

Happy New Year from Mr. & Mrs. Sullivan & Tabatha Catt....



diplomacy by moonlight

...the zine that nearly borders on the absurd

Tabatha purred softly to herself as she fixed the evening meal, a dish of scrap haddock fetched from the import shop below. A modest meal in these days of hard times, but a good one at that. Time ago when one could get big scraps of lamb at the butcher's shop down the street when he was still in business. She looked at the kitchen clock, its blue luminous dial said half past six. Fancy thing, that clock. Too fancy for a cat though, but Sullivan said he liked it, she thought, and my love is late again.

Sullivan and Tabatha are an unusual couple in regard to their special independence. Sullivan, a civil-minded feline who came to Chicago on an Irish freighter and settled on the city's southwest side, left the demanding lifestyle of an anti-espionage night watchman at an electronics plant (he caught many of the metallic spy mice that corporations use to steal information from one another) to take a job with Ralston Purina's advertising department.

Sullivan married a very attractive Tabatha, who as a child was the victim of too large a family and thus was cast out in the street to fend for herself. She was nearly killed by a stray dog, but was rescued by a small boy whose parents did not want such a pet. They would have sent her to the Anti-Cruelty Society if it was not for Sullivan who rescued her once again. Cats, of course, must look out for one another in such a large and indifferent city. But it was more than looking out for your own kind. It was love.

They rented a small crawl space of a neglected apartment above an import food store on Cermak Road, not far from Chinatown, and lived a modest life, Tabatha bearing a litter of three kittens thus far. This area of town

was a rough place to raise offspring of any kind. Two were later killed, one by rat poison and the other in a fire in an abandoned building. The third and youngest one went wandering with some of his socialist friends from Indiana who wanted to show him a few of the humans' shut-down steel mills, for an example of the 'rotting human capitalist system'. He was not heard from in over three months, and it is strange that a cat should take interest in human affairs. All told, a hard, short life for urban cats. We humans have a legend that a cat has 'nine lives', but that's a myth, of course. It is customary for us humans to make up such legendary nonsense. The below scenario, however, is no legend.

Sullivan was in a dead end alley, backed into a corner. The fur on his back stood up on end as he spat at his captor,

"Lester, I told you to never trouble me again."

The giant rat smiled. A tough product of decaying neighborhoods and generations of pesticides, Lester could afford to trouble a single cat. It was Lester himself who was notorious for attacking humans, such as when he jumped out of the corner mailbox into the arms of the local mailman, or when he bit the throat of George, the fat garbageman. Lester feared nothing, least of all, Sullivan. The great rodent cleared his throat and spoke in his dull monotone,

"And I tell you Sully, 'I want firstborn of every litter as payment for you and pretty wife's safety'. You say you want time to think. You think too much. You run out of time."

Sullivan looked around him. There was no escape, walls on two sides, a barbed fence far to the left. He saw the pink/orange gleam of the street light. The red eyes of Lester. Garbage strewn about. A broken bottle! Sullivan slowly inched towards it, keeping Lester in view. He stalled Lester as best he could,

"An innocent babe for your stomach, courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Cat. Barbaric." Sullivan was now behind the broken bottle. A crude knife, but it would have to do. "I'd never allow such a thing. It's unthinkable!"

"Then you be dead!" Lester lunged at Sullivan, teeth bared as sharp as razor blades, while Sullivan shuddered and held his weapon high. The enemies met and tumbled.

"Shreeeek! Shriek!!" Lester doubled over in pain as the glass dug into his right eye.

Sullivan was not unscathed, nor did he notice. His left paw bled as he ran for home, only a block away. He rushed across Cermak Road, nearly getting creamed by a human's ground car. He scurried into an adjacent alley and climbed the familiar telephone pole which led to the fire escape to the stone ledge to the hole in the brick where his apartment lay.

Lester's hatred forced down the shock and skull splitting sting as his remaining eye caught the sight of sight of Sullivan's trail of blood. He followed it without hesitation.

"I will kill you Sully cat, oh yes I will. And your little wife too."

Sullivan ran into the kitchen, shaking all over. Tabatha rushed to him with a scared look on her face as she studied his reddened paw,

"Beloved, who has done this?"

"Lester. C'mon, it's not over yet." He took her hand and led her to the entrance hall, asking her hurriedly, "Remember our plan for something like this?"

"Yes, but won't he bring his friends?"

"No. Lester's too proud for that, it's his private little battle with me."

"Will it work?"

"Yes. Humans call this a 'Molotov Cocktail'. I call it an anti-rat bomb."

Tabatha pushed the quart jar filled with gasoline through the hole in the brick out onto the ledge, while her mate descended to about a human's height above the ground. Sure enough, Lester was down below, searching for him. Sullivan licked his wounded paw and then called down,

"Lester! Go to your devil, whatever that may be!"

Lester slowly turned, his one eye regarded the cat above. He almost smiled. "No devil for our kind, Sully, but I be glad to send you to yours."

The distraction was sufficient. Upon Sullivan's signal, Tabatha lit the cloth and pushed the jar off the ledge. It crashed to the concrete and with a frooooph! burning gas was thrown over Lester. He cried out softly as he died in the flames.

Sullivan climbed back to his waiting spouse and embraced her. She was crying. He scratched her ears and gently assured her, "It's all over for Lester."

Tabatha ceased crying, but her face betrayed fear as she looked up at Sullivan, "But what about his little gang of terrorists?"

"They will be demoralized for a few days, perhaps a week, when they see his remains. For a

while it'll make them think twice about hitting us." Sullivan and Tabatha walked arm in arm into the kitchen. Tabatha sat down at the table as her mate continued on, "Then I suppose they'll choose a new leader and we may have to deal with them once again. But for now we've been granted a reprieve. Let's eat something."

"Ooooooh, but your paw! I forgot all about it! Let me see it!" Tabatha examined it, then cleaned it with her tongue. "If Lester was sick when he bit you..."

"No, look, it's a slash, a cut." Sullivan explained his confrontation in the alley to Tabatha. She nodded and concluded,

"So you cut yourself with your own weapon."

"Yeh," Sullivan murmured sheepishly, "I'm some hero, huh."

"Better than no hero at all."

They ate their meal quietly, occasionally mentioning a few words of other news to help one another get their minds off the imminent rat problem. Tabatha spoke first.

"How was work?"

"Felix is down on me again. It seems I can't come up with any more catchy songs or slogans. You can only say so much about cat food, you know."

"Is my beloved running out of breath?"

"Could be. It's tougher now. Not like a year or so ago when I thought up the Cat Chow 'chow chow chow' commercial. But Felix had to screw that one up by making cats walk backwards. I swear it, it really depicted our kind as being unintelligent. You know we're better than that. I wanted cats dancing in bright colored costumes. He said, 'too complicated. You need something simple the humans will like'."

"Do you think you are losing your pull?"

"No, not yet, but who knows? You know, I hate that place! Today the entire second tasters' shift was sent home sick from food poisoning. Chow chow chow! What kind of crock did R&D come up with now? Oh, I love the dinner, and I love you too...I couldn't possibly make it in this ghetto rat-trap without..."

"I know." Tabatha smiled and purred.

The wail of sirens came from outside. A human had called the fire department, and they now arrived with a small truck to dispatch the now dying flames. The firemen were not needed, bare cement does not burn, so the fire would have died out on its own. Sullivan walked to the hole in the brick, then reported back to Tabatha. "The captain will see quite a strange sight below, and chances are he'll write in his report, 'cause unknown'. The humans don't want to bother with small potatoes like this when more serious trouble goes on in the city."

The cat couple finished their meal and Tabatha told him the other news of the day. "Fritz was over today and announced he was raising the rent-- again."

Sullivan frowned and then spat, "Fritz, Fritz, the bastard pimp! Who does he think we are, Persians? Oh yes, we know all about Fritz and his cat house on Halsted Street. We know how Fritz bought out the East Catacombs in Calumet City so he could charge the life out of grieving families who only want to give their kin a decent burial."

"And note how he panders to his human master Billy Clyde and rides around in his catillac as if he was a human himself?"

"That too! He ought to have his eyes scratched out."

"Now now, my love, you know you are much too civil for that."

"Aye." When Sullivan was upset, usually his lost accent found its way back into his speech.

"Oh!" Exclaimed Tabatha, "I almost forgot, the post brought your radical newsletter today."

"Not my radical newsletter. I dunno how I got on their mailing list, but let's see it anyway." She passed it to him, The Cataclysmatic, a monthly paper. Sullivan peered over the pages, then grumbled his disapproval, "Momar Khatafy is once again raising hell, 'advocating destruction' of the dog race and wants a new world order ruled by us. Heh heh-- now don't get me wrong, I'm no lover of dogdom, I say cut them off the welfare roles, they never could take care of themselves, but this! Khatafy is a madcat. He gives our brethren a bad name."

"Hmmmnn."

"He's going to march next week. Dumb. There's also an article by some human called Bill LaFosse about 'Cat Discipline'. A potful of crock. The whole 'zine is crock." Sullivan threw it in the trash.

"My love, may I say something?"

"But of course!"

