

DIPLOMACY DIGEST

Issue #85
October 1984
Potpourri/GB

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Subs: 10 for \$4
Europe: 10/\$4.50 or 3/E1
Circulation: 103

VoD HITS 100↑↑

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The Voice of Doom has gone out not with a whimper or even a bang, but gone supernova. The 5th anniversary issue, #100, checked in at 270 pages. It transcended the notion of a dipzine. So heavy it was sent parcel post, it feels, and reads, more like a book. And it is, in its own way, a farewell.

The issue shows, in magnified form, what was always VoD's greatest strength: The unprecedented level of reader participation. I'm an archivist, so I've seen all the great zines on both sides of the Atlantic, and none has equalled VoD in that category in terms of the number of people and the scope of subject matter. Brutus Bulletin comes to mind, but it didn't have as large a stable of regular contributors, and the range of topics was narrower, since it dealt largely with politics and social issues; the game itself, for example, got much more attention in VoD. Europa Express and Greatest Hits also have fine records, but they have a way to go before the catch VoD.

Perhaps the quintessential example of this were his roundtable discussions, a format that Bruce pretty much invented. A series of situations were posed, grouped around a central theme. What did you think? How would you handle it? The

THE ZINE COLUMN # 78 responses would then be grouped for each question, and Bruce would print whatever people wrote in. He would flit in and about the answers, contrasting a view here, challenging an errant assumption there, and giving his own views, and then try to express an over-view. The one in the final issue dealt with player ethics, with 10 situations. 15 people responded, with a nice range of relative newcomers and old farts and GMs, etc. Everyone had their say, and it ran a leisurely 21 pages -- and this wasn't even his most successful roundtable. When these Roundtables were done, you sometimes had more than a collection of opinions, you had some insight on how people think, on the different ways of approaching questions. Maybe another zine could have done this too, but it was VoD that went and did it.

Space does not permit more than a quick glance at some of the highlights: MacFarlane on Dippy by Ham Radio, Ron Canada Brown with advice to novice pubbers, Michalski on PudgeCon III, Lisa Noto on being a dippy widow, another of Coughlan witty (turn to p10)

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

This issue has some extra pages. If any of you are seeing this zine for the first time, please don't draw the wrong conclusion. Single issues of DD are only 11 or 12 pages. However, the Langley matter came up, and I was unable to put this response where it belongs (Magus), so it has to go here instead. However, I did not want it to push aside the material I had planned for this issue (the TZCs, the Quiz results, and the British reprints), so I added the extra pages. I know that some of you won't be the least bit interested in this, so I've put it at the end, where you can completely ignore it if so desired, and still see an ordinary sized zine.

THE 1984 DIPLOMACY DIGEST HISTORY, TRIVIA, AND GENERAL TOMFOOLERY QUIZ RESULTS

OK, here goes. If a ! follows the answer, no one got it right. If initials are underscored, only he got it right. If * appears after the initials, that means he got the 1 point for the most amusing answer. Responding were Brad Wilson(BW), Bob Acheson (BA), Ron Galicia (RG), Steve Arnawoodian(SA), Bruce Linsey(BL), Don Del Grande(DG), Mark Larzelere (ML), Konrad Baumeister (KB), and Gary Coughlan(GC).

1. Glen Taylor committed suicide. 7 of you got this right.
2. The Marion Bates Death Letter hoax was in the worst taste; tho ill, he was not dead.
3. 8916 is the publication Number on the front of the Avalon Hill Rulebook! DG*: What Robert Sacks, Rod Walker, Bruce Linsey, John Boardman and a few others beleive their IQ is.(Gee, what a coincidence they all picked the same number). Oddly, BL and SA made the same guess --- the number of postal games. Its nice to see those two thinking alike.
4. Jim Bumpas doesn't voluntarily pay his income taxes.
5. The San Diego Shuffle is a specular fold as an event per se(see Erehwon #100). KB
6. Olsen called the VoD 4th Annish "totally insane" and "totally out of control" BL
7. Dan Paltercalled his zine "one of the worst" BL
8. Gazfinc, Atu XVIII, and Boojam are British dipzines. No, Woody, those aren't Joshua's middle names.
9. A "thinly laminated layers of colored plastic marked with 14,400 microdots to the square inch" is a Bruxcore, which is worn over the teeth at nite to determine the amount of teethgrinding, or bruxism, going on! Nope, Brux didn't get it. DG*: "Roy Henricks - isn't what you described the latest way for the IRS to simplify tax retur_{ns}?"
10. The bizarre Ber-Tri wandering was done by John MacFarlane in 82Z. BL. KB indignantly asks: How the hell are we supposed to know? It was in the endgame statement.
11. Coughlan said that Olsen was hitting the dictionary rather heavily. I also gave the point to RG's "thesaurus", which may have been a better word than Bob used.
12. NMR #50 was on a cassette tape. 6 people got this, remarkable for a British zine.
13. Mike Mills folded Enchain Macha twice, and marketed "Kamakura" in England.
14. 8 ppple took credit for the "Grandson of Lexicon"! GC was closest with 6.
15. "John will be tearing out the John" was how Hanson said that Michalski was folding. ML. I liked KB's; "Hanson himself wasn't sure."
16. Tony Pandin's Bangladesh was non-existant then, but is a real counntry now! There were two guesses for "Truth or Consequences" so RG and DG get points for a good guess.
17. David Perlmutter was in the movie, "Taps"
18. Debbie Osborne's "Never before Midnight" subzine first appeared in print as #2 --- #1 was to have been in JIHAD! #22, which never did come out!
19. Pearson said that "Phyllis' Pyramid" causes folds! BW got a point for his guess, going to college or getting married, the most common causes of folds, I'd guess.
20. Brad and Wiley Wilson are the DD subbers with the same last name! Everyone answered Brown (Canada's had just run out) or Byrne (Charles never subbed). Too bad, Brad.
21. Quinipique is a North American zine in French
22. John Leeder, who ran the zine poll, naturally knew all the votes for his zine. Smyth's letter elsewhere in this issue touches on this issue, indirectly.
23. He's Dead, Jim! is the British zine with the title from Star Trek. 3 got it, which is quite good for a very obscure British zine.
24. Ron Canada Brown had 10 million dollars worth of computer equipment to play with. KB*: Pubic Hairs.

