

CLAW & FANG

Number 121
December 10, 1980

This issue is dedicated to the rabbit eared bandicoot of Australia.

Starting with January, C&F publication date and my deadline will be the 20th of the month instead of the 10th.

It is Fang of the Year time again. Send in your nominations right away. The author of the winning nomination will get to see his name printed in the next issue (and will his nomination).

My standby list is being depleted. If you wish to be a standby for C&F games let me know.

DOWN MEMORY LAND WITH CLAW & FANG

[A number of years ago I published a Christmas letter from a Diplomacy player. This received considerable comment and has been reprinted in other publications over the years. Less well known was the second letter published the following year. Both are presented here.]

1st First Published in C&F #20, December 1, 1973

SEASON'S GREETINGS TO ALL MY FRIENDS.

Golly, it doesn't seem like a year has passed since I last sent all of you my Christmas letter. As usual, this has been quite an eventful year for myself, my lovely wife, Dolly, my three wonderful children, Tom, Dick, and Mary, and the family dog, Xenophanes.

As you all know, my hobby is playing a game--Diplomacy--by mail. Without going into detail about it again, let it suffice to say that there are seven players who write lies (ha ha) to one another and send in movement orders to an eighth person known as a Gamemaster. The one that lasts the longest, wins. I started 35 new games this year and finished 12. This means that I am currently participating in something over 120 active games. The precise number is not clear since these Gamemasters occasionally go bananas and their games remain inactive before someone else takes the game over.

I had to give my job up in April or May. It was interfering with all the letters I had to write. I won't bore you with the details except to tell you the satisfaction that I got when I uttered those immortal words, "You can't fire me, I quit!" The only trouble was that I had been fired three weeks before but no one had bothered to tell me. I guess I really should have gone in more often. But being an assistant taster in a pet food factory was rather demeaning work.

I'm not sure exactly when Dolly left me. I believe it was sometime during the summer. I remember I had been writing letters late into the night and when I finally got to the bedroom it was empty save for a note on the pillow. I guess it had been there for several days and I just hadn't noticed it before. I still have it as sort of a keepsake. It says, "Dear Franklin: I can't take any more of this. No job, no food, no clothes, just letters everywhere. If it were another woman I could adjust but that nutty game-- You can take those goddamned little blocks of wood and....." Apparently she thought better of what she had written and had carefully torn off the bottom of the page.

I guess she took my three wonderful children with her. I haven't seen them around the house in sometime. They must be getting pretty big now. I think the youngest is 11 or 14 or something like that. Oh yes, I did see a picture of the oldest, Tom, in the paper the other day. It seems the police had detained him for selling some grass. I remember his mother once mentioned to me that Tom had a hobby and she was thankful it wasn't Diplomacy. At that time I remarked to her that she should have a hobby. I suggested that she write Carol Buchanan and inquire about joining the Diplomacy Widows Association. Dolly was really excited about the prospect until Carol wrote back and said it didn't mean that one was a real widow.

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But enough about my wonderful family, let's get back to my real love, Diplomacy. The really great thing I did this year was to start my own gamezine, BLASPHEMY. After I ~~lost~~ quit my job I found it harder and harder to get the cash to enter new games. I did draw unemployment for awhile--when I remembered to go down to the office. I once took the Diplomacy game with me and taught some of the other fellows in line how to play. But the officials wouldn't let me do that again saying that all those shouts of "LIAR", "ASSASSIN", and "BRIGAND" were disturbing to the other clients.

At any rate, I hit upon the idea of starting my own zine and thus getting in money to enter new games. This has been so successful that I am planning to start five or six more zines.

Well, that's all for now. All of you have a happy holiday and I will send you greetings again next year.

Seasons best,

/s/ Frank Merriwell

p.s. I just remembered, the family dog, Xenophanes, died three years ago which is just as well because I could never pronounce his name anyway.

2nd First published in C&F #42, December 1, 1974

SEASONS GREETINGS TO ALL MY FRIENDS

Many of you received my Christmas letter last year (I understand it was reprinted in CLAW & FANG). To those that didn't--or have forgotten--things did not go well with me in 1973. My lovely wife, Dolly, along with my three wonderful children, Tom, Dick, and Mary, had left me. I had lost my job, I was losing money putting out my gamezine, and John Boardman had cancelled our trade agreement.

Since I was running out of money and clean dishes I decided to make a number of New Year's resolutions for 1974 to resolve my difficulties. Actually, the New Year's resolutions were made for me by my lovely wife, Dolly, who referred to them as surrender terms. They were: (1) I would quit publishing, (2) I would give up playing Diplomacy, (3) I would get a job, (4) I would wash all the dirty dishes I had been stacking up these past few months, and (5) I would quit publishing (she was quite adamant on this point). I accepted the terms.

The next day my lovely wife, Dolly, and my three wonderful children, Tom, Dick, and Mary, and my mother-in-law, Troll (hereafter known as The Enforcer) moved into the house with me.