"Let's...leave here." Sullivan was silent as Tabatha went on, "I mean, go somewhere far from here where we can raise our kittens without fear, where the sky is blue and there is real

grass, and where..."

"There are no Fritz the cats nor Lester the rats?" Sullivan smiled grimly.

"Exactly."

The cat couple walked together to the living room and sat on the couch. Tabatha looked at the photograph of her missing son, how it disturbed her so. "I miss Keegan so...I wonder where he travels."

"He must be lost by now."

"I wish we had other little ones, but you were right, one cannot raise a family here."

"I would leave here, but where can we go? To the south lies more of the humans' industrial wasteland. The north, well, I've never been there."

"There is a place I've heard of from human legend."

"We'd do best to bypass human legend."

"Please beloved, let me finish. I've seen the legend written on the backs of many of the humans' ground cars. It says, 'Escape to Wisconsin'. Is that a place where humans go when they tire of the city?"

"Perhaps. But I don't really know where or how far 'Wisconsin' is. It could be a rough journey."

"But surely such a journey would be better than staying here, awaiting Lester's terrorists when they return in force?"

"It could be better, but it would be even betterer if I merely found a human master to take care of us, like so many of our brothers these days."

"But you won't. You like your freedom and independence too much."

"Freedom for what? The freedom to be killed by Lester's gang? Or hit by a car? The freedom to be ripped off by Fritz? Of course, the way it's been going lately! Freedom has its price, and it's been damned expensive so far." Sullivan paused for a moment, studying his wife's face. As usual, it was a thoughtful face. "But I don't want to be no human's pet either. Very well. Let's 'escape to Wisconsin', wherever it may be."

Tabatha purred and squeezed his paw. Sullivan let out a "yelp!". Tabatha apologized, "Sorry beloved, wrong paw. You'll like Wisconsin, you'll see. It will be like the old days, much simpler. And Mrs. Wilson says the cats chase the rats out there, not the other way around, as it is here."

"Well, I dunno. Mrs. Wilson is an old busybody, but I guess it is possible." Sullivan broke into a grin. He was feeling better already. "And I bet the insurance rates are lower too, and you get a discount package for insuring all 'nine lives'." They both laughed at the ridiculous human soothsaying. Sullivan left the room for a moment, then returned with a small package. "Look what I brought for us for this New Year's Eve."

Tabatha smiled as she opened the gift. A look of surprise and delight lit up her face.

"Catnip! Oh where did you find..."

"Ramsey at the office knew a cat who has connections with the black cat market. It wasn't easy, but there you have it! The stuff's getting downright scarce." Sullivan and Tabatha each took a mouthful of the strange liquor-plant...

...and suddenly all their problems seemed attainable. They would find a way to Wisconsin somehow, north seemed the way to go. They would leave in a few days when Sullivan's paw healed up a bit, and they would elude the rats in daylight. And on this New Year's Eve, they would have a fine, quiet night together.

Happy New Year from Mr. and Mrs. Sullivan and Tabatha Catt.

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THE SECOND ANNUAL OZOG HALLOWEEN BALL.....

Halloween is the only holiday where one can go out in public in costume without being shot at. When the many characters assembled together on Saturday the 31st, we proceeded to do just that.

An Elf for a Day

Two hours before the party, my sister Paula and I dressed as elves from the epic story Elfquest, a large format comic independently published by Wendy and Richard Pini of upstate New York. Paula portrayed a woodland elf, dressed in a soft green suede blouse and pants, with a dark colored cloak with hood. A crown of flowers was on her head. I patterned myself after Elfquest's character 'Cutter', dressing in a cream colored velour shirt (with the sleeves billowed out and closely gathered at the wrist) and brown suede breeches, a ratty looking fur vest, leather moccasins and



Eric, your publisher



Paula, his sister

a rope for a belt. A pure white wig completed my 'Cutter' look.

We both had the gear of warrior elves, the usual bows and quivers of arrows. Paula's arrows had yellow feathers on the ends, mine were white. My bow was slung on my back while Paula carried hers by hand. A small belt knife was at my side. Oh! I cannot forget our dark brown skin and the essential pointed ears, necessary for elfing! We were ready for anything. No one would mess with us in our garb. I decided to put it to the test.

"Paula, let's go over to Yum-Me."

"No way, are you crazy?"

"Yeh. Come on, it'll be alright!"

"Uh uh."

After about an hour of pleading, she agreed. We took a walk to the supermarket down the street to buy a gallon of milk. I used to work there a couple of years ago, and I wondered if Mr. Yum, my ex-boss, was there (the supermarket is owned by Koreans). We went out the door and along Lawler Avenue to North Avenue, a four lane main thoroughfare. We crossed at the light and walked past Rocky's (the corner drug store) towards Yum-Me Foods.

Now let me explain the people we encountered. Chicagoans are more sensible, moderate people, than their big city counterparts in the East. New Yorkers tend to ignore anything out of the ordinary, because they are so used to seeing such strange sights. Not Chicagoans, no sir-ee! Chicagoans stand and gawk, a New Yorker would merely go about his merry way.

This is what happened as Paula and I went about our merry way. We live by a church, and the 5:00 evening mass was letting out. After a Mass, churchgoers usually run over to Rocky's or Yum-Me for something. The ho-hum usual boredom. Today on Halloween they stopped cold in their tracks, staring at us as we passed, not knowing what to think! We were practically stopping traffic in the street! Paula and I were quite an impressive pair, and I looked downright menacing.

We walked into the store. I said hi to a black guy who was leaning against the meat counter, and continued on to the milk cooler. I looked behind me and the black guy was still where I left him, with a confused look on his face. He seemed mildly shocked. Paula and I then stood in line at the express lane, then paid for the milk. The cashier behind the counter grinned and asked,

"What are you supposed to be? You look like something out of Star Wars."

"No, use your imagination! I'm a desert warrior elf."

"Oh. You look lovely." He smirked.

We walked out of the store, again passing a great deal of people while on the way home from our milk mission. We dodged numerous stares thrown at us, ignored them as we went home. It could have been worse. They could have thrown stones.

The whole operation took less than ten minutes. I'm happy the people who saw us had their normal rou-

tine disrupted for a few moments. It would give them different news to talk about.

The Party

As I waited for the guests to arrive, I sat on the front steps to hand out trick or treat candy. Two little black kids (accompanied by parents) hesitated to approach when they saw me, took two steps forward, then stopped. I then stood up, arms outstretched. They retreated in fright. I made a friendly gesture and reassured them,

"Come on! I'm not the devil."

They took their candy gingerly and hurried on to the next house.

Kurt was the first to arrive, without a costume.

"Let me guess. You came as yourself."

"Aw wow. If I knew you would wear the same thing as last year, I would have worn my dad's army uniform again."

We talked about heavy philosophy (Kurt's favorite subject) while I handed out candy. One kid's mother halted halfway to our neighbor's house and gazed at me for a minute or two.

"Yes?" I asked her.

"Oh, nothing. I was just looking at your ears."

"You like my ears, huh!"

"Yes."



The Blues Brothers

The main event of the party was the scavenger hunt. Our costumed contestants were to find certain items, written on slips of paper, randomly drawn. There were four teams:

(1) Stan (Time Salesman), Ann (Sack of Ceresota Flour), Kurt (Himself), Eric (Desert Elf).

(2) Dan (Clown), Vicki (Clown's Girlfriend), Kurt, my brother (Spiderman)

(3) Carolyn, my sister (Gypsie), Paula, my sister (Woodland Elf), Laurie (Clown), Kathy, clown's sister (Vampiress).

(4) Mike (Jake Blues), Chris (Elwood Blues), Keith (The Baby).

The four teams drove off to find the items, one car per team. I will talk about the team I tagged along with.

My friends found most of the items

they needed at Stan's house, three blocks away. Such items consisted of a chicken bone, a candle, a weed, a twig, a newspaper from the day before, etc. They lucked out, choosing relatively easy items. One item would be easy to get, but Ann would have to go out in public for it, a Wendy's napkin. She left the protection of the car and walked into the fast food joint, then came back, victorious. I asked for a report immediately.

"Well, what did they say?"

"They just looked at me kind of funny, chat's all."

The last items were to be more difficult. I had prepared a clue directing them to a local park where they would find a note taped to a lamp post which would tell them which items to get. (I had strategically placed them on lamp posts at the four corners and northern/southern center sections of the park during the afternoon.)

They found the park alright, but the lamp post? Hah! That's another story. They were to find the lamp post at the northern center section. Stan drove past the tennis courts and parked in the lot. He groaned, looking at a dozen lamp posts, "It could be any one of these!"

Actually, he had parked about twenty yards from the correct one. After about ten minutes of wasted time, Kurt discovered the note. Everyone crowded around him.

"Aw, what a drag. We need a white hair, a white bird's feather and a magic white rock."

They thought for a moment, then rushed me, grabbing at my white wig.

"Where do we get a white bird?" Kurt whined.

"Maybe Eric hid a white feather in the park," Stan wondered.

The three of them walked off into the trees.

