

Talk, talk, Talk, thats all you'll get in this issue of:

# DIPLOMACY DIGEST

Issue #49  
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Among those who write me to suggest general topics and don't suggest play-of-the game material, two of the most three common topics are hobby history and "personality" (the third is humor). This issue is directed squarely at both of those interests. Actually, I learned some things about editing doing this. At the start, I did almost none, but as I began to see how much space it was taking, I began to condense things somewhat, dropping some questions but keeping the answer, etc. Actually, it was a lot of fun, both the interview and the typing it up. So this issue joins others like 14-15, 21-22, and the Lexicon as peculiar, downright unique items. Let me know what you think --- if its popular, I may try it again in another couple of years.

People expressing interest in the application of computers to one aspect or another of Diplomacy include the following:

Steve McLendon Box 57066 Webster TX 77598  
George Boyce 114 Summit #26 Ithaca NY 14850  
Bill Newell 12734 - 11th Ave N.W. Seattle, WA 98177  
Dave Dyer 2040 Ridgeley Dr #206 Los Angeles CA 90016  
Allen Wells 550 Memorial Drive #2E3 Cambridge MA 02139  
Elmer Hinton (Um, I don't have his current address)

One of the most unusual issues of the summer has to be VOD #40. Bruce spent one page extolling the virtues of each of his favorite zines, including DD (#5), Retaliation (#4), Fol Si Fie (#3), Brutus Bulletin (#2), and Europa Express (#1). These are very unusual forms of plugs, and were quite well written. A bit gushing, but all in all, a very innovative type of issue.

Returning to publishing is Konrad Baumeister, with a new zine, Give me a Weapon! (Sounds a bit left wing, Konrad me boy! Shouldn't that be Sell Me A Weapon!?) Konrad will have one or two press games, and the unvarnished (and sometimes bewildering) opinions of one of the youngest pubbers in the hobby to have been around for quite a bit longer than I have! I imagine there will also be music and beer reviews (11416 Parkview Lane Hales Corners WI 53130. Subs 10/\$4)

As there was not enuf rom this issue for the entire Beyerlein interview, the final three pages will appear in #50...Just talked by fone with John Leeder. Here are the results of the Zine Poll. Black Frog won, followed in order by Dot Happy, Brutus Bulletin, Murdrin' Ministers, Retaliation, Europa Express, Lone Star Diplomat, Just Among Friends, Jihad!, Cheesecake, East of Eden, Whitestonia, Bushwacker, Fol-Si-Fie, St George & THE Dragon, DIPLOMACY DIGEST, Plague Times, Why Me? tied with Torpedo, and Enchain Macha. First place in the GM poll was won by John Daly. 126, voted well up from last years's 93. I'll have some comments in #51 after I've seen the actual numbers.

## THE BEYERLEIN INTERVIEW

The interview with Doug Beyerlein ("Buyer-line") was held in the evening of July 2, 1981, shortly after we had returned from the airport. Alos present were Eric Verheiden and Scott Marley (tho I don't think I got Scott on the tape). Doug was nursing a beer and seated in a rocking chair. I have done on ly a limited amount of editing. The quotes are nearly exact, but I am not much good at dictation. The tape quality was good, so I can't blam any errors on that!

Doug: I think I should start at the beginning.

Mark: Since you insist on starting at the begging, what do you define as the beginning?

Doug: The beginning is Nov 11, 1965.

Mark: Uh, tell us what happened on Nov 11, 1965

Doug: Is this thing running?

Mark: I hope so

Doug: On Nov 11, 1965 was Armistace Day. We got the day off from school, and I played my very first Diplomacy Game. I had never even seen the game before then. I knew that this was a momentous occassion.

Mark: How did you know it was a momentous occassion?

Doug: I was the end of World War I. What better time...

Eric: Does this mean you won?

Doug: No, I played Italy and I got totally crushed. Do you remember Richard Shagrin, or was he before your time?

Eric: I rmember the name.

Doug: He publis;ed a zine called "High Liver" by computer ouput. It didn't last long. He was one of the first ones to do that. He wiped me out. He was playing Turkey.

Mark: How did you find out about the game in the first place?

Doug: I was an Avalon Hill Wargamer. I had been playing AH wargames for about 2 years. I contacted this guy who also happened to have a Diplomacy set in his house on Armistace day...I don't remember his name. Thats how I learned about the game, and later a friend of mine bought the game. Then Derek Nelson came around. Derek Nelson won the very first postal game, 1963A, and he was living up in Vancouver, B.C, and he came down to my place on Feb 12, 1966.

Mark: How do these dates stick to you?