25. "Fiat Bellum" is the largest subzine, other than "Kathy's Korner".
26. Mercator VII is the variant with 19 players, 111 home centers, and 95 neutrals. A section of this was run by John Marsden, who must be a masochist!
27. I believe that Stafford's and Sherwood's fake of "Down and Dirty", when it was a subzine to BB was the first! BL guessed John Pack's fake of Bark of Doom in the fake VoD #37, which was the only reasonable guess, so it gets the point. It may even be right, and then again, it may be totally non-existent. Of course, "Bark of Doom" was not really a legit subzine either.....
28. Don Del Grande travelled cross country to get to MaryCon 1984.
29. Woody stabber Mazzer, Coughlan, and Byrne. RG included "Brux's Housreules in his guess".
30. The first discussion of Electronic Mail Dippy took place in Dot Happy! I'm amazed that nobody got this one. Several such games were run in DH, and he discussed how they WERE OPearted there.
31. The Lydiate Award for Wroost Dropout, a British award, was actually won by Glen Overby! BW*: Oh, God, I hope it wasn't me. I also liked RG's : They didn't have his name. He disappeared too fast.
32. GRI, the former owners of Diplomacy, didn't apply for a trademark on Diplomacy until 1972, and got it in 1973! I have no idea why they waited so long. SA's '65 won.
33. Ben Shilling called The Pink Dragon "free and overpriced" KB. I suppose I should needle SA for not getting this one --- it was in CoA #27.
34. Frauke Peterson dyed her hair orange and red, and had her face painted chalk white! I'm amazed that no one got this one---it was in the big Irksome! triple, #29-31. DG*: Thats funny-- I always thought ~~K~~hat was the way Kathy always looks in the morning.
35. Daf Langley's imitation of a Hare Krishna person supposedly fooled Coughlan but not Mazzar! This is another one I'd have thought people would get right.
36. Walker complained that as a result of meeting Kathy Byrnen he lost 2 inches in height! I'll give the humor points to that fun couple, SA and BL, who, once again, came in with the exact same guess, "years of his life". Did you two work together on this quiz?
37. Sleepless Knights was the only zine with just two words. More than one had folded ---both Ethil and JAF, and both Ethil and Howay the Lads were British. I'd have also accepted Ethil as the only zine which folded twice. BL
38. Correll, Ronson, and Drews were the "Toronto Triumvirate", who ran Paroxysm. BA
39. Scott met Frauke on 11-17-79! Several guesses relating to VOD, tho.
40. Wrobel typed rubble as "wrrubble". I liked DG's "Wruss Wrusnak"
41. I was referred to as "govenor Berch" in Knight's amazing press release in VOD #83 BL
42. The straights outnumbered the lesbians 3-2 at the Peterson-Hanson wedding. ML and SA got that one. At last, someone gets an Irksome question right!
43. Snorpid is used by Mark Larzelere as an aspecific derogatory adjective.
44. Erehwon is nowhere backwards.
45. "Initials" was Mr. Lowe, who had quote a few of them
46. Gawkin is how Pete Guaghan's name is pronounced. GC.
47. Oscar Twiddle is the name pubber Jim Benes uses for himself in his zine! Jim probably has the lowest visibility of any long-term pubber in the entire hobby.
48. Gary called First Class Mail Clerks "snotty creeps" ((EE #29))! Nope,, Gary didn't get that one, tsk, tsk. KB*: The list goes on and on. Nice guy, that KB.
49. "Coral Sea" "Sea Lion" and "Sword" are the names for the dippy games in Sidneg Archives. SA. That was a tough one.
50. A.F.C. was the Apis Fertility Curse! In EE's Apis, 4 of the 7 players became fathers or fathers to be during the game. Nope, Gary didn't get that one either. DG* All Fleet's Convoy.
51. The most misordered piece on SO1 is F StP. Players put it on the wrong coast, and then try to move it to Norway in SO1. I liked RG: A Tri.
52. Mike Ehli started the subzine FNORD to substitute for a nearly non-existent public /social/sex life! Another Irksome question with no one getting it.
53. Conrad von Metzke was simultaneously MNC and BNC. Several wrong guesses for Walker.
54. Whitestonia #47/48 had 59 independent mentions of my name! I gave to anyone the p point if they got the zine right. Bruce invited me to count them in VoD #100. Uh, no

55. Steve Hutton put over 250 numbers on a page, each of them underscored, in one of his puzzles! I'm a bit disappointed. Several of you got that zine, and it didn't occur to you.
56. Jim Williams accused me of wearing a "bald" wig. Ah, would that this were true. More people got it wrong than right by guessing the reverse, a toupee.
57. Steve Knight didn't wake up his roommates at DipCon XVI, so they missed round 2.
58. "Kafka was an Optimist" first appeared, so far as I know in No Fixed Address #13 BL
59. Of Kevin Tighe it was said that "he might reach puberty is..." GC
60. Politesse uses neither pagination nor issue numbers! I thought that would be an easy one. Several guessed NSWG, but I do see pagination. DG* Envoy - lately, no pagination, no issue numbers, no ISSUES.
61. Al Pearson said that Gary's airconditioning "sounded like a shuttle aircraft taking off"! I got 4 guesses pertaining to snoring.
62. Dick Martin is the person who I was asking for as having married the person he went to High School and College with, and that's the answer I'll accept, tho KB tells me he didn't know her in HS.
63. "Rhusty Underware" is a Turkish player in that game in MC where the players don't know each other's true names. 4 of you got that right, so I know 4 of the players in the game right there (tee hee) .
64. The items which I've done which have gotten the most response as of 2-15-84 were, in no particular order, the Lexicon, the Shep Rose article, the huge essay on Turkey in DW #21, the Coming of Joshua (DD#74), the Israel issue (#46), and the Coughlan editorial (in #64-66)! BL got the point for knowing 4 of them.
65. Tallman took over Flemings games when Jack went to Mexico.
66. "I'm going on the wagon for a month, so I can get back to drinking as a hobby rather than a profession" was Pete Birks! Sure was a lot of fingerpointing on that one....
67. "Negotiation is by and large a waste of time" was Bob Olsen! He said it in VoD #78, so I guess Bruce hasn't memorized all his issues after all. I could say something about who is a waste of time these days, but I won't
68. Mazzar said, "Contrary to popular myth, I'm not gratuitously ruthless." SA
69. "Nobody was out to lynch Coughlan, tho with hindsight it does seem like a good idea to me." --- that was Konrad Baumeister. Yup, Konrad and Gary both got that one. There were several wrong guesses for Martin. Look, without my dragging these quotes back to the surface, how could these ~~LEADS/BB/KAPL/ALIVE~~ writers be made to look silly.
70. Steve Hutton said, "A player who asks his dentist to give my next door neighbors hairdresser the orders is taking a risk" BL
71. I was an arrogant snob back then" -- Bruce Linsey. BL. Gee several of you could have taken your shot at Bruce on that one and gotten the point too.
72. "I trade with crap I would never subscribe to" was Pete Birks again BL. One person said, "Don't we all", another said, "I believe this, tho I wouldn't say it publically" I could see doing this if caught in a game there, but otherwise, that kind of practice doesn't make much sense to me.
73. "I'm not going to name this person, because I'm not a feuder. But use your imagination" --- that was a trick question; I made up the quote, and only BL said no one. There were scattered guesses for Caruso, Linsey, Byrne, and Boardman
74. "Because I don't deserve to win, I am the ideal choice" --- Steve Hutton BL, who seems to be on quite a roll here.
75. Ken Peel said "Organization, for some greater good of course, is the greatest threat of all, and must be organized against at all costs"! Only Tallman got 2 guesses.
76. Mark Lew said, "My advice to young GMs is that they ignore the Mr. Yuk stickers on the words "GM interference" The GM cannot help but interfere" BL, who got 3 guesses for himself as well.
77. I have no qualms about feuding with the Soviet Union", was Bruce Linsey. There were two guesses for Bill Highfield, which seems like an even better choice than the truth on this one!
78. "My House Rules are simple: 1. The GM is always right This is your assurance of error-free GMing" was the other trick question! Caruso was the only one with 2 guesses. Alas, this is pretty close to the attitude some GMS have.