"Idiots." I thought as I touched my white feathered arrows. I decided to stroll across the street to ring a doorbell at a tan brick two flat. Riiiiiiiing! Within a few minutes an old lady came down the stairs, saw me, then debated whether or not to open the door. She finally did.

"Yes?"

"I am lost," I said quietly in a slight English accent, "Would you know the way to the East?"

"That way." She pointed in the proper direction.

"Thank you." I walked away, back to the park. Team One had assembled back at the car.

"You got the feather," Stan said to me. "I first thought about getting a pillow, but then remembered you had white feathers."

I plucked a feather off an arrow and handed it to him.

Kurt found a white stone at his feet, by pure luck. "What about this magic rock business?"

"It doesn't have to be magical, Kurt, just white," I told him. "That one seems white enough for me."

They were set. They had found everything. We drove back to my house, Stan putting the pedal to the floor. We were the first team to return. My mother distributed prizes to the three team members, nice key chains. The other three teams straggled in from 15 minutes to an hour later. They weren't too happy about it, apparently some teams had trouble. My sister Carolyn complained to me.

"We went to the Southeast corner of Riis Park and nothing was on the pole! Then Mike jumps out of his car, running to us and wants to make a deal that if we give him a white feather and a white rock, he'll show us the clue off the post. We told him to go to hell."

It turned out that Dan had taken Carolyn's clue by mistake, my brother Kurt (who accompanied me when I placed the clues) had told Dan where to find a lamp post, Carolyn's lamp post. Damn you, Kurt!

Keith said, "When I went into Jewel for a receipt people were looking at me and laughing, 'Look at the baby!'"

Dan was too sophisticated to walk in public in his clown garb. He picked up his brother and his brother's friend at his sister's house to have them do all his dirty work for him, (walking into K-Mart for a sales receipt and a bowling alley for a scoresheet).

The Menu and the Bar

A sign tacked to the post advertised the different foods of the party:

1. Salted dragon scales = Potato chips
2. Chopped toes on a bun = Sloppy Joes
3. Stuffed hound dogs in a blanket = Cheese hot dogs (wrapped in a roll)
4. Toasted spider legs = Pretzles
5. Fire sticks = Hot tamales
6. Mud cones = Chocolate cupcakes (in an ice cream cone)
7. Jack-o-lanterns = Peanut butter cookies

At the bar was a sign 'Name Thy Poison':

1. Wormy apple spider = Spiced apple cider (Boy was that stuff rot-gut)
2. Witches brew = Beer
3. Poopsie crowla = Pepsie cola
4. Gin runny nose = Gin-lemonade-7-up
5. Bloody Mary float = Cranberry juice sherbert
6. 666 = 7-up
7. Rain = Water

My brother Kurt was appointed the bar tender. He was a lousy one, he mixed my 'Gin runny nose' with too much Gin in it. Later, Kurt told people to mix their own drinks. It wasn't that he couldn't get a 'witches brew' or Pepsie for someone, he just didn't want to gopher for anyone.

Other Party Games

Statues-- Contestants walked around and danced in the center of the room while I played Dixieland music. When the music stopped so would the contestants. If one then moved or couldn't stop, he or she would be out. This was one of the funniest events, seeing these costumed freaks mingling around. What a managerie! Laurie the clown was the last one out, she received her prize, a little clown statue. How appropriate!



Stan, the Time Salesman



Kathy, the Vampiress



Laurie, the Clown



Keith, the Baby

On the Road to Dracula's Castle-- In this event, we sat around a coffee table and a person would tell what he found while on his way to Dracula's castle, also repeating in order all the other things the other players found. Example: 'While on the road to Dracula's castle I found a shoe.' Then the next person, 'While on my way to Dracula's castle I found a shoe and a spoon'. And so on. I believe I screwed up on the fifth or sixth item. I can't remember, it was so ridiculous. I even forget what the prize was.

Voting-- After food was served and eaten, I handed out paper and pencils for people to vote for the best costume. Ozogs could vote, but could not be voted for. A person would give his choices for the best, second best, and third best costumes. I read out the results, assigning three points for the persons' first choice, two points for second, and one point for the third. Keith won by a landslide, his prize was Stevie Nicks' new record album.

Other party games were 'Charades' (with two teams, players taking turns acting out halloween characters for their team members to guess.

Another game was 'Bunco', a dice game where players had to roll a seven, eleven or doubles for secretly wrapped gifts. After the basket of gifts were gone, players could steal their neighbors' gifts.

Towards the end of the party, we read spooky stories and my mother, our 'resident witch' read palms in our six foot high pyramid. She had dressed as a soothsayer/mystic, with a white yarn wig and an 'Aquarius' symbol on her forehead, a rough textured robe, sandals, and she carried a gnarled branch for a staff. She scared off her share of trick-or-treaters too, ha!

We broke up about four in the morning. Quite a party. Halloween will always be one of my favorite holidays.

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PAID ADVERTISEMENT

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Hoof & Mouth is published every 4th week by Donald L. Sigwalt, 125 Hebard St., Roch., NY 14605. Phone: (716) 232-1879. It is dedicated to serving the Postal Diplomacy Hobby by providing well run games along with (at least once in a while) articles, news and letters concerning the hobby. The subscription rate is 55¢ per issue. Game fees are \$2.50 per game.

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Game Openings? Yes, Yes, Yes

RAMBLINGS

Well gang, here we are again. I hope. Don't expect too much from me in the future. I'm not allowed to ever see Angie again and it hurts now just as much as all the other times we were broken up. Notice I said broken up and not broke up. The Idea, again, was not our own. Oh, sure, we've broken up on our own before but we were always back together the next day (if not sooner). This time her mother and father stepped in AGAIN. Last time they did I couldn't see Angie for about two months and when I did get to see her, it still took a long time to get our own feelings sorted out. We were back on the right track though with things going good then all of a sudden, wham, bam, shazam, we get fucked up again. I guess parents will never understand their children and men will always be plagued by the petty prejudices that destroy people's lives daily. Anyway, faith and hope still linger (barely) and I know I love Angie, so with those three working in my favor, maybe things will work out.

Other personal stuff... my dad's been doing pretty good healthwise lately. My mother had her wrist operated on. Something about the nerves being pinched. It hurt her before and now it hurts after - I guess it needs about six weeks to get better. My brother, Billy, should be on his way home from NC even as I type this. He graduated 3rd in his class which is good, but not good enough to earn him lance corporal which he wanted. He should make it soon though, anyway. He is doing good in the Marines and we're all proud of him.

Oh, how could I forget - we got a new kitten. He's all white which is quite a contrast to the old black one we still have (Hobo). My mother's dog Mikey likes it because it's smaller than him (Mikey's one of those fat little weiner dogs.) Our first snowstorm has arrived...we got about 2 feet in the last 2 days. Almost forgot to write about the Rambler: It's been good. The gas gauge still doesn't work, the tailgate window's still out of commission and the left rear door still can't be opened. I think I need a new voltage regulator too because my battery keeps overcharging (and consequently losing water). But we're ready for the snow because I got 4 snow tires on it. Now if I can only learn to drive on the stuff! Well, it's not really that hard. In fact, I took my THRU road test today (12/11/61). Did pretty good too, in spite of the snow. Hopefully I'll have my license by next week.

On the game front...R1 and R2 rattle on. That international game is the pits. I think Malcolm took me out of it without even asking me. I wrote to everyone but so far only heard from Germany and Italy (whose letter took a month to get here). I'm supposed to be Turkey. I picked up a standby position in the Chamber. I got Germany in '01 - same as R1, only the Italians are not in Munich this time. So in this game I should be able to concentrate on building an empire instead of fighting for my own homeland, which is a much nicer pass time.

Since we last met I played my first face to face game and there should be an article or two about it soon. I'm also in a local telephone game with weekly deadlines. I'm playing England which is something new to me. I'll keep y'all posted as the game goes on.

Hi y'all! My name is Don Sigwalt, publisher of Hoof & Mouth. If you are looking for well-run games of a small (but packs a lot of punch) zine, H&M is indeed the place for you. My four week publishing schedule is very good for player negotiation, and I do my very best to keep the zine running on time.

H&M features good strategy and tactics articles and my honest commentaries on hobby politics and personalities. And the most entertaining feature of H&M is my own personal life, which is such a fucked-up soap opera, it even makes me laugh.

So send me a stamp and I will send you the January ish as soon as it rolls off the xerox. Oh! Don't forget, sub rates may soon drop to 45 cents!

[This is something new I am trying out in DBM, instead of the old-fashioned plug. The pubber himself knows best how to sell his own zine, and I believe this method will work out well.]

I like H&M. It doesn't get much attention (maybe because the H&F logo looks too much like the defunct Tetracuspids) but I've seen it develop into a well-rounded zine, thus can recommend it for playing, as well as reading. But the prospective player/reader knows best. Ask Don for a sample. I'm sure you'll be well received.

Hey! Bob Olsen, Dan Stafford, Mike Mazzer, Bernie Oaklyn, Keith Sherwood

and Scott Palter! How about getting into that grudge game with me? This is the second time I'm putting forth the invitation. Let's do it! Let's have Sigwalt GM it and play it in H&M.]

