

# GRAUSTARK

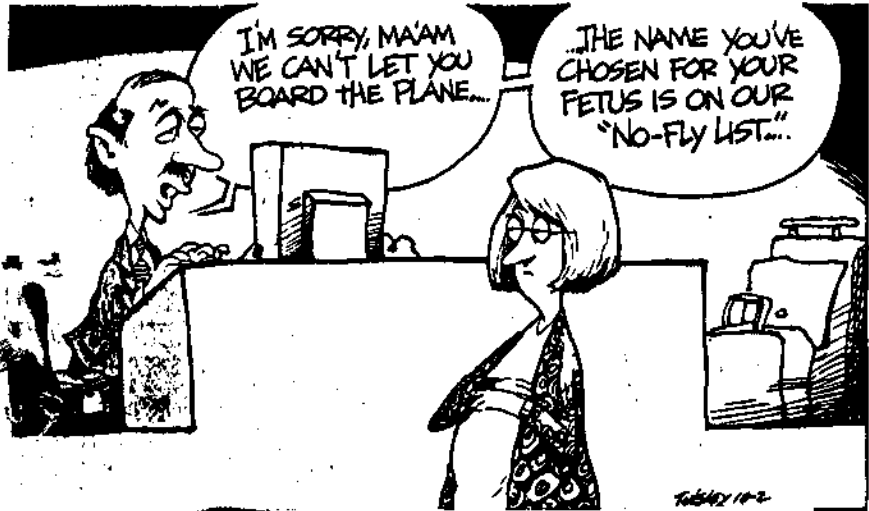
The first 'zine for the postal play of Diplomacy, a game of negotiation and conflict designed by Allan B. Calhamer and published by Hasbro

#780

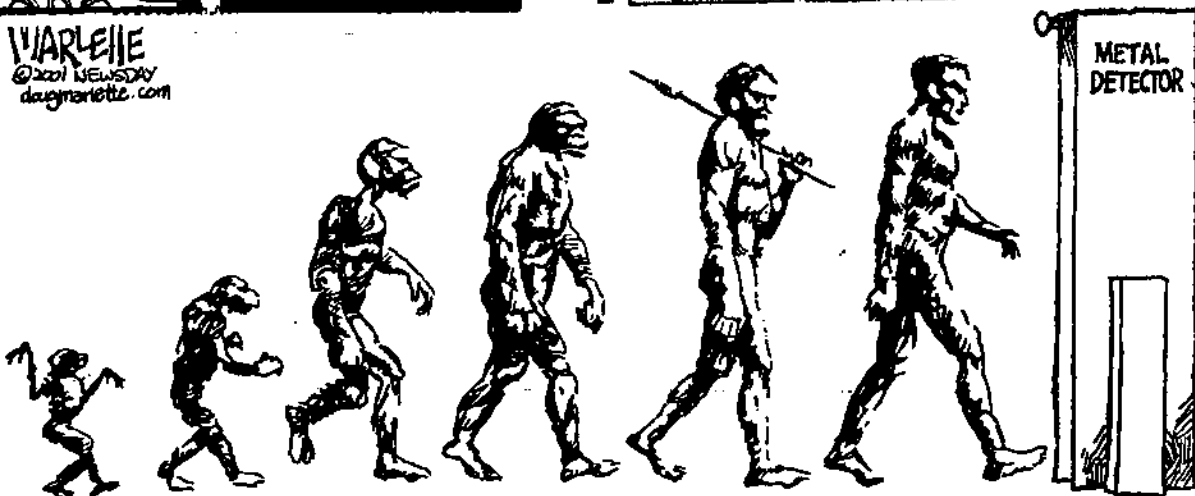
2002D, "Spring 1913"; 2004C, "Fall 1908"; 2006A, "Winter 1902"

4 August 2007

THE CITY 151007



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This cover commemorates the patriotism with which passenger airlines are going bankrupt, by enforcing so vigorously the decrees of the Department of Homeland Absurdity that the thugs they call "guards", and the long delays in their flight schedules, are driving passengers to other means of transportation,

## DUNGEONS &amp; CHRISTIANS - CXCII

"Imagine no suicide bombers, no 9/11, no 7/7, no Crusades, no witch hunts, no Gunpowder plot, no Indian partition, no Israeli/Palestinian wars, no Serb/Croat/Muslim massacres, no persecution of Jews as 'Christ-killers', no Northern Ireland 'troubles', no 'honor killings', no shiny-suited, bouffant-haired televangelists fleecing gullible people of their money."  
 - Prof. Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*

"Dungeons & Christians" has been running in my gaming 'zines since 1984, when it began by reporting John Sapienza's demolition of Pat Pulling's campaign against Dungeons & Dragons (D&D). It has since chronicled the continuing campaign by Christian fanatics to ban D&D, other role-playing games (RPGs), live-action RPGs (LARPs), and collectible card games including Magic: The Gathering, Vampire: The Masquerade, Werewolf: The Apocalypse, and others.

Important sources of information about game-bashers are the Game Manufacturers Association (GAMA) and the Committee for the Advancement of Role-Playing Games (CAR-PGA), "an international network of researchers into all aspects of role-playing games". This column relies heavily on reports from both of these organizations. CAR-PGA Newsletter is published monthly by Paul Caldwell 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.

