtis was Dopey, and Jack was Slobo. Batbrain and Slobo were drawn with thick glasses, disheveled blond hair, cross eyes and scrawny bodies. Dopey had thick glasses, dark hair in a Three Stooges hairdo, and a somewhat heavier body. While very intelligent, they were easily distracted by their special interests. Batbrain was obsessed with horror and science fiction stories, Dopey by medical experiments, and Slobo by physics. (I had planned to become a writer, Curtis was going to go to medical school, and Jack did become a physicist). Somehow, the Fearless Three had some sort of liaison position between the Allied governments and the Bushwacker Republic to coordinate their actions, both in World War II and the postwar world.

There were only 5,550 male Bushwackans, so there was no chance that they would ever become a ruling Power, despite their advanced technology. Each Bushwackan, male and female, had a huge red "Snuffy Smith" nose. They all wore yellow trench coats with the collars pulled up, so you never saw their mouths when drawn from the side. They were all short. Bushwacker, at 5'3", was the tallest; the rest all being just 5'2". (I was very short at the time of writing these stories; hence, my sympathy was with the little guy). The Bushwackans were all dead shots. This, combined with the fact that their noses were bulletproof, made them very efficient fighters. However, they were all a bit wierd, suffering occasional mental lapses. They also enjoyed strong drink, which was not looked upon with social disapproval in those days. There were times when "Bush" was apparently operating in a slight haze, although it seemed that

a stoned Bushwacker still had ten times the ability of any ordinary mortal. The men had a habit of smoking big, black cigars, and carrying sticks of dynamite in their overcoat pockets. The presence of blazing matches and cigar sparks among all the dynamite fuses was one of the continuing jokes in my cartoons, although there do not seem to have been any accidents. Bushwacker and his men were blithely unaware of any hazards from either cigars or dynamite, or from enemy bullets.

The Bushwacker life span is extremely long, although unmeasured. In the last Bushwacker story I wrote, around 1980, times had moved on to the 22nd century, but "Bush" reportedly had not aged a bit. Their origin is unknown. The question as to whether they are part of the human race or a separate species remains unanswered. They all seemed to have wives of similar build. Bushwacker was henpecked by his wife, Sweetie Pi, in a copy of the Jiggs and Maggie tradition. The canon is blank on the presence of Bushwacker children, except for one reference by "Bush" about getting "a Christmas present for Junior." Most of the time, Bushwacker was away from home, either on Earth or out in the spacelanes protecting humanity from various foul fiends, so there isn't much information on his homelife, other than that he employed a Chinese chef named Wong.

The current story begins shortly after the end of W.W. II, which I correctly predicted would occur in 1945. A particularly nasty fellow named "Umbriago" had crowned himself King of the Universe, and moved into the Solar System in The Great Steel Ball, which was a travelling fortress somewhat like the Death Star. The idea of the Steel Ball came from a Buck Rogers story ca. 1937 in which a character called "The Fiend of Space" utilized such a vehicle. However, Buck never went out to the Fiend's ball, while the intrepid Bushwacker sallies forth to penetrate Umbriago's fortress.

"Umbriago" was the name of an imaginary character created by Jimmy Durante. In Italian, Umbriago means someone who is quite tipsy, but the beloved Durante made his friend out to be a great guy, as when he sang, "Umbriago, could be mayor of New York or of Chicago." I was fascinated by the name, although I wanted a character with no redeeming human characteristics. My Umbriago is a warped fellow with fangs and heavy, dark eyebrows, who even shoots or punches his own underlings when they displease him. He wears a monstrous diamond-studded crown and an ermine robe. The capital letter "U" is seen everywhere in his ball. The underlings, of course, meekly obey his orders, and as each second-in-command is killed, meekly step forward to accept that post. He seems to have two races on board. One group is only 4½ feet tall, with sloping foreheads and low I.Q.'s. The other is referred to as "Eight Foot Men(?)," hairy giants who are ferocious fighters. (When I was a H.S. freshman, the Seniors appeared to be 8 feet tall). His officers appear to have pig snouts on their faces. There are also several robots clanking about in the best 1930's manner. I haven't any idea why they all obey Umbriago so abjectly.

Finally, it should be pointed out that Bushwacker wears his W.W. I steel helmet only in combat situations. In many of the comic strips, which cover his mishaps in an allegedly humorous manner, he is bareheaded. He has occasionally been seen in a derby hat, and at least once wearing a top hat. The only difference between the civilian and military versions of the famous trenchcoat is that on the military issue there is a "B" shoulder patch on each arm, plus, in the earlier days, the four stripes of a general officer (he was the only general). Later, when they decided to add a few more ranks, Bushwacker adopted a single gold star for the rank of Commanding General.

So, as you start this story, remember you are going back in time to the last year of W.W. II, complete with rationing and a steady diet of violence in the newspapers, newsreels, and radio reports. And I was only a 14-year-old idiot, instead of an adult one!

CHAPTER ONE: The Opening Gun

Preface:

After the end of Japan in 1945, Earth prepared to destroy Umbriago, who, inside his great steel ball out in interstellar space, was destroying the Milky Way with his Queba Ray. The attack by the First Earth Expeditionary Force in 1946 was a failure, with the majority of Earth's force of 1,000 rocket ships being destroyed. The Fearless Three, leaders of the expedition, call upon the great Bushwacker for help. The scene is Bushwacker's palace on the Planet of Bushwacker, in 1947.

The Fearless Three, Batbrain, Dopey and Slobo, entered the room where Bushwacker awaited them. "Bushwacker," said Batbrain, "we need your help." He then explained about Earth's defeat, and asked him to help them to somehow reach Umbriago's Great Steel Ball and destroy him.

Bushwacker replied, "Of course I shall send my 100 rocket ships under Waterwacker¹ to help out in the second attempt, but the best thing to do is to get someone inside to find out how the fort works."

"Yes, but who?" asked Dopey.

"Me, of course," said "Bush." "Cabbagewacker! Get out my ship. We leave at once."²

"Wonderful," said Slobo. "We'll attack as soon as we get word from you. This time, we're bringing in the Marines for a landing on the Ball."

