

C.R.
1983-1989

R.B.M.
1990-1996

D.B.M.
1979-1983

SHANKS

RAMBLINGS BY MOONLIGHT #54

March 15, 1997 Final Issue ? \$2.00

What sort of man can make dinner, give his baby boy a bath, read his daughter bedtime stories, then split a row of firewood for the winter? A Man of the 90s- that's me.

Publisher: Eric Ozog. Circulation: 40. Cover art this month: A Golden Book.

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Subscriptions: Closed. 50 cents/turn for games on flyer (good for all your games until completion).

Standby List: Bob Acheson, Doug Kent, Timothy Lurz, Paul Milewski, Michael Quirk, Eric Schlegel, Andy York. These will be the only folks I'll call on until the games end.

Colonial Diplomacy: Cancelled. Bob, Timothy and Kevin: fees have been transferred to subscription accounts to finish dip games at 50 cents/turn until the games finish, then refunds will be given for any remainder.

Why I'm Moving On

Well, the cover of the zine says it all- Shannon and Ryan come into my life and let's say there is a change of priorities. I just wasn't able to sustain the zine anymore due to time and financial constraints. I simply don't have the large blocks of time to work on it like I used to; juggling a family with career now just about takes it all up. I also haven't been able to afford the \$60+ per month for printing and postage. Even though about half the issues were paid by subscribers, the other half have gone out free to family, friends, and trades. Although I could undoubtedly be more efficient through better time-management, I'm burned out and I still won't have the extra cash to spend on the zine. In 1995 and most of 1996 we were feeling financially squeezed, until I went to northeast Oregon last summer for three weeks helping with the fire-fighting effort there. I cleared about \$3,900 over my regular salary, which was a real shot in the arm (and we spent about every penny of it catching up on fixing teeth, fixing cars, filling up heating oil for the winter, etc).

It was a financial sacrifice for us to take the transfer to Verlot, although for quality-of-life reasons we don't regret the move one bit. Cathy quit her insurance job to be a full-time mom and I became the full-time bread-winner. Our new (and more traditional) roles and a single income took some getting used to, but we're doing well. I survived the latest round of Forest Service downsizing and believe my career is looking solid. I got a "superior" job performance rating and a raise to go along with it, so this year should be easier to pay the bills, especially if I make "going out on fires" an annual thing. Still, all we're doing is trading water (like millions of other American working-class families) and in this economy nothing is secure. It disturbs me that this nation is replacing "We the People..." with "...of the Corporation, by the Corporation, and for the Corporation." However, there was some political candidate who said the answer to the shrinking economic pie was that people just had to get out there and bake more pies! Anyway I'm going to stop whining and might start some kind of home-based business eventually. I have some entrepreneurial spirit in me and there has to be an alternative out there somewhere to make honest money besides writing bogus checks like the "Freemen" do or joining the Church of Amway. Cathy is also thinking about writing professionally once the kids start grade school.

I really appreciate all the support DipDom has given me over these last five years of publishing, and the friends Cathy and I have gained. As a zit-faced 17 year old I first joined DipDom in 1978, by getting in a game in Don Horton's zine *Claw & Fang*, published *Diplomacy By Moonlight (DBM)* from 1979-1983 (the first 2 years as subzines in *Claw & Fang* and *Le Front*), met my future wife Cathy at DipCon in Detroit in 1983, and occasionally wrote a subzine in Cathy's *Rambblings (CR, 1983-1989)*. Logged thousands of freeway miles while on the housecon circuit (generally Madison-Kalamazoo-Wichita, and Russ Rusnak's in the south Chicago suburbs) during the first half of the '80s. Met the East Coast Clique in '81-82. I had to prove I was real to John Boardman by showing him my driver's license. Was first rejected and then befriended by Kathy Byrne-now-Caruso. Admittedly my hobby involvement has been rocky and sporadic over the years, but the Big Score was finding Cathy, which is a hobby fairytale and a story in itself. I didn't really believe Cathy was serious until a few people nudged me in the right direction. Russ started it with the infamous "date form," which I sent to Cathy and she filled it out! (see inside historical document). Jim-Bob told Cathy I was "in to" Elfquest. And Kathy Byrne was blunt with me: "that girl loves you!" Cathy flew out to Chicago to meet me, and our fate was sealed at Dipcon in Detroit in 1983.

I became entangled in some hobby feuds (although to a lesser degree than others) on and off during the 1980s. I was Bernie Oaklyn's buddy. Oh well, I was a "zit-faced teen" (quote Terry Tallman) and later a twenty-something who didn't know any better. I enjoyed slinging some mud once in a while (the streak of chaos in me), but I outgrew it, realizing it is counterproductive and a waste of time. Moved with Cathy to Flagstaff, Arizona in 1986, dropping mostly out of sight from the Dip scene to go back to college to study forestry, and managed to make a couple more Midwestern cons. Landed a permanent job with the Forest Service in 1990, with Cathy and I relocating to Washington state. Started up RBM in 1991, and I think my writing style matured a great deal since the wild 'n' woolley days of DBM. Five years publishing seems too short. I wish it could have been ten, until the year 2000 (the End of the World as We Know It), but will have to settle for 1998. Now that I'm 35, reality is hitting me: it's time to move on, putting more focus on family, career, health, and making ends meet. Looking at the cover of RBM again, I don't see it so much as an end, but as a beginning of something else.