I had to quit publishing cold turkey--so I did. Without notice. BLASPHEMY and my other gamezines just stopped coming out. As is the custom, Diplomacy players took no particular notice of this for two or three months. They are used to gamezines being late. Then there were a few inquiring letters from other publishers begging to cancel trade agreements, a few nasty telephone calls, and a congratulations telegram from Buddy Tretick. Finally, I couldn't stand it any longer. One night while my lovely wife Dolly was at her job (I still hadn't found one) and The Enforcer was watching a Lawrence Welk rerun, I sneaked downstairs to the basement where my mimeo was gathering dust and ran off an issue of BLASPHEMY. I instructed the players to send in the moves to a P.O.Box number and not to phone.

Everything went smoothly at first. Publication was a little erratic and I got a retraction telegram (collect) from Buddy Tretick, but I managed to get out an issue every three to five weeks. I even got a job which gave me cover while I worked on the game adjudications. I was supposed to be selling shoes--which I did when I had the time. I had the game material stashed away in a shoe box marked "Size 18, quintuple E". Then one day last summer, everything started to go wrong. I lost my job--the boss wanted on someone who really wore size 18, quintuple E shoes. (You should have seen him. 6'6", long hairy arms, and wearing a "Woody Hayes for President" button.) Then I tried to sneak the material back into the house. I was unfortunate enough to hit a commercial on the Lawrence Welk rerun. I felt like I had been hit by a Mack

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truck wearing size 18, quintuple E shoes. Papers and little painted wooden blocks scattered everywhere. When I came to, The Enforcer was standing over me screaming "I knew you were back in your old habits, you scissorbill!" (The actual language has been paraphrased since children and other impressionable people may read this.)

To shorten this account I will leave out the various negotiating sessions and just say that for a second time I agreed to stop publishing forever, beg for my job back, and would watch the Lawrence Welk reruns with The Enforcer. I am looking forward to another congratulation telegram from Buddy Tretrick--it's nice to hear from the outside world. To all of you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year and 1973ZP Spring ah one, ah two. Austria: A Lon-Wal, A StP-Mos....

[The rest of the page had been torn off.]

From Rod Walker:

The End of 1978HK, the Darkover Game:

	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	
AUSTRIA	5	4	3	3	4	5	6	6	draw
ENGLAND	4	4	3	1	0				
FRANCE	4	5	6	8	7	7	8	9	draw
GERMANY	6	6	6	5	5	3	0		
ITALY	4	4	5	6	7	7	7	5	draw
RUSSIA	6	6	7	7	7	8	8	9	draw
TURKEY	4	5	4	4	4	5	5	5	draw

AUSTRIA: Mark Berch (drew Su09)

ENGLAND: Ed Hendrix (dro F05), CD (out W05)

FRANCE: John Stevens (drew Su09)

GERMANY: Gary Durce (res W03), CD (S04 only), Vic Carpenter (out W07)

ITALY: Rick Price (res S08), Ken Autarch (dro F08), Ken Baker (drew Su09)

RUSSIA: Scott Hightower (drew Su09)

TURKEY: Dwayne Shreve (drew Su09)

Draw was declared by unanimous vote of the 5 surviving players after the completion of S09 but before the adjudication of F09 orders.

AN ANNOUNCEMENT: I am entering, finally, the field of fantasy fandom. I will publish a fanzine PELLENNORATH, which will be devoted exclusively to the geography of f/sf fiction. Articles on this subject are welcome, and anyone wishing to contribute may obtain a stylesheet from me for SASE. Subscriptions are \$1 per copy or 5 for \$4. Accepted articles will be paid for in contributor's copies. The address is: Rod Walker, 1273 Crest Dr., Encinitas, CA 92024.

Finally, may I say that the withdrawal of C&F from the hobby is much to be regretted. For almost a decade C&F has been one of the most respected and respectable publications in the history of postal Diplomacy, providing not only an excellent forum for games but a lot of enjoyable reading for players, subscribers, and traders. The good which C&F has done for the hobby as an example to be emulated cannot be calculated but is very great. Don's name will long be remembered in hobby history as one of the very best publishers, along with Miller, McCallum, Koning, and Buchanan. My sincere good wishes, along with my profound hope that C&F will someday be back.

Advertisement

Dave Marshall, who has GGMed in C&F for the past year, is starting a new "limited-circulation" zine called Down 'n' Dirty. DnD will be published independently on a 3-week schedule, but will also be carried in John Michalski's Brutus Bulletin as space permits. Dave has immediate openings in both "normal" and black press games for a total cost of \$3.50 (\$2.50 for current BB and C&F subbers.). Non-playing subs are not encouraged. Dave is at 1547 Maplegrove Road, South Euclid, OH 44121.