Bushwacker put some essentials in a small bag; namely a toothbrush, socks, a clip of bullets and a bottle of Black and White. In less than five minutes, Cabbagewacker reported in wearing a steel helmet, with a cry of "All ready, chief."

"Good, let's go," Bush responded, donning his own steel helmet and strapping on a Colt .45 automatic. "So long, boys," he called out to the Fearless Three. With a roar of engines they took off and disappeared into space.

. . .

"Bushwacker!" gasped the Umbriagoite officer as he saw the clearly marked "X-1-2" personal rocketship of the Bushwackan President appear on the Ultro-Television Radar screen, as it zipped by a Coca Cola ad and approached the Great Steel Ball. "Gotta tell the master."

He dashed through the door of Umbriago's office. "Yes, pig?" said a horrible creature sitting on a throne. The fanged creature with dark, beetling eyebrows was Umbriago. He sat on his throne, wearing a great crown and ermine wraps.

"Bushwacker is approaching, master, in his own private ship. He is within ten thousand miles of us already."

"Man the guns and destroy him," roared Umbriago.

The fortress came to life as panels opened and guns popped out. The guns included both ray guns and conventional anti-aircraft weapons. "He is in our sights, master."

"FIRE!"

1. Waterwacker, Bush's brother, was second-in-command of the govt. and military.
2. Cabbagewacker, a sergeant, was Bushwacker's faithful aide.

Zoom! Zing! Zoom! Blam! Blam! Bam!

"Oh hum," said Bushwacker, "I guess I'll press the invisibility button." So speaking, the Bushwacker ship disappeared both visually and on the radar screens.

"Yipe!" "He's disappeared!" cried the discouraged gunners on the Ball.

"Keep firing slaves, we may hit him anyhow," ordered Umbriago.

"Ha, ha, they can't see us now," laughed "Bush" as the quickly avoided the erratic barrage, and maneuvered for a landing. Swiftly and silently, the ship came in for the touchdown. "And thusly, we land on Umbriago's steel ball," he narrated.

Minutes later, Bushwacker and Cabbagewacker were in a side corridor inside the Ball. Bush had drawn his Colt, while "Cabbage" was holding a Sten gun at the ready. "That was easy sneaking inside, Bush," said Cabbagewacker.

"It certainly was. Umbriago's men are dopes ---"

Bush's reply was interrupted by a loud Clomp! Clomp! CLOMP!

"Oh! Oh! I think someone's coming," he finished.

They quickly ducked behind a huge oaken barrel marked "XXX" as a large robot came clanking along, carrying some object. "This week's password is Xipth," it said to itself as it passed.

"Gosh, now I know the password," thought Bushwacker.

"(hic)" replied "Cabbage," who had found a tap on the barrel.

"Now," said Bushwacker, "all we have to do is to find out how Umbriago's guns work, put the guns out of action, destroy his engine room and power system, capture Umbriago, and discover his Scotch supply. I wish I wasn't always assigned these easy jobs."

At that point the two of them decided to follow the robot down the corridor. As they were catching up to it, they saw it enter a compartment labelled "No. 2 Fire Control Room." As soon as the door had closed, Bush went up to it and knocked.

"Who's dere?" said someone on the other side. "Xipth," replied Bushwacker.

The door opened, and a little 4-foot jerk said "Enter, friend," and let them in.

"I'm a Johnson's Wax salesman," Bush said aloud, while thinking "Extremely low mentality." "Oh, brother," murmured Cabbage.

"I'll show you around," said the four-footer. "In this fire control room, we control one-fourth of the guns. There are three other rooms ---", he paused as he saw both Bush and Cabbage standing before him. "Holy cats! There's two of you!"

"You're seeing double, you must be sick," suggested Bush in his best bedside manner.

"Yeh, I'm going to bed. 'Bye."

This was Bushwacker's golden opportunity to learn Umbriago's secrets. No one else was in the room. For half an hour they studied the set-up and rapidly discovered Umbriago's secrets.

"I guess that's all we need to know," said Bushwacker. "All we need to do now is put this room out of action and our ships can get here, since the guns in this quadrant won't be able to fire."

"Well?," said Cabbagewacker, taking out a stick of dynamite.

Suddenly, the relief guard came in the door.

"Who are you?" he asked.

Konk! "Oh fish!" Thud!

Resuming their work, within a few minutes No. 2 Fire Control Room was no more.

"Next, to the radio room," ordered Bush.

But, someone else was heading for the radio room, too. Umbriago! "I'll speak to Earth on the radio," he told his companion. "I will tell them, they will surrender, or else I'll use the Queba ray on them!"

Zizzleitch, the second in command, ran up. "Master, we have discovered that No. 2 Fire Control Room has been destroyed."

"Bushwacker's here!" Umbriago instantly deducted. "FIND HIM and KILL HIM!" he roared, firing a pistol for emphasis, as he boxed his hapless officer's head. Turning, he strode into the radio room.

Three men were in the room. Two were radiomen, bringing the powerful Umbriagoite station up to broadcast power. The third was an armed sentry. "Umbie" and his companion were also armed. Umbriago seized the microphone.

"Are you ready to make your speech, Great Umbriago?" asked a technician.

"Yes! Put me through on all wavelengths!"

A few dials were twisted. The technician gave Umbriago a signal.

"Attention Earthworms!" Umbriago snarled. "This is your lord and master, Umbriago, King of the Universe, speaking. You have 48 hours to surrender to me, or..."

Bushwacker had just ambled up to the Radio Room door. "I thought I heard a shot here a minute ago," he said to "Cabbage." "Ah, here's the Radio Room."

Ignoring the sign which read "On the Air - Keep Out," he opened the door.

"B-Bushwacker!" stammered a radioman, interrupting Umbriago's speech. People began reaching for weapons. Bush shot out the lights.

"The lights!" Bang! "Yaaarg!" Crash! Tinkle! "Help!" Bang, bang! Clomp, clomp. Bang! Thud! Rat-a-tat-tat. Clomp, clomp. Slam! Bang! "Yeow!" Thud! Silence.

After 30 seconds, a voice called out, "They're gone or dead."

It was Bushwacker, of course. "Oh hum, turn on some lights, Cabbagewacker, and we'll find out what happened."

