

DIPLOMACY DIGEST

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Potpourri

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Only an absolute egomaniac would mention in the very first sentence of his dipzine that he had won the balloting in the "Rod Walker Award" for his story, "The Sleaziest Player of all Time: Shep Rose". To mention in the next sentence that this was the same story that came out first in DW's reader poll would be out of the question.

There has been some discussion about how strong the field was in the balloting. Several excellent pieces were not nominated. This is collectively all of our fault for not nominating them, and Larry's fault for not doing something about that. Some of these were approximately of the quality of the Shep Rose piece, so it's impossible to say how the balloting might have gone otherwise. But no matter. Many projects have had some weaknesses in the first year, and gone on to more successes later. The idea of an award to recognize excellence in writing is a superb one, and I'm confident that in the future even better items will win the prize. This type of positive contribution to the hobby has my wholehearted support, and I'd say that even if I hadn't won. It's a fine contrast to so much of the negative stuff floating around now.

Another excellent project getting underway is the revival of the International Subscription Exchange. The last two years have seen a definite increase in the awareness here of the British Dippy Hobby, in part due to the efforts of Mills and Henricks with the Zine Directory, and Gary Coughlan's international efforts with EE. More NA pubbers are trading with British zines, and mentioning them in their own zines. But subscriptions are awkward to arrange. A few months back I got payment, from a Britisher in the form of an Australian 5 dollar bill, which I still haven't been able to change. Steve Knight and Doug Rowling have set up the ISE, which allows you to pay for these zines in Dollars. Just write Steve (11905 Winterthur Lane #103, Reston VA 22091), giving your address, the name of the zine you want, whether you want it surface or air, and either the amount you are paying, or how many issues you want. Add a bit to cover variations in the currency rates; Steve may tack on a 10-20¢ service charge. I think this is great, and Steve tells me that the idea came to him from reading a back issue of DD mentioning the ISE. As long-time readers of DD know, I have featured a steady diet of British material here, partly because there's very little chance you've seen it before, and partly because their writers are different, their perspective is different, their experience is different, and so reading British material will give you a new slant on things. This should make it a lot simpler to get British zines ---- and for them to get ours!

Hm, a few last lines here. Real oldtimers may remember Jerry Pournelle, who is the most famous writer ever to come out of the Dippy hobby (he writes SF). Anyhow, I see he's now a columnist for BYTE magazine, the Big Daddy of the computer zines. Look, what do you want from a filler?

OKLAHOMA

((Mention "Oklahoma" to your average dipper, and if anyone comes to mind, it would be John Michalski and his crew, and Brutus Bulletin. But Oklahoma has an earlier, and completely unrelated history. The following is by Jeff Key, and appeared in The Voice, Vol III, #1, March 1969))

At one time, there was a fairly large group of Diplomacy players in the colleges and Universities of Oklahoma. Anytime 7 players could congregate for the purpose of a few hours of violent relaxation they would do so - and that was often. Then with marriages and graduations, the group scattered and the play of Diplomacy all but ceased within the state of Oklahoma.

This deplorable state of affairs continued until, in late 1967, Eric W. Just, Jr, independently "invented" postal Diplomacy ((that is, came up with the idea, unaware that others were already doing it)). The word was quickly spread and an experimental game - Dippy One - was started to determine whether or not Diplomacy could be successfully played by mail. It was immediately recognized as even better than in-person play, and that game - still in progress at this time - served to rejuvenate an interest in wargaming among the members of the old Oklahoma group.

With interest growing daily among the older members and new converts being enlisted almost as rapidly, one of the new players decided to start another game by mail in April 1968. This was R. Vanderbilt Foster, who was just completing his tour of duty with the Army. By May, he was settled in Florida, and with more than enough players to choose from, he started Dippy Two. Bob immediately ran into difficulties. With a heavy college load and a job as a DJ for a local radio station he was kept constantly busy. Publication difficulties seemed to plague him. In spite of all of his efforts, the game slid into limbo in November of that same year.

By this time, my own propaganda zine, The Voice of Vienna ((Jeff was Austria in a postal game, and established a zine just for his press!)) had likewise disappeared due to production difficulties, and only The Diplomat ((Just's zine)), struggling for acceptance in the recently discovered "mainstream" of postal diplomacy, was left to carry on. No one was able to contact Foster to determine his intentions concerning Dippy Two and Eric did not wish to take the game without his permission. Then, too, in mainstream Diplomacy GMs did not play in their own games ((Foster both GMed the game and played France)). Even though we had determined a way to "keep the gamesmaster honest," we did not want to continue to play in our own games. Another problem existed in that the game was considered by some GMs to be a variant because it utilized the Key Rule ((I believe that this is the one that says that if a unit is ordered to move, and fails to actually move, it is dislodged even by an unsupported attack)). No one seemed to be willing to give the game a home.

