

GRAUSTARK

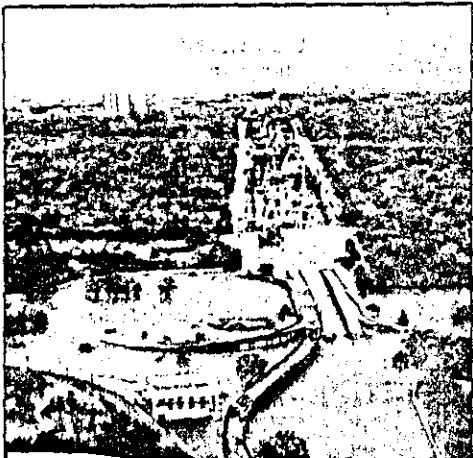
The first 'zine for the postal play of Diplomacy, a game of negotiation and conflict designed by Allan B. Calhaver and published by Hasbro

#768 2002A, "Winter 1912"; 2002D, "Spring 1908"; 2004C, "Spring 1904"

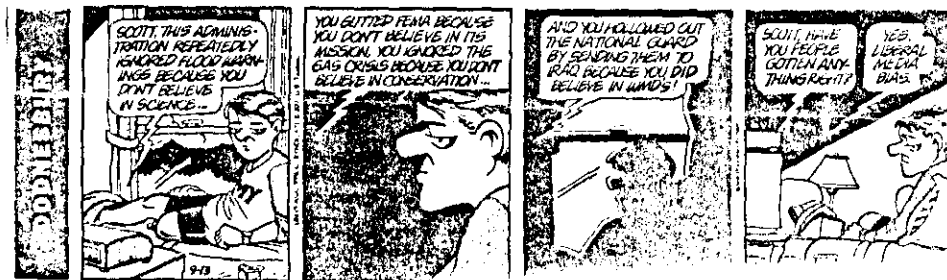
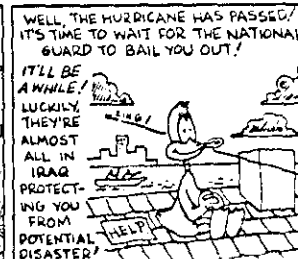
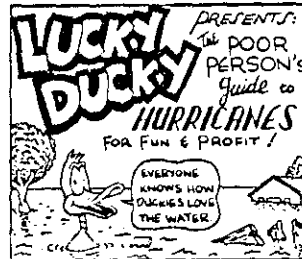
SPECIAL REPORT: DISASTER IN THE DELTA

TOM THE DANCING BUG By Ruben Bolling

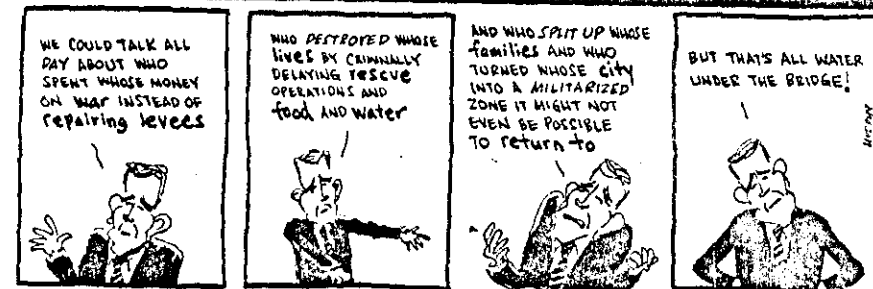
God Outdoes Terrorists Yet Again



- ▶ Officials Uncertain Whether To Save Or Shoot Victims
- ▶ Nation's Politicians Applaud Great Job They're Doing
- ▶ Area Man Drives Food There His Goddamned Self
- ▶ Bush: 'It Has Been Brought To My Attention That There Was Recently A Bad Storm'

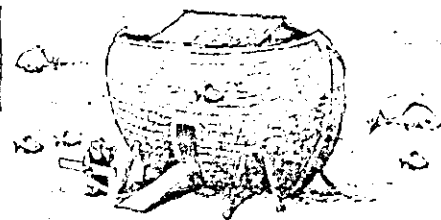


THE METRO CARTOON: IT'S ALL ABOUT YOU



NON SEQUITUR

BIBLE STORIES ACCORDING TO FEMA



"It's not the government's money, it's your money." - George W. Bush on tax cuts
 "It's not the government's hurricane, it's your hurricane."

NEITHER HELL NOR HIGH WATER...

For Michael Neal's new address, and how we got it, see p. 6.