Chapter II: The Queba Ray

When the lights went on, four of Umbriago's men were lying around dead, but Umbriago had fled through a back door.

"Oh hum," said Bushwacker, "I guess I'd better call the Fearless Three on the radio."

Bush quickly contacted the Earth fleet, and told the F.T. where to attack the fortress. "If you come in over No. 2 section they can't aim their guns."

"It's only 200,000,000 miles from where we are to Umbriago's location," said Dopey, so we'll be there tomorrow. Are you going to get out now?"

"Not yet. I think we'll try to destroy the engine room first. Don't worry about us. We have our ship hidden in a good place. We'll be out of here long before you arrive."

However, Bushwacker found an obstacle to reaching the engine room. All the passageways were now heavily guarded -- and not with the stupid dopes like those in the fire-control room. They were guarded by robots and electric eyes. Suddenly, Cabbagewacker spotted a safe and opened it with his combination fountain pen, blowtorch and toothpick. Inside he found a plan of the fortress. Bushwacker came over and studied them.

"I've got an idea!" he said. He reached for the public address system microphone. "Calling all robots! Bushwacker is trapped in compartment 17-B. Report there immediately and keep that space surrounded."

Clomp, clomp, clomp!

"I guess that got rid of them for a while," said Bush. He opened the Radio Room door. The corridor was empty. "Now, we'll just crawl under the electric eyes and get to the engine room. Come on."

Scene two is the Engine Room. Knock! Knock! "Who's there?" said the chief engineer.

"Xiphth," said Bushwacker. The engineer opened the door.

"It's Bushwacker!" he gasped. "You fool, didn't you hear the loudspeaker? You're in compartment 17-B!"

He took out his gun. "Very well, I'll finish you myself!"

"Dear, dear," said Bushwacker, "I don't like guns. Please apologize."

"All right, I'll apologize," said the engineer as he hurtled through space down the stairs and cracked his head on the steel floor. Bush and Cabbage strolled down the stairs and looked around the jumble of machinery in the engine room.

"Shall I toss a grenade into that machine, boss?" asked Cabbagewacker.

"Youse ain't throwin' no grenades nowhere!" snarled a hulking form of an 8-foot man(?) coming toward them from out of the engine's shadows. "I'se de ifficial bumper-offer," he added as he pointed his Chicago typewriter at them. The next moment he heard the birdies sing as Bushwacker's bottle of Black & White was cracked over his head.

"Too bad I had to waste good Scotch. O.K., Cabbage, let's throw some grenades. 1-2-3-4- throw - 5-6-7-" BOOM!

Umbriago jumped up off his throne. "What's that, blundering idiot?" he roared at Zizzleitch, his second-in-command. Umbie had just recovered from the disaster in the Radio Room, having cleaned up and put on a new crown.

The telephone rang, and Umbriago answered it. "What! Bushwacker has destroyed the Engine Room!" (The next 150 lines of Umbriago's cursing have been cut out by the censor). Finally, he stopped and looked at his second-in-command. "Stupid!" Bang! Thud!

"Boris, come in here," said Umbriago. "Our dear Zizzleitch just committed suicide. You are now second-in-command."

At that moment Bushwacker and Cabbagewacker, having found a fast elevator in the Engine Room, took the car to the throne room level, and were sneaking in the back door of Umbriago's private apartment. As they entered what was apparently a kitchen, the main lights went off, leaving just the dull glow of some emergency lights.

"Well, we sure fixed the engine room, boss," said Cabbage. "With the power off, they can't even fire their guns now."

"Correct," replied Bush as he put on his pocket flashlight. "Holy Ham! This is Umbriago's private kitchen. Look at what he eats!"

"Excuse me, chief, where's the washroom. I feel sick. Ulp!"

Back in the throne room, Zizzleitch's body had just been carted out. Lanterns had been lit. Umbriago was looking at a map of the Solar System.

"Boris, we are in a tight spot. I have just learned that the Fearless Three have left Earth with a new armada of rocket ships. We have only one hope left, and that is the Queba ray."

"Can I shoot it, master? Can I, can I?" Boris asked excitedly.

"Maybe. But don't forget that the ray is dangerous. If loaded, aimed and fired properly, it can destroy Earth or any other planet. But, if the slightest mistake is made, it can destroy us. Come, we will go and prepare the ray for firing."

"One moment, s'il vous plait." Someone in a Bushwacker uniform stepped out of the shadows in the back door.

"I KILL!" shouted Umbriago. Three shots were followed by two thuds.

"I've killed Bushwacker!" Umbriago shouted with glee, and then started to dance for joy.

"Oh, oh! Boris is dead, too. Garbage, come in here. Boris is dead. You are now second-in-command."

"Is that so," said Bushwacker, coming up behind Umbie.

"B-B-B-But you're dead! There's your body over th-th-there on the floor," stammered Umbriago. Then he fled the room, with Garbage at his heels.

"My goodness, I think Cabbagewacker is wounded," said Bush, suddenly concerned.

"I'm O.K.," said Cabbage. "He just winged me. You'd better destroy the Queba Ray, and fast!"

Scene four is the main gun platform in the Great Steel Ball. Auxiliary power had been restored to this area. Umbriago, Garbage and three other men went up to a special gun with a bloated barrel that looked like a cross between a cement mixer and a giant mortar.

"I'll load it myself," said Umbie, reaching the controls.

"Are you sure you know exactly how to load it?" asked one of the men.

"Of course I do. I'm Umbriago. I know everything!"

Finally, the Queba ray was loaded, and carefully aimed at the Earth. Umbriago took a final look at the planet through the weapon's cross-hairs, then stepped back and put both hands on the red firing lever. "Now, Earth, I destroy you!" he roared.

"Oh no you don't!" shouted a familiar voice.

"It's too late, Bushwacker, I'm pulling the firing lever!"

BALCOOM!

"I wonder if I did load it correctly?" mused Umbriago from underneath a pile of wreckage.

Bushwacker crawled out with the Colt in his hand. "You're my prisoner, Ubriago."

"You won't get me." "Who says so?" "Fritz and Schtinker," said Umbriago.

Two burly characters and two robots charged down on Bushwacker. "Dear, dear," said Fritz as he was hurled out a broken porthole into space. "Oh, meatballs," groaned Schtinker as his head crashed into a steel wall. But then a robot seized Bush by the feet and bounced him up and down, banging his head on the deck.