\*

The seventh and last Harry Potter book, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, has just been published, and the fifth Harry Potter movie, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, has just come out. This means that Christian cries for censorship are once again concentrated more on the Harry Potter books and films than on D&D. Such cries have been even more ineffective than their attacks on RPGs, since the media are filled with comments on both the new book and the new film, and the book has, like its six predecessors, drawn huge crowds to bookshops when its sales began. (Her book sales and tie-ins have made their author, J. K. Rowling, wealthier than Queen Elizabeth II.) Christians seem to have given upon banning the Harry Potter books from public or school libraries, or on boycotting theaters that show the films. Such opposition has accomplished nothing even in the South, the most devoutly Christian part of the country, where Christian belief once even prompted a long legal and extra-legal campaign against the idea that white and black children should attend the same schools.

Bill Gillis had a column entitled "Harry Potter and Christian Resistance" in *metro* on 11 June 2007, in which he observes that "magic...lies at the heart of the Harry Potter stories" and "is also the central component of many evangelical arguments against the Potter corpus. But wasn't Jesus an accomplished magician? What are miracles, after all, but divinely inspired magical tricks?" In subsequent letter columns, Christians rose in their wrath against this concept. Their arguments were, in effect, "Ours are miracles, but anyone else's is magic."

One Christian went on to say that "The devil wants us to think that wizard costumes and conjuring of spells are all cute and harmless, but they open the door to much more dangerous things." (He did not specify.) "The devil will walk through that door and introduce our children (and some adults) to some very bad things." However, he nowhere pointed out where any of these "bad things" have come to pass. For that matter, Neo-Pagans ("Witches") have not claimed that any flood of recruits has been brought to their ranks by the Harry Potter books.

The Harry Potter books will go into literary history as classics alongside Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, which was also bitterly condemned when it was first published.

\*

Over several decades I have heard a rumor that some state legislature once tried to change the value of the well-known mathematical constant pi from the irrational number you will find in any high school math text to an even 3. The state which allegedly tried to do this has been variously identified. The first time I heard this story, it was attached to Indiana, but usually some southern state took the blame,

probably because legislators in that part of the country have not been renowned for their intelligence or statesmanship. Pi is actually an immutable mathematical constant, the ratio of the length of the circumference of a circle to its diameter. Since ancient times, increasingly precise measurements of pi have been determined, but it is an irrational number, approximately 3.1415927.... For most practical circumstances, 22/7 is a good approximation, to about 0.04%.

The facts of the matter were finally revealed to us by Alex Boese in *The Museum of Hoaxes: A History of Outrageous Pranks and Deceptions* (2002, Plume, NY; \$12 tpb). Readers will recall that another book by Boese was cited in a previous issue for exposing that 2002 hoax about the low intelligence of Bush voters. A bill to change the value of pi to 3 actually was introduced into the Indiana House of Representatives in 1897; Boese did not give the reason for this attempt, or how someone with a knowledge of mathematics got it buried.

But the most recent "pi = 3" rumor, put on the Internet in 1998, claimed that the Alabama Legislature had voted to change the value of pi to "its biblical value of 3." The real joke is, that 3 actually is the value of pi, according to the allegedly inerrant and infallible texts of the Jewish and Christian bible. You will find it in 2 Chronicles 4:2, in the description of the plumbing fixtures of Solomon's temple. The precise words are:

"He made the Sea of cast metal, ten cubits from rim to rim, circular in shape and five cubits high; a cord thirty cubits long gave the measurement of its girth."

This latest version of "pi = 3" had been put on the Internet by Mark Boslough, a New Mexico physicist who thus protested attempts by some state and local governments to enforce the teaching of creationist biology in the public schools. If they are going to get biology from their bible, why not mathematics as well?

Biblical literalists may object that this verse gives the value of pi to a precision of 4.5%. You might respond by suggesting that if they obey the Seventh Commandment\* to that degree of precision, they must lead very interesting lives.

Christians have apparently also given up on their attempts to outlaw the conventional observances of Hallowe'en, an essentially pre-Christian ceremony which originated in the ancient belief that the spirits of the dead hang around on at least one evening of the year, pestering their living descendants. In Graustark #778 I cited such Christian complaints as their "Hell House" shows, and asked whether any had been publicized this year. Except for one New York City observance which was clearly intended to poke fun at Christian "Hell Houses", none seemed to get into the media. This seems to have been just one more Christian complaint abandoned as ineffective.

#### PLEASE STAND BY

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 "\*". A stand-by player who is called upon elsewhere in this issue is indicated by "#". If you wish your name added to or removed from this list, please let me know.

Hank Alme  
John R. Biehl

Harley Jordan\*  
Michael Quirk\*

Eric Verheiden\*  
Fred Wiedemeyer\*

\* - Different Christian denominations number the Commandments differently, so I am reverting to the numbering system used by their original custodians.

2002D

"Spring 1913"

## FOUR UNITS ACTUALLY MOVE!

ENGLAND (Wiedemeyer): A Mos S GERMAN A War-Ukr [sic]; A St.P S A Mos; F Bar, F Nwy, F Nrg, & F Lon hold.

FRANCE (Lischett): F Nap-Ion; F Tun, F Tyr, F Apu & F Adr S F Nap-Ion; A Tri-Alb; A Tyr-Tri; A Pie-Ven; A Rom, A Mar & A Par hold.