79. "A good bucket of mud once in a while is a nice change of pace, too" was John Michalski. John sometimes sez what other people just think
80. Pearson, Byrne, Mazzar and Frueh all are winners of the Nixon Award.
81. John Caruso and Howard Mahler both published dizines from Flushing (Howard's was called the Quick Quincy Gazette! Caruso picked up some run of the mill insults on that one, but nothing really clever.
82. M-5 and M-12 were lot numbers for the first PDORA auction that sold locks of hair! I was supipised that no one even guessed the association with the auction. SA gets the point for a reasonable stab at it, games GMed by Ron Brown.
83. Tom, Eric, Jim, Dick, St_eve, Greg, and Kathy were the participants in Mark Larzelere's D & D adventure! ML, suprisingly, didn't get it, but made a reasoable shot at it: Met or lost mates thru the hobby
84. The Diploat, St George and the Dragon, Diplomacy World all originated in Indiana. Somehow, I forgot TMOBR, sorry Mark.
85. There was no 85, was there? I wanted to see if people would notice, and see what people would come up with as an answer to a non-existant question. Only two people tried to make a joke of it, and best was DG*: These are the issues of Envoy that have been delivered since March.
86. Brown does Murdrin' Ministers, Osuch's subzine was "Mass Murders". I accepted either the MM notion, or the root word for Murder. GC.
87. DipCon IX was at Johns Hopkins University, where Eric Kane now attends.
88. Knight and Rowling jointly run the ISE. There were several guesses for "Steve" but there are dozens of other poeple in the hobby, so thats not distinctive enf.
89. Well, I blew this one, so I'm eliminating it. I inded Den, not Bel, so that these would be neutrals which could be seized uncontested in SO1. Interestingly, RG managed to get it right, oblivious to the fact that Bel doesn't fit. My typing Bel when I ment Den is an example of why I don't GM. Too careless.
90. 79KW and the rest were Ron Canada Brown's games. He listed them so that ratings-masters would know which games were which Brown. DG. There were several guesses that these were all irregular.
91. The three named things were all done by John Caruso. Almost everyone got that one.

OK, now the results (someone roll a ~~xxx~~ drum please): The winner, with 29 points was Bruce Linsey. Since it doesn't make any sense to add issues to his sub, Bruce, you can give those 12 issues to whomever you like. The runnerup, with 26, was Gary Coughlan, who gets 6 issues. 5 issues for the single most amusing answer goes to Brad Wilson for his answer to #31. And Don Del Grande gets a 4-issue extension for gaining the most points for humorous answers. A tip of the hat goes also to second runner up Baumeister(22), to Ron Galicia for the neatest entry, a tie between Woody and Brad for smallest pieces of paper, to Mark Larzelere for the longest rumination on whether it would arrive on time (I got more entires after the deadline than before!), and to Bob Acheson, for not only having the most illegible signature (fortunately, I've only got one subber in Lupin) but also correctly predicting that he'd have the lowest score. I hope that many of you enjoyed this, and I plan to do another one in another year and a half.

I've got a bit of spare space here, so I'll bring you some nooze from England. Their largest Face to Face tournament ever was ManorCon 84, which drew 91 players. This was a "team" tournament, something which doesn't exist here. Teams of 7 players are fielded, usually by zines or schools (this one had 13 teams). Each team obviously has one player for each country, which eliminates any problem of the relative strength of different countries. Results are then reported in terms of how in eachcase, the team did....In the British zine Poll, the winner was Hopscotch. 258 people voted in all, of which 187 were British. The top vote getter was Mad Policy, with 93. The turnout in their Zine Poll tends to be much better than ours, which doesn't seem to stop British pubbers from saying that we Yanks take things too seriously.

((Internationalism seems more in the air these days. The revival of the ISE, Gary Coughlan's concerted efforts with ER to foster transatlantic communication, the appearance of a British Edition of Diplomacy World are some of the more visible signs. The following view is from July 1976, by Peter Birks in the British zine Greatest Hits))

INTERNATIONALISM

Internationalism has always been an ideal for many members of the hobby - Walter Luc Haas ((switzerland)), Richard Walkerdine, and Edi Birsan to name but three. In effect, they wish that international boundaries need not exist in an essentially international hobby. I hope that is not too simplistic a description of their views, but that tends to be the impression that I have received over the years.

In a way they are right. Why should a country make any difference in a postal hobby? It only costs a few pence more to send a letter to the states or to Europe than it does to Britain, and the length of time taken does not vary too significantly either ((the differential from the British side has always tended to be smaller than the differential from this side. At present, an air letter sheet costs an extra 13p, and a letter, an extra 20p, i.e. double)). GH trades with almost as many American zines as British ones, and by doing so, I keep in touch with the American hobby. As a confirmed internationalist myself (not just in Diplomacy, but in politics as well) I could not agree more that national feelings in the Diplomacy hobby should go no further than the game itself. And since this is a hobby (i.e. our livelihoods are not at stake) there is no reason why nationalistic jingoism should interfere with smooth relations between various countries.

But it does. This is where, I feel, that some of the more avowed internationalists go wrong. Instead of saying, "national feelings shouldn't have any part in this hobby of ours", we should be asking "Why do such feelings exist?" Only by discovering the root causes of such disagreements will we be able to "make the best of a bad job".

So - what does make international relations so difficult? Some of the reasons are obvious, and people have already mentioned them in other zines. There is the problem of different languages, which has hampered the expansion of Diplomacy in continental Europe, and its establishment of relations with Britain and America. Walter Luc Haas, who speaks fairly good English, has done an immense amount to attempt to bridge the gap between Britain, America, and Europe, but even he has misunderstood what we have had to say at times, just as we have misconstrued his extremely honorable aims. No matter how fluent Walter might be in English, there remains a gap in what is and what is not acceptable and polite. In much the same way, we and America are "divided by a common language". Much as we may intend to be nice, the net result always seems to be taken the wrong way.

Then of course, there is the fact that most people only play in a few games, and they happen to be games in their own country. Thus, probably 90% of the hobby has absolutely no first hand contact with another country. Hence, us 10%, much as we may wish for the hobby to be truly international, there remains the basic fact that for the majority of the hobby it doesn't need to be. This removes the drive amongst the majority of the Diplomacy-playing population to become motivated about such a subject.

Thirdly, much as this may technically be a postal hobby, in practice, it is far from that. Altho the link is the magazine, phone conversations and meeting (especially Cons) are, to my mind, the life and blood of the hobby. I very much doubt if I would have stayed in the hobby as long as I have if I had been living in the Outer Hebrides. This perhaps explains why I find it difficult to understand members of the hobby who never go to Cons, Ken Jones and John Coombe for example, unless they are no more than a few miles away. The annual trek to Scotland ((for ScotDip, I think it was called, I'm not sure)) is a week end that I always hate at the time, and always look back on as the "peak" of my year in the hobby. All this tends to work against internationalism. Few Britishers can afford to go, or have the time, to attend an American Con, even the big DipCons once a year. Hence there is little personal contact. The few Americans I have

met have been over here on trips, while I have spoken to a few more on the telephone, and the difference that actually having spoken to someone makes to postal relations is greater than the difference from speaking to someone and actually meeting them. Thus, there is an automatic separation resulting from the fact that this "postal" hobby isn't that postal at all. I would count few members of this hobby as personal friends, and I have met all of them.

Since this hobby is about postal Diplomacy, the link between British postal Diplomacy and American postal Diplomacy is unbelievably tenuous. One would say, perhaps cruelly, that if America sank tomorrow then British Postal Diplomacy would not be seriously disrupted, and despite its cruelty, it is true. And where there is no natural interlinking it is hard to maintain an artificial one. The Worldwide Boardman Numbers are a step in this direction, but worldwide awards ((this I believe refers to the attempt to make the old Calhamer Awards international)) and "World Cons" (thank God no one has suggested one of those yet) are just not on.

