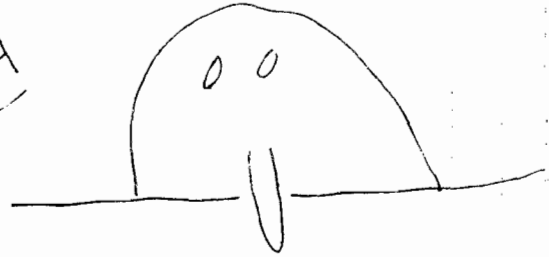




COSTA
GUANA



Volume 10, Number 8

August 17, 1985

Hi, guys. This is COSTAGUANA, a journal of postal Diplomacy and pachyderm pellets, inevitably mistyped, sloppily printed and awkwardly stuffed into the mail by Conrad F. von Metzke, 4374 Donald Avenue, San Diego, CA 92117-3813. Telephones: Home, (619) 276-2937. Office, (619) 566-2170 or 566-2190, but please call at work only if you've no choice. Subscription rate, 22c per copy, sold in increments of ten. Trades, all-for-all gladly or by arrangement (enquiries accepted, no salesperson will call). Game fees, \$7 to first time readers, \$3 to people already on the mailing list; these prices include a subscription for the duration of the game (forfeited if you drop away unannounced).

GAME OPENINGS: Keith Sherwood writes that we may be adopting two more orphans in the near future; I've agreed to hold space for them. This means I'll only be comfortable with one new original game at this time, and so that's what we got. Two signed already (John Walker, Paul Rauterberg), five slots open. Note: I do not use preference lists. Game fees collected from this gamestart will be donated to the Orphan Games Project.

MEDICAL BULLETIN: Your humble editor spent several hours in the hospital on Thursday the 15th, while a series of tests was run to investigate the possibility of a 'coronary event.' Result of tests: Major stress reaction (I prefer to call it a nervous collapse), and a series of instructions to go get involved in some stress-reduction therapies, cut back on coffee, stay off cigarettes, keep to minimums on liquor and loose women (the latter two not a problem anyway), exercise, eat a decent diet...the same advice we all get, only in my case rigidly enforced and monitored, with periodic follow-up tests.

Needless to say, I was a bit scared for a while. (Imagine the level of fear had it been 'the real thing!') So here we go, folks; stress clinic, psychiatric evaluation, down to just a squib of coffee and Cokes, no cigarettes, little or no hooch, and back to eating breakfast and decent lunches. Hmmm...this could get boring....

All of this is by way of information only. I am not leading up to any announcement that, in order to restore my state of health, I have to dump the games or anything. (In fact, one of the usual recommendations in these cases is, 'Get a hobby.' In that respect I'm all set; I have three good ones: This, stamps, and weeding the garden.)

WHY SO LITTLE ISSUE THIS TIME? Lack of time. Beginning Wednesday, Aug. 21, through Sunday, Aug. 25, there is a big national stamp show in town, and I have to help run the thing. I also have an out-of-town guest coming for the event, for whose visit I have a bit to prepare. (Wash the car, get the suit cleaned, that sort of trivial diddling.) So I'll keep this to games and maybe a little filler, and that's my limit. More rot next round.

GAME 1983CA - THE OLFACTORY OKAPI

This game is in a holding pattern for the time being, pending resolution of a controversial decision I rendered and the appeal therefrom. At the moment, the players and I are trying to come to terms on an Ombudsperson to take the issue into chambers.

I'll print a summary explanation of this when it's settled. In the meanwhile, I've elected to withhold comment lest it be thought I'm trying to influence or prejudice the case.

EMMYSYLVESTERVINCENTMAZZANTIKARLMENNINGERCHRISCARSTENSLEROYKURLANDER

(Linear separator indicating names of psychiatrists I've consulted at times. Yes, friends, Dr. Karl does belong there.)

KURTMASURBERNARDHAITINKBRUNOWALTERCHARLESADLERHANSKNAPPERTSBUSCHKARLBÖHM

(Linear separator naming some of my favorite Bruckner conductors. We could do another whole line of those....)

FRITZKONWITSCHNYOTTOKLEMPERERWILHELMFURTWANGLEREDUARDVANBEINUM EUGENJOCHUM
OSWALDKABASTAYEVGENYMRAVINSKYGEORGSOLTIHENRYSWOBODAHERBERTVONKARAJAN

(Gee...two more lines, and I can think of a couple of others too....)