Doug: Well, see, Feb 14 was Valentines day, and Feb 14 I broke my arm in wrestling class and this was on the Saturday before.

Mark: So this was pre-broken arm day.

Doug: That's right.

Mark: I can just see my readers falling asleep at this point ((General laughter)).

Mark: So why did you decide to continue with this game? You had all these other ones.

Doug: This one was a lot more fun. Diplomacy was by far the best board game invented.

Mark: Did you immeditaely forsake all others?

Doug: No, no, it took years. Then people like Dan Brannon ((who surfaced recently as Steve Cartier)), came around, and I got issues of their zines. And then a fiend of mine, Greg Long, and I started a diplomacy zine in the Spring of 1967 called "Cerebral Nebula" That didn't last long, because Greg discovered girls, and that was the last I saw of him. Then I satrted my own zine, EAFGIART with Doug Baker that year to pick up some of the games that were going in Cerebral Nebula. And then a year later, I turned everything over to Hal Naus, because I was starting college and I couldn't continue with my involvement with the Diplomacy hobby to the same extent, because of the differce between high school and college. Anyhow, those were the formative years.

Mark: What about The Lost Ones? Were you involved...

Doug: Oh yeah. That was Steve Hueston. He was somebody that I introduced to Diplomacy. He started a zine supposedly for the purposes of poetry and Diplomacy. But the poetry part soon disappeared and the Diplomacy part followed a few issues later. ((Hm. I've got TLO #4-5. I see no mention of poetry. Alos, in #1, he sez that he started playing dippy at Doug's house in Spring 1965 --- earlier than Doug's above date))

Mark: Sorta like the reverse of Erehwon, eh?

Doug: ((Laughs)) I guess so --- I haven't seen the poetry part of that, tho.

Mark: So you went off to college and stopped publishing and dumped all these orphan games on Hal Naus.

Doug: That's right.

Mark: A pattern that was to repeat itself many times over.

Doug: For other people.

Mark: How did you come to pick it up again later on?

Doug: I continued to play the game in college, and later, and those were some of my best years.

Mark: Were you a prosletizer for the game then, or was it the same group of people all the time.

Doug: I was one of these foolish people who felt you should go out and find new victims to play the game. And so I'd go around the country side, sometimes even to Portland to visit Eric, and generally find new people to beat. We had a group in Seattle at the time that --- Steve Heuston, Buzy Eddy --- anybody we could drag into a game. We played a game of diplomacy every Sat or Sun afternoon for over a year. That's where I learned all my strategy and tactics. We used to play in a dorm at the U of Washington. One of our games lasted 12 hours.

Mark: Were your games usually completed or called on account of time?

Doug: No, they all went to completion.

Mark: That pretty unusual. I'm not sure I've ever played a game that went to its natural conclusion face-to-face ((Actually, I have been in a few, but they ~~xxx~~ all in tournaments))

Doug: That's the only way to play FTF.

Mark: So you did this all during your college years.

Doug: During the first two. Then I was about ready to drop out of college. I decided to get serious and forget about diplomacy for a while and get my degree. Then once I got into graduate school I started publishing again. I started with Washington Reports. That was azinedevoted to ratings, because I was trying to continue John McCallum's ODD-rating system, and some of the other ~~ideas~~ he had. And so published WR until I moved to California in the winter of 1973 and published California Reports keeping the same numbering system. And then I made the grad mistake of getting involved with this thing against Ray Heuer at the 1973 DipCon. Or was it 1974 --- it must have been 1974. Conrad von Metzke was going to give up the Boardman Numbers and Ray was his assistant BNC. A group of us met at the convention. Conrad was not there. Heuer was there, but we decided that it might not be a good idea to turn over the BNs to Heuer. So we got Conrad to agree to continue them. He folded about three months later, at which point I went down to San Diego and picked up the Boardman Numbers. The biggest mistake of my life.

Mark: Did you get some kind of cooperation from him? Show you how to do it?

Doug: No, no, in fact Conrad disappeared, and we couldn't find him for the entire 3 days I was down there. Rod Walker and I figured out we were going to have to break into his house and steal all the information. Except, Rod was finally able to get into touch with him before I had to fly back to Palo Alto, so I did get the actual physical notebooks that had all the information.

Mark: Was it in reasonably good order?

Doug: Yes, except that he hadn't done anything on in in the previous 6 months.

Mark: I remember the first issue you put out was pretty big.