Now, with the rebirth of The Voice, the permission of Foster, and the location of an independent GM, Dippy two is to be continued in these pages. For those of you who like to follow games in detail, the progress of the game thus far is charted herein: ((He then reprinted the moves thru SO3. Of those in the game at that time, the only one still around, 15 years later was the replacement GM, Loring Windblad. The game at this point could not have been considered even a local Oklahoma game, since only two of the players were in Oklahoma. The Oklahoma hobby was by then, pretty much dead. The Diplomat limped along until May 1972, when Eric announced that he was broke and resigning his job. At this point, none of his players or subbers were from Oklahoma (altho one was in India!). All but two trades were cancelled, his other zine was folded. Publication then became very irregular, and the last issue under Just appeared in Nov 1973. So far as I know, Just left the hobby at that time, for all practical purposes. In Jan 1975, Rod Walker reactivated the zine and its remaining game. Years later, Dave Kaelman in Indiana started up a zine with the same name, and there have been at least two other zines, one in England and one a local zine, in Los Alamos, I believe with that name. But I digress.))

((Taking a weak position as a standby might not seem like it will give you much scope for imaginative play. But don't be so gloomy. From Graustark #365, June 1977 comes the following from Ray Heuer))

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING STUBBORN

Being a Commentary on Games 1975H and 1975Q

By looking at the SC holdings for the two games, one might think that they are studies in contrast. In 75H, I started with 5 centers and ended with 2. In 75Q, I started with 5 centers and ended with two.

However, they are both examples of how good allies and a stalemate line will prevail every time. In 75Q, I took over what seemed to be a hopeless position and did what any 2-center country would do - I grabbed two centers from my largest neighbor. This usually insures you a quick exit. However, it turned out that Austria (Ron Robinson) was too busy fighting England (Ben Laves) to bother with me (T). This, and selfless (if suicidal) supports from Penn's Russia made my position more or less secure. Around this time, with A taking R's last center, I noticed that the FIAT alliance had a stalemate line against E's 17-center England. It took several turns of nagging Robinson into making the proper moves to ensure the stalemate, but he finally saw the light, and himself proposed the moves that actually occupied the necessary spaces.

In contrast to 75Q's rather predetermined alliances, 75H was a madhouse. When I entered the game, it seemed to me as France that I held the balance in an E-G war. I determined to ally with the first of the two to write me. The only problem was that neither one did! However, a few days before the deadline, Turkey (Steven Silver) foned me and asked me to support his army in Sil to Mun. How did T get an army in Sil? It had been dislodged from Gal and retreated there, of course. Needless to say, with the headline "Sultan puts light in window for wandering boys", I did. Just as in 75Q there was a large E, 75H had a large Italy. While G made short work of England, T and I whittled at G's home centers. At one point, I had Mun, and T's last center was Berlin. Finally, R (Alan Cathcart) intervened and proposed a 5-year (W04-W09) FRGT alliance against Italy....It worked well until 1910 when G jumped R. G rolled over R in the north; Italy rolled over R and T in the south.

What was I doing during all this? Well, in F04, Italy stabbed me. Since I was planning to stab Italy in S05, this made me a game long enemy of Italy. While Italy and I tangled with little if any results I ignored Germany, leaving my "back door" open to him, an opportunity which was not ignored. I decided that I would give the game to G, since he had been a reasonably loyal ally of mine, so I continued my fight against Italy....Finally exiled from France itself, I set up a government-in-exile in Madrid. G tired to repay my loyalty by proposing a 3-way draw in 1912. Every season thereafter, he and I proposed the draw, and Italy vetoed it.

Then I remembered that in 75Q, Laves had accepted the draw only after I had written to him and outlined the stalemate line. So, I wrote to Italy, pointing out the fact that (as outlined in Graustark #363) that as long as Chafetz supported me, Spa was secure....so Italy had no choice....As a final note, I would like to remind Graustark readers that small does not necessarily mean hopeless. ((Indeed, it does not. There is a certain amount of luck involved, since some positions adford no flexibility at all. But many do, and its a question of whether you will put the effort into exploiting such situations. The best example from a game I've been in was 1976IF, where Doug Beyerlein entered around 1905 with a 4-center Italy, surrounded by stronger F, A, and G. When the game ended in 1920, he shared a 17-17 draw with me)).

((Next is Rick Brooks writing in Hoosier Archives #92, Sept 30, 1972))

THE EVILS OF RATING SYSTEMS

Liaisons Dangereuses had 4 questions on rating systems. Basically, Len Lakofka asked if a rating system should be standardized by a Diplomacy group with members voting on games to be included as well as terms of the system, if Walker should rate Buddy

Tretick's games, and how important rating systems are.