GERMANY (Quirk): A Ber-Pru; A Mun S A Boh; A War S ENGLISH A Mos; A Sil S A War; F Bal-Swe; F Bot-Swe; A Vie S FRENCH A Tri [sic]; A Boh S A Vie.

ITALY (Verheiden): F Aeg S RUSSIAN F Eas-Ion; F Gre S RUSSIAN F Ion-Alb, A Bud S RUSSIAN A Gal.

RUSSIA (Jordan): F Ion-Alb; F Eas-Ion; A Ser S F Ion-Alb; A Gal S ITALIAN A Bud; A Ukr S A Gal; A Sev S A Ukr.

Underlined moves are not possible. The deadline for "Fall 1913" moves is NOON, FRIDAY 31 AUGUST 2007. Michael Quirk writes that this issue of Graustark should be sent to him at 940 Beckett Crossing Drive, Mundelein, IL 60060; telephone 347-837-0487. This seems to be a temporary address until he finds a new job.

2004C

"not quite Fall 1908"

## SLIGHT DELAY IN WAR

When I published Graustark #779, Fred Wiedemeyer was on an extended vacation, and had no idea that I would then be mailing out that issue. Therefore I think it fair to allow him to retreat his dislodged French A Bur, and to re-set the deadline date for the "Fall 1908" moves. His "Spring 1908" retreat is A Bur-Par. Following "Spring 1908" moves, Italy retreated A Vie-Tri. The positions prior to the "Fall 1908" moves are:

FRANCE (Wiedemeyer): A Wal; A Mar; A Par; F Wes; F Naf; F Spa(s.c.).

GERMANY (Mathias): A Yor; A St.P; A War; A Pru; A Liv; F Mid; A Vie; A Boh; A Bur; A Bel; F Hol; F Kie; A Sil.

ITALY (Mooney): A Tyr; A Tri; A Ven; F Tyr; A Bud; F Ion; F Lyo.

RUSSIA (Biehl): A Mos.

TURKEY (Bruce): A Boh; A Gal; A Ukr; A Sev; F Aeg; F Alb; F Bla.

The High Combatant Powers control the following supply centers:

FRANCE: Lon, Mar, Par, Por, Spa, Tun. (6)

GERMANY: Bel, Ber, Bre, Den, Edi, Hol, Kie, Liv, Mun, Nwy, St.P, Swe, War. (13)

ITALY: Bud, Gre, Nap, Rom, Tri, Ven, Vie. (7)

RUSSIA: Mos. (1)

TURKEY: Ank, Bul, Con, Rum, Ser, Sev, Smy. (7)

The deadline for "Fall 1908" orders is NOON, FRIDAY 31 AUGUST 2007. If you plan to go with the moves you have already mailed in, please let me know by then. For Colin Bruce's new address see p. 10.

MOSCOW (October 31, 1908): The Soviet of Workers and Soldiers Committee has declared a cessation of hostilities in the interests of the people. Commissar Dmitri Bielski declared, "The Russian people call on all progressive socialists to defeat the imperialist German aggressors."

2006A

"Winter 1902"

## WHERE'S FRANCE?

ENGLAND (Wiedemeyer): Builds F Edi.                   AUSTRIA-HUNGARY (Williams): Removes F Tri.

FRANCE (Schmit): No build received.               RUSSIA (Biehl): Builds A Mos.

GERMANY (Jordan): Builds A Ber.

The deadline for "Spring 1903" moves is NOON, FRIDAY 31 AUGUST 2007. Stand-by French moves should be sent in by Hank Alme, whose address is on p. 10. For information about stand-by orders see p. 3. Don Williams's telephone numbers are 661-575-7252 (cell), 661-297-8947 (home), 909-350-6723 (business), and 909-350-7676 (fax). His e-mail addresses are <dwilliams@fontana.org> and <www.fontana.org>.

## PATRIOTISM - LIV

PATRIOTISM is the principal cause of war.

PATRIOTISM is the unprincipled cause of war.

PATRIOTISM is the belief that, in the event of a contradiction between the Constitution and the will of President Bush, the will of President Bush shall prevail.

PATRIOTISM is the application of this principle to President Bush's "signing statements", in which he expresses his determination not to enforce the bill he has just signed into law.

PATRIOTISM is the "Unitary Presidency" which his handlers attribute to President Bush. This in effect means that he can do anything he pleases.

PATRIOTISM is the belief that if Upper YakYak invades Lower YakYak, the armed forces of the United States of America must immediately get involved.

PATRIOTISM is the belief that the United States is presently at war, even though Congress has not declared war against any nation, and according to the Constitution the United States can't go legally to war in any other way.

PATRIOTISM is a bill just signed by Bush the Son, which protects from libel or slander accusations anyone who calls somebody a "terrorist". This means that if your neighbor's dog digs up your flowers, you can safely call your neighbor a "terrorist", and maybe his dog too.

PATRIOTISM is forgetting that war is a crime for which men have been hanged, and that conspiracy to commit a crime, is a crime.

PATRIOTISM is firing a school bus driver in Seattle because she gave a one-fingered salute to Bush the Son.

PATRIOTISM is the quiet good taste with which the *New York Post* depicted James Baker III and Lee Hamilton, co-chairs of the Iraq Study Group, of whose report the *Post* disapproves. On 7 December 2006 they were shown on the front page, with their faces on the bodies of chimpanzees, as "surrender monkeys".

