

THE MARK NELSON EXPERIENCE (October 1992)

Welcome to Volume One, Issue Eight, of **The Mark Nelson Experience**.

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The Mark Nelson Experience is available for the "usual" (circulation this issue is 35). This zine contains Hobby discussion¹ and will fold with the September 1993 issue.

This is **West Riding Press Publications 220**

"No, there isn't enough news and gossip to fill a global hobby magazine." *Mike Siggins*
Electric Monk 31 (August 1991)

This issue I'm going through the back-log of letters that has accumulated. I'm also including a freebie for those of you that didn't make it to ManorCon: a copy of the ManorCon booklet. There was a huge stack of extra copies of this so I helped myself to thirty of them. 8-)

Regular attendees at the Yorkmeet will know that a reoccurring event is **The Grandmaster** grinning at the news of his his latest pay raise, pulling out a wodge of notes and counting them. Two by two they are counted back into the wallet from whence they came. Sometimes, if he is very good, Pete Sullivan is allowed to count them as well — he needs the practise. In dark corners there has been the suggestion, well more of a suggestion, that the Grandmaster is more than a touch tight about redistributing his wealth. Let me take this opportunity to cast aside these childish rumours. At both the August and the October Yorkmeets the Grandmaster bought the assembled brethren a round. The High Holy Fen have been consulted and I can now tell you that this is believed to be a hobby record. Can he make it thrice, with two hobby meets left in 1992 interest is high!

THIS IS... YOUR LETTER! WELL IT SHOULD BE...

Mark Boyle, 15 Linn Park Gardens, Johnstone, RENFREWSHIRE. PA5 8LH (17th July 1992).

"Pete Birks deserves his eyes poked out for his patronising "*Mark Nelson has just devoted a whole issue... to the discussion of UBend and the irrepressible Haz, which underlines UBends significance to the present hobby*".² Every time you comment on another hobbyist, or their zine, out comes the cliché 'Mark's doing it for self-publicity'. It's becoming so boring and predictable, it should appear in **Electric Monk**."

"Well said on your mailing system for MNE. I got the same crap for my **Rotten Easter Special**, 99% of the time from those who never bothered to respond to its contents, and whinging to Dave Carter at that!"

"Your bit on Richard Sharp was spot on. Run one game of Dip and you're part of the Diplomacy Hobby. That makes **Take That You Fiend** a sportszine in his book (it has no contact with **Scorpio**, **Hopscotch** or the Downes zines etc worth talking about) and **Scorpio** (which has no contact with any mainstream Diplomacy orientated zines) a Diplomacy zine. What a TIT! That clinches it, he's finally gone ga-ga: send him off to the 'Lamb and Flag Granny Farm' for bewildered geriatric editors."³

¹Actually it contains Crazy Markie writings about the Hobby.

²This comment comes from a recent ish of **Greatest Hits**

³Also known as the Steve Doubleday annexe

"The last couple of issues have had me worried Mark, about what's going on in the mainstream hobby. MNE (*April 1992*): "Mr Nelson was being spanked by Mr Bowen whilst Mr Sullivan watched" and "Mr Nelson is said to be preparing himself for another round of spanking". Firth & Inte, that Bowen's turning you lot into the next Viennamob at these meets it seems. And what of Harry Bond (age ?)⁴. Bisexual conference leaflets? Are they putting testosterone in the envelope gum thesedays, or is there another explanation for your bunch turning into sex crazed perverts? I shudder to think what will happen at ManorCon! (Thank goodness the Viennamob and Football Crazy supporters are no more, or the whole event would be busted by vice)."

Crazie Markie: I have always enjoyed licking the envelopes...

Mark Boyle, 15 Linn Park Gardens, Johnstone, RENFREWSHIRE. PA5 8LH (4th August 1992).

"Nelson, I hate you! You planned this deliberately didn't you? You waited for me to painstakingly reread all those MNE's so I could comment on the bits I wanted to, get my letter list sorted properly so I could tell you what's what here, only for me to bump into the postman as I'm going out to post my overdue epistle who hands me an envelope marked 'University of Leeds'! Gaarrgh!!!"

"Mission From God's problem is a perpetual lack of identity and direction. One minute the, so-called, entertaining as well as informative zine, the next an excuse to show what pretty pictures one can make with a Desktop Publisher."