.....I feel that the human factor in Diplomacy bulks too large for any rating system to mean much. But there are other reasons for wiping out all rating systems.

First, where do we draw the line? Rod Walker has the thankless task of assigning game numbers ((the BNC)) and has questioned treating the 7-man, 7-game series as regular games ((7 players played 7 games, each played taking a different country in each game))....House Rules are a necessary evil in Postal Diplomacy. There are so many nits to be picked out here that I hesitate --- in fact, flatly chicken out --- to go into this further.

Second, the system now allows for abuses. Rod Walker now has the sole responsibility for deciding what is regular (i.e. ratable) and what is not. Rod has been feuding with Buddy Tretick and this can't help but color his views on Buddy's GMing.

But my main objection to the rating systems is that they spread hard feelings. The whole feud that split the TDA started with John Beshara objecting to an action of GM Rod Walker with one of the main reasons being that it would hurt John's rating. Now we have Len Lakofka dropping out of the 7-man, 7-game set in Peerimania with a part of his reasons being that he didn't want to be rated in them and issuing a blast at GM Peery. Since Len is somewhat more sensible than Beshara, and Larry has no intention of continuing as IDA president, we should see the IDA racked up ((over this issue)). But how long can we put up with the hates generated by people who profess to feel that some GM decision is cheating them out of rating points?

Playing to impress others is a damn poor motive (tho none of us are completely free of this). I play mainly to impress myself --- and have a long series of flawed games behind me. Some players feel that ratings are the main things and play for blood. The ratings are a club that I can use to beat you over the head with to "prove" that I'm a better man than you. Rating systems thus spread hard feeling among players. This undoubtedly extends to designers operating system that doesn't give somebody what he feels his just dies are.

If a rating system did measure excellence in Diplomacy, it might be tolerable to most players. I think that we do not know what constitutes excellence in Diplomacy. I believe that tactical skill is the main measure, but my believing this doesn't make it so.

Our culture is too hung up on winning as the measure of excellence. Edi Birsan swept 71BC ((the first Hoosier Archives Demo game)) against a strong field. But whether the win was due to overwhelming Diplomatic skill, or Edi just had the game drop effortlessly into his hands while the other players gouged each other to bits is another matter. The truth is undoubtedly between those two extremes. Despite my indepth study of the game ((Rick wrote the analysis of the game for HA)), I can't judge how Edi rates. ((I assume he means, "how Edi should be rated")) I doubt that anyone else can do any better.

The one case where I was definately on the inside, namely QEC which I won with a strong blitz and 29 SCs, I consider one of my poorer efforts. I was Austria. Walker replaced the original Italy in a weak position, and was willing to play for second. Von Metzke played Russia. I envy Conrad, as he is freer from the obsession of winning than the great majority of us. (I still cannot shake the feeling that a loss is a reflection on my playing a nearly total tactical game.) He kept after England even after I hit him. So the win in no way reflected my ability except for the amount of territory I took in before getting 18 units; even then, I was trying for 30 centers.

But still we treat the ratings systems as meaningful. But an unhealthy emphasis on rating systems causes us to turn the game into a competition. We take the fun out of it except for those who enjoy kicking each other in the teeth. We do not play for the game' we play for the rating. This is not only wrong, but also impoverishes all who play. How much longer can we tolerate this?

((Well, of course the ratings are meaningful. In the Spring 1984 DW, page 36, I am listed as the #2 player. That alone shows the legitimacy of rating systems. Rating systems in chess don't seem to take the fun out of the game, but then again, chess is a

much easier game to rate, for several reasons. There will always be problems with rating postal games, such as which games to rate, how far to go back, how to handle standbys, the relative values of different outcomes, etc. None of these problems will have a generally agreed upon solution. But there are some pluses as well. Some people enjoy compiling them and reading them and discussing them. In addition, I suspect that some people concerned about their ratings might decide not to drop out of a game, or otherwise give up the fight, out of concern for what that action might do to their rating.))

POLISH JOKES

((Everyone is in favor of jokes in dipzines, right? Don't be so sure. We start with Ethil the Frog #40, November 1973, in the letter column, edited by John Piggott:))

Don Turnbull: On the subject of jokes, frankly, nothing detracts more from the standard of a magazine (except, of course, the lack of legibility, which transcends all the contents) than awful, tedious sniggery humor. The publishers of the rags concerned should perhaps remember that they are selling their product as a Diplomacy zine, not as a sort of potted history of fifth-form humor. The implication seems to be that no one should read the magazine unless they happen to be at that age and (sorry, but there's no way around this) at that level of maturity. If so, then for goodness sake, keep these magazines in the schools, and don't release them on the adult community outside.... ((he later adds as one of his "cardinal rules":))

4) Think how embarrassed you are going to be in a couple of years or so, when you look back and see the tripe you produced.