GAME 1984HI - THE EXTROVERTED EMU - Winter 1904

It has been requested that I separate the Winter season and hold Spring until next time. Well, I did say I would if asked, so....

Retreats: Aus a rum-ser; Aus a mun-tyo.

POSITIONS:

- A (Pierce): Builds f tri. Has: a's arm, smy, ser, vie, tyo, ukr, con; f's tri, aeg (9).
 E (Johnston): Has: f's iri, yor, nwg (3).
 F (Fleming): Builds f mar. Has: a's ven, pie, pic; f's mar, mid, tun, tyn, eng (8).
 G (J.Walker): Builds a kie. Has: a's ruh, mun, gal, ber, kie; f's hol, den, edi, swe (9) (one short).
 I (anarchy): Has: f nap (1).
 T (Sherwood): Has: a's sev, rum; f bla (3).

The Italian removal, made by me of course, was a apu. Somebody is sure to throw at me, "But the rulebook says 'fleet before army!' True, but it also says, and I quote: "...(c'est-à-dire la plus éloignée du centre propre de ravitaillement le plus proche, en comptant les distances en espaces et en utilisant la route la plus courte possible...)...En cas d'égalité de distance, on retire le flotte avant l'armée."

So much for that problem.

(Dear readers of French: Sorry about the acute accent used in place of the grave; this typewriter is not fully equipped.)

Spring 1905 moves are due Saturday, September 7, 1985. (Tentatives on file for A, F and G.)

DEPARTMENT OF ABJECT TERROR: I am typing this the day before the deadline; today's mail is already here; and we are still missing (gasp) six sets of moves from five people. Let us pray....

NEWS FLASH: The new game now has three signed up. A nice letter and check arrived from a recently-transplanted British player, Simon Billenness. Simon also included a preference list, and I just said two pages ago that I don't use them; wassamarra, can't read?

Actually, it seems to be fairly standard these days to use such lists, so...maybe I'll change my mind. Okay, I changed my mind. If all seven players submit them, they'll be used, otherwise not.

In any case - a hearty welcome, Simon, both to this journal and to the shores of your former colony.

So. Four more for the new game, wot? Hurry up, they're already bumping and pushing in the queue....(I've already named the game; are you ready for THE DELIRIOUS DIK-DIK?)



"And while you're going over the revised articles of incorporation, I'll be playing softly Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 in C minor on my harmonica."

Thanks to Kitty Wolsiffer for that one....

////////////////////////////////////

I recently received a publication called BENZENE, from Alaska, which is worth a review and a recommendation. We'll do that later. For now, though, I am struck by a few comments in the extensive letter-and-response column; typical is this from editor Mark Lew: "Any intelligent politician, even a liberal one, must recognize that the nuclear freeze movement is long on emotion and short on sense." There is also some banter discussing whether children (babies up to teens) really worry about nuclear war, as some of the freeze advocates claim. Read the next page.



Peace in a Child's Life

A child has needs beyond those of food, clothing, and shelter in order to feel peaceful and safe. These needs include:

A nurturing family. These are people who will spend time with a child and let a child depend on them. In this way a child not only feels loved, but learns to love.

A sense of pride and control of one's body. Children need to view themselves and have others view them as normal, useful, and attractive. They need a sense of safety that their bodies and selves will be free from harm.

A home base and sense of community. This is a place where the same people and the same routines help a child develop a sense of the world as safe and predictable.

Fears in a Child's Life

Children have fears in their lives. Most children's nightmares, behavior problems, and emotional difficulties are due to these fears. The central fears include:

Being separated from loved ones. They worry that loved ones may be lost to them due to illnesses or death or through moves or rejections.

That their bodies might be harmed in some way. They worry about being abused or in pain or about being disfigured or disabled. As they grow older they fear death.

That their world will change. These changes can include a loss of familiar people, routines, neighborhoods, or income and status.

Nuclear War through a Child's Eyes

Children are particularly vulnerable to frightened feelings about nuclear war. All of the fears of childhood are stirred up for them when they begin to learn about nuclear war.

A child sees nuclear war as losing one's loved ones. A world without Mommy and Daddy or brothers and sisters or grandparents is the most frightening reality a child can imagine.