ENGLAND (Wiedemeyer): A Mos-Sev; F Nwy-Nrg; F Bar S F St.P(n.c.); F St.P(n.c.), F Lon,
& A Edi hold.

FRANCE (Lischett): A Ven-Apu; A Pie-Ven; A Tyr S A Pie-Ven; A Nap-Apu; F Tyr-Rom;
F Tus S F Tyr-Rom; F Tun-Ion; F Wes-Tun; A Par holds.

GERMANY (Quirk): A War-Gal; A Vie S A War-Gal; A Pru-War; A Liv S A Pru-War; F Bot &
F Bal S A Liv; A Ber-Sil; A Mun-Boh.

ITALY (Verheiden): A Rom-Ven; F Adr S A Rom-Ven; A Ser-Tri; A Bud-Vie; F Ion C RUSSIAN
A Apu-Alb.

RUSSIA (Neal): A Ukr-Sev; F Aeg S ITALIAN F Ion; A Gal-Boh; A Rum-Sev; A Apu-Alb;
F Smy-Eas.

Underlined moves are not possible. The Italian A Rom is dislodged and annihilated. Several moves were not possible because of the rule against dislodging your own units. Questions may arise about the French moves as printed above, but they are exactly as phoned in by the French player. The deadline for "Fall 1908" moves is NOON, FRIDAY 28 OCTOBER 2005.

WHEN DO YOU EXPIRE?

The subscriptions of the following readers expire with the indicated issue of Graustark. This information is valid to the date of 29 September 2005. See p. 6 for information about extending your subscription or joining a new game.

768 - Richard Bourgeois	768 - Sigourney Street	777 - Eric Verheiden
Dan McKinsey	William Watkins	W. Andrew York
David Stone	770 - Michael Neal	799 - Brenton Verploeg

PLEASE STAND BY

I am willing to take over games that have been abandoned by their gamesmasters. So if you are a postal gamesmaster who is no longer able to publish, or if you are a player in a postal game of regular Diplomacy that has gone for two or three months without a move being published, please get in touch with the Orphan Games Director, Michael Lowrey. (See p. 11 for his address.) If the game is to continue in Graustark, I would need the addresses of all active players, the current position, and a list of who owns which supply centers. If subscription money can be passed along to me, fine. Otherwise I will ask players to join a new game in Graustark, or to subscribe to Graustark if they do not already do so. Players who resign or drop out can be replaced by Graustark stand-by players.

Stand-by players are always needed for postal Diplomacy games in Graustark. If you volunteer as a stand-by, you may be called upon whenever a current player misses a move. If you send in moves for that country for the next turn, and the present player does not, you will take over play of that position. No game fee will be asked, though you should keep your subscription current, or enroll in a new Graustark game. No stand-by will be called upon in a game in which he or she has already played.

Stand-by volunteers who are willing to take on additional games of postal Diplomacy are listed below. A stand-by player who is already playing in a Graustark game is indicated by "*". If you wish your name added to or removed from this list, please let me know. These data are accurate to the date of 29 September 2005.

Hank Alme	Michael Neal*
John R. Biehl	Michael Quirk*
Harley Jordan	Eric Verheiden*
	Fred Wiedemeyer*

PEACE AGREEMENT SIGNED

Following a vote after the "Fall 1912" moves, the three remaining players have voted for a draw. They are Bill Watkins (Austria-Hungary), Sigourney Street (France) and Harley Jordan (Turkey). The roster and supply center chart follow.

		00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12
John Boardman, Graustark														
E - Fred Wiedemeyer (out F05)	E	3	5	3	1	1								
F - Sigourney Street (drew F12)	F	3	5	5	5	6	8	8	8	8	8	9	10	11
G - Richard Bourgeois (dro S11)	G	3	5	6	6	7	8	9	8	8	5	2		
Paul D. Milewski (out F11)	I	3	4	4	4	3	2							
I - David Stone (dro F05)	A	3	5	6	6	7	7	7	7	7	8	9	10	12
Hank Alme (out F06)	R	4	4	5	4	3	4	4	5	5	6	5	4	
A - William Watkins (drew F12)	T	3	4	5	6	7	5	6	6	6	7	9	10	11
R - Dan McKinsey (dro F10)														
John R. Biehl (out F12)														
T - Harley Jordan (drew F12)														

This game began in Graustark #735 on 20 June 2002.

Bill Watkins comments: "My thanks to Harley and Sigourney for proving such excellent allies. And again, my thanks to them for helping me stay at it during various hospital stays.