Internationalism, then, is a good ideal, but we must be aware of the immense practical difficulties, and the question must be asked - are these difficulties so great that the problem is not worth overcoming? That is to say, why doesn't the IDA become the ADA, IDA-Central European Region become EDA (or ADE in French), and the British become BDA (altho we could get into trouble with the British Dental Association!) This, sort of a "Confederate" system, might naturally be obnoxious to the USA, but it strikes me as the only workable system. Each association runs itself totally, and the elected members nominate a President, Vice-Prez, and Editor between them. Since only about 10% of the hobby know from first hand what is going on in other countries, this way we could obtain the best leaders (if leaders are what we want, which is another editorial!)

If internationalism is to be obtained, then it must be from the top, and a good way to set about it would be for us to get an association of GMs that is worldwide. I don't know whether such a system would be workable, but the idea of a world-wide "standard" set of House Rules (with variations over seasons and retreats depending on the GM's individual preference) so that players would at least have a basis when they started playing the game. I would suggest Wlaker's 5-page treatise on rules for Postal Diplomacy as a good basis for this. Second, we should stop trying to interfere with things we really know nothing about. I have been guilty of this in the past, and I'm sure I will be again in the future, but the very problem of ... the lack of perfect communication means that we cannot understand what is going on simply thru the post. Unless one knows the individuals personally it is hard to take sides. For all I know, Gordon Anderson may be a really nice guy - even tho all the American zines have talked about his true nuttiness (in the nasty sense). Without meeting him, or actually being part of the American hobby, how can I know? Perhaps some American could consider this when they discuss the British hobby. There is no way that they can really know what is going on - all they can know is what they read in British zines, and words on paper are no substitute for spoken words.

I personally enjoy the American zines I receive, and I intend to play in them, one day. I am always glad to get American and players from other foreign lands in GH, for they are the truly "international" members. So think about it all you Britian-only players (and some of you Americans who play only in American zines) - what's wrong with playing in a zine that happens to be in another country? After all, Ron Kelly ((an American. Sorry, Ron, but I'll bet 1/3 of my readership has never heard of you!)) plays in more British games than any other Britisher!

((This is an almost timeless editorial. Except for the organizations, it could pretty much have been written today, not 8 years ago. Even those of us who do get a few zines see only a fraction of the hobby. I get, for example, Ode, GH, Dolchstoss, War&Peace, and Watch Your Back. Cathy Cuning, I suspect, gets a very different assortment. Thus, her view would be very different even if she hadn't been part of the British hobby earlier. But we do have things to contribute to each other. A little while back, I wrote an essay, setting forth the reasons why I felt that the use of standbys produces a better game. Over here, such an article would have gotten, at best, a few scattered responses, and I

might have even had trouble finding a publisher. But when it appeared in the British zine Ode, it kicked off a very interesting discussion, to which quite a few people contributed, and which lasted almost a year as I recall. The point about knowing people in person I thought was also well put, and often relevant. (For example, there are a few people around who never even met Bill Highfield, and yet they are absolutely confident that their reading of him is correct, and that Bruce --- who has spent a great deal of time with him --- somehow has got Bill figured all wrong). I don't think Pete ever did join those American postal games, but he still has some American zines that he gets))

((Last issue, I featured a humor item on the "wrong envelope play" The following item, from Fall of Eagles #54, March 1981, mentions an actual use of the ploy in a postal game. With regard to the English WO1 orders, recall that in virtually all British games, WO1 adjustments are included with FO1 orders

MY FINEST (?) HOURS

by Mike Nicholas

Your article in issue 50, 'My finest hours', stirred nostalgic memories and I thought you might be interested in what was probably my greatest(?) coup which brought disaster instead of the success I'd hoped for. It was a painful lesson in the art of diplomacy and one which others may well find amusing and perhaps instructive.

It happened in NGC 92: I was Germany. Ross Baird as Russia, Richard Donaldson as France, Ian Noble as England, the others I forget. However, Italy seemed dependable, but unimaginative.

My opening diplomacy was directed as follows: to get Italy to attack France, France to attack England, England to attack Russia via the Barents Sea etc, Russia to attack Austria and also Scandinavia, Austria to attack Turkey. Communications seemed favourable with everyone except Ian Noble, and I awaited the results of opening moves with high hopes.

Spring 1901

G: A(Mun)-Ruh, A(Ber)-Kie, F(Kie)-Den
 I: A(Ven)-Pie, A(Rom)-Ven, F(Nap)-IOS
 F: F(Bre)-ENC, A(Mar)-Spa, A(Par)-Gas
 R: F(Sev)-HLA, A(War)-Gal, A(Mos)-Stp, F(Stpsc)-GOB
 E: F(Lon)-NTH, F(Edi)-NWG, A(Lpl)-Edi

So it was looking good, and communications were swift with France and Russia, the former seeking support for F(ENC)-NTH and the latter seeking safe entry to Sweden. The Autumn 1901 results and builds came through:-

G: A(Ruh)-Bel, A(Kie)-Hol, F(Den) S FRENCH F(ENC)-NTH	Builds A(Mun), A(Ber), F(Kie)
F: F(ENC)-NTH, A(Spa)-Por, A(Gas)-Spa	Builds F(Bre)
I: A(Pie)-Mar, A(Ven)-Pie, F(IOS)-Tun	Builds A(Ven), F(Nap)
R: A(Stp)-Fin, F(GOB)-Swe, A(War)-Gal, F(Sev)-Rum	Builds F(Stpsc), A(War)
E: F(NWG) C A(Edi)-Nor, A(Edi)-Nor, F(NTH)* S A(Edi)-Nor	(F(NTH) disbands - no retreat given; builds F(Lon) and is one short.)

I was very happy at this stage, although the emerging Russo-Turkish pact was alarming and diplomatic activity in this area was appropriately increased. France trusted me implicitly at this stage, although concerned by my strength, and insisted the army that was to be convoyed to England had to be A(Bel). I concurred and also offered him the services of A(Mun) to fight the Wops. A beautiful stab was shaping. The Spring 1902 moves were :-

G: A(Bel)-Ypr, A(Hol)-Bel, F(Kie)-Hol, A(Mun)-Bur, A(Ber)-Mun, F(Den) S FRENCH F(NTH)
 F: F(NTH) C GERMAN A(Bel)-Yor, F(Bre)-MAO, A(Spa)-Gas, A(Por)-Spa
 I: A(Mar)-Spa, F(Tun)-WMS, A(Pie)-Mar
 R: A(Fin)+F(Swe) S F(Stpsc)-Nor, A(War)-Sil, A(Gal)-Sil
 E: F(NWG) C A(Nor)-Edi, A(Nor)-Edi, F(Lon)-NTH

So, apart from wondering if I had achieved a Diplomacy record in landing a German army on English soil in Spring '02, and a growing concern about Russia, I had much to feel smug about. France and I had agreed, as part of earlier negotiations, to support a French fleet into Edi in Autumn '02, and for A(Bur) to assist the French. Well, about two weeks before the deadline all moves had been agreed and my stab was ready. But doubts started creeping in and just to make-sure nothing went amiss I played the crossed-letter coup: a letter clearly meant for England, rejecting an Anglo-German alliance and thus a stab on Franco, was sent by 'accident' to France. By this I hoped to set the seal of success on the Autumn campaign. The moves came through:-

G: A(Bur)-Par, A(Mun)-Bur, F(Den) S F(Hol)-NTH, A(Bel)st, A(Yor)-Edi. No builds!
 F: A(Gas)-Par, A(Por)-Spa, F(MAO) S A(Por)-Spa, F(NTH)-Edi (retreats-HEL) !No builds
 E: F(Lon)-Yor, A(Edi)-Yor, F(NWG)-NTH No builds.
 R: F(Swe)+A(Fin) S F(Nor), A(Gal)-Bud, A(War)-Gal Builds two for eight.