"Dreadfully boring, you know," said Bush.

"My patience is exhausted," said Umbriago. "I'll fix you with my gas gun!" He took out a queer-looking pistol and put a capsule inside. He fired, and a cloud of gas surrounded Bushwacker and the robot.¹

"Oh Snodgrass, sleeping gas," said our hero. That was the last thing he remembered.

1. This is a description of the gas-gun used by The Green Hornet in the movie serials.

* * *

Chapter III: Earth Attacks

When Bushwacker woke up, he found himself in a steel cell with no windows, except for a small opening in the door. Suddenly, the door opened, and Umbriago came in.

"I'm sorry that I can't attend your funeral," he said, "but we are very busy trying to get our power restored. Keep looking up at that ceiling. It's the base of a hydraulic press, and it's coming down. Goodbye, Bushwacker." Slam! Click!

"I'm locked in," said Bush, and the ceiling is coming down. I'll be crushed!"

The guard, one of the little men, came to the cell window. "Yak, yak, yak."

"Hey, guard, I'll give you a thousand dollars if you'll let me out."

"Are you kidding?"

"\$2,000? \$3,000?" "Nix."

"Look," said Bushwacker, "I'll give you my 100 carat diamond if you'll let me out."

"Yak, yak, yak."

There was a rumble of machinery. The ceiling was coming down.

In desperation, Bushwacker made a plan. "Hey, guard, if you let me out I'll give you a pound of butter."¹

"It's a deal," shouted the guard. "Where's the butter?"

"Come closer and I'll give it to you."

"I don't see —" Conk! "Oh fish." Thud!

"I knocked him out and got his keys. Now to open the door."

Suddenly, Bushwacker looked at the door. He couldn't reach the outside keyhole, and there wasn't any inside keyhole! And the ceiling was coming down.

. . .

We now go to the Moth Ball, the flagship of the rocket fleet bearing down on the Great Steel Ball. Inside the command cabin, Dopey sat at a desk littered with papers. As he signed one, one of his famous maze designs flittered to the floor. Batbrain was pacing the floor in frustration. Slobbo was at the radio trying to contact Bushwacker. "I just can't reach him, and we're getting so close," said Slobbo. Only 50,000,000 more miles to go."

"Yes," replied Batbrain, "We'll be there in six hours. We must contact Bush soon."

An officer dashed in. "Sirs, 100 rocket fighters are closing in on us; they must be Umbriago's."

"Stand by for action," said Dopey. "All hands on ray guns."

Rather than waiting for the Earth armada to reach the Steel Ball, Umbriago had launched his fighters to attack at maximum range, hoping to head them off. One hundred comets roared into the giant fleet, spitting flaming death. Then, with a blinding flash of light the Earth ray-cannon opened up. The sky was filled with ships going down in flame, out of control, or blowing up. A flaming fighter struck the Moth Ball.

The Fearless Three made a desperate attempt to stop the flames but all was lost. Abandonning ship, they got into a small three-seater ship mounted on a catapult, and left the ex-flagship. Dopey piloted the tiny craft near an enemy fighter. Batbrain and Slobbo manned the two .75 cal. explosive rocket bullet guns. They blasted away at the rocket fighter until it exploded. "What fighter?" said Batbrain.

1. Butter was severely rationed in W.W. II.

Umbriago's fighters had been outnumbered 3 to 1 to begin with. Nevertheless, they had destroyed 25 Earth ships in their attack. But now, the last of them were being blasted out of the sky. As the battle ended, the Fearless Three landed on the rocket cruiser Admiral Seasick.

"This will be our new flagship," said Batbrain. "Now, let's plan our strategy."

. . .

In the Seasick's cabin, the F.T. and four of their best captains met to plan the attack. "Bushwacker said to attack the No. 2 Section," said Capt. L'Epinards, but what weapon can break through Umbriago's steel ball?"

"Armor-piercing 6 ton U-235 rocket torpedos, and 6 ounce atom bombs," said Dopey.¹ "Our high-speed rays will also be effective at 25,000 W."

(Editor's note: The ceiling was coming down).

"Let's organize our attack," said Capt. Vermisseau.

"Correct," said Batbrain. "Listen to me." "But," interrupted a captain. Konk! "Silence! First we'll send six ships around the fortress to make sure which is the No. 2 sections. They will lay anti-radar smoke screens. Our special radio-controlled ships loaded with explosives will be rammed against the steel ball..." Batbrain's voice droned on. "But--" Konk! "Silence! Finally, all ships will attack from all directions at once dropping bombs at point-blank range. Now," turning to the captain who'd tried to interrupt, "what do you want?"

"I've been trying to tell you that there is a time bomb beneath the table!"

"You stupid fool," roared Dopey, "What didn't you tell us!"

Now, the time bomb was thrown out and all plans were made. "We're only a million miles from Umbriago's fortress," said Slobo. "This is it!"

. . .

That brings us back to the steel cell where the ceiling was coming down. "Yawn. What to do?" said Bushwacker. He was forced to get down on his hands and knees as the press lowered. Then, he heard a clanking sound in a corner of the room. A trapdoor opened, and who should appear but Garbage, the second-in-command.

"Quickly, down this ladder," he said.

Puzzled, Bushwacker followed him down. The trapdoor was shut. Then Garbage spoke: "You wonder why I saved you, heh? Well, I know we're licked. It's hopeless to fight Earth. I'm on your side now. In the next room is Robot Control. I can swing the robots to our side, too. Now, I'll make you a deal. I want you to promise to help me get outa here if I turn the robots against Umbriago. Well?"

"You're just as guilty as the rest of them, and you can't escape justice," said Bush. "I can take you with me, but you'll have to stand trial."

"B-B-But," stammered Garbage. "O.K., then I'll do the job myself without your help."

1. This was written in 1944, but we smart-ass kids knew from the comics and radio serials that you could make atom bombs with U-235.

But first I'll finish you off with this gat. Goodbye, Bu—"

Sock! Splatt! There was a struggle for the gun. Bang! Garbage fell dead.