Doug: That's the way it always is for the new BNC. They almways have to catch up first

Doug: The most important things that ever happened to me in my diplomacy career was at the 1974 DipCon when I met Marie Cockrell, who lived in Chicago at the time. This was Chicago DipCon. She was the only woman to play in the tournament that year. In the first game, I was E, she was F, and there were 3 other chicago people in that game, so I figured that she was the girlfriend of one of the others players, and that she was just a puppet. That didn't prove to be the case however, and she turned out to have more control over the game than any of the other players. It ended up to be a 5-way draw...Len Lakofka was in that game too --- he managed to survive with a 1 center Italy. Anyway, by the end of the 3-day DipCon we had played in 2 games together, and had got

ten to know each other, and so after the DipCon ended, I came back to California, and pursued a romance by correspondence for 4 months, and then I invited her out here at Thanksgiving time, and proposed to her. And we were married in April.

Mark: Pretty quick!

Doug: It could have been quicker, but there are things you have to do, protocol to keep the parents happy.

Mark: Was she playing postally at that time?

Doug: Yes, in fact, she, at least then, was the only woman to win 2 postal games. So I guess that made her the highest rated woman player in the hobby.

Mark: Were you helping her with any of her games?

Doug: No. The two wins were over with before I even met her. Later, when she played in the DW demonstration game, she totally ignored my advice and did what she wanted, and was part of a 5-way draw.

Mark: The reason I ask that is that I had the occasion to ask Walt Buchanan about Carol Buchanan's postal win, and he intimated to me that it was mostly his doing.

Doug: Yeah, that's true with Carol, she really wasn't that interested in Diplomacy...

Mark: Other than the press.

Doug: Yeah, and even that, only nominally, I think. Marie was actually was interested in Diplomacy at that time. She no longer is.

Mark: How long after you got married did she remain interested in Postal play?

Doug: 6 months at most.

Eric: That long?!

Doug: ((Laughs)) Well, she had already won, why continue playing?

Mark: Do you know why? Did she get other interests, lose interests, get bored?

Doug: She got involved in other things. Started going to school at night, bicycling. She had actually been at the DipCon in 1973, but I didn't meet her there. Later we went to DipCons in 1975, 1976 and 1977.

Mark: Did she play/ Why did she go?

Doug: No, she didn't play. We did other things on these vacations, visited her sister...

Mark: Does she have any objections to your participation in the hobby? A lot of wives kinda resent that.

Doug: No, as long as I don't get carried away... There's no conflict.

Mark: Tell us how you got back into GMing. I took over the BNs... in the previous spring ... somebody... Ray Bowers was publishing Midwestern Courier, and Carol was playing in an all-woman's game there. The zine folded, and Walt said, Why don't you pick up running it? I said OK, so I started up EFGIAET again, continuing the numbering where Hal Naus left it off. Since then, I've only GMed previously orphaned games. I don't think there's any point in starting new games when there's plenty of orphan games to be picked up. I have a policy where I don't run more than 3 orphans at any one time. Because I don't have the time to do it. I've got to be able to adjudicate, type, and send the zine out in 2 hours, from start to finish, because I never have more time than that to devote to it. That's why EFGIART is only a one page zine, and only goes out to 12 people. Basically, I'll pick up any orphaned game, almost, except for a few quirks that I have ((starts laughing)) I won't pick up any orphan games with Ron Kelly in them.

Mark: There goes one subscriber. Who else?

Doug: Do you hear that, Ron Kelly ((laughs)) Well, that's based on the fact that Ron Kelly has done a lot of things that I don't agree with, but in particular he did one really nasty thing in a game Marie was playing. He could have let her survive, and still win the game, but he had some compulsion to wipe her out. For no real reason.

Mark: Do people need a reason to wipe someone out at this game?

Doug: No, but it makes little sense when there's nothing to be gained from it, and...

Mark: Isn't this supposed to be a heartless, cruel game?

Doug: No.

Eric: It's also his zine to publish what orphans he chooses.

Mark: How long do you plan to keep up this vendetta?

Doug: As long as I publish.

Mark: So you'll never forgive him?

Doug: I would see no reason to.

Doug: I have a theory, which I've published, that an editor or publisher has only so many pages that he'll publish over his lifetime, and therefore he can either publish for example 10 100-page issues and blow yourself out, or you can publish 1000 1-page issue and spread yourself out over years.

Mark: Of course, who wants to get a 1-page issue, unless its strictly a warehouse zine

Doug: In a game, you want it to finish, and if its a one page zine, and its finishing, then that's great.

Eric: I don't see anything wrong with one page zines ((general laughter; Eric's zine is usually just one page))

Mark: But if the zine is going to consist of nothing but games, that reduces....

Doug: No. What the zine should consist of is not games, not press, but what the GM or the pubber is interested in, whether it be his recent trip to Israel or his bicycle racing in the last month.

Mark: So it should be only what the GM is interestd in, and to hell with the players.

Doug: Exactly, because its the GM who does the work to put out the zine. The players...