A child sees nuclear war as losing one's body. Older children can understand that they can die in a nuclear war. All children worry about being disfigured or disabled and about losing control of their bodies.

A child sees nuclear war as losing one's home and community. Children are especially vulnerable to the sense of loss that comes from a changed world in which nothing is predictable or familiar. They cannot comprehend any other world than their own.

Dealing with Children's Fears about Nuclear War

Most children can handle their fears about nuclear war if parents will let them feel free to talk about their feelings and answer their questions. In simple words parents should ask their children what they are afraid of and listen to their concerns. Parents should reassure a child that adults are trying to keep their world safe.

Some children may not seem to be reassured by parents. For some of these children there is a fear that a nuclear war might repeat an event that was traumatic in the past such as a death or injury. For other children nuclear war reminds them that they feel unusually helpless and vulnerable in their lives.



If a child seems unusually upset about the possibility of a nuclear war, it might be helpful to discuss your child's fears with a professional. Your child's school counselor or your family's physician or pastor may be able to evaluate if counseling might be helpful, or a parent can phone a local community mental health center for assistance.

What a Child Needs to Know About Peace and Nuclear War

Children must be hopeful their world will survive. They need to be told that there are alternatives to nuclear war. Any time a child discusses nuclear war, parents can say in a child's words "People in the world are trying to learn to settle disagreements by talking to each other and by agreeing not to use nuclear weapons."

Children need to be told that their fears are reasonable and that adults are also afraid of nuclear war. They can learn that talking about their fears out loud can make them less anxious. Parents can say in a child's words, "I worry about our family being hurt in a nuclear war, too, and I don't want that to happen."

Children need to have a view of their parents and themselves as having some power in stopping nuclear war. When parents can tell children that people can vote, that people can write their political leaders, that people can be a part of peace groups in their communities and churches, they let a child know that the situation is not totally out of control. Children can learn to use actions in a positive way to help themselves feel less anxious.

John Walker has asked a couple of leading questions about the nine-digit ZIP code mentioned last issue: Does it really do any good? How does it work? How far down can mail be sorted with it? So I thought a few of you might enjoy a short essay on the subject.

The expansion of the ZIP code derives from the recognition by postal managers that, between technological advances and the incredible expansion of postal services within certain fast-growing areas, the old five-digit system was being outgrown. The same fact was realized twenty-five years ago, when the old city zone system was replaced by the present five digits.

The incredible expansion of the volume of mail delivery, and the mandate to cut costs, is now leading into serious use of electronic mail sorting machinery. At this stage, bar-codes, optical character readers, and various levels of computer processing are past the testing stages and at least partially on line.

The greatest single budget item in the USPS is labor and labor-related costs (benefits, pensions, etc.) Depending on what one counts as a 'labor cost' (as a silly example, is toilet paper a 'labor cost?'), estimates run from 70% to 90% of the postal budget spent in labor areas. Simplistic solutions such as 'cut salaries' or 'lay off a bunch of people' would certainly have an effect, but could never solve the problem in the long run. So the current scheme of things is, use technology to reduce the need for labor, and then let attrition take its toll.

In its ultimate projection, ZIP + 4 is intended to reduce up to 40% of the sorting stages through which mail now has to pass, thus reducing up to 40% of the labor needed to process it. As with most such numbers, "up to" is rarely reached; a more realistic figure is around 20%. In concrete terms, if we were in full swing right now, you'd be paying about 18c for a letter and 12c for a postal card.

ZIP + 4 in general terms is an original invention of the USPS, but owing to bureaucratic matters, by the time we finally got around to thinking in concrete terms, other countries had moved ahead in their adoption of the concept. As a result, our 'original' idea is modelled on the Japanese system.

A five-digit ZIP code can be subdivided to the following data:

FIRST DIGIT: One of nine broad regions in the nation.

SECOND DIGIT: One of up to one hundred subdivisions within that region.

THIRD DIGIT: Further refinement of the second digit. (Digits 2 and 3 are properly treated as a pair.)

FOURTH and

FIFTH DIGITS: A metropolitan enclave within the regional subdivision.

In general, these digits identify the area serviced by a single post office or substation.

Thus my own ZIP code, 92117:

9: Region 9 (states of Calif., Ore, Wash., Alaska, Hawaii, and our Pacific possessions).

2: Southern California.