"Now," said Bushwacker, "I'll investigate Robot Control." So saying, he walked through the door marked "Absolutely No Admittance" and disappeared into that room.

of the main corridor

Then, the door at the other end/opened just as the regular lights went on. Umbriago and an officer entered. "Power's back. At least we can fire our guns now," said the other man.

"And Bushwacker has been crushed to a pulp by now," said Umbie. "Here's what I'm looking for, the drain underneath the press. I'll open the drain and watch him ooze through—" He stopped at the sight of the dead body. "Garbage! He's dead!"

Umbie opened the drain. "No ooze! Bushwacker's gone. Garbage let him out!" He drew his pistol and pumped three shots into Garbage's form.

"Take it easy master. Don't shoot him again, he's dead already."

"You're right, Igor. I know what. You are now second-in-command. Come, we must prepare for battle. I only wish I could get my hands on Bushwacker."

With that, they walked directly past the Robot Control door and left. Suddenly, the whole fortress shook as the ray guns opened with a barrage.

Bushwacker looked up from the control panel. "The fight's started. I must get out of here. I know how these robots operate now. Pull this lever, push that button. Snap the off switch. That's that. They're all turned off. Now to scram."

WHAM!

* * *

Chapter IV - Trapped on the Steel Ball

A terrific explosion knocked Bushwacker down. He got up, and staggered into the corridor, which was filled with smoke and dust. Operating solely by memory, he reached a certain sliding door. He forced the door open and stepped through -- into an elevator shaft.

"Holy Ham!" Thud!

"Whew! What luck. The elevator was parked on the deck below."

Bushwacker knew that this was the special elevator connecting with the throne room and the surface. Suddenly, the car started down. Bush stood up, and at the next level jumped off onto a beam, forced open the door, and got out.

"Well, I'll be," he said, "This is Umbriago's Treasure Room. Look at all those gold bars, diamonds, pearls, silver coins, etc." Then, Bushwacker found the all-important thing, Umbie's secret supply of Scotch. Picking up two bottles, he returned to the elevator and summoned it.

"Let's see now. According to my calculations, the throne room is either five or six floors up. I'll try five."

The door popped open five levels up. Four of the 8-foot men(?) gaped at Bushwacker. Shots rang out as the door closed even more rapidly, leaving the smell of gunpowder, new ventilation for the car, and at least one body on the deck. "Fancy that, wrong floor," said Bush, as he slammed a new clip into his automatic.

Now the elevator went up another level. This time, Bush opened the door carefully.

"Hi, Chief (hic)" said Cabbagewacker joyfully. "I've been keeping pretty busy while you were gone." An empty rum bottle lay next to him.

He waved at the stack of Umbriago's men lying around dead over by the main door. "They kept coming in one by one to see the master. Oh, one robot got away, so maybe they'll be back with reinforcements soon."

"No, I've turned the robots off, so that got rid of half his fighting strength. So, before we go, let's celebrate. I found some Scotch --" WHAM!

A terrific explosion knocked Bush down. The Scotch bottles flew against the wall and shattered. A tear ran down Bush's cheek.

"Oh, how's your wound?" he finally asked.

"That doesn't hurt a bit, but I'm all out of ammo," Cabbage replied.

"I've got one clip left. Com'on, let's get back to our invisible ship," said his chief.

They got into the elevator and went to the top level. "This is where we came in," said Bushwacker. He climbed up a steel ladder to the surface. (Editor's note: The steel ball had 20 feet of atmosphere).

"Holy Ham! They've found our ship!" gasped Bush. "Look, it's surrounded by his men." They faced the rocket tubes of the now visible Bushwacker cruiser.

"Sacred Salt! Umbriago's getting inside. He's trying to escape in our ship, boss."

"You have three grenades left," said Bush. "We'll each toss one down a tube. In this light gravity, it's an easy shot."

Bush and Cabbage both hurled their pineapples into rocket tubes. There were two explosions and a crackling sound. The ship caught fire. Umbriago jumped out. His in-human vision saw the two Bushwackers crouching behind a ventilator. "It's Bushwacker," he roared, waving an arm in their direction. "Kill them!"

As the 8-foot men(?) started to go into battle formation, a damaged Earth ship plunged through the smoke screen and made a wobbly bombing run on their position. "Duck," "Run" and "Help!" they cried. WHAM!

"Another hit," said Bush as he untangled himself from some debris.

"What do we do, boss?" asked his aide. "Now we can't get outa here."

"Well, that bomb wiped out all of Umbie's men, so we're safe here for now. If I can contact the Fearless Three they might be able to pick us up. I'll try to get them on my pocket radio."

So speaking, Bush tuned in to the Fearless Three's frequency, and began calling their private call letters, JRK-1. "BUS-1 calling JRK-1, come in please..."

(Editor's note: The "JRK" call letters came from the surnames the Fearless Three had adopted on Earth; namely Jyllman, Rex and Kaufman. At least, that's their story.)

The flagship Admiral Seasick was completing its bombing run on the Great Steel Ball. "We've blown five big holes in the fortress, but it still keeps fighting," said Dopey. At the bombsight, Slobo took aim. Click! "Bomb away!"

The Seasick made a 180° turn and retreated into the smoke screen. WHAM!

"Direct hit! Make that six big holes," cried Slobo.

Batbrain, who was seated at the Master Radio sending out orders, suddenly exclaimed, "Hey, I've got Bushwacker on the radio. I'll turn on the loudspeaker... JRK-1 answering BUS-1, go ahead, please."

"This is Bushwacker, boys. We're in a fix. Our rocket ship is gone and we're trapped on this confounded fortress. Can you help us? Over."

"Where are you?," asked Batbrain.

"Right by that big triangular hole in No. 2 Section. Hurry, some of Umbriago's men are coming this way. Over."

"I think we can reach you. Be there in a jiffy. Signing off."

Once again the Seasick plunged through the smokescreen, right into the sights of an Umbriago battery. Zing! Zing! Rrrrip!

"We've been hit," cried Dopey, "Hold tight!"

Crash! The ship had made a belly landing on the steel wall. The Fearless Three and two crew members crawled out. Three of Umbriago's 8-foot men(?) came out after them.

"You really must try my new maze," said Dopey as he checked off the three giants with his typewriter. A hand grenade went off near them.