"I'm still puzzled by Germany and France going at it. I thought it was premature, which certainly proved out. At that point, Turkey and I were blocked out and I didn't see a lot of hope for us to become unblocked. Timing is all!"

Any additional reviews and comments on this game will be published in the next issue.

THE WEAK GO TO THE WALL

The Russian retreat in the last issue was misprinted; it was actually "A Ank-Arm".

ENGLAND (Koch): F Nrg & F Iri hold.

FRANCE (Wiedemeyer): A Lon & A Bel hold; F Eng S A Lon; F Mid-NAf; F Spa(s.c.)-Wes; A Gas-Bur.

GERMANY (Mathias): A Yor-Edi; A Hol holds; F Nth S A Yor-Edi; F Nwy-St.P(n.c.); A Mun-Boh; A Boh-Vie; A Ber-Sil.

ITALY (Mooney): A Tri-Bud; A Ser S A Tri-Bud; A Ven-Tri; F Adr, F Ion, & F Tun hold.

AUSTRIA-HUNGARY (Alme): A Rum S TURKISH A Gre-Bul; A Bud S A Rum.

RUSSIA (Biehl): A Arm-Smy; A Bul-Con; F Bla S A Bul-Con; A Ukr-Rum; A Sev S A Ukr-Rum; A War-Gal.

TURKEY (Bruce): F Aeg-Con; F Ank S F Aeg-Con; A Smy S F Ank; A Gre-Bul.

Underlined moves are not possible. The Austro-Hungarian A Bud and A Rum are dislodged and annihilated. The High Combatant Powers now control the following supply centers:

ENGLAND: Liv. (1)

FRANCE: Bel, Bre, Lon, Mar, Par, Por, Spa. (7)

GERMANY: Ber, Den, Edi, Hol, Kie, Mun, Nwy, St.P, Swe, Vie. (10)

ITALY: Bud, Nap, Rom, Ser, Tri, Tun, Ven. (7)

RUSSIA: Bul, Mos, Rum, Sev, War. (5)

TURKEY: Ank, Con, Gre, Smy. (4)

Germany may build three new units, and Italy and France may each build one. Russia and England must each remove one unit. The deadline for these "Winter 1904" orders is NOON, FRIDAY 28 OCTOBER 2005.

HUNTING THE HUNTERS

Margaret Frazer (pseudonym of Gail Frazer), *The Hunter's Tale* (2003, Berkley, NY; \$6.50 pb). For reviews of the twelve previous books in this series of the 15th-century detective adventures of the Benedictine nun Dame Frevisse, see ##673, 675, 677, 724, 729, 737, and 767.

The first chapter of the typical Dame Frevisse murder mystery begins by describing the people among whom the murder occurs or is about to occur. Once the scene is set and the *dramatis personae* are introduced, the second chapter takes us to St. Frideswide's convent in Oxfordshire and establishes the connection between the murder setting and Dame Frevisse.

This time the setting of the first chapter is the Oxfordshire estate of Sir Ralph Woderove, a successful lawyer turned landowner and also a domestic tyrant so hot-tempered and overbearing that anyone familiar with the conventions of crime novels knows that he will be the victim. And so he is, but he's only the first victim. Sir Ralph's youngest daughter Ursula is a pupil at St. Frideswide's, and the nuns learn of the murder when her older brother Hugh comes to inform her. At this point you should begin sketching a family tree that will enable you to keep order among the characters, which include Sir Ralph's grandson through his first marriage, his two sons and three daughters by his second marriage to Lady Anneys, and the family of his neighbor Sir William Trensall by his two marriages, the second to Sir Ralph's eldest daughter Elyn. Also relevant is Sir William's general factotum Master John Selenger, brother to his late first wife.

The book's first murder takes place during a hunt, and the men of both families are enthusiastic hunters, so the author can make use of much recent reading about hunting customs in medieval England. However, hunting then was in motivation not much like the autumnal diversion that presently takes many city-dwelling enthusiasts out into the woods after deer and usually also beer. Hunting was justified in the Middle Ages as a way of familiarizing men with weapons, horses, and their management, thus training themselves for war. However, the owner of an estate had many mouths to feed, and coursing for deer, boar, or hare was one way of doing it. This was the justification behind the sometimes savage regulations against hunting out of season, to excess, or by unauthorized persons. While a landowner wanted to ensure sport for himself and his family and friends, he also needed to maintain stocks of game adequate to feed his family and dependents.