PAID POLITICAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Greetings Fellow Dippers!

I'm Andy Lischett, the publisher of Cheesecake. When Rod Walker of the NADF (North American Diplomacy Federation) opens free elections in mid-Spring, I would like the hobby to remember a man who the hobby can trust.

Eric Ozog for Hobby Ombudsman!

That's right, my friends, take it from me, a hobby member who's silver has remained untarnished through all these years.

I've known Eric for ages. He has kept his head through many a crisis (Bernie Oaklyn, 1979 IW, Coughlan vs. Martin and the Erebor fold) and comes out on top every time, stronger than ever. That is because he tackles his problems with the power of honesty. His willingness to look scandal squarely in the eye, admit his mistakes and his unique sense of humor make him unchallengeable in attaining this honorable hobby office.

Vote Ozog this Spring for Hobby Ombudsman!

[Thank you, Andy! With such an endorsement coming from you, I'm sure the hobby will stand up and take notice. If I am elected, I promise to bring a new 'golden age' of honesty and integrity to this respectable hobby position.]

* * * *

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Standbys and Orphans--	\$5.00/10 issues

There are no more game openings, but will accept a few more standbys.

DISCOUNTS: For material submitted for print (at least 1/2 page typewritten), that person who sent something will receive the issue it appeared in for free. This only applies to persons who have paid the new sub rates. Courtesy copies will be sent to non-subscribing writers on a one time only basis.

Whether or not your material is chosen for print will depend on the following factors: the quality of material, available space and the publisher's mood.

Remember, I print anything. Nothing is sacred in DBM.

* * * *

FROM THE PUBLISHER

All right, gang, fun is fun, but this is getting out of hand. Way back when I made up this Eric Ozog character it was all in clean fun. Sure nobody believed he existed, so I went ahead and hired this high school kid to play the part.

Actually, it wasn't all that easy. Well over 80 kids answered my initial ad ("Wanted- obnoxious teenager"), but after a lot of interviewing I sorted out one particularly nasty soul, named Elmo Kunkle. This viscious miscreant actually terrorized his mother until she agreed to go along with the Ozog charade at the Kunkle residence at 1526 N. Lawler. In short, I had an "Eric Ozog" for personal appearances.

That wasn't enough. Elmo started demanding raises and cash advances and stealing my cocaine to sell to neighborhood kids. What was worse, he started enjoying Diplomacy on those rare occasions when he wasn't torturing small animals.

That would have been fine, but he wouldn't leave well enough alone. He decided he wanted to start a zine. This entire project so far has consisted of me writing, printing and adjudicating while he collects the money. This wouldn't be so bad, but Elmo is so viscious that nobody writes to him and I have to forge all the letters to the zine, well, not all, since Osuch got drunk one night and mailed one in, and someone else bothered. However, you get the picture.

So here it is- deadline for another DBM and little Elmo is out in his Explorer Scout uniform pushing old ladies into traffic or stealing wheelchair batteries. Frankly, I have had it- I

am not printing up any more DBMs after this one. Elmo, wherever you are, if you want the zine, you print it for a change, and, hey, use your own name, O.K? --D. Shreve.

[I'm not going to comment in public about this other than saying we ought to split the costs. I am going to talk to you privately later, and I may bring a couple of 'friends'. Watch it, you may be wearing concrete shoes on the bottom of the Chicago River.]

* * * *

AN ATTACK ON MARK BERCH WRITTEN IN PHILOSOPHY CLASS. MARK BERCH; LINSEY TOADY, BY KEITH SHERWOOD
Sherwood to Hanson-- Put this in Irksome (the zine) or else...and give me sub credit. Don't you want to become the new BB? [Brutus Bulletin]

Hanson to Ozog-- Eric, Talked to Tro last night, and he & I agree that this article is too serious for IRK, but he sugested I send it to you for Dip By Moonies- OK!

Ozog to the Hobby-- It's too hot for Scott Hanson's touch, but it only feels lukewarm in my hands. Of course I'll print it. And here it is...

Face it, you know it's true: Mark Berch is a Linsey toady. Putting everything else controversial about mild ol' Mark Berch (his outspoken support for John Michalski, his infamous link to the weather reports in every Midwestern zine, and his entertaining travelogue Dip Digest), his only place in the hobby seems to be at Mr. Linsey's side. Have you ever seen them disagree? Have you ever seen Berch not back Linsey fanatically on anything? Of course not! If Mark lived in New York instead of the Silver Spring Maryland area, it would be thought he's a Linsey pseudonym instead of Oaklyn's.

The last couple of Trip Digests really sent me off, though. Berch, like a good sycophant should, goes running to Linsey's side as Linsey is again broiled in heart stopping debate. In #51 Mark prints a thinly veiled attack on Masters while defending some unnamed wronged person (Linsey --who else?). If Linsey got a hang nail, Mark would tell us about it and who was responsible. Mark, If Linsey had just kept the issue to East of Eden, where the ratings thing was originally started, then the hobby wouldn't know about him being a ratings player and he could have kept his ever-luvin' reputation.

Was that all, Mark? No! In #52 you come riding to poor ol' Linsey's defense against Masters again. He just reprints (but not verbattim- that would be plagerism) the standard Linsey position and arguments. Great, but I read 'em already in VOD [Voice of Doom]-- why get them again and again and again from you too?

So why this sudden attack from left field, Mark (since you've been a Linsey toady for a good while)? Ironically, because I hold you and DD [Diplomacy Digest] in very high esteem, even as second flagship of hobby status, why? I don't exactly know, just do. (How's that for sycophancy!) So either you're gonna have to clean up your act and become a little more objectionable (or at least less objectionable) or I'm gonna have to revise my appraisal of you and DD and take you both off my pedestals. In that case, this article is more of an appeal than attack.

So please, Marky, Brucie is a big boy now and can handle his own feuding, so let him to it. I know you're a good speaker, and can probably come up with a million times you and Bruce disagrees and how you're not a Linsey toady, but you better do it fast because I and a good segment of the hobby think you are.

[Well America, do you think Mark Berch is a Bruce Linsey toady? Let's talk about it! Call area code (312) 237-4650, lines are now open!

Protocol requires that I allow Mark to make a response to Sherwood's accusation (don't make it too lengthy, Mark). Then we'll close this case. I cannot go renting out my olympic-size battlefield for every two-bit feud, heck, I need all the space I can get for my own feuding. Oh yeh, my only regret about this is I lose money on Berch and Sherwood because they never have (nor ever will) pay hard currency for this rag.

Keith, you brought up a good point which I will note in the future. When someone badmouths you in a different zine, make your defense in that same zine. Don't take the battle to a different zine. HMMMMM. A new compound word I've invented...Crosszining!]

* * * *

LETTERS, LETTERS, LETTERS

From the hobby kingpin, Rod Walker, 1273 Crest Dr., Encinitas, CA 92024 (December 13th):

Dear Eric: Thanks for the copy of DBM 36. I was very glad to receive it and didn't even mind the

17 cents postage due.

I thought I would send you a few comments on that issue.

I suppose I should be unhappy that you have actually failed to produce a list of Rod Walker toadies. I should think that, after all these years in the hobby, I deserve a few. I sincerely hope you will instantly rectify this error.

[You got it! Mark Berch, Paul Rauterberg and Bruce Linsey. Throw in Eric Kane. Maybe even me too, after pandering to you and subbing to Diplomacy World to get that DBM review...]

On the stand-by issue: I must entirely agree with Brux (does that make me his toady?). When I was actively GMing games, I had more or less the same sort of requirement (does that make him my toady?).

In my opinion, s/b players ought to take the "good" with the "bad" and they ought to be required to do it. In my HRS, anybody who failed to submit s/b orders when requested was dropped from the list permanently. (That is, he was unless it turned out not to be his fault.) Very small positions can often turn out to be key ones.

I will now bore you with my favorite example of this. I took over a one-unit position, which was Austria with one army, in Bohemia. My last remaining home center, Vienna, had a Turkish army in it. The upcoming season was fall. I persuaded Russia to stab Turkey and to support me back into Vienna. That worked and I survived. I then proceeded to ally with Russia and, in fact, to guide and assist a lot of his strategy and tactics (although he was by no means a poor player). We wiped out Turkey (no big feat; the crybaby NMRed out of the game) and then mop up the board. At the end of the game I not only came in 2nd but was in fact the only survivor: I had 6 and Russia had the other 28, a record for the size of the victor until the incredible win by Dave Crockett with 32 centers recently.

[It must have been 'incredible'. Crockett must have pulled quite a few strings or bribed enough players or had an arsenal of toadys to get 32 centers. Oh yes, I remember Davey Crockett well, a great bear of a Chicagoan who didn't come to our face-to-face gatherings any more because he lost twice in both his visits.]

Now, it's true that most 1- and 2- unit positions go down in flames. But that's no reason why a player should refuse to play them, and even less a reason why a GM should simply refuse to fill them. I'm really glad that you have bought Brux's reasoning and will require your s/b players to pick up any position offered.