Disaster! And I now had an implacable France growling at me, with a Russian invasion looming on the horizon. Swift attempts to heal the split with France were useless, as expected, but revealed that had I not sent that last missive the stab would have struck home!

Morals of this story: 1) When you're ahead keep your head, and 2) Keep faith with your own diplomacy! Footnote: Russia won, with Turkey second.

Next up is a letter from Mick Bullock, appearing in Ethil the Frog #42, 11-29-73

...one facet of the IDA's terms of reference seems to have cropped up continually in a more favorable light. I refer to the Orphan Games Project....there does seem to be something said for starting an Orphan Games Project, which would be run on the following lines as an insurance scheme:

First of all, the scheme would need the support of the majority, if not all, of the British GM's and pubbers. Without this, we can forget the whole idea.

Second, cost. I envision that an ample "kitty" could be created if all game fees were increased by 15 pence ... collected by the GMs with the normal GF, and sent to the "insurance secretary." At this stage, the payment of the 15 pence would be mandatory rather than optional, i.e. be treated as part of the game fee. This assumes of course, that the particular GM was amenable to the increase. Once the money was received, that particular game would then be insured. Players joining "non-amenable" GM's would be allowed to send their 15p directly to the secretary themselves; if all the players in a game did this, then the game would have full insured status ... but if one or two opted out then only those who had paid up would receive any benefits if the game were orphaned.

In the event of an insured game being orphaned, there would be two courses of action open to the secretary. First, he would hopefully be able to allocate the game to a new zine, always assuming that the existing GMs were willing to take on new business, or that new GMs were available and prepared to "set up in business". GMs would be paid in the region of £3-£4 for each game they took on. Second, in the event that the game could not be rehoused, each insured player would receive a compensatory payment of 75p to soften the blow, as it were, of the game's abandonment. (I estimate that approximately 1/3 of the 15p would be needed for expenses such as postage, etc, the remainder going into the kitty).

Games with uninsured players would either have to be abandoned straight away, and the insured players paid off, or standby players found to take over the places of the uninsured players in the new zine (It would, of course, be necessary that players in the transferred games must subscribe to the new zine in place of the old). Uninsured players could continue in the new zine on payment of 75p (?) to the secretary (optional ruling). Games already in progress could also be insured, possibly at a reduced rate for well-advanced games. Payment could be made either thru the GM or individually....

Tho it may appear at first glance to be an unwarranted expense, one has only to look at the situation in the States at the moment, where magazines are ceasing publication as fast as they are starting up, to see the problems we over here could be faced

with in the not too distant future, especially bearing in kind the growth of the magazine market this year. Whilst an insurance scheme is not the perfect situation to have to endure, I should think it would go a long way towards making "orphanization" less of an ogre than it may become otherwise.((The editor, John Piggott, then replied:))

...My own opinion ... is that some time next year we are going to be inflicted with the most godalmighty crop of orphans it will ever be your misfortune to encounter. Zines are swelling and swelling ... and quite frankly I don't see how some of these editors are going to cope.

An insured games project is already ... a reality in ((illegible)), where it is being handled by, (you guessed it) the IDA! I think the way it works is that a GM pays a sum of money, probably \$2, to insure the ... game; and if the game is orphaned, money is guaranteed by the project to the replacement GM. I don't think the IDA's project has the scope for individual players to join, and frankly I don't think that part would be a very good idea; it would need too much paperwork to keep it going and if a partially orphaned game came about one is left with the nasty choice of either abandoning a game which might be capable of reactivation, or else throwing out some of the players who aren't insured. Remember, these players played the GF, just like the insured ones!... I'll just reiterate once again the need for this kind of project, and also point out that the US version is a success,

((As I recall, this insurance scheme did not last long in the US. The above is a fine example of a solution in search of a problem. Too few GMs are going to admit the possibility of a fold, which is implicit in paying the insurance charge. It has proved simpler to have an Orphan Games service of some sort which covers all games, and try to fund it from general hobby sources. At present, as I understand it, there is no trouble at all finding GMs to take orphaned games in North America. Such may not be the case in Britain at present, tho. In War & Peace #19 (July 1984), Editor Derek Caws writes, "I ... was quickly persuaded to take three of the Perspiring Dreams orphans. I didn't really want them, but there is a distinct shortage of suitable Diplomacy zines to take over games from a zine which used to be run as efficiently as PD, so I felt a sort of sense of responsibility." Here, I doubt any GM would feel the need to take 3 games they didn't really want))

(from page 1)

play s marred only by his failure to include me, Beyerlein on PBEM and change, quite a few people on social attitudes toward homosexuality, a terrific humor item by Chuff Afflerbach, Smyth on the play of the midgame, Walker on a HR inspector, and a 28 page history of the zine. For those who seek only to denigrate VoD, and there are those who will do that, this will be helpful, for his history includes the good and the bad. There were also a slew of reprints, mostly by Randolph Smyth, and a number of original items by Bruce as well. All tolled, exclusive of just orders, reprints and Kathy Byrne, 53 people contributed, many with extensive or multiple contributions. In total, there were 73 articles. Megaissues sometimes have extensive padding in the form of bulk Xeroxing from e.g. newspapers or photographs; this issue had virtually none.

VoD in its history had 2668 pages, in just 5 years. That kind of pace leaves too little time for outside interests. Sometime back, Bruce added midmonthly issues, so that #100 would hit the 5th annish. Bruce will still be around the hobby, and will have a subzine in EE for a little while to finish up the games, etc. But mostly, more time will be freed up for other activities outside the hobby.

Preferences in dipzines are intensely personal, which is why dipzines vary so much. No dipzine can --- or should --- try to absolutely satisfy everyone. For my values --- which are challenging and entertaining reading above all else --- Voice of Doom was, quite simply, the greatest dipzine of all time. Sometimes it stumbled, and lesser people saw only that. Yet far more often, it soared to heights that left the rest of us marvelling. Bruce, when your DD sub account runs out, your money will be no good here. You've got a lifetime sub to DIPLOMACY DIGEST, for as long as you want it.

THE ZINE COLUMN # 79

CHANGE

Change is an inevitable feature of the Diplomacy hobby, and there's plenty to report. Rod Walker, publisher and managing editor of DIPLMACY WORLD has announced that Kathy Byrne has become the General Editor of Diplomacy World. The zine will now be a team operation, with both of them having responsibility for content and the overall character of the zine. If you'd like to submit material for the zine, send those articles to Kathy Byrne at 160-02 43rd Ave., Flushing NY 11358. Acceptance will now depend on getting the approval of both of them. Rod and Kathy are, to say the least, the "Odd Couple" of the hobby. They represent, shall we say, rather different wings of the hobby. Rod is perhaps the quintessential Old Part (West Coast Division), and Kathy would have been one of the leaders of the New York Conspiracy, were it not for the fact that it was dissolving around the time she came in. This is a daring move for both of them, especially since relations between Flushing and Encinitas have, shall we say, waxed and waned. Altho Kathy has never put out a dipzine per se, she has extensive personal contacts, a lot of enthusiasm and a tremendous amount of energy, all of which Rod will need. DW has become somewhat stodgy over the years, and I think that Kathy is just the person to give that trend a turnaround. This announcement probably caught quite a few people by surprise (when Rod foned me about it, I demanded to know what imposter was trying to hoodwink me with this ludicrous story). Diplomacy World I think will be the real winner. And I think I'll probably get less abuse the next time I anoint DW as the "flagship" zine of the hobby.