John Piggott: As regards the great jokes controversy, I saw things proliferating all over other zines, assumed people liked them and so put some in Ethil. It would appear that this was an error in judgement on my part ---- is there anyone in the house who does like the jokes? Speak now, or forever hold thy peace.

((So much for the general. Now for a specific. Here we turn to 1901 and all that.... #42, January, 1975. The editor is Mick Bullock))

Tadek Jarski:I am writing seriously and in earnest. My fit of seriousness is brought on by a press release in 74EU. The press contained a free sample of so called "Polish Jokes" There are many of these. Some are funny. Some are mischievous. Most are sneers rather than jokes. The common theme for those is to show Poles as a stupid, if not moronic nation.

I do not mind being laughed at if I am guilty of stupid behavior. I am quite quick at laughing at another person when he or she does something silly. But I do object when someone, thru arrogance or ignorance, and I don't care which, brands a NATION as stupid. And I take offense when anyone sneers at my nation.

It so happens that I am proud of being a Pole. I am proud of my country's heritage, of its culture, history and traditions. I am proud of a nation which produced Micholas Copericu and Friderik Chopin and Marie Curie ((etc. Remaining glories are edited for reasons of space))

.....I know that this does not make me better than any other man but simply different. I am proud of the difference. A man for Switzerland can be proud of his cuckoo clocks, an Eskimo of his igloos, a Japanese of his industry. But damn the arrogance of any man who dares to consider himself better than I simply because he happens to be Eskimo, or a Japanese, or an Englishman for that matter and I happen to be a Pole. Damn his ignorance is he considers his nation to be "wise" and any other nation "stupid" What is the nature of a nation's wisdom?.....

I am certain that the "Polish Joke" which appeared in 74EU was not meant to be offensive. But now that you know my views on the subject I am equally certain that another one would be.

Mick Bullock: The "Polish Joke" you refer to also appeared, as an "Irish Joke", in an earlier 1901 and all that..... It just so happens that I wrote the earlier one, whereas

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the press in 74EU containing the Polish Joke was sent in by a North American (not one of the players therefore). They, North Americans, tell Polish jokes ((see, its all our fault!)), we tell Irish jokes; basically, they're the same thing. So to be consistant, you must also take offense at any Irish jokes I tell. (I am farily sure that it was an unfortunate coincidence that that press appeared in your game, and was not intended as a jibe at you personally ((Sure. Who could possibly have guessed that "Tadek Jarski" was a Polish name.)) I didn't even connect the 2 things when I printed it). Which reminds me of one.....((what follows is a not-especially-clever "Irish Joke"))

Now, if I come across any good Jewish jokes, or Italian jokes, or Scot jokes, then I'm likely to print them. At the moment I'm afraid that Irish jokes ... or call them Polish jokes if you will, tho I'll admit I never thought of them as that, are the vogue, and they're likely to continue in these pages. No offense is intended to Irishmen, Poles, Jews ((some terms which I consider offensive are deleted)) or anyone else. You really shouldn't take any

((It didn't turn out that way. The following appeared in #43:))

Tadek Jarski: That you for informing me ... as to what I should find offensive and what not. You may be glad to know that so far I have managed to deal with such problems without outside help and I don't need any assistance from you. However, I will be glad to retain you as my personal sexual consultant for future reference. The duties are not onerous. The post simply means that when I need your f----- advice, I will ask for it.

In the meantime, I would like to resign from 74EU. I do not wish to spoil the game for the other players and enclose my orders for SO2, in case you cannot find a standby for the next deadline. Kindly take me off the list of subscribers ... Your declared program of Polish, Irish etc jokes does not appeal to me at all. Please use my remaining credit to purchase a supply of Polish jokes.....

Mick Bullock: ...I don't use standby players in standard Diplomacy gamesCivil Disorder rules apply. The difference between resigning and dropping out being that other GMs wouldn't apply blacklisting and consideration for rating purposes wouldn't be affected....

Terry Knowles: First point, my apologies -- I had not the slighest intention of offending anyone, and as Mick guessed, the fact that you were in the game didn't occur to me. Besides which, I had no idea you were Polish anyway. This constitutes a public apology

Second Point: I have nothing against Poles in terms of bravery, intellegence, and creativity, love of freedom and love of their nation, all Poles can be proud. I haven't the slighest idea why people use Poles as the butt of their jokes instead of Albanians or Katangans. It could just as easily have been a Canadian ((Terry was Canadian)) joke, or just left as a Lemming joke. I honestly intended no slur on yourself.