Of course this creates the problem of having enough s/b players. I hope that the listings of GMs who need s/b players in PONTEVEDRIA [Walker's game openings listing] will lead to larger s/b lists in the 'zines that need them. That should take care of the problem.

Ooops! Your review in DIPLOMACY WORLD lists the old sub rate. But I can understand the need to increase it. Your printing job is really great, as I said in the review.

Re: Tretick (a.k.a. "Oaklyn"): I've not seen a copy of FLD [Le Front de Liberation du Diplomacy] for a very long time. I'm not anxious to see it, judging from earlier issues and of course by his former 'zine, LA GUERRE. Tretick's prose style is bad to the point of virtual incomprehensibility. Anyway, I gather from your remarks in #34 that it's business as usual in FLD: atrocious GMing, questionable practices, ranting, raving, and carrying on, including the usual non sequitur attacks on the Rulebook. This is exactly what was going on in LA GUERRE and exactly what I was warning people about when I first learned that Buddy was going to make a comeback as "Bernie". I gather he has not yet begun to practice another technique of his, which was to botch and delay games so badly that he could eventually forget about publishing them entirely, thus abandoning them...and this while starting new games as well. I was custodian of the Orphan Games Project at the time, and had to place more than one of Buddy's unfinished games in new 'zines while he was collecting games fees for new ones. I am not predicting that "Oaklyn" will revert to type, but I suggest that people playing in his 'zine ought to watch out for any sign that he's trying that trick again.

Your suggestions for rescuing FLD sound fair, but I doubt that Buddy will ever accept them. Considering that he has reverted to type in virtually all respects, I'm not too hopeful that he has reformed at all. I will say that in terms of regularity and consistency of publication, it appears that Tretick is not having the problems he experienced with LG for a time. Until Buddy gives some tangible evidence that he's not going to cheat people the way he did in the last episode, the only recommendation I could make regarding any publication of his would be to avoid it. Your plan would help, but there is still the matter of his fundamental dishonesty with the hobby and any possible outstanding claims against his previous publishing/GMing venture.

[But Rod, what if I told you he is mellowing out? This is what I recommend to players: Play in Le Front only if your game has a good guest GM. Like me. To Writers: Write some decent material for Le Front so Bernie does not fill the pages with anti Walker/Rulebook tirades. To readers: Don't take Bernie's writing seriously or as gospel. Like mine. Also, nobody send Bernie any money for the zine, he will send you plenty of free issues. Like I do.]

As to your problems with the Long Neck crowd. Frankly, Eric, your comments about them did not come across as humorous. It would be easy for anyone to mistake them for serious attacks; that's what I assumed them to be. The fact that (as you say) you didn't mean them seriously unfortunately doesn't explain them away and doesn't mean they weren't taken seriously by a lot of your readers.

If a reasonable and noninvolved person would take your remarks as being serious, then Halpern and Kane could hardly be blamed for so doing. Regardless of your intent, maybe the best way to stop this thing from escalating any further is to offer an apology, a fair review of the two 'zines involved, and a serious attempt to bury the hatchet and get friendly.

I realize that Herr Doktor Boardmann (sic) has done you considerable injustice. You're hardly the Lone Ranger in that regard. There are very few people whose names have appeared in GRAUSTARK to whom the Herr Doktor has not been grossly unfair. Those few are either ardent toadies of his, or are so namby-pamby neutral it hurts, or are in such a position that he's their toady, or he hasn't gotten around to them yet. I place Halpern and Kane in the last category. I have found them to be relatively independent thinkers and not toadies of Boardman's at all. The Herr Doktor can be perfectly charming when he wants to be, and generally is, in person. Sooner or later one of the Long Neck bunch will cross him on something, and then he will probably castigate the whole bunch of them.

[But Rod, what if I told you that I like being hated by people who can't take a little ribbing from a brilliant comedian (i.e. Don Rickles)? My 'attack' on Halpern and Kane was not serious, period, not 'meant' to be not serious. The style of writing proves it. If one carefully reads my Erebor/Anduin plug on page VI of issue #34, it reveals two factual, totally fair items. The first merely states they are brand new to the field of publishing/GMing and prospective players should always use caution with this; certainly nothing unreasonable here. The second item states that I give Halpern the benefit of the doubt, trusting him as I sign up for a game in his zine. That has told my readers that I thought the zine good enough to take a chance on. The other line, 'Ken and his counterpart Eric Kane of Anduin remind me much of myself when I first started out, bad GMing and all' takes a swipe at myself, to show the readers I can laugh at myself too. I also do not see how the line 'Not to say that these guys will be as lousy as me though' isn't the same vein. So all things considered, they got their fair plug.

[As I said before, my only apology was the fact they were brand-new to postal Diplomacy, and they treated the hobby as a sacred cow. They did not know my style. I should have realized that and shouldn't have dumped on them. Of course they took it seriously, how were they to know I was only goofing off?

[As for John Boardman, I don't think he has caused me 'considerable injustice'. That is because I never took Boardman's anti-Ozog charades seriously, even if he did believe himself what he was writing. I considered what he wrote about me in Graustark great publicity. Christ, if he ignored me that would have been a considerable injustice.]

Interesting that so many people connected with this are named Eric. "Eric" (as in "Blake") is another one of the Herr Doktor's names...but I'm sure you've heard that story by now.

By the way, I'll mention here that GRAUSTARK was not the first postal Diplomacy 'zine, as you may already know. You might wish to inform your readers that a complete reprint of all issues of the 1962 postal 'zine, MONGO, appears in RUDDIGORE #2, available for a buck from me. The mere existence of the physical proof that he wasn't the first is enough to drive the Herr Doktor to a near-homicidal fury. People who really wish to prove they are not Boardman (sic) toadies should order one of these. (And I plan to have the originals in my possession at DipCon XV for anyone to examine who cares to.) Best, Rod.

[I never knew which zine came first, the thought never occurred to me. You heard him, readers! Renounce your Boardman toadyship and stay in the Kingpin's favor at the same time by sending off for Rod Walker's Ruddigore #2. I intend to see those issues of Mongo at DipCon this summer. Rod, it was a pleasure arguing with you. Thanks for the letter!]

The local view from Chuck Kaplan, 742 Grouse Court, Deerfield, IL 60015

Eric, Let me add my uninformed views into the tumultuous broth you concocted in your DBM #34. But first I should inform you of where I stand in the hobby. Basically, I am a player who enjoys the game, and its variants, for its own sake. It is a fun way to meet other players who on the whole are intelligent, creative and interesting to communicate with, people I would never know otherwise.

The hobby, though growing, is still tiny. The hobby cannot afford to be split into various pieces constantly fighting with each other. This continual bickering must turn off many potential enthusiasts. Let's keep the differences relatively friendly.

Now to get off that old pulpit.

To me, it was obvious that DBM #34 was intended (and it was) to be humorous. However, as you stated in #36, Ken Halpern and Eric Kane are also new to the PBM game. It should not have been surprising to learn that they took your attacks seriously and personally. "Wild Creativity" is not an adequate defense. In this instance it might have been better to "expose" a more knowledgeable zine writer. I guess this puts me as agreeing with Kathy Byrne, whoever the hell she is.

Now that I have put you young whippersnapper in your place, let me repair your demolished ego. Your zine is extremely interesting and fun to read. Keep up the good work. Just because I am an elderly (27) stodgy partypooper, does not mean that I don't enjoy watching you shake up the hobby. As long as it is "in fun", "only joking", "not serious", "just kidding" or whatever. Maybe you should begin each zine with a declaration whether this zine is serious or "in fun" by showing either a smiling face or a frowning one. Chicago magazine did it with Jane Byrne, and look how many copies they sell. By the way is it really true that Kathy Byrne is da Mayor's illegitimate niece, who now gets paid \$30,000 a year to read dirty mail, or am I thinking of someone else?

[Of course Kathy is Jane's illegitimate niece. And you're on her side?]

When are you going to start pushing the Spring Chicago Diplomacy convention? I'm sure all your multitudes (34?) would be interested. I'm trying to get a game of "blitzed" Dip together. Every time you take a center you must down a beer in less than a minute. There are no losers or winners in this game! Anyone interested?

That's all for now. Please no more scandalous, personal gossip-mongering directed against innocent lambs.

So when are you going to Sweden for your sex-change operation? You'll do anything to get into the girls' locker room. Have a safe trip.

Ba-ba, An innocent lamb, Chuck (rhymes with) Kaplan.

[I could answer your sex-change question one of two ways: 1) I'm tempted, providing you'll pay the plane fare and escort me, or 2) I have never, ever thought of such a thing, I and potential partners of the opposite sex value my male hide too much. I'll keep the hobby guessing on that one. Personally, I'm shy and am presently hard-up at the moment. I'm going to join Linsey's and Kelley's Lonely Heart's Club. Oh boo hoo hoo. Throw in Sigwalt too.

As for the Chicago Con, a formal announcement will be made, I hope, in the February issue. A bunch of us locals are getting together at Andy's house (Sunday January 17th, 11 a.m.) to play dip and to discuss what to do about it. If anybody in the area wants to come this Sunday, give me a quick call at 237-4650. Let's play "blitzed" Dip at Andy's house.