Voice of Doom is not the only zine to be folding. Eric Kane writes me that the next issue of Anduin will be its last. Eric has just started college, and there is only so much time available. Anduin I always enjoyed for its varied letter column, and I think that Eric found just the right balance in terms of how much of himself to insert into it (which is no simple matter; I don't think I'd ever get the hang of that). Still, college comes but once, and should be grasped for all its worth. The Hobby will still be around when Eric graduates, and if he wants to take another shot at it after graduation, I for one will want to be one of the first to sign up. There is precedent for this; Doug Beyerlein folded his zine to go off to college, and his best days were still ahead of him....the Canadian zine C.F. Maciavelli, by Mr. Lowe has also folded, and it appears that both Envoy and the Zine Directory are both quite overdue.



Slap and Tickle Chris Spall 7 Duppas Hill Road Croyden Surrey CRO4BC1 England
Heimskringla John Norris 14 Clifford Rd New Barnet Herts EN5 5PG England.
Command Dennis Agosta 57 Meadow Road, Edison N.J. 08817
Hoof and Mouth Don Sigwalt 125 Hebard St Rochester NY 14605

The last two are revivals of zines which folded rather messily. Don plans a warehouse-type zine, with games run on a 3-week deadline. That's not my cup of tea, but then again, 3-week deadline games are hard to find these days.

Other changes have taken place in three of the polls. Dan Stafford has taken over the Marco Polo from Mark Larzelere, and the Whitsonia Player and Writer Polls from John Caruso, and will be running all three. Bruce Linsey has taken over the Runestone Poll. A boycott of this has already been announced by one Jim Meinel. If you will recall, similar talk occurred back in 1982, and I don't think any more will come of this boycott talk than came of the last one. Jim's flyer is remarkable in the various insults that he feels is necessary to heap upon Randolph Smyth. Smyth was, he sez, "unaware of the storm of protest this would cause", and was not knowledgeable enough about current events" I wonder whether Jim wrote to Randolph to find out if he was really as ill informed as Jim has pronounced him to be. Jim proposes that "we find someone who would like to run the Runestone Poll", and volunteers himself. I wonder whether Jim wrote Randolph earlier when Randolph was seeking someone to take it over. I feel quite confident that the answer to both my questions is "No". Jim pronounces this as "not a legitimate transfer".

If Jim wants to start his own poll, or get someone else to start one, fine, be my guest. But I think we could all do without this gibberish about Randolph Smyth (who has, after all, been in the hobby for over ten years) somehow being incapable of picking a successor. The hobby has long had a tradition that custodians pick their own successors, and it has served us well, without exception.

In other nooze of change, from IndianaCon comes the announcement of two engagements: Eric Ozog/Cathy Cuning, and Mark Frueh/Nancy Irwin. And that's a nice note on which to end!

I do like to run letters. The only ones I run, however, are those which comment on what has appeared in earlier issues. There are zines with "open" lettercols, e.g. Europa Express, but this is not one of them.

Chris Downs: ...The "Mastermind Diplomat" article really had me laughing....

Allen Barwick: ...you published one of the funniest articles I've ever read ---- Steven Bell's "Amastermind Diplomat". It's been a long time since I laughed that hard. Please, may I encourage you to consider doing a humor theme issue if you can find similarly good material. Re: Sacks & Boardman running DipCon at EastCon 1983 (Atlaticon 1983 is possibly what you thought it was) I was the convention manager and we couldn't get anyone else to do the tournament. I understand from the Atlanticon 1984 Con manager, again, Sacks and Boardman volunteered first. ((I often get suggestions for theme issues, and "humor" is the most common topic named. It is very hard to find material suitable for reprinting. Much of the original humor is not really dippy related. Gary Hamlin's epic battle with a washing machine, which was in VoD was one of the funniest things I've ever read anywhere, but it has nothing to do with the game or hobby, so it will never be reprinted. Other items are funny only in a particular context of zine and time and some of it will be lost later on, so much so that it isn't worth reprinting. The Wlaker item in #82 was a borderline case that I decided to run; it was surely much funnier at the time, when the individuals were well known.))

Robert Sacks: You state that "that's (sic) the third Atlanticon, at least, that I've heard such complaints about Sacks." That was the first Atlaticon that's ever been held. I do not remember any disagreement between Boardman and myself on whether to allow a draw or win. The entire point about the proof process is not to convince the Director, but to convince everyone watching, or atleast enuf of them, so that the directors decision is obvious. I usually start the process by saying what I would accept, which means that we only have to go into formal proof when the players can't agree, or some players want to make a different claim. DIAS is the default if no win or draw can be proved or agreed to, but since the players who do not want DIAS cannot insist that the game continue as they can in postal play, there has to be some alternative which we provide with the proof process and the 80% agreement rule.

((OK, I stand corrected on the Con titles --- the 1981 one, for example, was a GenCon. I don't have much comment on the rest because frankly I have only a hazy idea of what you are talking about. "Convince everyone watching"???)

Randolph Smyth: I quite agree that FSF should really have placed considerably lower in the poll, tho I was somewhat devastated at being singled out for mention. I think the "Runestone Syndrome" (from the first year of the Poll when Runestone was #1) played a part, where my subbers were reluctant to send me a mark as low as the zine really deserved. Also, I have a high proportion of long-term subbers, who may have been voting for a zine of the same name from 3-4 years ago ((i.e. were voting the zine's quality as of, say, 1980)). In fact, I would have won the poll based on the 7 voters that were around at that time, which is bit ridiculous...Even now, I can only hope that next year will show improvement, but I'm not interested in recovering the enthusiasm necessary to put out the product I once had, so I'm quite content with the idea that the zine's glory days are over. ((Nonetheless, Randolph is, in my opinion, the best writer in North American on the topic of psychology, strategy, and negotiations.))((You were "singled out" because I really didn't want to insult anyone, and I was pretty sure you wouldn't feel insulted because you'd probably agree))

Last issue, I offered Kathy \$50 if she could produce what she repeatedly said that she had --- proof that Bruce had written a "sick letter" to Francine. So far, I have received nothing: No proof on that point, or on the other two accusations that I asked her to prove. In fact, so far as I am aware, no one has said that they saw a "sick" letter from Bruce to Francine. The closest was Steve Arnawoodian, who in the recent CoA says that he saw a Linsey-to-Francine letter (which is unremarkable, since Bruce never denied writing Francine at all, only writing a nasty letter). But Steve doesn't say when the letter was written, what it said, and doesn't say that it was "sick". If someone wants to say that, yes, I saw a sick letter, let them write me, and say that, telling me, to the best of their recollection, when the letter was written, and what did it actually say.

I did get some mail on this from Flushing, NY:

Kathy Byrne: I want a sub refund as I don't subscribe to trash. Please mail the check to Rod Walker for a sub to Erehwon.

P.S. Don't you or your fair haired boy write to me ever again! I don't want anything to do with either of you!