Third point: Don't you think that one of the more admirable qualities of any people of any nation is the ability to laugh at themselves? I'm not sure how prevalent Polish jokes are over there; if they are very common, I guess perhaps I can understand you are a bit tired of them, and thus a bit touchy on the subject. But if they are not ... then I think you are taking offense much too easily Sure, not all Polish jokes are funny; and some, I see, would really give offense. But I happen to think the example ... in #41 was rather amusing.

((Mick then reprinted the following comments by PETE BIRKS from his Greatest Hits:))

....If we cannot laugh at people's characteristics, even tho they are not actually true, then we have lost a great slice of humor. I can laugh at my own relative shortness (I'm five foot six) ((that's tall to me!)) and my baby face, which often make people think I am about 15, 4 years under my true age. I laugh at my cockney accent, which is the jibe of may "posher" speakers ... why cannot we laugh at ethnic jokes?... Humpr is cruelty anyhow, so why can't we laugh at the cruelty? When do people laugh except at other people's misfortune? Look at Laurel and Hardy...

((Mick closed by saying that his policy would not change. A few issues later, John Leeder checked in with a letter saying, in essence, that since the same jokes were told, in different places about different people, and since the jokes obviously had no truth

to it, then Tadek should have realized that they were not intended with any malice. Altho no one stood up for Tadek, I don't think his position is totally without merit, tho he did overreact. It is all well and fine to talk about laughing at one's shortcomings, as Pete suggests, but those telling the Polish jokes were not Polish, so it wasn't their own shortcomings. Indeed, these jokes can hardly fit into the category of laughing at real shortcomings at all. The problem, I think, is that the jokes are targeted to a people or nation. If you are a member of that people, its probably not as a matter of choice --- you were born that way. So you have a strong attachment to it, and thus it is difficult to distance yourself if an outsider tells a joke making your people the butt of the joke. There are better solutions. There are such jokes in Jewish humor targeted against, of all people, the Wise Men of the town of Chelm (which, alas for my point, happens to be in Poland!). This is a much narrower target, and people are unlikely to feel the attachment for a town that they would for a country. In the same vein are "Aggie" jokes in the US --- the fools here are those who attend a particular college. It must also be said that Dipzines are for fun, and you can't be surprised that if someone does not like the fun, he will leave. But --- Tadek was completely wrong to quit the game. When he signed up for the game, he obligated himself to play it out. Moreover, such action actually increases the chance he will come across more Polish jokes in other zines. If any enemy wants to knock him out of the game real quickly, all he has to do is get some Polish jokes printed as press, and Tadek will fall on his sword....))

((Summer is traditionally the time for dippy gettogethers, altho in recent years, they've been scattered better thruout the year. For a more lighthearted lookat one of these, we turn to Erehwon III, #10, July 1969. The host of this gathering, John Koning was a pubber and a Boardman Number Custodian, and is now deceased.))

WALKER IN KONINGSBURG

It was a warm June night, the 27th to be exact, when Dave Johnston and I pulled into Youngstown. I had warned Dave of the hazards when I picked him up in Columbus, but he insisted on coming. On buying the gas, even. I proved my warnings true by promptly getting lost twice on the freeways by missing turnoffs. But we finally made it.

We quickly located Manse Koning, bordering as it does next to one of the world's largest graveyards. "Just the place," I observed, "for a Diplomacy Convention." Had I But Known the terrors that lurked ahead, I would not have made the remark so offhandedly. Manse Koning was dark and forbidding, but we knew that was only outward show to discourage the local motorcycle gangs. We parked in the drive and started up the steps to the door. By taking them two at a time, we managed the trip in only 15 minutes or so. The view was breathtaking. At our feet lay mile after mile of tombstones. I could just make out my car, parked between

POTTER BILGENEST
1832-1876

and

SAMANTHA THAUMATURGE
1665-1743

I shall always think of you, my beloved husband, when I see cigar ashes.

She popped and crackled when we burned her.

We rang the bell. Mrs. Koning, John's mother, answered. She unbarred the door and undid the latch and undid the latch and undid the latch and undid the latch and replaced her Colt .45 in her shoulder holster. "The motorcycle gangs are out tonight," she said, "and Samantha Thaumaturge is walking the grounds." We assured her that all had been quiet when we drove up. "John has gone to the airport to pick up Derek," she said.

I shuddered. It was true. The dread Dirac A. G. Nelson, code-name "Derek", had arrived from Toronto, headquarters of the Sinister Canadian Conspiracy. After resting awhile, we left for the car and half an hour later brought up our bags, books, Diplomacy junk, brief cases, and of course my cat, Cat. He was consigned to the basement, where he wouldn't claw things and where the noise of motorcycles wouldn't bother him.