"The first incarnation didn't fizzle out, it was killed outright thanks to the "ego, yellow journalism and the nonsense world of would be Hearts" (to quote Richard Egan) it supported itself upon. Brown nosing the 'in crowd' and spitting on the pariahs, it inevitably went that bit too far (or rather they got caught out by those they hadn't the courage to bad mouth directly). One counterblast from Mssrs Boyle, Egan, Howe and O'Brian later, tapped with the bumbling attempts at countering them by Bate and Doubleday (the old story of children trying to do a man's job) successfully discredited the existing team as a bunch of social climbers at best, two faced scum at worse. The obvious thing for them to do would be to hand over the editorship — instead they tried the old cliché/ of crawling up to those they'd so vitriolically condemned before. Old readers puked and left, and after their previous performances the new ones weren't fooled and did the same. Even the rather sad roping in of Dave Carter failed to stop virtually every sportsgame player (part timer to full) leaving en mass after Doubleday's infamous comments and Bate's biased reviews to anyone ramming their tongue up his rectum (see **Football Crazy**) became wider known and folk rushed up to become disassociated."

"The Key takeover was simply too late — the MFG name one for scorn. Whilst its ousted, failed, former chief Bowen crashed to the sidelines like an expelled member of the NF; the new reviewers turned out the "tale of Peter Rabbit" and "Winnie The Pooh" reviews. The occasional swipes were predictable and obvious: the worm turns, but it remains a worm all the same."

"To digress for a minute, I fully agree with you on the point of design and layout of zines. Where's the experimentation gone, the attempts at new styles? Gone thanks to bloody Amstrad and Apple, with the former using them as designer typewriters that don't improve the style of their zines one iota whilst the latter restrict themselves to the example columns inside their PC Users Guides (hence the newspaper look fetish which is the bane of all 'pretty' zines) and their graphic packages."

"By the way, shouldn't you be calling the mimeo crowd the neo-luddites and not the P.C crowd. The luddities destroyed new machines that threatened the existence of old ways and machinery (in their case that required more manpower). Or is it something to do with them trying to destroy the mimeograph machines? You've got me puzzled."

⁴22ish, a young whippersnapper is young Bond

"I suppose I ought to get a copy of MFG soon, if only to see which zines are being produced in Britain (forget elsewhere — since when did a British listing zine ever cover what was going on abroad?). Electric Monk doesn't tell me."

"I loved your MFG — especially the thermo nuclear strikes. But why miss out on Froggy, you shouldn't let a technicality like 'it's folded' put you off. And the Smodnoc review was classic."

"I had no idea Obsidian was still going — the Daily Mail of Diplomacy (locked in a 1920's timewarp). And Pigbutton — good grief. Who runs the Mark Nelson Experience?"

"Dave Carter's gonna love you for saying Scorpio ain't part of the hobby. He fumed for ages over Scorpio being dubbed a crossover zine by Bate and Bowen when they ruined ran MFG. What the hell's that supposed to mean? The GM's a rap MC? The editor's a transvestite? Utter twaddle. Scorpio's a sportsfolk zine that runs Diplomacy & other boardgames and that's that. It is also a proud 'Mainstreamer Free Zone' — long may it continue (despite David Oya's arrival, we are safe. If Rosie Robert's joins however, or worse, action will be taken...)"

"Is there such a thing as a mainstream *anything* anymore, anyway? (In this country anyway)."

"Is Dunx Proffitt or whatever really in Jail?"

MARKIE SAYS: *We can only hope so! Sometimes I have wondered about faking my own death, I could then read what was said about me behind my back! I have wondered if Dunky might have done the same, whose word do we have that 'no-one has been able to contact him'? Perhaps I should look into this a little deeper... The use of the phrase PC is a play on both PhotoCopy and Political Correctness.*

Ben Goodale, 3 Devonshire Terrace, GLASGOW. G12 0XE, (5th August 1992)

"Thanks for The Mark Nelson Experience. It is quite an interesting variation of fanzine production, this extended essay focusing in depth on a topic."

"Unlike recent issue covering such fascinating (er...) topics such as Harry Bond, an analysis of MFG is certainly comprehensible to me. I haven't seen it since the second issue, Bowen never having posted me one of his as he promised (I never forget a promised trade!) sometime in 1988. Certainly I thought the value of MFG under Pete Tulk was its off the wall approach; it was hard hitting, entertaining, but gave the newcomer all the relevant information. What more do people want? Reviews cannot be allowed to become merely soft soap approaches. This was the basis of many an argument, as you will doubtless recall, in the frup hobby. A rather cynical review of Cerebretron in Utter Drivel #15 somewhat upset Alex Bardy; reviews can hurt. However, the punters have to be told. If they get an honest opinion, not a soap advert, then they takes their chances. What good is it giving every zine a bland review, the punters don't know where to turn, so they perhaps buy the wrong one and possibly never bother to shop around again?"

"I say: Bring back Pete Tulk!"

Jack McHugh. 280 Sanford Road, Upper Darby, PA 19082. USA (30th August 1992)

"If this were an ideal world I'd agree with your suggestion that the DipCon committee should organizes decent publicity for the event — but this isn't an ideal world and I suspect that asking the DipCon organizers to find the time, energy and money to advertise is a bit much."