PATRIOTISM is attempting to meet the enlistment quotas of the U. S. armed forces by lowering those quotas, and by enlisting people with prison records, including Private Steven Green of the 101st Rapists, who with four buddies raped a 14-year-old Iraqi girl, and murdered her and her family.

PATRIOTISM is still failing to meet those enlistment quotas for May and June 2007. (*New York Times*, 10 July 2007)

PATRIOTISM is forbidding air passengers to take liquids onto airplanes, and defining "liquids" to include toothpaste and lipstick.

PATRIOTISM is several airlines going bankrupt rather than keep "security" guards from bullying passengers and thus driving them to other methods of transportation.

PATRIOTISM is the belief that the American soldiers who went to Iraq, gang-raped a 14-year-old girl, and then killed her and her entire family, will not do the same when they return to America.

PATRIOTISM is six carloads of police profiling and detaining six leaders of a mosque, all American citizens, when they drove over the Triborough Bridge, lining them up by the roadside, and handcuffing them. (*Newsday*, 10 May 2006)

PATRIOTISM is "a sweeping network of kickbacks, bribes, and fraud...in a scheme to inflate charges for flying freight into Iraq in support of the war." (*New York Times*, 21 July 2007)

PATRIOTISM is requiring Dr. Richard H. Carmona, Surgeon General from 2002 to 2006, to mention President Bush three times on each page of every speech he gave. (*Newsday*, 14 July 2007)

PATRIOTISM is furious protests over the establishment in Brooklyn of the Khalil Gibran International Academy, a public middle and high school which would specialize in the study of Arabic language and culture. Columns in the *New York Sun* by Daniel Pipes and Alicia Colon have claimed that the academy, which is named after a Christian Arab poet, would be a training school for terrorist Muslim fanatics. (*New York Times*, 4 May 2007)

PATRIOTISM is the claim that it would be extremely difficult to get American troops out of Iraq. (Actually, it would be quite easy. You just point your gun at the pilot of a supply plane and say, "Take me to France.")

PATRIOTISM is the principal cause of war.

## THE MINISTRY OF MISCELLANY

Today's Terrorism Alert Color Code is shit brindle, in reference to the feeling of Secretary of Homeland Absurdity Chertoff's declaration that he has a "gut feeling" that somebody or other is going to make a major terrorist attack on the United States. President Bush the Son, who is responsible for Chertoff holding this job, has claimed that there is no definite reason for this "gut feeling", and he should know, shouldn't he?

\*

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 75 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 Inflamm  
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. Players who phone in their moves should call me at 718-693-1579. An answering machine is attached to this phone.

# 2134

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 has informed me that, while Katz's may be New York City's most famous delicatessen, it has not been kosher for several decades. The big scandal broke sometime in the 1930s, when it was discovered that Katz's was selling shark meat.

Meanwhile, if you want to know what Katz's is chiefly famous for these days, I refer you to the best-known scene in the film *When Harry Met Sally*. That scene takes place in Katz's.

\*

Colin Bruce writes that the question of whether to send Prince Harry to Iraq with other British soldiers has been decided in the prince's favor - that is, he isn't going. "The army brass eventually decided that it was too dangerous to send him to Iraq because his presence might cause the locals to shoot at him, and this would endanger his colleagues! This was after jokers from Harry's regiment had teeshirts printed saying I'M NOT HARRY on them."

But religious fanaticism has accused another member of the British royal family. The eminent Indian author Salman Rushdie has been awarded a knighthood, an honor altogether in accord with his fame and the quality of his books. But some Muslims consider their faith insulted by his novel *The Satanic Verses*, and have blamed the Queen for Sir Salman's knighthood, apparently unaware of the fact that, with a few exceptions, she has nothing to do with deciding who becomes a knight. As a result, they have been threatening her life. This can be discounted as the usual blithering by religious fanatics, something we are already familiar with from their Christian equivalents in the United States. But let them think about it. If they can actually carry out this preposterous

plan, how many mosques, or Muslims, do they think will be left standing in Great Britain?

\*

Over four years ago I last published in Graustark #746 a bibliography of crime novels with historical settings, several of which have been reviewed in Graustark. I plan to published a revised and updated version of this bibliography in an upcoming issue. I would appreciate it if readers could send in bibliographic information about books which I have not yet listed. I would appreciate it even more if readers would write reviews of such crime novels.

\*

I did not attend Origins 2007 in Columbus on the first weekend of July. As always, the problem was in finding a hotel room reasonably close to the site of this gaming convention. I phoned one hotel alleged to have rooms, but they never returned my call. Either their rooms fill up early, or else Origins has got so large that Columbus no longer has adequate hotel space.

However, if any reader who did attend Origins 2007 wishes to write a report about it for Graustark, I would be glad to publish it.

\*

Greg Stafford's copy of Graustark #779, addressed to him at the office of his gaming firm Chaosium Inc., has come back in the mail. Can any reader provide a current address for him?

\*

The dwindling number of supporters of the American invasion of Iraq may be gratified to learn that there is an organization called "U. S. War Heroes of the Iraq War". However, this organization, whose e-mail address is <www.tomjoad.org>, is located in Canada, and supports the American troops who have fled to Canada to claim political asylum. These people are the true "heroes of the Iraq war". As to what will become of them in the course of history, note that the German government has erected a memorial honoring the men who deserted from the German armed forces during World War II.