Moreover, dogs were more frequently used in hunting then, than now seems to be the case. The care and training of these dogs, in which Hugh is an expert, makes up a considerable part of this book, and figures in the solution of one of the murders. Among the author's sources, cited in an epilog, is *The Master of Game*, written by Edward, second Duke of York, grandson of King Edward III and a casualty of the Battle of Agincourt (1415). Since dogs and men do not change much in 600 years, most of what he wrote is still useful in the care and training of hunting hounds. (He was the uncle and predecessor of the Duke of York cited in Graustark #767 in the review of Fraser's *The Bastard's Tale*, the previous book in this series.)

And, while modern hunts are frequently a masculine excuse to get away from the womenfolk, medieval women often accompanied their men into the field, sometimes making the hunt an excuse for a picnic while the men "chased the bounding stag throughout the royal wood", as a disreputable 19th-century poem put it.

Who gets to inherit what from whom is an important part of *The Hunter's Tale*, complicated still further by Sir Ralph's trick will. Many of Lady Anneys' privileges could be lost if she either remarries or just fools around, and since those privileges would then go to Sir William, he has obvious motives for plotting, and Hugh Woderove has obvious reasons for suspecting him of it.

As a nun, Dame Frevisse may not leave her convent without the company of another nun. So when she accompanies Ursula to the Woderove mansion, Sister Johane accompanies her. (We may assume that the more senior nuns have the title "Dame", while the prioress is "Domina" and the younger nuns are "sisters".) But Sister Johane is no mere cipher.

PATRIOTISM - XLII

- PATRIOTISM is the principal cause of war.
- PATRIOTISM is the unprincipled cause of war.
- PATRIOTISM is Representative Richard Baker's (R-LA) observation that "We finally cleaned up public housing in New Orleans. We couldn't do it, but God did." (*New York Times*, 10 September 2005)
- PATRIOTISM is the federal refusal to accept the Cuban offer of 1,586 physicians and 36 tons of medical supplies to aid victims of Hurricane Katrina. (Albor Ruiz, *New York Daily News*, 11 September 2005)
- PATRIOTISM is "several heavily armed plainclothes officers" ordering dozens of African-American refugees out of a truck that was taking them out of New Orleans, forcing them at gunpoint to lie face-down on the ground, and after several minutes letting them go without apology or explanation. (Bob Herbert, *New York Times*, 12 September 2005)
- PATRIOTISM is the belief that the United States can and should remain an island of high prices, high wages, and high tariffs in a world of free trade.
- PATRIOTISM is American rejoicing over the damage that short-sighted nationalistic pressures are now doing to the concept of a European Union.
- PATRIOTISM is the development by the Department of "Defense" of a hand-held torture device called "The Predator". (Jon Ronson, *The Men Who Stare at Goats*, 2004)
- PATRIOTISM is cutting out the letter column in issues of *Time* which go to prisoners, because of fears that Al Qaeda is communicating through this column by coded messages to its members in prisons. (*New Yorker*, 28 June 2004)
- PATRIOTISM is X-raying the packages of an Amtrak passenger who was upset because he had missed his stop, seizing his computer as a possible bomb, and delaying nine trains for up to four hours in Richmond. (*metro*, 9 June 2005)
- PATRIOTISM is President Bush's resolve to keep Osama bin Laden's chauffeur in prison even if he is tried and acquitted. (*New York Times*, 10 September 2005)
- PATRIOTISM is President Bush's resolve to deny, to 20 Yemeni prisoners, an opportunity to prove their innocence in court. (*Ibid.*)
- PATRIOTISM is a "national security letter", a form of subpoena provided for in the "USA PATRIOT Act" which, even if Section 215 authorizing the seizure of library and bookstore records is repealed, can still be used to seize records.
- PATRIOTISM is the attempt of the federal government to keep secret the name of an organization from whom the government is trying to subpoena library records with a "national security letter", even though everyone knows that it is the Library Connection of Windsor, CT. (*New York Times*, 10 September 2005)
- PATRIOTISM is an attack on a Bangladeshi news dealer by New York City fireman Edward Dailey, who told the man that he "looked like you're Al-Qaeda", and then cut him by throwing a large plate of plexiglass at him. (*New York Post*, 12 & 13 September 2005)
- PATRIOTISM is arresting Prof. Steven Kurtz of Buffalo on charges of "terrorism" after he called 911 when his wife has a heart attack. (He had harmless bacterial cultures which he used in his art work.) (Caryn James, *New York Times*, 12 September 2005)
- PATRIOTISM is Republican Party workers in New Hampshire, jamming Democratic phone lines in 2002. (*New York Times*, 26 August 2005)
- PATRIOTISM is Chase Card Services, a branch of JPMorgan Chase & Co., issuing a credit card to Sami Habbas, a grocer of Corona, CA, under the name "Mr. Palestinian Bomber", and addressing him as "Mr. Bomber" when he phoned to complain. (*New York Daily News*, 25 August 2005)
- PATRIOTISM is Specialist (in what?) Glendale C. Wells supervising two other soldiers as they made prisoners in Iraq kiss their boots, or otherwise abused them.
- PATRIOTISM is American newspaper editorials continuing to urge Americans to kill Iraqis, despite the fact that a Belgian missionary has just been arrested in Rwanda for writing newspaper articles which urged Rwandans to kill other Rwandans.
- PATRIOTISM is ignoring the two demonstrations that took place in Manhattan, one for the war with Iraq and one against it. The anti-war rally, at which Cindy Sheehan spoke, outdraw the prowar rally, four to one.
- PATRIOTISM is the principal cause of war.