John and "Derek" were due back from Cleveland at 9. John was more punctual than usual, and we heard the roller-skate wheels of his go-cart scrape into the driveway at

10:30. We soon learned that Dirac's plane had been early. Many people do not know that John Koning is in reality Bernie Kling, being under the false impression that his only alter ego was "Paul Harley". This statement will therefore be a surprise to some who do not know John very well. We were all introduced to Dirac Nelson, who proved a very affable chap. We were charmed by his disarming greeting, "Kill Yanks". Dave and I were having some iced tea, having found twenty or thirty pots of it in the kitchen. John got a case of beer for Dirac, and Dirac drank it. I think Mrs. Koning objected somewhat when he broke the tops off over the mantel instead of on the edge of the kitchen sink, but she good-naturedly did not mention it.

Eventually we decided to get some sleep, having spent several hours listening to Dirac's plans for massacring several million Yanks and Quebecois. He was very entertaining. And graphic. We were to sleep in the attic, where John normally hangs out and works on Diplomacy material. To be sure, in one corner there was a game board, all set up for a sTab game. At least, that's what John said; it was hard to see the pieces through the cobwebs. In another corner was a stack of mail three or four feet high. Some pieces near the bottom seemed to be postmarked "1965", but they were too badly faded for me to be sure.

There were three beds. There was a very large one into which Dave plopped, going instantly to sleep. He didn't even say, "this is too soft". There was a smaller bed and an army cot. Above the snores, Dirac and I argued good-naturedly over the bed. After I broke two of Dirac's arms, he decided to take the cot.

Early in the morning, we were awakened by loud voices and raucous laughter. Surely, we thought, one of the motorcycle gangs was having an orgy in the back yard. As it turned out, however, the East Coast contingent had arrived, as well as the famous Charles Reinsel, whose heroic determination to "pmrn" John Boardman has made him the hero of a generation. From New Jersey and New York came several other, uh, individuals. We were introduced to Jeff Key, who was filling up a corner of the yard nearest the kitchen; to Loring Windblad, who had stopped talking long enough to set up a photo lab near the garage; and to Bud Stowe, who was already picking out likely victims. With Jeff had come his charming wife, Mary Ann, who kept laughing about "grown men and their toys", and her friend, Edi Birsan, who was telling everybody "when you get to New York, come up and see me some time". Charles Reinsel proved far more affable in person than he sometimes is in print, perhaps because he was wearing his summer mustache. Charles, with whom I have had a feud of a year's standing, immediately agreed to bury the hatchet. It was only later, during the game, that I found out where.

We decided to play a game of (surprise!) Diplomacy—the results of which have since been published in THE GRAND FENWICK GAZETTE NUMBER 2—and immediately everybody took to the bushes in twos and threes. It took us several minutes to get them all back so we could assign countries. Then we all agreed to dispose of Dirac Nelson who, being a foreigner, didn't speak the language very well, and then fell to on each other. I distinctly remember 1901 setting some sort of record for an in-person game, as somewhat less than a quart of blood was shed from various knife cuts, gunshot wounds, and brass knuckle marks about the groin and kidneys. But then, Youngstown is noted for its rather bloodless games. Charles Reinsel began claiming victory in 1902. Dirac Nelson, down to one unit in 1904, upset the board with a flying leap, screaming, "I win, I win!" This claim was disputed by some, but it was then decided to go on to another game.

Many games were played that day. Much food was consumed. Much beer was guzzled. Dirac Nelson, somewhat paranoid over the fact that everyone attacked him in every game, built a fortress out of empty cases which he had drained. The Rolling Rock factory was called for a special shipment. This came, although delayed by a motorcycle gang attack. The trucks managed for form a circle and fought off the howling savages.

((The reference to Nelson being a foreigner comes from him being a Canadian. Most of the people referred to are gone from the hobby, tho Loring Windblad is still around, as are a few others. I believe that copies of GFG #2 are still available from Rod Walker, if you'd like to see that a FTF game of Dippy in the late 60s was like. sTab was at that time Koning's zine.))

WORDWORKS-OTHER VOICES

For those of you who came in late, a quick summary. Wordworks games are run on Wes Ives' computer. Each player is given a pseudonym, so they don't know each other's names (unless they wish to tell). A player sends his letter to the computer, and players retrieve messages sent to them in the same way, after giving a secret password to identify themselves. Thus, the players can conduct secret negotiations, just like in regular dippy (and unlike other types of Anonymous games, which involve open negotiations in the press, or have none at all). The first such games that I am aware of are (1975BG) and (1975II), which had the same system, except that mail went via the Post Office to the GM, who remailed it.

The current BNC, Kathy Byrne, has declined to give these games a BN, as she considers them to be variants. Both of us have expressed our views in earlier issues of DD.