Mark: Should keep their mouths shut?

Doug: The players should interest with the GM, if they are interested in the zine. If they are not, they shouldn't be gettting in the first place.

Mark: Other than the press, what else should pubbers remove from their zines?

Doug: Pointless articles on how to play the game, which have been reprinted time and time again.

Mark: But what about people who are just coming into the hobby?

Doug: They can easily be served by haddbooks or things like DIPLOMACY DIGEST, which serve a function in republishing .....

Mark: Republishing stuff that you said shouldn't have been published in the first place And the Handbooks are out of print.

Doug: Each zine should be a specialty zine, reflecting the interests of the publisher If he's interested in reprinting art cles from the past, fine. And if they're not interested in articles on the play of the game.

Mark: Actually, if you look at the zines as they are now, articles on the play of the game are relatively infrequent. Most of what appears in that appears in the form of end-game statements, which have a certain value in and of themselves. What do you thi think of endgame statements?

Doug: The only people who read them are the players in the game. I don't read them

Mark: You're hardly typical.

Doug: ...You've got basically two audiences out there. There's the novice who's grasping for anything he can get about the hobby, about games that are going on, about hobby personalities, aall the information that once you've seen it, you don;t want to see again. Then there are those who've seen it once and don't want to see it again. Those people extract a page of interesting material; the rest they breeze right by.

Mark: Then how do you explain people getting zines they aren't playing in?

Doug: The e are two basci reasons. To keep track of friends you've made in the hobby. And second to keep track of hobby happenings.

Mark: What about discussions of SF, movies, politics, stuff people write pages on?

Doug: Thats great if you're interested. Sergeant writes reviews of SF, and I find those interesteing.

Mark: Lets start with Conrad von Metzke.

Doug: CvM is basically the largest teddy bear you will ever meet, one of the most li likeable people. The only problem is that he finds it much easier to say yes to you in person, instead of no which sometimes he really means. And then he doesn't follow thru. CvM is also one of the best FTF players who has ever played the game, because he's such a likeable person. I have no contact with him anymore. I write him about 1 year ago and never got a response. He's totally out.

Mark: Thats what Rod tells me too. Anything else?

Doug: He's one of these brilliant people who for one reason or another never quite got it together. Last I heard he still works for the postoffice. Conrad must have an IQ of about 160, and he's totally wasting it being a clerk at a window.

Mark: What about Walt Buchanan?

Doug: Walt Buchanan was the best man at my wedding. One of the nicest guys I've ever known. I wouldn't turn my back to him in a Diplomacy game, because he can be ruthless, but that was only on the board...He and Len Lakofka got drunk the night before my wedding, and I ended up having to drive Walt back to his motel room, and I took his VW van back to where I was staying. The next morning I picked him up, and then on the way back, the van broke down and I was late to my own wedding...Walt is an Indiana farm boy and an extremely reliable person

Mark: Have you had any contact with Allan Calhmer?

Doug: Oh, yes. Calahmer is one of these guys who is extremely overqualified for what he does, which is to work for the Post Office as a carrier...He played early in the 60s when postal Diplomacy first started, and he was far better than any other players at the time; he knew the board and strategy far better than they did. Because they were just learning, and they didn't particularly care, they were more in it for the press and other things. And then he left the hobby for 5 years or more, and when he came back in, the hobby had totally evolved. And when he tried to play against the top players of the hobby, his ideas were outdated. Some of his ideas were amateur. I never played with him, but talking with other people who did, he did things like he wrote letters using stationery that was orange with green ink, based on the idea that if you Xeroxed it, it would all come out grey, so people couldn't Xerox his letters. But people say things that aren't necessarily to be believed. Who cares if your letters get passed? You're always trying to feel out the opposition, and negotiate new terms, that's just part of the game, you can't get upset.

Mark: So how did this reentry turn out?

Doug: His play, while being good, certainly wasn't of the same caliber of the top players of the hobby, and it showed. He didn't do well in the HA Demo game and in some other games he was in, and subsequently either lost interest, or decided not to play postally anymore... I was sort of sorry to see this happen, because I really admired the man. But he hadn't learned about how his game had changed since he had last played it.

Mark: Now he seems to be primarily interested in scoring systems for tournaments. I've gotten some correspondence from him on that.

Doug: That goes back to when he was running scoring systems for Chicago DipCons. Actually, I like his general philosophy, at least as it was way back then, which was basically to penalize somebody who played for second place and let somebody else win. I agree totally with that philosophy...He had a pretty elaborate system then for determining at any point in curtailment who had how many points ((See DIPLOMACY DIGEST #13)).

Mark: How about Len Lakofka.