THE MINISTRY OF MISCELLANY

Today's Terror Alert Color Code is Toxic Swampwater Gray, the consequence of federal diversion of funds away from shoring up the levees of New Orleans and towards rounding up "terrorists" in Asia.

*

Graustark is the Very First bulletin for the postal play of Diplomacy. It is published every fourth Saturday by John Boardman, 234 East 19th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11226-5302. Diplomacy is a board game of negotiation and conflict for the period of World War I. It was designed by Allan B. Calhamer and is now published by Hasbro. Another new postal Diplomacy game is now being organized in Graustark, at a game fee of \$35. (For Canadian and Mexican addresses the game fee is \$50, and for other foreign addresses it is \$100, or 85 euros in cash.) This game fee includes a subscription to Graustark for as long as the game lasts, whether or not you are eliminated. With your game fee send in a list of the countries you'd like to play, in your order of preference, and I'll try to put you as close to the top of that list as I can. If you do not already have the postal rules for Diplomacy, which were last published in Graustark #749, let me know when you send in your game fee, and I'll send you a copy.

This is
O At
P Great
E Intervals
R This
A Appears
T To
I Inflame
O Optic
N Nerves

Graustark subscriptions for non-players are 10 issues for \$15 for U. S. addresses, and \$40 or 35 euros for others. Back issues as available are 10 issues for \$5 for U. S. addresses. To foreign addresses, back issues have the same price as for foreign subscriptions. # 2112

Players who phone in their moves should call me at 718-693-1579 or 718-951-5808, extension 2. There are answering machines which can take your moves if I'm out. I do not have an e-mail address.

I want to again remind players that the U. S. Postal "Service" is not capable of reliably getting mail here in less than a week. Please take this into account in sending in your moves. If, a few times, your moves have arrived here by mail in less than a week, do not assume that this will always be the case.

Graustark readers who are interested in postal games which don't run here, are invited to write to the publishers of 'zines with which I trade, and ask what game openings they have. For their addresses, see all the readers indicated by "(T)" for "trade" in the Graustark Directory on pp. 10-11. Several of these publishers run a wide variety of postal games.

*

Mark Blackman consulted a few relevant websites, and has located Michael Neal, who is playing Russia in postal Diplomacy game 2002D. Michael made it safely out of New Orleans, and is may now be reached at P. O. Box 620219, San Antonio, TX 78262. His voice-mail number is 210-233-9546.

Andy York also sent some details about relocations from New Orleans due to Hurricane Katrina. In a letter dated 6 September, he wrote:

"Fortunately, we in Austin are well away from the area the hurricane hit. Texas is hosting a large number of folks from the region (last count, about a quarter million according to the news). There are roughly 5,000 in public shelters in Austin and an unreported number in hotels, motels, private homes, etc. Dallas, San Antonio, Houston are housing much greater numbers. A good friend, a police officer in Beaumont just across the state line from Louisiana, states they are fine though dealing with plenty of displaced persons.

"Regarding your question about getting mail to people, we really haven't heard much about that - we're still dealing with the more immediate problems of housing, food, medical needs, and jobs. The state agency I work for has been integrating out computer network to work seamlessly with the one in Louisiana so that we can take their unemployment claims from our offices. A friend who works for the real estate board has been busy licensing those from Louisiana so they can legally work out of state to conduct transactions in their state. It's going to be a long term effort to take care of everyone.