I promise not to roast innocent lambs anymore. After Walker's and your letters, the score is Halpern (2), Ozog (0).]

* * * *

Don Ditter (publisher of Everything), 910 Hope St. #12A, Stamford, CT 06907

Dear Eric, I have written a letter to Walker stating that I believe he should delete the warnings from your zine's entry in his game openings list. I respect a man who admits he was wrong and goes about with determination to do better.

[Thanks. Rod has been very reasonable about the whole business, and I believe that quickly the accursed beware signs will be removed from the Walker/Sacks KGO listings, and I can bury the 1979 IW affair for good.]

Your zine is very good- I've enjoyed all three issues I've received tremendously. The issue (#35) on St. Louis was particularly enjoyable. I had no idea Bob Osuch could write an article and a good one at that.

It was fun reading about your and other's impression of the people you met there. I feel

that I know all just a little bit better. The Kane-Halpern thing is unfortunate, the hard feelings that could develop certainly does the hobby no good. Do you think it was wise to print Halpern's letter? I'm sure, as you say, it was written in an emotional state and may have been better handled privately. I hope you three can put this incident behind you.

Keep up the good pubbing work. Take Care, Don

[When I look back on issue #36, it looked dumb to me. What I should have done was let the whole thing blow over instead of upping the ante by printing Halpern's counterattack. The whole situation grieves me now, and guilt is raining all over me. I would even thrown roses at Kane's and Halpern's feet to end it on a happy note. And to top it off, Kenny has folded Erebor. Now there's nothing much I can say without looking like an ass, but I will say liked it (depite our falling out) and hope there are no hard feelings. Hey! I've an idea- I'm going to throw those roses at Kane's and Halpern's feet, when I arrive with my little band of wicked Chicagoans at DipCon, coming up this summer.]

* * * *

The Mark Lew Commentary On the St. Louis Issue

The grey paper reminds me of a Graustark sample I got about a year ago. (Heh heh)

Yours and Andy L's comment about Michalski's giggling amused me because I'm the same way. I figure if I ever end up at a Con I'd spend the whole time watching everyone and giggling at them. That and contort my body; when I get fidgety I do things like pick up my foot and wave it in front of my face.

Hurry for staying sober. Sometimes I wonder if I'm the only tea-totaler in the hobby. Same goes for coffee.

I'll toss in a stamp this time so you don't waste so much \$ on me. Would you happen to have and sort of article you'd like written?

[Why, yes! Write an article on the situation in Poland, Lew style, for the February Poland issue. And I found no stamp in that letter either, but we at least know a little bit more about you.]

The December 12th Mark Lew Commentary

Oh, all right, I'll attempt to fit a few bux herein.

[Enclosed was a single 'bux', and a badly mangled one at that. Mark, I think I am going to refer to you now as the 'hobby's welfare case'.]

It's fun to generalize hobby members into factions and toadies etc, but people get mad. No never mind. I guess I'm a Brux toady, but I'm thinking of switching to Scott H. (Charter member!)

I see Eric Kane is younger than I. Good think, as I understand Manuel has left us. You are so right on escalating/writing without thinking. (See enclosure). In fact I like your logic in general. Can I become an Ozog toady? [Of course you can!]

I think Byrne & Brux really are reconciled. Honest.

[Of course Byrne & Brux are reconciled!]

Bobby Olsen (who hates me by the way) is right, DBM will be the new BB [Brutus Bulletin]. Nothing like a bit of irony to liven up the day.

There are a few sycophants around, Sherwood for instance.

I must correct your nomenclature: Brux toadies, Martin toadies and Berch toadies do not exist, they are (respectively) Brux sycophants, Martin clones and Berch clones.

Good thing you need standbys, now I won't feel guilty signing thereup (excuse my pedantic diction, snork!) and getting cheap(er) sub, assuming you won't be a Coughlan clone and accuse me of exploiting you.(u)

Printing archaic letters, huh? Ngarrrrrrr!

[Yes, no way to avoid it, really. A whole round of 'archives' will follow your commentary.]

My illegible was "moment" I believe. (Silly me I missed an opportunity to say 'My illegible was [illegible]. I did get a call from Uncle Dan so got to hear nice comments like: "No wonder

you're so fucking weird" ooo --(me) "it bothers me when people hate my guts", "Get used to it scuz. There's a lot of us".

I like 1-3 center standbys pots! Give 'em all to me!

Why not save trouble and just say, "Brux's VOD HRS apply".

DBM is Marco Poll material now I just love that "scandal pit" theme. I'll be sure to save my best satirical accusations, generalizations, etc. for you! You might get a bit of flak for letting loose our tongue-in-cheek mendacity. Love & kisses (u)

[What is 'Marco Poll material'? And I don't mind the 'satirical accusations' as long as they are written decently. I might take Kaplan's advice and stamp little happy or sad faces at the top front page of the zine to warn people.]

* * * *

ARCHIVES LETTERS (STUFF MOLDING AWAY SINCE OCTOBER):

The following are good letters that people have written to me, but have been put on the back-burner for one reason or another. Remember that DBM is monthly, which means I can only cram so much into an issue without it costing me an arm and a leg. Consider #37 a double issue, meaning your 20 cent sub will drop an extra issue. At least I can choose how fast to loose my money.

All letters sent to me are greatly appreciated, but please do not feel offended if your letter does not appear immediately. It will, eventually, depending on the backlog. Backlog has been overwhelming from issues #33 through 37, and I expect it to level out by #38, where I come out with a twelve pager and try to keep it at that.

The letters below have been slightly edited, to erase obsolescence.

Jim Burgess, 23 William Ellery Place, Providence, RI 02904 (October 28th)

Dear Eric, (whether you like it or not) you elicit comment on DBM #34. I personally feel too much is made of the mudslinging aspects of the hobby. However as far as I can tell it is confined to the limits of the toady feuds expounded upon in your exposes issue. I am involved in another network of zines centered in the NE area and although Bernie has invaded it at times (how else could I have found out about him w/o receiving one of many complimentary copies of his zine), is there anywhere in this hobby Bernie has not been(?), none of the mudslinging goes on up here. I assume Boardman and Ditter are aware of these zines as they are rated, but even Stafford, as noted in a recent phone conversation, had never heard of any of them. I personally would rather see it kept that way. Among my friends in these zines Bernie is also seen as a little strange but we just ignore his mudslinging and beat the pants off him.

[You speak very vaguely. Care to expound a little bit? Oh, I get it, are you a member of a secret East Coast clique that Coughlan crabs about?]

Not being the vindictive type I basically prefer these zines, however as one might guess the intensity of the games is not as great. Most of us are grad students or professors and are very busy and cannot even imagine putting as much time into this as someone like Bernie does. As a result zines are late, dropouts are frequent, and communication is rather rare. The above comments apply to me as well and I blame no one for them, though they do explain why I don't publish a zine. I am not willing to break deadlines but at the same time work is pressing. As a result I clear my desk of Diplomacy mail approx. once every two weeks (generally at strange times as well, I got up at 4:00 this morning to do it this time, it is now 5:30 and the sun isn't even up yet).

[Four in the morning? Well America, have you ever answered dip mail at odd hours of the day? Let us talk about it! Call area code (312) 237-4650. Really Jim, your involvement in the hobby you choose is understandable. Professors and Grad-asses (thanks, Paul!) must spend more time trying to save the world, not play dip.]

Anyway back to my point on mudslinging. Some people are more "involved", let us say? I will never again enter a game GMed by Oaklyn and I hesitate to even sub to his zine as it always takes him at least six months to cash my checks. Stafford said that might have something to do with legal endorsements, (i.e. it is made out to Bernie Oaklyn). Well....I refuse to open that can of worms. I guess what makes me an Oaklyn toady is that after all that (don't forget his numerous GM screw-ups either) I still talk to him, I enter games with him, & I ally with him upon occasion (though I have also universally had occasion to eventually regret this occurrence). Basically I agree with everything you said about Le Front. I understand Olsen is basically withdrawing as well. This is too bad. In my all too infrequent dealings with his maildrops & enjoyed dealing

with him very much. I can see the genesis of your misc. note concerning him. I would say that if he abandons Bernie's zine then that is the end of it as deserving of the title "zine". And that would be too bad.

I have had about enough of this rambling. If you do wish to publish this you also probably want to edit it. As you might imagine I was (am) very tired.

The sun is almost up and soon there will be enough light for me to wander into my office. Let me close with a little philosophical note. The basic idea of this whole hobby (both its point and its appeal) is embodied in all the subtleties of meaning in its name. Games are something all of us play every day. Some of rules carved in stone and others no one ever figures out the rules to. But there is one (and only one) characteristic that a game must possess in order to truly be worthwhile of the time and effort involved in playing it (or not playing it as the relevant case may be). One must be able to come out at the end whether winner or loser and say, "gosh, at least I learned something," and about a really good game one can say, "I learned something and not only will it help me play this game better next time but also...." (I am not intelligent enough to quite finish that sentence appropriately but perhaps someone else could).