For those of you new to the hobby, let me introduce the people who follow. The three people with the longest and deepest involvement with variants are Lew Pulsipher, Fred Davis, and Rod Walker. I consider them to be the hobby's true experts on variants. Lew has published a book on the subject, which has been sold both here and in England. In addition to his own variant zine, Lew has been DW's variant editor for 10 years. Fred's Bushwacker is the oldest variant zine, and I suspect that more sections of Fred's creations have been played than anyone else's. Rod has been involved in the variant hobby since its start in the mid 60s, has run several variant zines, has developed the largest variant archives in the world, and designed the numbering system currently used by the MNC to label variant games. Les Kendter is the current Miller Number Custodian, in charge of keeping records on variant games. Conrad von Metzke and Lew Pulsipher are former MNCs, Rod is a former Vice MNC. Lee, Conrad, and Rod are all former Boardman Number Custodians. Their qualifications, of course, do not mean that they are right. It does mean that they are speaking from a substantial background of hobby involvement.

OK, then, we'll start with Fred Davis:

"Based on the sum total of what is written in DD #79, and what I've heard separately from Kathy Byrne, in my opinion the "Wordworks" games are not variants.

....Once it was established that the players can communicate with each other, I agree that it is a regular game. We have the precedent of other PBM games wherein the players had to send their letters to the GM, and the GM then forwarded them to other players (1975BG, 1975II)....it is completely irrelevant whether the transmittal of orders is by mail, telephone, hand delivery or electronic mail.

There is certainly no need to know a player's real name as long as communication can be established, and as long as it can be verified that no player is playing more than one position.

It could also be pointed out that at large Diplomacy tournaments, where one plays with complete strangers, no one remembers names anyway. The players call out to each other, "Hey, France," and "Hey, Germany," in their negotiations."

Next up is Lew Pulsipher :

"I'm quite surprised that anyone would call the Wordworks game(s) variants. The choice appears to be between "irregular" and "regular", but the games should have BNs in either case. I see no reason why anonymity per se should cause the game to be a variant. And communication in a wordworks game is much more like communication by mail than it is like, say, communication by telephone. It's the written word....essentially, I agree with your discourse in DD #79.

Don Miller gave his "Anonymity" game a Miller Number, and it probably deserved one because negotiation, thru the press only, was visible to all....negotiations were radically different from negotiations in standard Dip. The negotiations in Wordworks are no different from negotiations in many novice games, in which no player has any knowledge of the other players at the start of the game. So why call it a variant?"

Next up is Lee Kendter, Sr, writing in Alpha and Omega #5, May 1984:

"....I have come to the conclusion that nobody can be 100% right on this issue. At best it might come out 60/40. Both sides have valid points. However, I have examined all sides of the argument as carefully as I can. I have taken all points into consideration and weighed them very carefully. I agree with Kathy that Mr Ives' games are indeed a variant and should not get a Boardman Number.....

Next up is Rod Walker:

"Consider three situations:

1. Seven people enter a postal game, using their correct names and house addresses. None of the 7 knows any of the others; they are all total strangers.
2. Seven people enter a postal game. Each of them uses a quite ordinary pseudonym (John Smith, Brad Dominsky, Bill Husak, etc) and a P.O. Box.
3. Seven people enter a postal game. Each of them uses an obvious pseudonym (Rasputin, John Bull ... etc) and an electronic mail drop which is just as private and secure as a P.O. Box.

The first game is completely regular and gets a BN, right? What about the second? Certainly we have had games in which some players entered under pseudonyms, and they were regular. How many pseudonyms can you have before the game isn't regular? There is no line here; at worst, a game with 7 pseudonymous players would get a BN and a little note about its unusual nature. So why is the third game ((i.e. Wordworks)) a variant? The players don't know each other any less than in the others: in each game, the players are effectively "total strangers". Can the players communicate any less directly or privately or effectively in the third game? No, indeed, the communication is exactly the same. Why, then, is this game a "variant"? Obviously it is not, unless you want to consider inconsequential side details which have no effect on how the game is played. But the BNC has chosen to ignore basics and consider only inconsequential minor detailsI know that Kathy has been doing a fine job handing out the BNs and doing her job generally, but in this one instance, she is dead wrong. (By the way, I have discussed the issue of this game with Conrad von Metzke ... and he agrees with my analysis that the game does not differ in any significant way from any other 7-person postal game).