Doug: A Nice guy, but misunderstood by the hobby. The problem with Len was that he was abrasive to just about everyone. So what happened was that he turned people off because he didn't have the patience to work with them, so he made a lot of enemies. And finally that ended up driving him out of the hobby.

Mark: He also got more interested in D&D.

Doug: Yes, he was a good friend of Gary Gygax. He didn't have the patience to deal with a lot of the fools in the hobby that the rest of us suffer thru.

Mark: What about Rod Walker?

Doug: Rod --- we're only talking about people that I like so far --- Rod is another person that I like. But Rod has some strange ideas, especially when it comes to organizations. He likes organizations for themselves, not necessarily for what they really accomplish, or what they should accomplish. The only thing that upset me was that when he dropped out of the hobby in 1972, he really dumped everything. I never felt he made proper amends for it, but of course that's a long time ago now. I think he really enjoys playing the father figure of the hobby now. He doesn't really get involved, except in little projects of his own, which is fine. I don't have any real contact with him now. ...The first zine that I played in postally was Erehwon; he was just starting it up. I've played in his variants, Imperialism VII and some of the others, and also in some of his regular games. He's an excellent GM.

Mark: Really? I've played with one game with him. He's a real bumbler.

Doug: I think that probably shows his lack of interest

Mark: What do you think of his variants?

Doug: I liked his variants. In fact, that's the reason I got into postal Diplomacy, not because of the regular games. In particular, Imperialism VII, which was a World War II version of Diplomacy with 6 players. I think his variants were the only variants that I've ever played that were worth playing a second time. I haven't played that many but I've seen just about all of them. I played in just about all of his variants when he first started. They were well balanced.

Mark: Who would you say is your favorite GM? Or one of your favorites?

Doug: ((after some hesitation)) I'm not sure if I have a favorite GM, but there are GMs I will play under, for example John Leeder, Robert Sergeant, Steve McLendon, Lee Kendler. Most GMs now, at least, I probably would not.

Mark: That list is long enough that you'd never lack for games.

Doug: Yes, and I only play standby positions anyhow.

Mark: Is there any other person you want to talk about?

Doug: John McCallum. I think he was the most important person ever to be in the hobby other than the fact that John Boardman started the hobby. He was the most important single person in the hobby, but probably fewer people remember him today than any of the other top people from back in the 60s era. He basically, because of his impetus, the Rulebook was rewritten. It was based upon all the discussions in his zine Brobdingnag. He took rating systems and made sense out of them, made them work, though only the Calhmer Point System really survived. He raised Diplomacy to the level of an adult hobby, and took it out of the chaotic area of adolescent activity, where a lot of ....

Mark: It was the hobby's discussion zine.

Doug: Yes, and basically he made the hobby something worth participating in, as opposed to something where you get your laughs just from doing the sort of silly things that GMs get involved in ((??)). I think that's important in the long run. The hobby finally evolved into an adult pastime instead of something kids play.

Mark: Great. I've got a bunch of teenagers who do sub to my zine....

Doug: Well, good. Ultimately they're going to grow up, and eventually will recognize this fact. But John's been totally out of the hobby since 1972. I keep in touch with him about once a year at Christmas time.

Mark: How about Brenton ver Ploeg? Aside from that game, which was written up lastish.

Doug: The game I remember well. I never met him in person. Over the phone, however, we had extended conversations, when that game was going on. He was the first person I ever met who made extensive use of the phone, and did an extremely good job. I put him in the same category as Conrad von Metzke. Extremely likeable person, at least over the phone, to the point where it was very easy to agree with him.

Mark: He had a very funny zine too for a while.

Doug: Platypus Pie? Yes, one of the best zines around. In fact, I have his old ditto machine, which no longer works. Now he's a lawyer in Florida. He was extremely articulate, a very good writer. Some day I'm sure he'll show back up in the hobby.

Mark: He used to subscribe to DD, and I notice he was on the sub list for Lone Star Diplomacy. So he's still an observer.

Doug: Yes, a lot of people just sit back on the fringe and watch.

Mark: Have you had contact with John Boardman?

Doug: I've had contact with Boardman ever since 1966. He's really sorta strange, in that back in the days on the Walker, Buchanan, Beshara, etc conflicts, Boardman loved to dump on anybody at all who he thought was pro-Walker or pro-Buchanan, but he never dumped on me, and I don't understand why. I met JB at DipCon in 1976, and I'd heard that he looked quite a bit like Rod Walker, and it turned out to be the case. JB I guess is a good GM, I've never played in any of his games, he certainly is reliable. His zine is utter trash --- I don't get his zine now; I have some back issues dating back to #1, but it probably hasn't changed much since then.