Anyway thanx for the opportunity to enter your national game and thanx for running it. The players look good (special thanks for giving me the opportunity to ~~oppose~~ play with (don't want to antagonize him needlessly), but gee whiz...did you have to put him right next to me?!?) and I'm going to do my best to keep up on letters. Thanks again and take care, Jim.

[And I'll do my best to print them sooner! What a good letter! I'll warrant that Bob Olsen (in addition to me) cried when you spoke of the demise of Le Front, and that half the readers of DBM clapped and cheered at the end of your eye-opening, eloquent insight of the meaning of the game (somehow that didn't sound right, er, how about I call it just a fine speech?). Thank you Jim.]

* * * *

Mike Mazzer, 1338B Harvard Street, Santa Monica, CA 90404 (October 12th)

Dear Shaggy Haired Vacant-Eyed Flower Child:

Your Dip by Moonlight #34, the "You Can't Tell the Toadies Without a Scorecard" Issue was superb, the truly definitive cataloging of the hobby's Toads and Toadies. For this may all your sins be forgiven. Don't forget to put me in the Ozog Toady column next year.

Did Ronald Brown (of Quebec) send you the last issue of SNAFU? (The one with the endgame statements for '79 KW) If not, here they are. Boy, we sure were a windy bunch! That was my first PBM game and still my favorite. '79 KW (and you, and Olsen, and Brown, ect.) made me what I am today, whatever that is.

[Ron did send me that issue. 1979 KW was a good game, one I tried to play rationally (despite the numerous times I tried for Belgium and failed). Unfortunately those days are over (my rationality in a dip game). Maybe if you get in the grudge game we could be allies for a change.]

I can't say that I agree with your answer to Dan about there being "a chance" that Le Front will make a comeback. I do agree, though, that at the time I joined 1980 CP (when you and Bob and Peggy [Gemignani] and Dan were playing), it was indeed the best zine in the hobby when viewed with the tiniest bit of objectivity (except perhaps for Claw & Fang). But what you essentially suggest is that the only way Le Front can improve is to take it away from Bernie. But then it wouldn't be Le Front anymore. 'Zines are very personal things and the flaws of the zine are the flaws of the pubber, and unfortunately, Bernie is quite flawed, and my suggestion is that the most sensible thing to do is let Bernie and Le Front go its own way and, I suppose, die its own death. I will continue to subscribe as long as my game continues. I feel obliged to play '80 CP out (I feel the same about any game I'm in), so when that ends, so will my sub.

I wish I could say Le Front will be missed (I consider it effectively dead), but with energetic young guys like yourself, Brux, Dick Martin, and Gary Coughlan, etc., who dedicate their time and energy, and most important, their senses of humor to this kid's game, I don't miss Le Front at all!

Thanks for the picture. I'll try to dig one of myself up. Where was that picture taken?

Yours, Mike (alias Mazzerman!)

P.S. I can sympathize with Olsen. Last year I bought a bike having never ridden before (I was 30 years old!). It was a couple of months before I had the nerve to appear in public with it.

[You mean appear in public in California with it. I hear it's suicide to ride one in the Los Angeles area. But it's not so bad here. One day last October I ran up against the curb (on my merry way to work) and flip-flopped and skinned my knee. The following day I realized the gears

were damaged in that crash when I tried shifting the gear lever too far, the gear shifter mechanism became entangled in the spokes and was badly mangled. I was stranded on Halsted and Lake Streets by the meat packing plants and wondered if I would come out alive. I found a phone and called my sister who rescued me. I might get my nerve up again this Spring.

I don't like your 'let him do his own thing' philosophy about Le Front, and I don't think I was taking anything away from him. His zine could still be highly personalized if he cut the crap out of it. Your way of thinking is typically Californian. I doubt it if it will die for a while, Bernie is on one of his novice campaigns again.

The picture of me was taken when I traversed the East and risked Montreal and lived to tell about it. People in Montreal have a favorite pastime: Driving their cars as fast as possible at rush hour, even scaring the daylight out of me, a well seasoned Chicago driver. Nobody obeys the speed limits in the province of Quebec (except for Americans who are too nerdy and cautious the first couple of days, thus not doing over 100kmh. You see, we Americans are very polite to the customs agents at the border when we first visit Canada, and I was impressed by the agent's French accent, so I didn't want to get into trouble). After a few days of Canadians whizzing by you and not seeing any cops on the roads though, and you forget the politeness. Gang, Canada is just like the U.S.A., only more spaced out and no cops.

And where was I? That picture was taken at Acadia National Park in Maine, on the Atlantic seacoast. My 'buddy' Dan White and I had scurried up one of the local mountains.]

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Guy & Libby Hail (publishers of the Great War in Modern Memory) of Austin Texas (November 15th)

Eric, we enjoyed reading your St. Louis con special issue, "Diplomacy by Burning Thatched Huts". I wrote nothing on the personalities of the players as you did because I cannot write so personally. But I loved your characterization of me as 'Mr Nice Guy'; people here would be surprised; I'm close to an enfant terrible down here.

Sadly, St. Louis was too far for a three day trip to play Diplomacy. Was I tired. Ask Gary: my snoring probably irritated him enough to stay awake himself on the way back. Hope to see ya'll at Dipcon. -Guy

[I will be at Dipcon and will pick up Stafford on the way there if he's in a good mood. Don't try to write 'personably', it only gets you in trouble sooner or later. I must say, your ancient history/St. Louis review Prehension & Apprehension Trailmarks was very entertaining, even if I did not understand it. Did Liz work on that story too?]

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M.P. Barno (pubber of The Shogun's Sword) (October 25th)

Eric, thanx for sending a copy of DBM a ways back. Here's my TSS' latest. Hope you enjoy it.

I've seen some of your comments recently; among them, the "call me a hippie if you want" bit. I had to laugh at your comment: "Anyhow, there was somebody there (GenCon East) even more hippish than me." That was me.

Continue, I say, to take pride in your individualism. I've started a bit of dialogue in Plague Times recently on this topic. Appearance is big today, involvement is out. Human lore has been replaced by either "look young" or "you must accept our moral code", depending upon which aspect of society you look at. Oh well, take care.

[So which side are you on? From the way you talk, I'd say you were on neither, good for you. I have always considered myself to be partially non-conformist, and have rejected some of the dumb practices and customs imposed by our modern society. I thumb my nose at the world. Oh, TSS looks decent enough, how about a trade? I cribbed a local (Richard Locke) off your address list and sent him a sample, but never heard from him. Is he real?]

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A follow-up letter from Fred Davis (publisher of Bushwacker) (October 13th)

Dear Eric, thank you for printing my letter on the "Good Old Days" in Chicago. Enclosed is the next issue of Bushwacker to begin our regular trade. Note the Game Openings listed. Fortunately, I have a very loyal readership, which usually goes on from one game to another, but I'm always in need of new blood. Perhaps some of your readers may be interested, so a plug is always in order.

[Readers, read the line 'in need of new blood' with a Transylvanian accent and have yourself a

good laugh on Fred. Fred, write yourself a 'self-plug' like Sigwalt did with H&M and I'll put it in the next issue. The cost of the advertisement is actually free.]

If you are referring to the Air-Sea Diplomacy variant invented by Buddy Tretick and then reprinted by David Staples, I already have that in my North American Variant Bank - East. If this is a new Air-Sea variant, I'd like to have a copy for the V.B. If you're uncertain as to whether this is the original version, send me a copy, and I'll let you know. I never could get enthusiastic for this version. Nothing to do with who invented it - for years I thought Staples was the designer - but it just didn't tickle me.

If you're interested in what I consider to be better variants, send me a SASE and I'll send a short list. While it does include several of my design (I'm prejudiced that way), it also includes many others. If you want to get into this deeply, send \$1.10 to Rod Walker, and ask for a copy of the ARDA Catalog, which carries all the known [Diplomacy] variants in the North American Variant Bank - West, the main V.B. There is an explanation of the code, so you can figure out what each game's scenario is. I think you might have more luck signing people up for a game if you could describe something about the scenario in your zine. Carrying a variant makes for a nice change of pace.

[I agree it does make a nice change, but I think that not too many Diplomacy players go for the variants, perhaps because they do not want to get too involved with learning new rules. I liked Air-Sea, mainly because I thought it fun to play and easy to learn. Even though I'm experienced in GMing it, I will not run it mainly because the rules need a bit of work (Dan Stafford proposed some good changes) and I don't feel up to retyping and collating a new edition, as well as promoting the variant. Rod Walker already has a copy of Tretick's version, and I recommend the readers to send for this information from Davis and Walker, if they're into variants, of course.]

I enjoyed reading about your Sleazecon (or whatever) in St. Louis. It made even more interesting reading when you jumbled up the names of males and females in motel assignments until you spoiled it all by adding "two rooms". Shucks, and I was almost set to buy my plane tickets.

[Ha, maybe Barno and you ought to get together. I didn't want to violate anyone's 'moral code'.]

If by any chance I'm around Chicago in April, I'll let you know. I hope you'll try to get to DipCon here in Baltimore Co. next July. UMBC is a nice campus, in a low mugging district. (We have a reason for always saying Baltimore County. Baltimore City is not part of Baltimore Co. They are as different as night and day.)