"I did check with the folks at the post office about the mail question after I

opened your letter. They were a bit vague on their answers, but from what I can deduce, once folks get located to a medium-stay facility (i. e., they move from an emergency shelter to interim housing), they will complete a change of address form. At that point, the accumulated mail will be forwarded to them. How long that will take, who knows?

"From what I hear from the media, most of the communication is happening via the Internet or the phone. A friend who was volunteering at the Austin Convention Center last evening said his 'free nights' cell phone was in constant demand and the Internet connections were always busy - there are plenty of Internet sites to post messages and 'have you seen' notices."

I also want to thank Paul Bolduc, who lives in the Florida panhandle, for his information about Hurricane Katrina. He also escaped its more serious consequences.

As soon as I heard from Mark Blackman, I sent to Michael Neal, at his San Antonio address, the last three issues of *Graustark* and a map. His letter with his moves, dated 23 September, noted that "As far as I can tell at this time, neither anyone I am close to nor myself was seriously injured by Katrina. I hope I can make the same boast about Rita." He probably can, since San Antonio is well inland, and Rita turned northward from its originally predicted track, and hit the coast at the border between Texas and Louisiana. Andy York's policeman friend in Beaumont probably was very, very busy.

My brother Karl, in Corpus Christi, was also concerned, and also spared much of the impact of Hurricane Rita by its northward turn. He is on kidney dialysis, but the hospital had its own power supply, so things seem to have gone well with him.

*

I was unable to go to the big anti-war demonstration in Washington on the weekend of 24-26 September, since we had a long-standing commitment to attend the wedding of the son of an old friend on the 25th. It was the biggest anti-war demonstration since the American attempt to conquer Vietnam. Media reports usually gave the turn-out at something like 100,000, but they habitually underestimated such numbers during the war with Vietnam, and their servile support for Bush War II indicates that they are still playing this game. (The *New York Times*, for example, has editorially demanded that 40,000 *more* U. S. troops should be sent into Iraq.) On 25 September there was actually a *pro-war* counter-demonstration in Washington, which (according to those same media) attracted all of 400 people. So, even by the media's own figures, the supporters of war were outnumbered by about 250 to one!

Next year will be elections for seats in Congress, and it is already evident that the administration will desperately try to keep this enormous majority from becoming effective at the polls. Many "red states" are now trying to require photo identification for voting, but making no effort to provide such identification to people who do not already have it. The next step will probably be articles in conservative publications, asking what is so great about a majority vote anyhow. We will be asked in horrendous tones what will happen if a majority of the voters want one thing, but the national interest (as determined by those publications) requires another. There may even be a revival of the demand, first made in 1982 by the conservative columnist R. Emmett Tyrell, that the President should respond to "unwise" congressional decisions by calling out the armed forces, dismissing Congress, and ruling by decree.

*

Recently a *Graustark* reader made a curious accusation against me. In response to my remark about a liberal talk show host who was literally shot to pieces by neo-Nazi militants in 1984, he claimed that Nazis are "your people, not mine".

I am willing to give space to an elucidation of this startling accusation. Any *Graustark* reader who wants to explain how my views coincide with those of the Nazis, "neo" or otherwise, may do so in an article for publication in these pages. I make only one condition - that he or she explain how my successful work against racial segregation by law enforcement in the South in 1955 is accounted for by my purportedly Nazi views.

I am waiting.

*

We had primary elections in New York City about a month ago, and the Republican Party's attorneys came through like troopers (what kind of troopers I leave for you to

DUNGEONS & CHRISTIANS - CLXXXIV

When my father was farming, I would sometimes try to help out by opening feed sacks. These were stitched shut with intricately sewn red and white strings. He could take the end of one of those strings and pull it, and then the whole feed sack would somehow come open at once. I was almost never able to manage this trick. The string would knot up, and the sack would have to be carefully opened with scissors or a knife.

But when it comes to the realm of ideas, this sort of operation is much easier. If you play any role-playing or board games, you have probably encountered some of the Christian fanatics who have for the past 25 years or so been attacking Dungeons & Dragons (D&D) and other role-playing games (RPGs), video games, and even board games. The principal opposition to these bursts of religious fanaticism comes from the Game Manufacturers Association (GAMA) and from the Committee for the Advancement of Role-Playing Games (CAR-PGa). This column relies heavily on reports from both of these organizations. CAR-PGa Newsletter is published monthly by Paul Cardwell Jr., 1127 Cedar, Bonham, TX 75418 at \$12.00 a year for domestic, and \$13.50 a year for foreign, addresses. It keeps us posted on attacks on D&D and other RPGs, and provides us with arguments and strategies to be used against attempts to censor or ban games. It also lists upcoming gaming conventions. And, when time permits, I am going to cite its reports of the latest such attacks, and hopefully, the crushing rebuttals made to them.