Mark: Well, he made a big political shift ((in 1973))...

Doug: There's no real shift. Basically, he's still yelling at the same people from

the opposite side. Boardman is a real strange case, but the hobby is full of them. I respect him for the fact that he has continued to publish for as long as he has. It totally amazes me. I wouldn't play in his zine today.

Mark: Plus, he charges for standby positions.

Doug: Yes, well, he's smart. He has a product and he's selling it. Way back when, he charged more in game fees than anyone else, but he still filled up his games. He charged \$10 when others charged \$2. But they knew the games would go to conclusion.

Mark: How about John Beshara?

Doug: When you were on John's side, you got all these fantastic phone calls and letters and he was the nicest guy in the world. But once you crossed him, boy, you name was really mud. At one point, I tried to stay in the middle, and tried to reconcile him on one side with Buchanan, but it never worked. I was happy to see him leave the hobby. At the time that things completely broke down, he was off with his own little group, and the other were off their own group, there was nothing to be gained for him staying in the hobby. His group was mostly New Yorkers. I don't know what Eric's involvement was in it ((it=TDA)). I thought Eric was a good guy.

Mark: Do we have any comments by the Good Guys?

Eric: I think John was put upon unfairly because he was subjected to 50 pages of reprinted letters, edited and annotated by one Larry Peery. The Veritas Vincit thing.

Doug: John's big mistake was, simply, in starting a Diplomacy organization, he led everyone on to think it was going to be a mass participation organization...

Eric: He claimed that that ((the mass-participation)) was all Edi Birsan's idea.

Doug: In any case, John started it, and made certain statements that later did not...

Eric: There was that one flyer that he said Birsan put out...((Eric probably refers to a flyer which was reprinted on page 5 of DD #21-22. The names and addresses of Edi and John appear. As I recall, it was Joh who sent me a copy of the flyer, years later))

Doug: Maybe that true, but people had expectations that were unfulfilled...

Eric: He had expectations that were unfulfilled too, like people doing work. I talked to him for some time about it. He started this organization, had the expectation that people were going to write things for him, and nobody ever did anything.

Doug: Well, that's not exactly true. I don't know what he was expecting, but I even contributed to his zine ((Wazir, which I believe had 4 or 5 issues)).

Eric: I'll admit that he certainly got hung up about some things. Membership lists...

Mark: Which he refused to let any body see, basically.

Eric: Basically. He felt that he had put out the labor and money, and it was his organization.

Doug: If he would have called it a private organization from the start, there would have been no problem.

Eric: That's what he thought he started. He thought that the flyer sent out by Birsan was sorta a spurious thing sent out by somebody else.

Doug: He may have thought that, but he never told anybody else, at least publically that I know about, of that fact, so everybody was expecting an organization in which they could participate. It turns out, they couldn't. So everybody got upset, and went off and started IDA instead.

Eric: And look where that ended up.

Doug: Well, that shows you the problem with Diplomacy Organizations in general. None of them have ever lasted because they don't really know what their mandate really is.

Eric: The Diplomacy Organizations get hung up on "organizations". Everybody has to have an office. No body does any work. NADF is about the same thing.

Doug: That's just a silly organization. Its not a mass, its not a hobby-wide mass-participation organization. From what I understand its just a few crazy people off in a corner doing their own thing. That fine. Bob Walker is not going around promising people things and then not delivering. That's what happens all too often.

Mark: IDA put out a whole series of handbooks, and who is to say that they would have been put out without the organization.

Doug: No, they wouldn't have. IDA did some really good work. John Boyer got the ball rolling with the handbooks.



Mark : What about some people that you dislike?

Doug: I wouldn't play in any of Reinsel's games. He's sorta off in his own little corner anyhow. I met Charles at one of the DipCons, and actually he proved to be a surprisingly sane person at the time, and isn't come across nearly like he does by mail. That's true for a lot of people. He used to visit Walt Buchanan, Hal Naus, travel around the country.

Doug: Gordon Anderson. I have a trophy from the 74 DipCon, which doesn't have a little plaque on it because Gordon never sent out the little plaques for hte place. That really upsets me, Anderson!!((laughs))

Doug: Should I talk about Ronn Kelly?

Mark: Go right ahead. I may have to devote a response issue to this interview.