(With thanks to John Biehl for this information. He also reports other Canadian organizations opposing this war, at <www.resisters.ca>, <www.couragetoresist.org>, and the Canadian Peace Alliance at <www.acp-pca.ca>, "the principal umbrella organization for peace in Canada, with 140 member groups.")

\*

There are computer programs for adjudicating Diplomacy moves, though I still prefer to do it by hand. But I doubt that a computer program for playing Diplomacy will ever be practicable. This feeling was confirmed by an article that appeared in the *New York Times* on 20 July 2007. It seems that a computer program, Chinook, now exists that can play a "perfect" game of Checkers. (For British readers, that's "Draughts".) The best that anyone can do against Chinook, which was developed at the University of Alberta over 18 years by a team led by Prof. Jonathan Schaeffer, is a draw.

(Try it yourself. The program's address is <www.cs.ualberta.ca/~chinook/play/>.)

Checkers is the most complex game that has yet been fully solved. Chess still awaits any such discovery, and it is debated whether any such thing is possible. Moreover, I would estimate that Diplomacy is a more complex game than Chess. For one thing, it has seven rather than two players, with the prospect of continual and continually changing negotiations among them. For another, while there are many possible tactics in Chess, there are only two possible strategies - checkmating your opponent, or desperately trying to hold him or her to a draw. The possible strategies in Diplomacy are innumerable.

\*

And how about Poker? A team of researchers at the University of Alberta has also developed a Poker-playing program called Polaris. (*New York Times*, 26 July 2007) Since so much of Poker involves psychological interactions among the players ("bluffing"), computer programs will probably be no more effective in the play of Poker than they would be in Diplomacy. "Rapid progress is being made in developing new algorithms in areas such as negotiation and commerce." (Thus Prof. Tuomas Sandholm of Carnegie Mellon University)

## IF THIS IS THE KALENDS IT MUST BE OLYMPIA

Lindsey Davis, *See Delphi and Die* (2005, St. Martin's Minotaur, NY; \$25)

This is the 17th in the author's series of the detective adventures of Marcus Didius Falco, subject of and sometimes investigator for Emperor Vespasianus in the Roman Empire of the first century CE. Reviews of the previous books may be found in Graustarks ##606, 608, 639, 641, 654, 671, 683, 706, 717, 731, 745, 759, 762, and 763.

These novels deal with aspects of life which have not changed much in two thousand years. This one, for example, deals with tour groups, travel agencies, guides, and their foibles. It would be rather more difficult, and require more research, to put Falco into a skirmish on the Dacian frontier, or have him investigate fraud in the sale of slaves. But by his time the Roman Empire was in control of the entire Mediterranean basin, and such extensions as Gaul, Britannia, and as much of the Middle East as could be pried away from the Parthian Empire or the region's smaller kingdoms. This meant that well-to-do Romans might be interested in touring the scenic attractions which their forebears had wrenched away from their builders or their legitimate rulers.

Chiefly this meant Greece, because while Rome's ascendancy meant public works and military bases, Greece's cultural, intellectual, and religious primacy was a part of every educated Roman's education. This meant that any Roman who could afford it was inclined to visit Greece and tour the places significant in Greek culture. Under these circumstances, Davis is quite safe in assuming the existence of travel agencies, guided tours, and tour guides.

However, there were some grim aspects to Greek mythology, which are not omitted from these tours. Greek myths were not always about gods seducing beautiful nymphs to beget stalwart heroes who grew up to slay monsters, rescue princesses, and inspire statuary. While investigating murders that took place during packaged tours provided by Seven Sights Travel, Falco encounters myths in which some ancient Greek took revenge upon an enemy, often a relative, by inviting him to a banquet and serving to his guests those guests' own children.

But to begin at the beginning. Falco is a *delator*, a Roman occupation usually translated as "informer" and given a bad reputation by historians who came from the upper classes. It was, after all, their relatives who were most likely to be informed upon for real or imaginary plots against emperors. But Falco prefers to regard himself as what we would call a detective, usually in private practice but sometimes on commissions from Emperor Vespasianus. He is not on any such commission here, but often finds that mention of his work for the emperor helps him get information from people, particularly if they are public officials.

Two Roman women, one a bride, have disappeared during Greek tours run by Seven Sights. Friends and relatives of these women prevail upon Falco to go to Greece and look into the matter. He travels with a sizable entourage: his wife Helena Justina, their British servant girl Albia, two of Falco's scapegrace nephews, his even more disreputable dog, and Glaucus, a young athlete and bodyguard who is the son of Falco's personal trainer. Since one of their planned stops is Olympia, Glaucus is also interested in prepping for the CCXIVth Olympic Games, which are scheduled for the following year. (Falco's daughters are left with Helena's mother, a senator's wife who has the slaves and facilities to look after two active toddlers.)

This group attaches itself to a tour group from Seven Sights, not always to the pleasure of its official tour guides. The stops include the major tourist attractions: Olympia, Corinth, Delphi, and of course Athens, where one of Helena's brothers is currently studying and gets involved in Falco's investigation. We get insights into the management of the Olympic Games, and of course an explanation of the oracle racket; Delphi turns out to be only the most famous of several expensive and ambiguous fortune-telling schemes.

As is usually the case in a murder mystery, no matter the date of its setting, the detective finds several other mysteries which complicate the ones he is out to solve. These have to be sorted out, and they finally are at a banquet in Athens. Here everything is settled at once, including the fates of the victims and the identities of their murderers. We do not see the arrests and punishments of the perpetrators, but the climax of the novel is so well written that we scarcely have to.