((You do not get a refund for monies never sent in the first place. Your paid sub ran out last year. What you've been getting are free issues, for winning the trivia contest and putting out fake issues of DD. You have ten issues left, 85-94 (you aren't charged for this one, its a courtesy copy). You can either ask that your sub be resumed, you can have the issues added to someone else's sub account, or you can have a new sub set up for someone else (but in that last case, I'll need a note from that person saying that they want a sub). If you do none of those things, the issues will just wait in limbo until you make up your mind.

If your P.S. refers to Bruce, you can write him yourself; I'm not your messenger - boy.))

Phyllis Byrne: Who the hell do you think you are? I wonder what kind of garbage I could dig up about you. Calling my mother ((Kathy)) names and telling my sister ((Francine)) she's a liar? You pick the place and time I'll be there and we'll see who's right. Just remember this is a promise not a threat.

((I did not call Kathy any names --- please reread the editorial and you will see. I did not tell you sister anything --- I have never written or spoken to her in my life. The editorial was about what Kathy did. As for the rest, good luck with your digging. The place? Right here, the Diplomacy Digest letter column. The time? Whenever you are ready. DD has been around since 1977, and will continue for a long time to come))

I also got a letter from John Caruso, which was at least a little more to the point (the above two are primarily just insults). Unfortunately, it's Not for Print.

Ed Wrobel: You certainly did quite an evaluation of Kathy's charges, but you say we should take Bruce on his word, ignoring "previous experiences" as well as common sense. That doesn't look very straight to me.

((That's also not what I said. I never said to ignore common sense, and your "previous experiences" are unspecified, and I'm not going to try to guess what you meant. Bruce, or anyone else, is entitled to be taken at his word when he talks about his own internal thought processes, because no one else has access to these things. What Kathy was talking about was actions taken by another person, which is an entirely different matter))

Robert Sacks: Since Kathy has said she has acted because of Linsey's letter to her daughter, why aren't you taking her at her word ((1)) Your remarks on Kathy do not seem entirely correct. Are you claiming that you never attacked her by letter or published zine for placing Overby's games? ((2)) I know you blocked Kendter from accepting election by the DVC to become MNC because you did so in letters to me ((3))

((The editorial makes no mention at all of Kathy's motives for doing anything--that's ((1)) As for ((2)), the answer is yes, and that covers all forms of communication. And ((3)) There are no such letters, and you know that as well as I do. I am sick and tired of people talking about letters which don't exist. I've never had anything at all to do with the DVC (or any variant organization). If I wanted to "block" someone from becoming a MNC, you are the last person I'd write))

I also received several letters in support of the editorial, but for several reasons, I'm not going to run them. I do, however, appreciate you all writing, and I hope you will understand my not running them.

THE ZINE COLUMN #80 IN THE MATTER OF STEVE LANGLEY

There has been some additional response on the Highfield/Linsey business to my comments in DD #83. Most of it is from Steve Langley. Steve had an editorial in Magus #38 which was sharply critical of my DD #83 comments. My reply was published (altho he dropped a line, which hashed one of my arguments) in a Magus supplement called "Volunteers from the Audience" (VftA), along with his response and some other materials. In this response, he asked some additional questions of me, and made some fresh accusations, one of which is extremely serious. You would think that my response and answers should go in Magus, right? So would I --- that's where they could reach the original audience, so that they could see my response to these accusations. Steve will have none of that --- he states that "I will not print any letters on this or related subjects." So much for right of reply. So it goes here instead.

VftA starts off with yours truly getting whipsawed. Bi Olsen sez, "I think you will find that Berch is blissfully ignorant of most of what's going on. He doesn't seem to know any part of the real story...." Just what the "real story" is Bob doesn't say, but OK, we have here Berch-the-ignoramus. A few pages later, Steve checks in with the opposite view: "I think you ((Berch)) know more of the truth than you are letting on and are consciously attempting to cover it up." Consciously attempting to cover up what I am blissfully ignorant of is quite a feat!

And what is this "truth"? In Magus #38, Steve gave a distorted account of Bruce's VoD explanation, dismissed it, and in its place expostulated the "Love Triangle Scenario" (LTS). The LT was Bruce, Bill, and the maiden, Alex Lord. "Bruce decides to eliminate his rival" by going to the Navy. "Exit one rival", sez Steve.

To begin with, if I had a love rival, I'd want him to stay in the Navy, and be Off to the Sea In Ships (or at least, in some shipyard somewhere, and not in upstate NY, where she is). But seriously. Steve has an odd practice of occasionally torpedoing his own position. What of the two gentlemen in this LTS? Bruce naturally denies that there was any romance; it was just friendship he wanted. In this he seems to have succeeded. VoD #100 has a nice note from Alex, which concludes, "You're a good, dependable friend". As for Bill, VftA reprints a letter he wrote to Bruce. It's a rather pathetic item; a lot of it has Bill trying to figure out, and speculating on, how Bruce feels about things, and then reacting to these hypothetical thoughts of Bruce. Anyhow, it also includes this item: "I care for Alex very much; I love her. It's nothing romantic, mind you, we're just two very good friends..." Well, now, it's kind of hard to have a Love Triangle when both men are proclaiming friendship and disclaiming romance!

And what of the evidence, you might ask? All #38 has is, "Actually, I think there is sufficient documentation to support the 'love triangle' scenario." I wrote Steve to ask what this might be, and he replied, "I refer you to VoD, TMP, TMOBR and Anduin of 1983/84." That covers a colossal amount of territory --- easily over 1000 pages. This strikes me that Steve either doesn't know where it is, or is being evasive: I wrote the pubbers, figuring they'd know their zines. TMP and TMOBR didn't reply. Eric Kane (Anduin) said, nope, not here. And Bruce denied this as well. And VoD would be a very risky place for evidence of a LTS, since Alex's mother, Debbie Lord, was an avid reader of VoD (if it were my 15 year old daughter, I'd be an avid reader too!). VftA checks in with the specifics for what was in VoD, the awful evidence that it was romance, not friendship on Bruce's mind: "Bruce was constantly introducing her column in VoD with the most extravagant of praises. He visited her home and made himself almost a member of the family. Now, I may be wrong, but that doesn't sound like a teacher/student relationship." Of course it doesn't, but Bruce never claimed that's all it was. Don't go away, it gets even more torrid: "I remember the story of Alex trying to get Bruce to talk in a game, and telling him that his underwear was showing. Alex seemed to enjoy the attention and had a fun time with the people she met in the hobby. That is the love triangle..." The hell it is. That's fun and friendship, and no, I don't have my "head in the sand" Someone's head is in the wrong place, and it's not mine.

The other leg to the Scenario is as follows: "Bruce visits Bill, uses his fone for some long distance calls, and pays for the calls with a check on which he stops ⁽¹⁷⁾ payment (emphasis in the original). Bill is furious. He writes Bruce a "death threat" about the bad check. Bruce forwards the "death threat" to the Navy." Mind you, Steve

isn't saying that he actually seen this letter, any more than he's seen the "Francine Letter", but he's perfectly willing to throw it up against Bruce, who's being hit, not with facts, but with hypothetical letters. This Scenario has 4 gaping holes in it: 1) Bruce made no such fone call 2) The letter (which I have) isn't written to Bruce, it 3) doesn't mention any fone calls, and 4) doesn't mention any stopped-payment check. You'd think with 4 gaping holes, Steve would let this one sink beneath the waves, but Steve dismisses all this as mere details: "As for my account of the fone calls and the check, I accept that Bruce says that my account is false. So? In fact, most of the details are false." Its a little hard to take someone seriously who, when confronted with all of his facts being wrong, says, "So?" When you're trying to clobber someone with a Scenario, you don't need facts.