December 3, 1980
A clapboard cabin near Brattleboro

Dear Donald:

It is certainly my pleasure to contribute a quaint New England touch to your Demonstration Game analysis by famous writers, 1979CT. Ever since the Kennedy inauguration people have thought of me as a rather senile, cantankerous old fellow whose creative powers had waned somewhat. I am happy to take this opportunity to correct that impression; the simple truth is that everybody in Vermont is 95 years old.

Sincerely,
/s/ Robert Frost

Analysis of Demonstration Game 79CT

Chapter 16---I Had Two Friends by Robert Frost

I had two friends, in years gone by,
Beneath Vermont's September sky;
And weekdays we would work the land,
And Sundays we would go to church.
(Donald, I had considered whether to make this rhyme or use blank verse. Then I figured, for what you pay, and after all I'm supposed to get 4 free issues for this and there are only three left, so you'd better just take what you get!)
The folks at church would say, "Come see!"
There's Frenchie, Ivan, Joey D.
It's wonderful to see those three, for they are such good friends."
When Springtime came we'd tap the trees,
While chickadees would chirrup.
Though Joey D. snuck back at night,
And stole my share of syrup.
When Winter came we'd spend the day,
And go and harness up the sleigh;
Though passersby might think us queer,
To stop without a farmhouse near.
(Just an old man indulging himself in a small joke.)
My two good friends played jokes on me,
Though some were not so funny,
Like when the bear attacked our camp,
and they came over and filled up my sleeping bag with honey.
(I know, I know. It's supposed to go ta TA, ta TA, ta TA, ta TA, and it goes TA TA ta ta ta TA ta ta or something. Frankly, Donald, I'm too old to give a damn.)
In fall the russet apples grew,
The cider soon turned hard--
When Frenchie ran off with my wife
I'd passed out in the yard.
But still I had my one true friend,
Though now I'd lost my spouse;
Then Joey bought my mortgage up,
And repossessed my house.
So now I have no friends, no wife
No place in which to dwell--
And with no land to work by hand,
Encyclopedias I sell.
(Sure, Donald. Sit there and laugh! You're young and clever and get to eat in fancy European restaurants all the time. You don't have to sit on the porch and get eaten by black flies while you try to squeeze "Encyclopedias" into iambic hexameter! Okay-- you think this is so easy? I'll just leave this unfinished and your clever young Mensan friends can make up their own last line! Maybe you could have a contest.)
And so I've lost my two old friends,
They've run off with my riches.
But should I meet them e'er again....

End of Chapter 16

1979 CT W '06

England (Palter) no change.

France (Reese) (Aut '07: F Nwg R NAT) Build F Bre, A Par

Italy (Ditter) Build A Ven

Russia (Baker) Remove A Con, A Smy, A Ank, F Bla

Spring 1907 due 13 January 1981. COA 19 Dec--4 Jan: Eric Verheiden;
3245 SW 185th Ave; Aloha, OR 97006. Mail to California will be held (no registered).

[*] [*] [*] [*]

[Move over Little Moron Jokes, Elephant Jokes, Polish Jokes, and Italian Jokes,
now we have.....]

THE AUSTRALIAN JOKE

by Tom McMillan

(This story has the distinction that, in three years in Australia, this is the only funny joke I heard.)

This story takes place in Tasmania, where the brightest of Australians are traditionally not found. One night a traveling salesman was driving down a deserted country road, glancing fearfully at the farmhouse lights twinkling in the darkness and just hoping that he would make it safely home to Hobart. Alas...Ka-pop! Ka-pop! and with two flat tires he had no choice but to seek help at the nearest house.

And, sure enough, his worst fears were realized as a cretinous shaggy little urchin with a crazed laugh and twisted, addled smile appeared in the doorway.

"Excuse me, lad, is your mother home?"

"Har har har, hungh, hungh, me Mum? She ain't here, mate. She's in the looney bin. She's been in the looney bin for five years. No mate, she ain't here. Har har."

Somewhat taken aback, he still had no choice, so he persevered. "Well, son, is your father home, then?"

"Me dad? Huingh, huingh-har har-No mate, he ain't jere. He's in prison. He's been in prison for nine years. Har har har."

"Er...do you have any brothers or sisters who might help me?"

"I got me a brother, mate...Har, har, hungha, hungha.. But..He ain't here!"

"Please, don't tell me, I don't really want to know..."

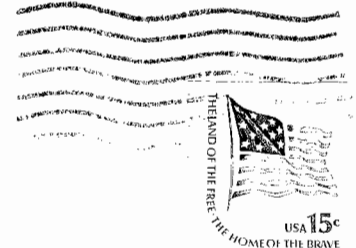
"Okay, mate, but he's at the Medical School in Hobart, he is, har, har."

The salesman was understandably taken aback. Coming from such a family and going to medical school! "Excuse me, son, I know its really none of my business--but what does he do at the Medical School?"

"Do, mate? He don't do nuthin... He's got two heads; he's in a pickle jar."

[If this is the only funny one, we may have heard the last of the Australian joke.]

Happy holidays to all from
CLAW & FANG #121 sent your way by
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