## 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 4 August 2007. See p. 6 for information about extending your subscription or joining a new game.

780 - Mike Fisher	787 - Eric Verheiden	799 - Brenton Verploeg
780 - Michael Neal	797 - W. Andrew York	

## THE MINISTRY OF MISCELLANY (continued from p. 7)

This program is designed for a currently popular and particularly carnivorous variety of Poker called "Texas Hold 'Em", "a two-player game in which some cards are hidden and others are playable by both sides." (This sounds like a sophisticated version of a Poker variant I learned as "Spit in the Ocean".) Two human players challenged Polaris, and both humans and computer achieved some victories, though humans proved to be the better bluffers. However, they "said that Polaris challenged them far more than their human opponents."

\*

Chess figures as a plot element in numerous books and even a few films. Perhaps the best known such book is Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*, which proceeds as a Chess game, although Carroll does not maintain a strict alternation of the moves of White and Black. And the best known Chess film is the game between Sir Antonius Block and the allegorical figure of Death, in Ingmar Bergman's film *Det Sjunde Inseglat* (*The Seventh Seal*). Bergman took this concept from actual medieval works of art, in which the eternally victorious figure of Death is seen playing Chess with a mortal. Earlier, Bertolt Brecht wrote a play about Galileo, in which he compared the astronomer's radical new view of the Solar System with the changes that had recently been made in the rules of Chess. However, Brecht apparently did not understand those changes, which produced the game we have today, because he mis-stated them.

Several films in which Chess is an element are cited in Dylan Loeb McClain's Chess column in the *New York Times* of 5 August 2007. One of them is *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (2001), which "has a chess scene with living pieces which is crucial in the plot...When the game depicted on screen has to be a real one to advance the plot, it is common for directors to turn to chess players." The Chess player called on for the Harry Potter film was the international master Jeremy Silman, as he explains on his Web site <jeremysilman.com>. McClain gives a diagram of the position. In the Forsythe notation it is 5r1k/1pN1R1pp/1Pb5/n1r1P1n1/7N/b2p4/7P/1R1Q2K1, "with the Black rook on f8 representing the character Hermione, the Black knight on g5 representing Ron (who has to sacrifice himself) and the Black bishop on a3 as Harry". McClain points out that there is a faster win for Black than the one given in the book, but that it involves sacrificing Harry.

I recall seeing, several decades ago, a film not mentioned by McClain. A valuable Chess set is bequeathed to two twin brothers who dislike each other strongly; one gets the white pieces and one gets the black pieces. Part of the plot involves reconciling them and getting them to re-unite the set. I cannot remember anything else about the film, and would appreciate it if a reader could identify it.

\*

Harry Manogg writes that the state of his health has required him to move to an assisted living facility. His new address is 63 Parker Hill Road, Landmark...Apt. 401, Boston, MA 02120. His new telephone number is 617-277-3037.

\*

Recently Brooklyn was hit simultaneously with a violent rainstorm that delivered eight centimeters of rain, flooding that suspended much subway and bus services, and an F2 tornado that hit the neighborhood of Bay Ridge, at the other end of the borough. Apparently horrendous reports of these events got on the national news media, because both our daughters phoned us from Maryland to find out whether we had been affected. Suffice it to say that we are well, and our neighborhood experienced only a few limbs

(continued on p. 11)

## THE GRAUSTARK DIRECTORY

Players in a current postal Diplomacy games are indicated by its Boardman Number, with the initial of the country being played, and with "S" indicating a substitute player. (E. g., "2006A-R" or "2002D-FS".) Paying subscribers will be indicated by the number of the issue with which the subscription expires. Other designations are:

C: complimentary copy for a gamer

N: entrant in the next Graustark postal Diplomacy game

R: complimentary copy for a non-gamer interested in the mystery novel reviews

T: trade copy

U: uncomplimentary copy

This directory is accurate to the date of 1 July 2007. Please let me know of any corrections or additions that need to be made, particularly if you want your nine-digit ZIP code, phone number, fax number, or e-mail address added to your listing. This is particularly important for electronic addresses, which seem to change more frequently than do postal addresses.

If you are already a Graustark subscriber when you decide to send in a game fee, then when the game begins, the number of issues you had coming when you joined will be added to your subscription once the game ends. After your name in the Directory will appear some such notation as "2004C-T+6".

Stephen Agar (T), 4 Cedar Gardens, Brighton BN1 6YD, ENGLAND; 01273-562430;

<stephen@stephenagar.com>

Hank Alme (2004C), 506 Paige Loop, Los Alamos, NM 87544; 503-672-0883;

<almehj@alumni.rice.edu>

Thom Anderson (R), #5-D, 10 Park Terrace East, New York, NY 10034

Ruth Berman (R), 2809 Drew Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55416-4209

John R. Biehl (2004C-R, 2006A-R), #8, 11530 84th Avenue, Delta, BC V4C 2M1, CANADA;

604-816-0460; <jrb@dccnet.com>.