Doug: Ron Kelly had an interesting strategy. He wanted to be the best player in the hobby. So what he did was, he figured that if he had the most number of wins, he'd be the best player. So he went out and played in as many games as he could find. That worked real well since, at the time he was worked for The Washington Star, and had a lot of free time to devote to Diplomacy. Then he figured that if he got into games as a replacement player, he'd have certain pre-arranged players to be in the games with him. So that he'd be in a game, a standby position would open up, the GM wouldn't have a standby, so all the sudden this "new player" would enter the game, somebody who may not even have been getting the zine before, and all the sudden, there's Kelly with his new alliance sweeping the board. I know about this because I was the "new player", at least in one game. I came into a game in a zine which I had never gotten before. All the sudden I had taken over a Turkish position in a game in which Kelly was Austria. He had this set up, I think he was supposed to win. I stabbed him.

Mark: He didn't get together in advance with you, did he?

Doug: Well, yes he did. Basically, he set up cross-game alliances with me.

Mark: So much for your reputation, I might add!

Doug: I only did it once, and then I stabbed him. So that pretty much ended that.

Mark: What other Did you discuss this in advance with him?

Doug: He basically told me in a letter which I no longer have a copy of that this is what he was going to do.

Mark: He would get you into a game that he was already in, and that you would ally.

Doug: Based on the idea that this would be done in multiple games.

Mark: What other people did he have this sort of deal with?

Doug: Eric, do you know of anyone he did this with ((smiles))?

Eric: Well, I don't know. In the games I played with him, I don't think we had exactly that type of arrangement. It was more, I was in a situation that I was in so many games, he was playing in so many games, that there was a certain intersection.

Mark: Did this intersection always express itself in the form of an alliance.

Eric: Not always. If it seemed reasonable, we would ally. If it didn't, if we were on opposite sides of the board....

Doug: Did you ever stab him?

Eric: Hm, yeah. He didn't like that.

Doug: Right. The one time that I stabbed him, that was the end of it. I think I got attacked in 3 other games were were in.

Eric: We had some problems. We were in too many games together, to let one game get between us.

Mark: So it was just one stab.

Eric: One or two, I forget . He's a very good ally if you have him for an ally. The thing about Kelly is if he's allied with you, he's allied. He won't stab. That's an advantage.

Mark: Its an advantage to have that reputation.

Doug: Interestingly, he's won far more games than anyone else probably far more than anyone till another Ron Kelly comes along. But his reputation among the better players, at least the people I know, is a "good" player, not a "great" player. The good players are good in terms of the mechanics of the game, and being good allies. The great players know exactly what they are doing all the time, when to stab, and how to win games. There aren't that many great players around. I don't even know who they are anymore.

Eric: I think its very nice to be able to play 7 games and win 7 games and then drop out of the hobby ((referring to Crockett, I assume)). You always wonder how they would do if they continued to play.

Doug: Someone is going to gang up on you somewhere down the line just to be the first to beat you if nothing else.

Mark: Its very difficult when you've finished a game, and you have 32 out of the 34 centers to say, "OK, I'll sign up for another game"

Doug: The best players, tho, can come away from winning a game without making any enemies. You can win a game by stabbing everyone in sight, and getting 6 angry people who just can't wait to reek revenge in the next game they meet you in. A lot of poeple can do that, and win their games, and then lose the next 5 until they find a new group of people to beat.

Eric: Buchanan and crockett were both in that type of situation. Both started all of their games at more or less the same time, and had them all won before anyone could fic- ure out anything.

Doug: I don't know anything about Crockett.

Mark: He was bragging about his sucesses well before he had finished his run. In fact he was predicting toward the end how his last games were going to go.

Doug: About Buchanan, he and I had that 2 way draw in the one game. I certainly knew what his reputation was. I could have stabbed him.

Mark: What about Edi Birsan?

Doug: Of all the people I've ever played against, he was the best. That includeds Buchanan. Edi had this knack for coming up with totally ridiculous ideas that worked. In the last DW Demo game, he got this othher player((McIlvaine)) to agree to this idea of a shared victory in which Edi actually won the game, but this other guy was on his side at the end. He pulled it off, but nobody else would actually attempt such a thing and actually get away with it. He had a way of presenting something, that even if you thought it was crazy, you thought it might work, because it ~~was~~ his idea. That takes a certain knack. Edi, when he first started was , in about 1966, a lousy player, same as I was. He'd get slaughtered. Usually what happens to those people is they drop out of the hobby. But he continued, and picked up the knowhow he needed. He was the only effective IDA preseident there ever was.

Doug: I've had contact with Leeder, but only by mail. What I like about John is that he'll sit down and do what more GMs ought to do. He writes about what he's interested in, whether its bluegrass music or canoing or whatever.

Mark: Who are other GMs who do that well enuf for you to want to get their zines for that reason?

Doug: Steve McLendon, Robert Sergeant. Your issue on Israel was real good ((#46)). I'd rather read about that than a lot of the reprints.

Mark: We've discussed this before. You always prefer the original stuff to the new, becasue the odds are you've alredy seen it if its a reprint.