CRAZY MARKIE: *But why did they take the job on if they can't be bothered to organise non-hobby publicity for the event? That should be a requirement in getting the job, not a luxury thrown to Dipdom by a committee feeling generous.*

“Re: Avalon Con — lack of space will be Avalon Con’s down fall unless AH wise up and move the damned thing. Right now the Penn Harris Hotel is bursting at the seams trying to hold all of AH’s events.”

“The Midwest area of the DipCon Zonal system is basically the Chicago — Milwaukee — Detroit area. I believe that the three most Eastern Canadian provinces (Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Quebec) and part of Ontario are all in the East. Most of the rest of Canada in is in the Midwest and few other provinces — notatably the Northwest and Alberta are in the West.

Eric Brosius, 41 Heyward Street, Milford, MA 01757 USA (September 9th 1992)

“I thought **Electric Monk** a lovely zine, but it unfortunately did not inspire a single loc from me in however many issues I received, which is a good sign that it’s not the zine for me.”

Andrew York, P.O. Box 2307, Universal City, TX 78148-1307, USA. (22/08/92)

“I finally had the chance to sit down and read the July issue of **The Mark Nelson Experience** and your **Mission From Ghod**. It sounds like the British hobby is having problems with their ‘review zine’ that are just about as bad as ours (though of a different variety).”

“I really enjoyed your reviews — ‘two thermo-nuclear strikes’, absolutely hilarious. I hadn’t realized that there were that many British zines, though it shouldn’t have surprised me when I think about it.”

“I’ve recently heard from Per Westling and Iain Bowen. I’ve also added Adrian Appleyard to my trade list. Thanks for the help!!”

Steve Doubleday, Norton House, 46 Whielden St., AMERSHAM. HP7 0HU. (September 1992).

“Oh well. I expect you think I keep writing about various of these games for the good of my soul. I don’t. Having just written off a diatribe against the likes of En Gardel and Soccerdross, and trading the at least regular **Gallimaufry** for the unbelievably infrequent **Mouth** ...”

CRAZY SPEAKS: I’m not sure where you dreamt that I owe you a favour — probably the same place Richard Sharp dreams up the results for finished diplomacy games. Although I initially thought that internet email games should receive UK Boardman Numbers, if run by a UK GM, I have come to the conclusion, as have all the main figures in the internet diplomacy community, that internet games should receive internet numbers and that there is no reason whatsoever to get Boardman Numbers for these games. If you like you can label these numbers as ‘transferred outside the British sector’ in your records.

MARKIE: As for the other games. Mark Firth tells me that he will mail you the details for 1989BA.⁵ As for the other games I simple can’t understand why you have written me so many letters. Richard’s going to invent a result for each of these games without paying any attention to their actual result, can’t he be a little more creative and invent a supply-center table as well? It’s not as if I’m asking him to invent the player names, he already has these on file.

Halford Dace, 3 Rhodes Avenue, Westville 3630, SOUTH AFRICA (21st September 1992)

“I really appreciate the zines you mailed me. I’ve learnt more about the hobby, fandom and fannishness in the last 48 hours than in nearly a year of email play. One comment about email — it tends to be very games-orientated rather than fannish (understatement?). Let me run through my impressions zine by zine.”

⁵the details are in the post, or soon will be, probable. REAL SOON NOW. Maybe

THE CRAZED ONE: *The internet diplomacy hobby is a separate entity to the snail-mail hobby with only one or two points of linkage. It's almost entirely dominated by games and rating systems. The Compuserve BBS approach has produced a much more fannish community. Whilst a number of Compuserve fans have made significant contributions to the snail mail hobby (for example Tom Nash and Jack McHugh) I can't think of anyone moving from the internet community to snaildom.*

"C'est Mag. (You gave me issues 103, 105, 106, 107, 108 & 109.) Most of the lettercols discussed the, then, forthcoming General election and the feeling was that the result would be much closer than it actually was. (Is it okay to express an opinion on other country's political organizations? I think so. I got jumped on in a FidoNET discussion by an American for saying something nasty about the Republicans, then a Democrat rushed to my defence.)"

"C'Mag is a nice, balanced zine. Not Earth-shattering, but pleasant reading (or it would be if Pete stopped using that yellow paper!). The lettercols were interesting — a diversity of views and opinions."

"Arfle Barfle. I liked the cover (issue 36, an intrepid fish running across land) and the zine was entertaining. The lettercol got quite heated and I enjoyed the cartoons."

"Nertz. What can I say? Different. Basically, I think the writing's great. A bit too much on films I've never heard of, but blame the South African Distributors — I take it William is not a neo-Nazi. The political discussion was really interesting. It would help if the presentation was more readable, trying to follow the columns was quite a task. I'll forgive William though, since he superimposed one of the pages on a Doonesbury cartoon. The man has taste."