Mark Blackman (C), Apt. 4A, 1745 E. 18th St., Brooklyn, NY 11229

Paul Bolduc (U), 203 Devon Court, Ft. Walton Beach, FL 32547-3110; 850-863-9081;

<prbolduc@aol.com>; <bolduc@eglin.af.com>

Anne Braude (R), 5313 W. Acapulco Lane, Glendale, AZ 85306-3416

Colin Bruce (2004C-T+6), 30 Almoners' Avenue, Cambridge CB1 8PA, ENGLAND

Jim Burgess (2006A-I, T), 664 Smith St., Providence, RI 02908-4327; 401-351-0287;

<burgess@world.std.com>; web page <<http://devel.diplom.org/DipPouch/Postal/Zines/TAP/index.html>>

Allan B. Calhamer (C), 501 N. Stone, La Grange Park, IL 60525-5523

Paul Cardwell Jr. (C), 1127 Cedar, Bonham, TX 75418-2913; 903-583-9296

Columbia Games Inc. (C), P. O. Box 3457, Blaine, WA 98231

Jim Dapkus (779), W6575 Dakota Ave., Westfield, WI 53964

Jim Dunnigan (C), 328 W. 19th St., New York, NY 10011

Paul Evans (T), 180 Aylsham Dr., Ickenham, Uxbridge, Middlesex UB10 8UF, ENGLAND

Mark Fassio (U), 276 Yates Lane, Pendleton, KY 40055-7751

Sue Feder (R), Historical Mystery Appreciation Society, 3 Goucher Woods Court, Towson,

MD 21286; fax 410-847-9303; <monkshould@home.com>; <<http://members.home.net./monkshould>>

Mike Fisher (780), #2, 43 W. Manheim St., Philadelphia, PA 19144-2942

Chris Hassler (T), 2000 S. Armour Court, La Habra, CA 90631; 562-690-7827; fax 562-690-

7827; <chassler@adelphia.com>

Sharon Heap (C), 2876 NY Route 26 South, Vestal, NY 13856

Raymond & Faith Heuer (R), 2nd floor, 9 Beacon Terrace, Keansburg, NJ 07734-1914

Tom Howell (T), 365 Storm King Road, Port Angeles, WA 98363; 360-928-9698;

<off-the-shelf@olympus.net>

Harley Jordan (2002D-RS, 2006A-G), 109 Sunnyside Dr., Rochester, NY 14623; 585-475-9832

Susan Keaveny (R), 1030 Tyrus Court, North Merrick, NY 11566-1035

Paul Koch (2004C), 24920 Fairmount Dr., Dearborn, MI 48124; 313-274-6579

Timothy Lane (R), P. O. Box 37281, Louisville, KY 40233-7281

Robert Lesco (T), 49 Parkside Drive, Brampton, Ontario L6Y 2H1, CANADA; 905-452-6304;

<rlesco@yahoo.com>

Andy Lischett (2002D-FS, T), 2402 Ridgeland Ave., Berwyn, IL 60402; 708-788-1507  
 Rick Loomis (C), Flying Buffalo Inc., P. O. Box 1467, Scottsdale, AZ 85252  
 Michael Lowrey (C), 6903 Kentucky Derby Drive, Charlotte, NC 28215-6507; 704-569-4269;  
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 Joseph T. Major (C), 1409 Christy Ave., Louisville, KY 40204-2040  
 Harry Manogg (C), 63 Parker Hill Road, Landmark...Apt. 401, Boston, MA 02120; 617-277-3037  
 Brad Martin (C), 180 Peninsula Road, Maylands 6051, Western Australia, AUSTRALIA;  
 <Westfront@hotmail.com>  
 Dan Mathias (2004C-G), 509 Bayview Drive, Lusby, MD 20657; 410-326-2568;  
 <dcmathias@comcast.net>  
 David Milliams (C), Paideia School, 1509 Ponce de Leon Ave., Atlanta, GA 30307-1666;  
 404-377-0032 fax; <milliams.david@paideiaschool.org>; <www.paideiaschool.org>;  
 <www.krause.com/static/comics.htm>;  
 Maggie Montgomery (R), Apt. 819, 325 W. 45th St., New York, NY 10036  
 Brendan Mooney (2004C-I), 423 Lenox Ave., Westfield, NJ 07090; 908-654-0527;  
 <bkmoooney@comcast.net>  
 Michael Neal (780), Apt. 809, 2355 Austin Hwy., San Antonio, TX 78218-5905  
 Albert A. Nofi (C), 3506 Duval Street, Austin, TX 78705; <anofi@aol.com>  
 Keith Wm. Oschman (U), Riverside Christian School, Lost Creek, KY 41348  
 Michael P. Quirk (2002D-GS, 2006A-T), Apt. 10, 2750 Brittany Terrace, Manhattan, KS  
 66502; 785-587-0872  
 Roberta Rogow (R), 1755-A Manor Drive, Irvington, NJ 07111  
 Karl Schmit (2006A-F), 1509 O'Keefe Road, De Pere, WI 54115; 920-338-8402;  
 <diplomacy@new.rr.com>  
 Bruce Schneier (C), Counterpane Systems, 101 E. Minnehaha Parkway, Minneapolis, MN 55419  
 Gary Tesser (R), #5-A, 2455 Haring St., Brooklyn, NY 11235  
 Eric Verheiden (2002D-IS, 787), 1805 Vista del Oro, Fullerton, CA 92831-1331;  
 <everheid@adelphia.net>  
 Brenton Verploeg (799), 1980 Tigertail Rd., Coconut Grove, FL 33133  
 Conrad von Metzke (C), 4374 Donald Ave., San Diego, CA 92117-3813; 858-270-8313;  
 <metske@san.rr.com>  
 Stephen T. Whitmore (C), 350 Old Paper Mill Road, Newark, DE 19711; 302-368-1127  
 Fred Wiedemeyer (2002D-ES, 2004C-F, 2006A-E), Box 92010, Meadowbrook RPO, Edmonton,  
 Alberta T6T 1N1, CANADA; 780-465-6432; cell 780-497-8283; <wiedem@planet.eon.net>  
 Don Williams (2006A-A), 27505 Artine Dr., Saugus, CA 91350-2193; 661-575-7252 (cell);  
 661-297-8947 (home); 909-350-6723 (business); 909-350-7676 (fax); <dwilliams  
 @fontana.org>; <www.fontana.org>  
 W. Andrew York (797), P. O. Box 201117, Austin, TX 78720-1117; <wandrew@compuserve.com>  
 William E. Young (N), 2304 James Buchanan Drive, Elizabethtown, PA 17022; 717-361-5768