"Oh dear, I just thought of something terrible," said Batbrain as the concussion knocked him down.

"What's that?" shouted Slobo. "Quick, tell us!" A machine gun began firing.

"I left my Thrilling Adventure Stories at home!"

A few more rounds cleared the area of Umbriago-ites. "Com'on, let's try to reach Bushwacker," ordered Dopey. They darted across the steel surface to the triangular hole, where they found Bushwacker and Cabbagewacker fooling around with some exposed control wheels.

"Hi, Bush," said Slobo. "We made it."

"Come in, boys. We were just about to put this gun deck out of commission. We discovered that by increasing the flow of ray chemicals through these pipes, the guns won't be able to use it all, and they'll blow up." WHAM!

"Make it seven big holes," said Batbrain as he pulled his head out of the wall.

"Now, I shall increase the chemical flow," said Bushwacker, turning a valve as he spoke.

They heard shouts coming from the gun deck. Then, a buzzing sound. Then, the guns began blowing up, one after another, blam, blam, blam!

"That's the end of those ray guns," said Cabbagewacker. "Now, let's call another ship to rescue us."

Bush got back to his pocket transmitter. In a few minutes, the Wiggled Eagle came down and made a perfect landing. Everybody except Bush began climbing aboard.

"Let's go, Bushwacker," said Dopey from halfway up the ladder.

"Not me, boys. I've got an appointment with Umbriago. You guys get going. See you later."

With that, Bush ducked back inside the steel ball. The Wiggled Eagle took off.

* * *

Chapter V: The Rocket Fuel Tank

Umbriago held a meeting with his top four lieutenants. "Well, Igor, what is your report?" he asked.

"Bad news, sir. Both Bushwackers and the Fearless Three escaped in ^Nanother ship."

"What! You mean they were all right here, and you let them escape!" Umbriago cursed, drew his pistol, and fired at the hapless Igor. The latter expired with a thud.

"Blump, you are now second-in-command." WHAM!

"Eight holes, sir."

"Well, why don't you do something?"

"We can't, Master. It's hopeless to fight on. Let's surrender." "Aye," replied the other two.

"Crawling swines, cowardly jackals, I refuse to surrender! We will go down together. Come, to the gun platforms!"

Umbriago was a maniac and a murderer, but it must be admitted that he wasn't a coward. It was only he who was holding the fortress together. Carrying a tommygun, he arrived on the gun platform. "Back to the guns, slaves. Fight! Fight or I'll kill you. We'll all be killed anyway if the earthlings capture us, so go down fighting."

A report from the atmosphere room arrived. It said that the air was escaping three times faster than it could be replaced. The fortress was turning into a sieve, despite the sealing off of compartments when they were punctured.

Then, the Bushwacker battle squadron commanded by Waterwacker roared in. The Ball was rocked by more direct hits. Behind them came the troopships. Umbriago was about to be invaded.

. . .

Hurrying through empty corridors, Bushwacker continued his search for Umbriago. Since almost everyone was now on the gun platforms or at the "front" forming where the Marines had landed, it was easy for Bush to slip around. With his photographic mind, he had

memorized the map of the entire structure. Bush had assumed that Umbriago would be at some command post, but this was not so. He had not counted on the so-called King moving from point to point right at the firing line.

He entered a large hall with balconies around the sides. In the middle was a rocket fuel tank. He climbed a ladder leading to the top of the tank. There, he found an opening into the tank. "I can set this tank on fire. That ought to utterly annihilate Umbriago's defenses. When this fire gets out of control, he'll have to surrender."

He took out a box of matches and struck one. He dropped it into the tank. Hiss! Blam! A roaring flame shot up. Bang! A shot rang out from the balcony and struck Bushwacker. He slumped on the edge of the tank.

. . .

Half an hour earlier, the Earth troopships had landed United States Marines, under the command of Major Fitz-Donovan, on the fortress. Under a terrific hail of machine-gun fire, the Marines pushed forward inch by inch. In every nook and cranny of every room and corridor, Umbriago's men fought back, fighting like wild fiends. And, above all, rose the shouts of Umbriago's voice itself, calling orders to his men.

His crown had been blown off, his emine wrap was in rags. A deep cut over his forehead dripped blood, but he still fired a Chicago typewriter. Bit by bit, slowly but surely, his forces were pushed back, deeper and deeper into the fortress. Umbriago used every trick at his command, but he was outwitted every time. In desperation, he withdrew his forces to the "Iron Ring," his innermost and strongest defense line. But, Umbriago knew that unless a miracle happened, he would eventually lose. He didn't relish the thought of the noose or electric chair. Suddenly, a plan came to him.

"If I can capture Bushwacker, I can get out of here. He didn't board the ship with the others, so he's got to be still here on the Ball. Blump!"

"Yes, sir."

"As second-in-command, you will hold the fort. I'll be back shortly."

A shot rang out, hitting Blump. "Arg!" Thud.

"Itchface!" "Yes, sir?"

"You are now second-in-command. Hold the fort until I return."

So saying, Umbriago ran down the halls in pursuit of his enemy. "Where would I go if I were Bushwacker? Ah, the rocket fuel tanks. If I were that so-and-so, I'd try to sabotage them."

He stepped through a door and out onto a balcony overlooking the tanks. Someone appeared to be dropping a match into one of the tanks. Umbriago drew a gun and fired - and the man slumped down on the edge of the tank. "I must put out that fire," he said. He leaped down onto the tank from the balcony.

"Purple persimmons! I've shot Bushwacker!"

Umbriago's hopes soared now that he had Bushwacker in his power. For a second, he wondered whether he should use him as a shield or hurl him into the flaming tank.

"As a shield, of course," he decided.

"Groan, a short beer, please," mumbled Bushwacker as he started to regain consciousness. Then, he saw Umbriago standing over him with a Luger in his hand.

"You're my prisoner, Bushwacker. Get up, swine. Quickly! We're leaving this place together."

Bush staggered to his feet. "This tank is going to blow up any second," he mused. And then, in the split-second that Umbriago's glance was diverted from him to the tank, Bushwacker struck. He knocked the gun out of his opponent's hand with his left, and jabbed a hard right into Umbie's solar plexus. Umbriago staggered backward, surprised at this attack. Then the two closed in for mortal combat. A left, a right, a left.