"Finally, the 'Fannish Fanzine' TMOS. Really nice, with great insight into the hobby. (Some of the victims of your more — um — sharp-tongued side may tell me differently though ;-) I see you're not in the habit of mincing words — even in public. I did notice a number of 'I hate neofen' type quotes from you, as well as a rather amusing one from Iain Bowen."

"I must say, 31 pages of 'hobby news' is about as good as you get."

"Anyway, I think you've inspired me to start pubbing, if only to get trades going."

"Our Post Office/Customs obviously didn't like your writing or something. They opened the envelope of zines. Probably looking for Communist Propaganda or something - I don't think they've outgrown that one yet ;-)"

Halford Dace, 3 Rhodes Avenue, Westville 3630, SOUTH AFRICA (22nd September 1992)

"Course you need toadies, Course you do. In fact, I'm angling for toadies myself. We all need one, preferable more. I have this odd feeling that one day a 'toady loop' rather than a 'toady hierarchy' will develop, you know, the guy you control is controlling the guy who's controlling you sort of thing, just bigger."

"Organisations often do lend themselves to infighting, and the more formally constituted the organisation, the tougher the infighting. But, I won't say I'd always oppose some kind of charter or whatever. Having no regulation or order can have problems as well, such as squabbling over who gets the next WDC."

"I have no problem with being your toady for a while as a step on my path to being dictator of America (I'll find their constitution and create the necessary conditions!)"

"Absolutely. This is why toadydom suits me right now. You are helping me immensely, and I am boosting your ratings ;g; If I were to have gone into all this blindly (well, I wouldn't have if it hadn't been for you ;sob;), I would have made a severe cock-up."

Doug Kent, 54 West Cherry Street, #211, Rahway, NJ 07065. USA (23rd September 1992)

“Andy York magnifies the crucial error so many people make about the ZR — it was *supposed* to be a Zine Directory, not a Zine Review Service. Of course, it all depends who the editor is and what his or her viewpoint is.”

“An ultimate final judge on any zine are the subbers. How can **The Canadian Diplomat** be as bad as ZR says, when so many people subscribe to it? Doesn't make much sense, unless you think all North American dipsters are masochists. Then again, some must be — people still sub to my zines, don't they?”

The Crazy One Says: Come on! A zine with a large subscribership can be rubbish! The zine might have been excellent and attracted a large readership and then gone down hill. Under such circumstances many players would continue to sub, not wanting to drop out of their games. They might just have really poor taste in zines and there are some excellent zines with small circulations. (However, The Canadian Diplomat is an excellent zine.

“If you're going to be Sack McHugh's toady, you'll therefore be my sub-toady, and any toady of yours will be my sub-sub-toady. Sack is and always will be my number one attack-dog and toady. He tells people I am his toady, but I told him to say that to throw my enemies off base.”

“If you want to win a Sack McHugh imitation contest, just remember that as soon as it appears you will lose a game (of anything), start complaining 'this game is unbalanced.' Sack McHugh is the only person I know who claims Chess is unbalanced regardless of what side he is playing.”

Andrew York, P.O. Box 2307, Universal City, TX 78148-1307, USA. (11/10/92)

“I chuckled at Peter Sullivan's comment that I may be another Nelson pseudonym. I hope that a second RW sent his way after I received a letter from him will clear that up. However...”

NGC: Zine Literarcy Commission

Gallimaufry 124 (*October 1992*) contains an excellent DaytoDay idea. Thinking about starting a zine? Do you have the time to run a zine? Yes? That's good. Can you afford to publish a zine, you could lose a great deal of money? Yes? That's good. Do you know the rules for the games that you are going to run, that'll help cut down on the number of GMing mistakes? Yes? That's excellent. You've got the time to produce a zine, you've got the money *and* you think you'll make a good gm, what else could you possible require to publish a zine...

Oh I see. You don't think that the quality of your writing is high enough. Worried that editors in high places might smirk behind your back about your editorials? The solution is simple. Please send DayDay a two-page sample of your writing and *for no fee* Steve will burn your offering and offer it up to the Pagan Ghods. And if the Pagans Ghods say Yes then you will will be allowed to pub your zine.

As I say, this is an excellent idea and a very valuable hobby service. I hope DaytoDay won't restrict it to editors though. It makes sense that before any proto-novice enters is allowed to play their first game they first provide two sample diplomacy letters. If these letters are of sufficiently high literary merit then they will be allowed to enter a game. If not, well we don't want them in the hobby do we?

DayDay has provided the basis for an outstanding new hobby service and I hope he will soon set up the Hobby Literary Standards Commission: you know it makes sense...

“Yorkshire people have a long-standing reputation for dourness, pig-headedness, and arrogance. Is this true of all Yorkshire folk?” *Andy Key Electric Monk 19 (June 1990)*