((I'll close with a few comments of my own. I've discussed this with a good many people, and I've frequently heard the response that a game is a variant if procedures are used which are outside the norm, very unorthodox, or seriously outside the norm. As a simple matter of hobby history, this is simply not true. I mentioned last issue about games by Reinsel, wherein he adjudicated before the deadline if he had all 7 sets of orders, so that a last minute change of orders that came in before the deadline could be ignored. Players were told of this procedure, and his games were never considered variants. There have been games where the GM was a player as well. There have been games where men have been ~~ba~~ as original players ("amazon" games) and games with 10 week deadlines and 10 day deadlines. There have been games ^{with} very close relations in the game (e.g. GM married to player). Some games have had one or two players operating under a pseudonym. Sometimes the other players knew, sometimes they didn't. There have been games with 2 or more players, or GM and a player, at the same address. Some of these games were "irregular", and some were not, but they all got BNs. They were not considered to be variants because they did not have a significant departure from the Rulebook. And neither does the Wordworks game))

THE ZINE COLUMN # 74

It says here in Magus #36 that 1981KD ("Pressgang") has ended in a win for Woody, playing Italy of all countries. That just goes to show that the old adage is indeed true: You can't always believe what you read in Dipzines.

And speaking of which, contrary to what I said lastish, best Austria at Mary-Con was actually Bill Thompson. I'm sure you all were very perplexed by that. And speaking of declining standards. The cover of Liberterrean #208 is so far as I know a first, a "full frontal" nude photograph of a female. A human female. Jim Bumpas, incidently, has openings in a PBEM game for users of the "ACE BBS", whatever that is (Jim Bumpas 4405 Dillard Rd Eugene OR 97405)... Europa Express #34 had a fine essay by John Michalski on how to get reader response for your zine. Its no big mystery, and John speaks from first hand experience.

Advice of the Month comes in two categories this time. For players, we have Kathy Byrne, the BNC: "Please read the Houserules before you sign up for a game" (Everything #60). You may find some things you really don't like, and such a surprise is best discovered before you enter the game, not after. A really thoro set of HRS will give you a very clear idea of the philosophy of the GM, and thus will tend to put you into a game with people who are looking for the same style in GMing. And GMs do vary on important things, such as whether all survivors must be in a draw, how vote results are announced, how strictly deadlines are followed, etc.... And for pubbers we have Konrad Baumeister, in Give me a Weapon #38: "...phone conversations are particularly difficult to remember, ah, fully and correctly." Indeed. Pubbers would do well to remember this when they get involved in a public discussion which turns on who-said-what-over-the-phone. As Konrad points out, this can just get down to a one-person's-word-against-the-other situation, which is unedifying for the readers, to say the least.... And finally, understatement of the month comes from Brad Chase in DW #37: "30 characters a second" is "faster than most people can type." I'll say. Some of us have trouble with 3 characters a second.



So I Lied Marc and Debi Peters 29 E. Wilson #202 Madison WI 53703 (The "Madlads")
Barataria Rod Walker 1273 Crest Dr Encinitas CA 92024 (Variant Game Openings)
The Appalacian General David McCrumb Rt 1 Box 109 New Castle VA 24127
The Concert of Europe Michael Lee 3480 Danna Ct Eugene OR 97405
Protozoan 4 Meadow Lane Hicksville NY 11801 Scott Cameron (Dipvariants and other games)
The Wind's Second Quarter Graham Staplehurst 277 Church St Clissold Park London N16
Quartz Geoff Kemp 23 Raygill Wilnecote, Tamworth, Staffs B77 4JY England
Feuilletonist's Forum Gregory Ellis 700 Rio Grande Austin TX 78710

The last zine there has an intriguing offer. Conrad Minshall (3702 Tarragona Lane Austin TX 78727) will be guest GMing a game with no game fee, but a \$5 NMR deposit. If you NMR, your deposit is forfeited, and you must replace it with another \$5. This, then, is a game for those who fancy themselves as reliable --- and want to be in a game with like-minded people! If the forfeited deposits amount to more than Conrad's costs, they will be distributed back to the "players who rarely NMRed".

Contrary to the impression you might have gotten (I was confused too), Politesse is not folding, and will be carrying the "Bahnhof Zoo" game, where Ed will be player and will simultaneously be doing real-time commentary. Should be interesting.... The latest VoD has an interesting round table discussion on the question of what constitutes GM interference with the games. With 17 people contributing, there's an amazingly wide variety of views, many argued quite well.... Dirty Files of Plaid Clothes #25 has a nice (albeit belated) account of this year's MadCon, complete with some nifty fotos.... Ken Hager has probably set a hobby record -- he collected \$25 for writing in a Dippyazine! (Peery offered that as a prize for the best analysis of 1982AY, recently completed in Xenogogic).... DipCon 1985 will be held in Seattle, in conjunction with a Con which is partly wargaming, partly SF. The new Administrative committee for this will be Terry Tallman, Pete Gaughan, and Rod Walker.

Mark L Berch
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If the number (82) appears by your
name, your sub is up! Its time to
renew!

The Winner of the
Don Miller Award for Hobby
Service has gone to Lee Kenten, Sr,
former BNC, present MNC, and one
of the best GMs of all time



*Paul - I was hoping to get your
recent Word works comments, but
I didn't want to wait any longer*