Steve gets onto a little firmer ground when he suggests that Bruce should have gone to Bills' father. Of course, the same issue refers in several places to conflict between Bruce and Bill's father, and even Steve admits "I suspect that Bill's father might have told Bruce to put it where the sun don't shine...." Indeed, or worse, judging from the account in VoD # 100. Steve also suggests that this talking about killing people is just "part of Bill's idiom" Some other people have suggested this too, that this is just Bill's way of expressing himself. And this may well be true, who knows. But there are some ways of expressing yourself that aren't acceptable. Now don't get me wrong. I'm a firm beleiver in free speech and civil liberties, and I've been a card-marrying member of the ACLU since before some of you were born. But some forms of expression are objectionable per se. Obscene fone calls. Libel. Shouting fire in the proverbial crowded theatre. Death threats. Now, some of you might choose to ignore that last item. Fine. I personally would tend to ignore the first. But I think people have a right to try to stop these if they choose not to ignore one of them.

Now, don't get me wrong here. I've got no problem if someone says that s/he would have just ignored it, or gone to the police or father first. I'm not saying that Bruce's was the only way or even the "best" way to handle this situation (tho its probably what I would have done). If you think Bruce used poor judgement, you're entitled to your opinion. What I object to is the mind-reading approach used by Steve.

Steve in several places disputes my facts. "Bill was not a legal adult" (Sorry, Steve, but in New York, its age 18). "He was a member of the NROTC which is the Navy by courtesy only." I'm not sure what distinction Steve is drawing here (and he accuses me of nitpicking!), so I might be wrong on this. If you're in NROTC, you have the rank of midshipman (which Bill frequently used), you wear a uniform, Bill did use Navy stationary and did get money.

One thing that Steve strongly challenges me on is the timetable I gave, using Jan 1984. How could I explain, he asked, that "some knowledge of the letter to Bill's commander was revealed at DafCon III in late 1983". My source was Bruce's letter's date of Jan 1984. Undaunted, Steve insisted that there were others: "There was also a letter or letters written to Bill's CO in late 1983. That may account for the mixup. Didn't Bruce tell you about the earlier letter?" Steve has written me that the person who made this revelation at DafCon III was Terry Tallman. I have written Tallman, and he has written back. But I still do not know such basics as who wrote the earlier letter(s), what the letter(s) was about (Love Triangle? Highfield's Right Wing politics? Death threats?), and who Terry's source was, so thats a dead end. Bruce denies writing

any earlier letter, but then again, throwing up phantom letters at Bruce is par for the course in the hobby these days. The letter doesn't have to be produced or even described, and the people who talk about it don't have to have even seen it.

In other cases, Steve simply resorts to making facts up. For example, there is the question of why Bill left the hobby. In his misdescription of what Bruce said in VoD #98, he has Bruce saying that Bill dropped out of the hobby as a result of being confronted with his commanding officer. I then pointed out in VftA that Bruce has said nothing of the sort. Bruce had indeed said zilch about what had happened as a result of Bill meeting with his Commanding Officer (presumably because he didn't know). In his response, Steve decides to attribute this to me instead: "What are you talking about? You well know, and I know you know since I have seen you cite it as a reference, that Bill said he was dropping out of the hobby because of a letter some nutcase sent to his CO. So what if Bruce didn't say anything about that. It is still the case." (emphasis

added). False. Steve has not seen me say anything of the sort, because I have never said that, and in fact, I don't even believe that its true. The really bizarre thing about this is that in Magus #38 he printed the reverse chronology, this time from Kathy Byrne: "Bill left the hobby, but did that satisfy Linsey - no he wrote to his NROTC commander" See? IN #38, its first Bill drops from the hobby, then the letter to the commander. In the next issue, the dropping comes after the letter to the commander. This way, Bruce gets criticized both ways! But why rely on this --- lets hear what Bill had to say. In the final issue of TMP, which appeared in EE #33 (April 1984, many months after Bruce's letter), he is very irate about the letter to his CO, but doesn't seem concerned about any impact. He presents his CO as agreeing that the writer of the letter was a "lunatic", concluding, "Thank God, however, that so far it's gone my way - so far." So why did he leave the hobby? Bill states that explicitly: "After over a year of publishing, I have decided to leave the hobby. The reasons, while clear, are none the less painful. I entered this "hobby" with a purpose - to do my best. It became evident that I could not do my best at everything. I had a choice - school or the hobby. I chose the only answer, school." Of course, you didn't read that in Magus.

"Bruce explicitly asked that Bill not be told about VoD #98" sez VtFA. Asked who? Bruce denies this entirely, and of course no proof is presented. When I asked Steve why he ran Kathy's accusation about the "Francine letter", but not Bruce's denial, he replied, "It slipped my mind" Steve informs his readers that I am "responsible for Bruce's actions." It gets hard to take someone like that seriously.

Two final matters are, however, serious and ugly. In #38, Steve accuses me of libeling Bill Highfield. This is the most serious charge that can be made against any editor, in amateur or professional publishing, and its the first time its ever happened to me in all the years I've been publishing. We all know what libel is --- at a minimum, it has to be something you've said thats factually untrue. I went back thru my editorial, sentence by sentence, and as best I could tell, everything I said about Bill was true. I wrote Steve, asking him to either specify exactly what the libel was, or retract his charge. He did neither, saying that the libel was "the entire editorial", which gets us nowhere. I wrote him a second time, again asking him to be specific, and asked him if he would consider an Ombudsman on this matter. To this suggestion he did not reply, but in VtFA, he identifies the libel thusly: "the premise that Bill Highfield is a dangerous person." To begin with, you cannot libel with an unspoken premise or an unspoken assumption or the like. A libel has to be something that you've actually said. And second, I don't make any such premise. I don't know whether Bill is a dangerous person, and I do not need to assume it. Bill might be dangerous because he has acted like some dangerous people act. What, if anything, you do about that "might" is a matter of judgement, and if you disagree with Bruce's judgement, fine, I've got no problem with that. But I resent Steve's calling this a libel, which seems to have resulted from him not knowing what the word means.

The other matter is not so easy to resolve. In VtFA, page 16, Steve begins, "Time here for a bit of "NFP". I'm not quoting. I was told by a source that I consider trustworthy that....." What follows is a horrible story, which I am the villian. If this were true, then not only would I be a false friend to Bruce, but I'd be a completely dishonest and dispicable person, and the hobby would be better off if I folded this zine and left the hobby. It is FALSE and Defamatory. The source is not named --- anonymous lies are the order of the day at Magus. Steve says that "I don't know the details", but not knowing what he is talking about doesn't seem to be a bar to Steve. I know all the details and I've got all the correspondence. Unfortunately, I cannot give the specifics on what happened, because to do so would break a confidence (the fact that Steve prints Not For Print stuff doesn't mean that I do). This is obviously very frustrating. A copy of this will go to the person that I need a release from, along with my request that the confidentiality on this be removed so that I can give the truth on this matter (the person is not Bruce or one of his friends). And I am asking Steve to name his source, so I can know just who it is who is defaming me.

But even aside from that, how would you, dear reader, like to open up a zine, and read that some unnamed person has put out a totally defammatory story, and that the person who printed it isn't going to let you tell your side of the issue, because no more letters will be printed? You won't even be able to deny it! Well, I say thats hit and run journalism, and I say it stinks.