Doug: The British are very good at this. When I used to get all the Brish zine in the mid-70s, they were really good about just talking about things. They were less oriented toward the game, which I think is far better. Conrad von Metzke was the same way.

Mark: Brutus Bulletin is that way

Doug: I've never seen it. It started after I quit as BNC.

Mark: Its a voluminous zine which seldom touches on the game itself. It has the biggest letter column I've ever seen in a US zine.

Mark: Why do you take standby positions, but never original ones?

Doug: I played Diplomacy seriously from 1966 to 1974. 8 years, and I wrote an awful lot of letters, and basically I got tired of it. You can either quit playing, or you can play the mechanics. I like to move the pieces around the board, and I think I'm pretty good at that. I'll take over the standby position, and see what I can do. If I'm forced to, I'll write a letter to somebody.

Mark: You could play ooriginal positions the same way, couldn't you?

Doug: You've got write letters at the beginning. You can not, and expect to do anything.

Mark: How can you take a standby position, not write any letters, and expect to do

well there either?

Doug: Its real easy. If you have a natural alliance, one that your predecessor had....

Mark: You mean that you won't switch your alliances from what was there already?

Doug: I will, but not right away, until I establish what my position is, get the feel of the game. If I want to do something different, ~~then~~ then I'll try some diplomacy.

Mark: So when you take up your standby position, you won't initially change the pre-existing alliance structure.

Doug: Not unless it looks like I'm about to get stabbed ....

Mark: So if Doug has been called as a standby, the players' best approach for dealing with Doug is to write him a letter and lie about the present alliance situation and hop he'll believe it.

Eric: Wel, you could look back a few issue....

Mark: Do you look back a few issues?

Doug: You've got to be kidding! ((laughter)) Look, I can take any game, set it up, and in about 10 ~~min~~ minutes tell whats been happening and where its going to go. If someone going's to stab me, its pretty obvious, or if its not, its not going to succeed.

Mark: Seems to me you'd like GunBoat Diplomacy..... So how would you advise someone getting into a gme with you?

Doug: If they were an ally of the previous player, all they need to do is write me saying , I'm going to do this, will you do that. I'll look at it, and if its reasonable, I'll continue with the alliance.

Mark: If they're not the ally of the drop-out, is there any point in writing you?

Doug: Sure, you can always try. I'll always read the letters.

Mark: Thats large of you. ((laughter)) I won't respond, but I'll read them.

Doug: I simply don't have the time, and sometimes don't have the interest. I don't recommend this as a way of playing diplomacy. This isn't the way you're going to win games, but if you're just in for fun, the easy approach to the game.....((The reason I pursued this was that I suspect there are quite a few who take this approach.))

Doug: ((After Eric had complained that he had landed up in nearly all of Lipton's TMG games as a standby)) Once I take over a standby position, I tell the GM not to put me into any new games till this one is finished or I'm wiped out. I can't ahndle more than about 4 standby positions... some of the mail on my desk is more than 1 week old, some I haven't even opened. I tend to wait till the last minute on games.

Eric: I just open the zines that I'm playing in, put them in the corner of my desk, and every week-end I look and see if the deadline is coming up yet.

Doug: Well, see, you're more organized than I am.

Mark: This is going to be very demoralizing to my readers. I'm not pubbing any of this.

Doug: When I was playing seriously, I did everything you should do to play well. I would send out letters right away, follow these things up, sent in early orders, kept track of everything. Its great, but its a full time hobby occupation, and now, my see scheduld doesn't permit it. What happens to most people if they can't keep up, instead of cutting back to a reasonable level, just fold. Drop out. I got into the hobby in 1966, and I figure I'll be around for the next 30 or 40 years, at this level or less. But at least at this level. Already there are so few people left from when I entered. Very few people pace themselves. New Publishers don't understand that bigger is not better, so they burn themselves out.

Doug: I take just orphan games because I don't see any point in starting a new game ((In EFGIART)) when there are orphans to be picked up.

Mark: What was the most difficult decision you had to make as a GM?

Doug: The worst foulup I ever made was when I misfiled 2 sets of orders in a game, in which, because of that, I recorded two players as NMR, and another player won the game that season. Two days later while searching thru another file I found them, and had to readjudicate the games, and put out a new issue. That doesn't look too good. As long as you keep good records, you can't make too many errors. I give players quite a bit of benefit of the doubt as to how they write their orders. This whole controversy in VOD was once of the most childish things I ever read in my life, about "tro". The GM was totally correct in his decision. If I ever saw A Vie-tro, it could just as easily be tri, with a type --- on the typewriter, the "i" is right next to the "o"

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