THE MINISTRY OF MISCELLANY (continued from p. 9)

blown off trees.

\*

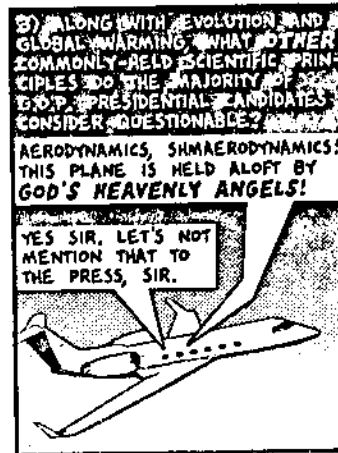
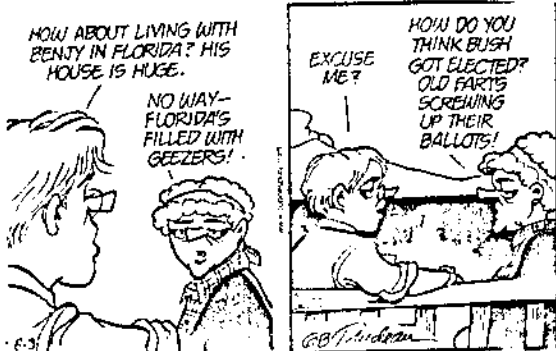
I cannot for the life of me make any sense out of the current presidential campaign and its candidates. For one thing, the election will not take place for another *fifteen months*, and the campaign has already been going on for over a year. Apparently the Democrats are so confident of winning that people qualified only by the possession of warm bodies are jumping into the race. Meanwhile, the Republicans realize that if a Democratic Attorney General is nominated by a Democratic President and confirmed by a Democratic Senate, several of their most respected party leaders will go to prison for unlawfully preventing presumed Democrats from voting in Florida and Ohio, or for preventing the counting of the votes of the Democrats that were allowed to vote. As a particularly notorious example, in 2000 the official vote tally in Florida recorded that Al Gore got a *negative* 16,022 votes in Valusia County. Staying out of jail has motivated a good many Republican candidates who, without these considerations, would prudently remain in private life and nominate, solely for his years of service, some amiable party hack such as Senator Dole, who received a worthless nomination for this reason in 1996.

Every announced Democratic candidate for the nomination, who was a U. S. Senator in 2002, is on record as voting for the infamous "USA PATRIOT Act" and in support of President Bush's private and personal invasion and annexation of Iraq. There is every reason to deny the presidency to such avowed enemies of our traditional civil liberties as these candidates, and I specifically include Killery Clinton among them. Although the withdrawal of all American troops and American interests from the Muddle East is now a compelling necessity, she and Senator Lieberman (I-CT) have introduced a bill to recruit 80,000 more troops for war in Iraq and Afghanistan.

And, if Killery Clinton wants to bomb Iraq and Afghanistan, her rival Senator Obama (D-IL) wants to bomb Pakistan. But this is small change next to the plans that Representative Thomas Tancredo (R-CO) has if his party should nominate and elect him President. If there is another event here, which he chooses to regard as "terrorism", he pledges to bomb the Muslim holy cities of Mecca and Medina. (*New York Times*, 7 August 2007)

Other Republicans are just as wacky. Senator McCain (R-AZ) endorses President Bush's famous "Surge", which is making more American troops available to the fire of Iraqi resistance fighters. Ex-Mayor Rudy Giuliani is famous for trying, unsuccessfully, to censor the exhibits in the Brooklyn Museum, and is obviously looking forward to "cleansing" the Smithsonian and the National Gallery of Art. Three other candidates for the Republican nomination have announced their rejection of evolution. The religious domination of the Republican Party goes even farther than that. The Republican platform in Texas, and presumably in other states as well, rejects separation of church and state.

Things could get worse. President Bush is firmly resolved to continue his war against Iraq. But, increasingly, the American people are opposed to it. Suppose that some Democratic candidate for the presidency perceives this, runs on that platform, and wins. Will President Bush then allow him to take office? This is a question that will have to be taken into consideration.



GRAUSTARK #780

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- ( ) - Your subscription expires with this issue.
- ( ) - Sample copy.
- ( ) - You missed a move in game \_\_\_\_\_. See p. \_\_\_\_.
- ( ) - A stand-by move is needed from you in game \_\_\_\_\_. See p. \_\_\_\_.
- ( ) - You may be interested in an item on p. \_\_\_\_.

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