And if you examine the intricacies of these attacks on RPGs, you find that the strings come open very easily, revealing many other aspects of what seems to be a Christian attempt to dictate every phase of American life. The same people who are on record as attacking the "satanic" character of RPGs are also trying to get their bible taught in the public schools as a science text, a religious notion which has variously been called "natural theology", "creation science", and "intelligent design." They also attempt to place religious symbols, whose display in their homes and their houses of worship are protected by the Constitution, in public buildings and on public land as well, as if they were expressions of public policy.

I recently ran across an account of a far-fetched justification for this sort of thing, in an article by Norman Kelley in the *Brooklyn Rail* of September 2005. Kelley reviews two works by Shadia B. Drury on the thought of the late Leo Strauss, whom Drury believes to be the seminal conservative thinker whose works inspired the policies of the Reagan and Bush Administrations. For details, see Drury's *Leo Strauss and the American Right* (St. Martin's, 1997) and *The Political Ideas of Leo Strauss* (Palgrave, 2005).

Kelley summarizes Strauss's views thus: "Philosophy can undermine society because it can strip away the illusions and myths that under-gird it, and the greatest illusions are the existence of God or religion. However, people need...their opium. Philosophers or scientists ought to respect that opinion (the existence of God), which is not the same as believing it. It is this kind of philosophical flexibility in the pursuit of power that allows neo-conservatives to have an association with the pious Christian foot-soldiers of the conservative movement...Drury contends that Strauss believes that 'philosophy regards nature as the supreme authority'...This is essentially the conflict between science and religion. Science is a methodology that tries to measure the natural world and understand its laws, which is why evolution is such a bone of contention between science and religion. However true evolution may be, its laws displace religion, which is impolitic and threatens to undermine the foundations of society (hence the 'crisis' of modernity). The problem with science is that it is a project of modernity, which has a tendency to undermine the external checks - religion and morality - on the vulgarians (the common folk) through knowledge, which is bad for the many but good for the few...For Strauss and his disciples, God has a utilitarian purpose: calming the minds of the benighted masses. For an atheist like Strauss, this is a 'noble lie' which serves a purpose, namely holding society together. In the current historical moment, the Enlightenment, or modernity, is under serious assault by the forces of religious fundamentalism, which seeks to return God back to the center of things."

These ideas run as a strong current within conservatism. Karl Marx may have called religion "the opium of the people", but many conservatives also believe it, and thoroughly approve of it for this reason. Or, as Voltaire put it even earlier, "I should like my lawyer, my tailor, and my wife to believe in God." (Though presumably not his niece.) This theme can be found in the remark by a 19th-century Englishwoman

who, upon hearing of Darwin's book about human kinship with the apes, responded by hoping that it is not true, but if true, that it would not become generally known. And, before he became bogged down in accusations of unlawful campaign financing, House Majority Leader Tom Delay claimed that the Columbine High School massacre took place because students were being taught evolution, which presumably Strauss would have called "undermining the foundations of society."

*

Members of the Republican Church and the Christian Party (have I got that right?) will be pleased to learn that President Bush has formulated a faith-based plan for relieving distress along the Gulf Coast. You put two animals of each kind on this big boat...

*

"Theodicy" is not, as you might expect, short for "theological idiocy". According to Edward Rothstein's column in the *New York Times* of 8 September 2005, it is "the effort to reconcile the existence of an all-powerful benevolent God with the occurrence of horrific events." The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, the Indian Ocean tsunami of 26 December 2004, and the hurricane which struck the Gulf Coast states on 29 August 2005 have stimulated much discussion on this point.

For many Christians, whose bible relates numerous episodes of divine punishment through earthquakes, epidemics, or foreign conquests, this is not a problem. Rev. Pat Robertson had already gone on record as threatening Disney World with destruction by hurricane because among the groups given special "days" there with cut-rate group admissions were homosexuals. (So far, God seems to have ignored this and several other orders from Robertson.) Robertson and Rev. Jerry Falwell blamed the terrorist attacks on the fact that abortion is now lawful in America. It has now been revealed that a parade of homosexuals had been planned in New Orleans a few days after Hurricane Katrina hit, and Christians are now proclaiming that this was God's way of preventing it. They have not explained why, to judge from the large number of children among the refugees, heterosexuals were also punished. Nor do they have an explanation why several hurricanes have struck the most devoutly Christian portion of the country, while ignoring the infidels and unbelievers of the Northeast, California, and Hawaii, the only state in which Christians are a minority.