Suddenly Umbriago landed a haymaker on Bushwacker's jaw. Bush was knocked down near the edge of the tank, 50 feet above the deck. Umbriago charged and attempted to kick him off the edge. Bush seized his foot and hurled him head over heels to the inner edge of the tank and then pounced on him. Umbie attempted to push Bush into the flaming fuel. Instead, Bush shoved and Umbriago went over the side. He seized Bush's hair. Bush lost his balance. They both disappeared into the flaming gulf.

BOOM! The rocket fuel tank blew up.

"What was that?" asked Major Fitz-Donovan as he rammed a hand grenade down an enemy's throat.

"I don't know," said Dopey as he whacked in a giant's head with an ax.

"Sounds like it came from over there," said Slobbo as 3 dum-dum bullets bounced off his/ head.

"Let's see what happened," suggested Batbrain, blasting an Umbriago supporter.

"That's the rocket fuel room," someone shouted.

They fought their way over to the door. "Good God, this place is going up in flames," exclaimed Dopey.

"One tank has already blown up, and two others are on fire!" said Slobbo.

"What's that?" shouted Batbrain, "It looks like a body."

"Nothing we can do to stop these flames now," said Fitz-Donovan. "We must evacuate this section and turn on our fire-fighting chemicals.

"Get all these people moving before it's too late," ordered Dopey.

A captain ran in. "Sirs, it's all over. They've surrendered. But we can't find Umbriago."

"Search the fort. He must be hiding somewhere," said Slobbo.

They started over to the door. "Where's Fitz?" "He's gone!" "There he is," exclaimed Batbrain, "Carrying out that body we saw. The fool, he'll never make it..."

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Chapter VI: Epilogue

All was black. Batbrain seemed to be floating off in space, beyond the furthest galaxy of existence. All was black except for one white spot which seemed to be billions of miles away and slowly moving. He felt nothing. Nothing seemed to exist. Then, he seemed to hear a voice coming from somewhere far, far away. Then, a searing pain ran through his body. Through a clouded haze, he recalled that scorching rocket fuel had poured down on him in the last second of life.

He winced in pain, and from countless ages away a low voice mumbled, "He's coming to, Mike." Suddenly, he was no longer beyond the furthest reaches of space, but was lying on something cold and hard. Mysterious bells rang inside his head. Seven little men with hammers started beating him. He tried to move his arm, but nothing happened. Then, he felt nauseated as a bad smell filled his nose. The white spot in the far distance then seemed to come closer and look larger. Batbrain started to laugh at the thought that it looked like a face. Then, suddenly, it was a face. There was a man standing over him with a bottle of smelling salts.

"Ug. G'way," he moaned.

"You're O.K. now," said the man. "We thought you were dead for a while. I'm Mike Blitz, your medic."

on a stretcher
Batbrain sat up slowly. He was in a corridor of Umbriago's fortress, wrapped in bandages. All about him lay the wounded of both sides. Gunpowder filled the air. "Where are the others?" he asked.

"Dopey and Slobo are O.K. We know you guys are from another world, and aren't affected as much by these things as our people," Mike replied.

"But the rest—"

"Major Fitz-Donovan is dead. So's Umbriago. It was Umbriago's body that Fitz was trying to rescue when the tank blew up."

Batbrain was depressed. Then, something clicked in his brain. "Are you sure that Umbie was really dead?"

"Of course. His heart had stopped."

"You fool, Umbriago had no heart! He's not human. He worked by osmosis."

"He's out of his head," said Mike to his assistant. "What he just said is impossible."

"And Bushwacker?" asked Batbrain. "Where's Bush?"

"He's disappeared. Probably destroyed when the tank blew up. He's been given up for dead."

Batbrain was floored. What was the use of smashing Umbriago if Bush had to be sacrificed to do it? Who was left to guide Interplanetary Relations?

At this moment, Dopey and Slobo appeared. Slobo had been almost out the door when the tank blew, and was able to walk around. Dopey was in a wheelchair.

"Hi (groan) boys," said Slobo.

"Bushwacker is dead, they say," said Dopey, sadly.

"I know," replied Batbrain. "They just told me. I still can't believe it."

"When we get back to Earth, we'll have to hold a conference, and select someone else to take (sob) Bush's place," commented Slobo.

"While we were with the medics, they brought all the ships down on the Ball for re-fueling, and to get ready for the return trip. Oh yeah, and there's going to be a brief ceremony for the dead, at which time we'll be awarding posthumous medals to both Bush and Fitz-Donovan," added Dopey.

"There's something else we have to do first," interrupted Batbrain. "We have to..."

An officer appeared at that point. "Gentlemen, the funeral service is about to begin. They want you to make a speech. Please follow me."

The remaining Marines and ships' crews had gathered in a large hall. Up front were 300 urns, holding the last remains of those members of the Earth forces who had lost their lives in the battle. The Fearless Three, Waterwacker, and the various Earth commanding officers were seated on the dias.

All other ceremonies being over, Dopey had been selected to make remarks on behalf of the Fearless Three and the Bushwacker Republic. Dopey stood at the lecturn.

"Uh, my friends, we have gathered here to respect our last pay - uh, I mean pay our last respects to the men who died to free the Solar System from its greatest scourge, Umbriago. We especially regret the sad fact that the great Bushwacker has fallen. He was a great friend of mine. Why, I can almost hear him say right now..."

"A double Scotch and Soda."

"B-BUSHWACKER!" Thud! Dopey fainted.

"Hello gang, what's the matter with everybody. You all look like you've seen a ghost."

"We have," said Batbrain. "You're dead," exclaimed Slobo.

"Boss, you're alive," called Cabbagewacker from the ranks, while Waterwacker lit a big, black cigar in joy.

"I suppose that just because you couldn't find me you figured I was dead," said Bush.

"Now, I'll tell you what happened. This is an asbestos overcoat I'm wearing, so the flames and heat didn't bother me much. After the explosion, I found myself up on the balcony. I must have been knocked out for hours. I saw that the fire was out. I found my way back to that special elevator I'd used before. 'Perhaps,' I said, 'some of Umbriago's men are still hiding in some of the secret rooms that only this elevator leads to.'"