[The Chicago mini-con might not be in April, nor might it be mini. Everything is still up in the air. It may even be held in conjunction with the Chicago Wargamers Association convention this Spring. I think a good date for our Con would be the Memorial Day weekend, where persons attending can take an easier time travelling, instead of cramming it into two days.]

I was 14 when we had our first sand-ship naval battle on Touhy Beach. I'd guess we had our last one when I was about 17. We continued to have our Fletcher Pratt battles until I went in service at the age of 21. Are you familiar with Dan Dorcy's group, the Chicago Naval Wargamers? I get his zine in trade for BUSH. They hold some of their battles in Rogers Park, only a few blocks from where we fought ours.

There was a pond in a public park in Evanston, just south of Northwestern [University] where some of my friends would operate 10' to the inch warship models powered by clock motors salvaged from old alarm clocks. One friend actually had a home-built steam engine in his ship. He now has a Ph.D in Physics. There is a pond in Central Park in NYC where people sail beautiful models in daytime. I don't know of any such place around Baltimore.

[I've never heard of Dory's group. And I can just imagine your friend (how old was he) showing his home-made steam boat off to some kid who only has one of those dime store sheet metal wind up toys. It never occurred to me that you could put a clock drive in a boat to make it run. Such bright kids of your day.]

I'm also enclosing an article for BUSHWACKER in 1974, describing how to fight Fletcher Pratt type naval battles on paper. This was part of a series I ran at that time, including a description of the 4-man (later 5-man) board on which we conducted a form of "Diplomacy" back in the 1940's and 50's. Each country was a separate Australia-like continent. Attacks could only be made by fleets. Fleets consisted of actual ship models. They moved around the board on pins, each bearing the coded designations of certain ships. You never knew what ships were in the other players' fleets unless you met them on the high seas or in port. This led to some interesting

naval actions when two countries went to war. There were some 18 islands scattered around the map that acted as a justification for wars, in the same way that Supply Centers do in Dip. Each game might last for two years, until someone was wiped out. Then we'd start all over again, perhaps with different types of ships. This lasted from Freshman High school through our Junior year of college. (We all lived at home and went to streetcar colleges at least through our Sophomore years).

Needless to say, we were denounced as "queers" by other elements in our schools. Nobody ever told us we were all little Mensa-brains. One member of the group went on to help design the Centaur rocket which got the Viking Landers to Mars. One reason I'm so strong on Mensa is that I'd like to help rescue other bright kids and let them know that just because they're bright they're not "queer." I wish someone had told me when I was growing up that I wasn't an ugly dachshund but a Great Dane!

Needless to say, my 8-year old son, Kevin, is quite aware of the fact that he's smart, and that smart is good. He's already designing his own games. Best regards, Fred

[And from there he'll probably design a laser cannon that's going to knock the Soviets clear across the solar system. You are seeing more of the old ways of thinking (he and she's queer because they're smart) being replaced as more parents realize they've bright kids and are giving them special education for the 'gifted', etc. But I think any kid is going to get made fun of by somebody of his own age for thinking too much. If I may get philosophical for a moment, I think it's interesting to wonder what makes the smart kids and the dumb kids.]

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 OZOG II -- 1979 IX / Spring 1911: FANCY RUSSO/FRENCH CONVOY INTO BREST

ENG [Stafford] f spa/nc-mid, f por-spa/sc, a par-bur, a edi H

FRA [Nelson] f enc C RUS a nwy-bre, a pic S RUS a nwy-bre, a hol-bel, a vie-bud, f mar S RUS
 f lyo-spa/sc

ITA [Lischett] f tyn-lyo, f wes S f tyn-lyo, a ven S TUR f adr-tri, a rom S a ven

RUS [Oaklyn] a nwy-bre, f nth C a nwy-bre, a bur-par, f lvp-nat, f wal-lvp, f lon-yor, f lyo-spa/sc, a tyo-ven, a boh-gal, a ukr-sev, a tri-alb, f rum-bul/ec, a con-ank, f bla S a con-ank

TUR [Sherwood] f aeg-con, f smy S f aeg-con, f bul/sc S f aeg-con, f ank-arm, a ser-rum,
 f adr-tri

DEADLINE for Fall 1911 is Friday February 5th.

(Burgundy) The Franco-Russo Regime regrets it cannot favor the English army, now wetting the lawn of Paris, for fear of contacting what is known as "Burn Bernie any way you can-fevor". Maybe when the weather gets somewhat colder --- then, sirs, we will burn that army.

(Trieste) In fear of the coming Italian invasion of Austria (what did Austria do to Italy?), the Russian units there have been ordered either into Budapest or Albania. When asked which, the Tsar retorted, "Oh, what the hell does it matter! It is either Budapest or Greece! Which do we care?"

(Constantinople) Cries came out, loud and clear, yelling at the Tsar for leaving its finest romper-room troops under-manned and yet undefended in this province. "Why won't he ever give us the support? Why does he always favor Frenchmen to Russianwomen?" Echoes across the laru were astounding, cheering the Tsar on the one hand and fearing him on the other. A letter from the Tsar exclaimed, "Why not move to Ankara, then you won't have to face those three fleets yourselves --- you will have sand lice with you."

(Russia to England) It's stinked extinction for the likes of you. Send letters to BRUX, will you! Hah! Remember, Dan, Yuma expels gas and Nettle expels phlegm. I am sending you a package of each to your own injection.

(Russia to Italy) Have you fun, son, your time will come. (Gee, I am a poet and don't know it). (Could it be that this guys is one of my 'four' sons?)

(Bernie to Bernie-Toady) Richard Tretick has a surprise for you to behold. Why not ask him what it is?

(Brest-Russia Occupied Newspaper) The Russians have announced another first in this here, the oldest war of Diplomacy now going. We have broken a French newspaper syndicate, we have broken a gamesmaster's purse, and we now move to break Stafford's holdings. First, we shall scuttle the newest of Turkish fleets. After all, they sent a boy to do a man's job. Tell me, huh, that "the way Bernie moves, this game will go on forever", huh, huh! Of course, and why do you think I am moving that way. Nevertheless and because of that very thing, Italy will outlive England and Turkey in this game. Long live the Tsariness Denise!

(Bernie to Eric) How dare you send me a gamezine with postage due. That is five sheets of twenty pound paper for one stamp, you cheat-toady.

[But let me explain! I thought I could get away with seven sheets, but no-uh uh, says the post office when they called my house. They had kept 20 copies for me to pay extra postage, while the other 24 somehow got away. At least they were civil about it, they could have canceled the stamps and sent it back to me. Six sheets are the maximum for one ounce postage.]

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 OZOG III -- 1981 IK / Fall 1901: PALTER PULLS HIS USUAL FAST ONE, THIS TIME ON THE DUKE-BOY

AUS [Reynolds] a vie-gal, f alb-gre, a ser S f alb-gre
 ENG [Ashley] f nwg-bar, a yor-nwy, f nth C a yor-nwy
 FRA [Duke] a mar-spa, f mid-por, a bur H
 GER [Tallman] f den-swe, a kie-mun, a ruh-hol
 ITA [Palter] a pie-mar, a ven-pie, f ion-tun
 RUS [Stafford] a war-gal, f bot-swe, a ukr-rum, f sev S a ukr-rum
 TUR [Burgess] a bul-gre, f con-aeg, a smy-con

SUPPLY CENTERS

AUS -3-	vie	bud	tri	SER	GRE	(5)	Build 2
ENG -3-	edi	lvp	lon	NWY		(4)	Build 1
FRA -3-	bre	par	mar	SPA	POR	(4)	Build 1
GER -3-	kie	ber	mun	DEN	HOL	(5)	Build 2
ITA -3-	ven	rom	nap	TUN	MAR	(5)	Build 2
RUS -4-	stp	war	mos	sev	RUM	(5)	Build 1
TUR -3-	con	ank	smy	BUL		(4)	Build 1

DEADLINE for Winter 1901 Only is Friday February 5th.

(Paris to Rome) I see no reason for your show of force in Piedmont. I sincerely hope you did not attack Mar. I thought we had an understanding, but if you want war with me, you've bitten off more than you can chew.

(Germany to Ozog) Tell your little dog Toto to quit beating his furry little brest about past bozoisms and concentrate on the present or twilight zone or whatever passes for reality in Chicago. I will be extremely irritated if you don't run this sucker till the end. Ignore the chipmunks, concentrate on the spear in your guts.

[Ozog to Germany] Toto has calmed down and Wild Creativity is put out to pasture. You are the only one who bothered to vote. What apathy!

(Germany to Russia) Oops, this is what happens when you don't communicate with rookies who are stumbling about, tripping over Chipmunks. (Ask Eric.)

(Germany to Turkey) The only fuel weaker than D.B.M. is a D.B.M. soaked in water.

(Other Stuff From Germany) Sorry Eric but I signed up for Bernie's zsine. I figure there's no way to find out the real scoop pther than first hand.

I sent him a tape & mentioned I have a lot of hard core war-gaming friends who are in a