1: San Diego City. (As opposed to San Diego County, which is '0')

17: Clairemont, the name of this particular housing area. It includes roughly 15,000 homes and businesses.

'Clairemont' is served by, I believe, forty-seven carriers. Using just five digits, and with the understanding that mail arrives for sorting thoroughly mixed to every point in the universe, several separate sortings must occur: First to the region, then to the state, then to the area within the state, then to the local post office (last two digits), then to the particular carrier route, and finally (by the carrier) to the house. Six steps, with potential for error all along the way; if the carrier delivers the wrong letter to your house, then depending on what you do with it, it is theoretically possible for the letter to have to repeat all six stages.

The biggest of these stages is the sorting to carrier route. Clerks are required to learn every single street and block range in the entire area; this can consist in hundreds and hundreds of memory items. And, considering the mail volume, quite a few clerks must be trained for each 'scheme.' The labor costs in training alone (which is essentially a non-productive function) are obviously staggering.

With the nine-digit setup now being phased in, these forty-seven routes and hundreds of streets can be broken down into extremely tiny units. The largest geographic area identified by a nine-digit code is a single side of a single street between two cross-streets; the smallest division is to a single point of delivery (one business, one post office box, one bank of apartment boxes). Further, even if you have a particularly long block between cross-streets, the code will change any time the numbering range (in hundreds) changes. Thus a 4200 block and a 4300 block will always have different codes, no matter intervening streets.

My nine-digit code, 92117-3813, is common to a total of four houses - those on the even side of the street, in the 4300 block, between Bert Ct. and Rolfe Rd. So far, the largest grouping I've run across is fifty-three houses. The only exception is major apartment buildings; there is always a code for the entire building (which could mean hundreds of units), but this is solved by giving a separate code to each group of apartments in the building whose mailboxes are accessed by a single post office lock.

Given this, imagine the sorting steps that can be averted. And particularly, if the mail is prepared so that it can be electronically (optically) 'read,' the possibilities are nearly endless.

In fairness, it is the major business mailing that we're aiming for: Large companies that can obtain equipment to address mailings in electronically-ready format. The day is long ahead when we can scan the handwritten scrawls most of us use. And so, using ZIP +4 on COSTAGUANA, or your letters to your Aunt Maude, is actually meaningless. Except for one thing: It could have a significant symbolic value. Not only will it enable you to learn your code, so as to be able to supply it to your big businesses when needed, it will show your correspondents that the concept is not a joke cutting the costs and speeding service. And who knows? Maybe the day of OCR scanning of handwriting is a long way in the future; on the other hand, in 1902, all but two strange men in North Carolina thought manned flight was a futuristic fantasy too.

GAME 1985AJ - THE TERGIVERSATORY TAPIR - Spring 1903

AUSTRIA (Walters): a gre (h). a ser (s) bud-tri. a bud-tri. a tri-tyo. a vie (s) tri-tyo.
 ENGLAND (Fleming): a ruh-kie. f nth-den. f wes-tyn.
 FRANCE (Walker): a par-(s) gas-bur. a mar (s) gas-bur. a gas-bur. f pic-bel. f por-spa sc.
 GERMANY (Caruso): a den (s) ber-kie. a bel (s) kie-hol. a sil-mun. a pru-ber. a ber-kie. f kie-hol.
 ITALY (Pustilnik): a ven (s) tyo. a tyo (h). f adr-ion. f ion-tyn.
 RUSSIA (Brown): a bul-con. a rum-gal. a arm (s) con-smy. a war-lvn. a stp-nwy. f bla (s) bul-con. f con-smy. f swe (s) ENG nth-den.
 TURKEY (Cartier): f aeg-con. a ank (s) aeg-con.

The German army Denmark retreats to Poughkeepsie, New York, where it will live in retirement raising rutabagas. There are no other retreats.

Remember that this is the last move in which Steve Cartier is to be involved, he having resigned. No volunteers having come forward, Turkey is now in anarchy.

Michael Pustilnik announces that he has done something nasty to his back, and is in pain. He also announces that, as of August 16, he ceased being a teen-ager. We wish you well, Mike, on both fronts (or backs).

Fall 1903 moves are due Saturday, September 7, 1985.

VENICE TO TRIESTE: I regret that the visit I've been planning for two years will have to be postponed. Someone is knocking at my back door.

.....



Graphik: Simon Wiesenthal

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