Such questions also arose after the earthquake which destroyed Lisbon in 1755. Voltaire responded by writing *Candide*, and bringing his hero to Lisbon in the middle of this destruction. *Candide* sees the good perish and the evil survive, and is unable to reconcile all this with what he has been taught by Dr. Pangloss ("All-Tongue") about everything being for the best in this best of all possible worlds. But while theologians and philosophers tried to sort out this problem, the prime minister of Portugal, a heavy-handed anti-clerical reformer named Pombal, simply and sensibly declared that the government's duty was to care for the living and bury the dead. Unfortunately, the heavy-handed pro-clerical administration of Bush the Son seems unable even to do that.

*

The most far-fetched arguments are often employed to try to persuade us that the United States of America is founded upon Christianity and is a Christian nation, in a sense in which it is not a nation of any other religious belief. To start with, nations do not have religious beliefs; individuals do, as private persons. Granted, from time to time a ruler will attempt to proclaim that his or her nation is a nation of one religious faith only, the ruler's own. King Charles I tried this in Great Britain, and King Louis XVI tried this in France with a rather different brand of Christianity. Their subsequent fates should eloquently declare that this is not a good idea.

While it is difficult to persuade anyone who has ever read the U. S. Constitution that America is a "Christian nation", the attempt is still made by people who pick events from our history out of context and base their arguments on them. For example, they make much of the fact that in 1775 Ethan Allen demanded that the British surrender Fort Ticonderoga "in the name of the great Jehovah and the Continental Congress". This story is highly dubious, since Allen was an Atheist. He wrote an anti-religious tract entitled *Reason the Only Oracle of Man*, and was bitterly attacked for his views on

THE GRAUSTARK DIRECTORY

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HUNTING THE HUNTERS (continued from p. 4)

Dame Frevisse learns some interesting things about her younger colleague, even as both of them try to figure out the secrets of the Woderove and Trensall families, and how they may be related to mysterious deaths. Indeed, one of the mysterious deaths is apparently accidental, a rare thing in a murder mystery.

Her solution of these mysteries leaves Dame Frevisse in a considerable moral quandary. However, like a later English detective, she eventually decides that she would rather play tricks with the laws of England than with her own conscience. With the moral questions settled to everyone's satisfaction, including that of the Woderove

family's chaplain, she is satisfied that she and Sister Johane can return to St. Frideswide's with the moral questions settled, and the legal questions set aside.

The books in this series seem to alternate between crimes that involve high matters of state, such as *The Bastard's Tale*, and those which involve private persons at lower levels of society, such as this one. The next book, *The Widow's Tale*, will return us to the developing political squabbles which will eventually lead into the War of the Roses.

THE MINISTRY OF MISCELLANY (continued from p. 7)

decide) in keeping off the primary ballot any opposition to our Republican mayor. Mayor Bloomberg, an unbelievably wealthy man who bought his election four years ago and is favored to repeat this year, was challenged for the Republican nomination by a chronic sorehead from Queens named Thomas Ognibene. The issues at stake go to the heart of the internal divisions within that party. Michael Bloomberg believes that it is the Republican Party, out to get as many votes as it can. Thomas Ognibene believes that it is the Holy Republican Church, out to throw unbelievers into the outer darkness. He differs with the mayor on issues ranging from legal abortion and civil rights for homosexuals (which he opposes) to censorship of exhibits in art museums (which he favors). Ognibene's partisans will probably vote for some nonentity on the Conservative Party ticket, which got less than 0.3% of the vote in the last mayoral election.

Meanwhile, the Democrats put up six candidates for their nomination, although the media found only four of them worthy of mention. These four were singularly inept in word and deed. The winner, with just over 40% of the vote, openly sanctions the murder of civilians by police, which has often been a major problem here. The runner-up, as a member of Congress, supports the American invasion of Iraq, a position which is rapidly becoming a form of political suicide. I voted for Chris Brodeur, a chronic political gadfly whom two successive Republican mayors tried to get arrested, with no success.

DUNGEONS & CHRISTIANS (continued from p. 9)

religion by his contemporaries. Vermont still has on its books a law which provides for a \$200 fine for Atheism, which was probably enacted in a futile attempt to shut him up. Any attempt to enforce it in the current fashion for religiosity would certainly fail in the courts, although it would put the defendants to great expense and would probably elicit much screaming and yelling from Christians.

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