"So, I got in, went all the way down to the bottom. Then, I came up one deck at a time. As the Ball is ten miles in diameter, there are about 5,000 levels. That's what took me so long. Oh, by the way, I ran into four groups of Umbriago's men who weren't quite ready to surrender. They're all taken care of now. Then I reached the Treasure Room again and found another case of Scotch. I continued upwards, and reached here in the middle of Dopey's speech. That's the elevator over there. (Cabbage, see that that case gets aboard my ship intact). I don't believe there are any more Umbriagoites around."

"Except for the 200 we took prisoner," said Dopey, who had recovered from his faint. "They'll all be brought back to Earth for trial."

"Oh yike!" yelled Batbrain. "I just remembered. We forgot all about Umbriago!"

"Oh no, sir. His body was placed in a freezer," said an officer.

"You don't understand. They couldn't hear a heartbeat, so they thought he was dead. He may have escaped by now!"

All was confusion, as frantic calls were made to the location of the freezer and to various guard posts.

"We're wasting time," cried Slobo. "Let's get to the roof, quickly." "I thought everyone knew he works by osmosis," he muttered to the others as they raced out.

Running down the hall, they came to a library. Slobo stopped and picked up a copy of Telescope Making. Dopey grabbed a book called Timbuktu Diary. Batbrain halted to take a copy of Ghoulish Horror Stories. Then they continued on. The delay had given Bushwacker time to catch up with them, and the four went up in the same car.

The elevator opened on the roof in the middle of the parked fleet. One ship had just taken off. It was the fastest one in the fleet. Bushwacker turned on his pocket transmitter. "BUS-1 calling ship No. 21. Why are you taking off?"

"So long, you suckers, I'll see you in Hades," answered a voice.

"That's Umbriago!" exclaimed Batbrain. "What will we do?" moaned Dopey.

"I'm afraid that he's made a complete getaway," said Bushwacker. "However, we'll put out an all-points alert for him. When he shows up somewhere in the Solar System, we'll get him. His supplies won't last forever."

"Well, we'd better get headed back to Earth," said Batbrain.

One hour later, an officer came up to Bush and reported that all the Marines and prisoners were on board their ships, except for the permanent party which would keep the Great Steel Ball from ever again being used for evil.

"Good. Take off whenever you're ready. Oh, oh! Here comes Cabbagewacker."

"Hey boss, big news!" "What's happened?"

"The first ship to reach the Solar System from outside has arrived. It's painted orange, and has the words "The Orange Emperor" painted on one side. It's heading straight for the Uranus Colony. They want you to go out and investigate it."

"Another dull assignment, I suppose," said Bushwacker. He waved to the Fearless Three, who were about to climb aboard the Wiggled Eagle.

"The Orange Emperor. Sounds interesting," said Batbrain. "Be seeing you."

"Hey, wait a minute," said Bush. "What happened to my case of Scotch?"

"I think the Marines drank it," replied Dopey, closing the hatch.

(Editor's Note: Bushwacker's next remark is unprintable).

Final Notes:

These stories were strongly influenced by radio broadcasting, where a great deal of the action was carried forward by sound effects. In the earlier parts of the story, there was too much dependence on sound effects instead of narration. Sounds are fine in a comic strip, but I finally realized in later portions that I had to include some narration.

In radio scripts, the characters also spent a great of time talking about what they were doing, or were about to do, since there was no picture. This also shows up in the Bushwacker stories, where there is a great deal of dialogue and little description.

I had devised my own rules for paragraphs and punctuation when writing these stories. Large blocks of material, including several quotations, were bundled up together into giant paragraphs. Partially, this was due to the severe paper shortage in W.W. II, which caused people to use every inch of every scrap of paper. I could get a lot more material on each page by not starting a separate paragraph for every quote. In re-typing this, I have broken the story up into several more paragraphs, but in a few cases where there are short pieces of dialogue, I have run some speeches together, as they originally appeared.

I have taken the liberty here, since I am the author, of adding a few descriptive lines, and eliminating a few purely "sound effect" phrases. A few gramatical errors have been corrected, and in a couple of cases the transitions from one scene to another are less abrupt. About 95% of the original text remains unchanged, including the then-revolutionary idea of a pocket radio. The "Editor's notes" are all original, except for the one on Pg. 13, but the footnotes have been added with this typing.

In my early Bushwacker comic strips, I used the word jiu jitsu to describe Bush's remarkable ability to toss around people many times his size. The word "judo" was not known in the U.S. until about 1944. It is obvious from Bush's encounters with oversized hulks that he was using the more murderous judo rather than jiu jitsu. Maybe it was even karate, but that didn't come in until the 1960's.

I was just starting to study French when this was written; hence, the inclusion of an occasional French word. ("Vermisseau" = Worm; "Epinard" = Spinach).

The names of the spaceships were based on inside jokes. I had a character called "Admiral Seasick" in one game. My friend Jack named his admiral "Sir Mal de Mer." In the school cafeteria, they sold a penny candy called malt balls. We always ordered them from the hapless lady in charge as moth balls. In a week of wild spending, I might spend as much as 3¢ on said moth balls.

The inclusion of The Orange Emperor at the end was the old serial-writer's trick of keeping the audience hooked for the next adventure. There were several more Bushwacker stories, beginning with one featuring said Orange Emperor, but I always felt that my first effort was the best in this type of story, which is an amalgum of Three Stooges farce, Flash Gordon adventure, and occasional attempts to be serious. As I grew more mature, I finally realized that a story had to be either completely a burlesque, or basically serious; that it was not compatible to combine the two forms. After that realization, most of the remaining Bush stories stayed on the comic side.

So, here's a view into the mind of a somewhat disturbed and unhappy 14-year-old Mensan (not yet aware of the fact that he was a Mensan and not just a skinny and somewhat poor nerd). Had circumstances been different, you may see that there was a glimmer of hope that I might have become an adequate humor or science fiction writer when I grew up. Things did not work out for many reasons, and, instead, I wound up as a frustrated civil servant who became a Diplomacy zine publisher. For "one brief shining moment" there was hope for a somewhat better outcome, but I do not cry for spilt milk.

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