I think DipDom's future is in E-Mail, as it is a far less expensive and more reliable medium than the postal Dip Zine. Of course the technology is here, as is being demonstrated. I could do it if I had the time, but even if I did, I believe it wouldn't be worth losing the tactile, fannish, home-made feel of a paper zine in this virtual world. Time to stand aside and let the cyber-punks take over, I guess. Who knows what the future will hold, however; I might decide to continue as a chat-only zine. It's unlikely at this time but I'll leave that door open. In the meantime I won't disappear completely, but will just sit on the sidelines for now, staying in touch with some folks via my annual Christmas letter. Once my paper-games end I plan on hanging out occasionally in cyber-world, playing in and GMing a game of electronic dip. Might write record reviews for Jim-Bob's *Abyssinian Prince* sometimes--the graveyard zine of Hobby old farts--as he won't let me get lost.

Now for some housekeeping. I have continued to run my five remaining games on flyer for 50 cents a turn. *Dark Side of the Moon*, *BNC Blues*, and *Cheyenne* have just ended, and *Nisqually* and *Maricopa* are still underway. Any remaining sub balances have been paid back with this issue, except for the *Nisqually* and *Maricopa* players, and minus \$2.00 for this double issue. Check out this last blowout issue as it contains some fun, earlier articles from DBM and CR, written by various folks about some of the Cons. Enjoy!

"I see that the as yet anonymous sponsors of the 'Eric Ozog' hoax have decided to give it up. Considering the poor judgement in releasing it on fandom in the first place, it was probably the best decision that Tretick, or Linsey, or Lakofka, or whoever, could have made. Ozog, ferchrissake! It sounds like the name of an evil Martian high priest from a bad science-fiction pulp story of forty years ago. 'Saved!' cried the beautiful Fallopia, daughter of the eccentric Professor Barthelin, as she saw the stalwart spaceman Mike deltoid charge through the cowardly horde of evil acolytes. 'Fallopia!' cried her hero. 'Now I can take you back to Earth in my hypership!' He swept her into his arms, when they heard a sinister voice hiss, 'Not so fast, Earthlings! You have not yet reckoned with me.' Turning in dismay, the heroic pair saw the evil high priest Ozog..." --John Boardman, 1981

(Old) News On the Home Front

This is quite a bit dated (events of last year) but still interesting, included in last year's Christmas letter with some additions.

It has been an interesting year for terrestrial and extraterrestrial events. No, the Aliens haven't landed yet, but with all the alien-invasion related movies and television shows on these days, you'd think they were coming over for dinner at your house next week. It must be the approach of the end of the millenium....

First we were able to catch a spectacular view of Comet Hyakutake last March. We were lucky to have one of those rare clear spring nights in Verlot on the day the comet was closest to the Earth, and it was so impressive I ran back to the house to drag Cathy outside in the cold. "Cathy, you have to see this, this is a once-in-a-lifetime!" There it was, a hazy round sphere the size of the moon and the long-long tail streaking over a quarter of the night sky. Seeing this really reinforces that we are a part of a living, dynamic, universe. There's a new comet (Hale-Bopp) in the neighborhood right now. Hale-Bopp is 25 miles in diameter but will be over 120 million miles away at its closest point. From pictures I've seen so far it looks as bright as the brighter stars and has a short tail, but because it is only visible in the north-northeast in the wee hours of the morning, I'll likely not boot my butt out of bed early enough to see it. Melody told me she and Tim were surprised to see the comet about five this morning (Friday March 14) over Green Mountain; they didn't expect to see it and it looks quite impressive. They're not exactly rocket scientists (I'm not either, although I'm somewhat more astronomically savvy) but for them to notice it, this comet must really stand out. It would be devastating if one of those hit the Earth- the theory of the dinosaurs going extinct as a result of a meteor or comet impact is generally accepted now. We're realizing more than ever that there have been and will be a variety of extraterrestrial influences on the Earth- why just recently a solar storm knocked out AT&T's \$200 million communications satellite (and you wondered why your long distance went up!).

Then there was the earthquake which happened last May. The quake registered 5.4 on the Richter scale and its epicenter was in Duvall, Washington, a small town about 25 miles south-southwest of Verlot (as the crow flies). It hit about 9:00 at night, and Cathy and I thought it was anything but an earthquake because we've never experienced an earthquake before (she thought at first it was thunder and I thought a plane was going to crash). It sounded like a loud roar and the house shook, but there was no

damage, not even anything falling off a shelf. Once we determined, "duh, we're having an earthquake, get under a doorway!" it quit; it only lasted about 20-25 seconds. An aftershock hit about an hour later, which felt like a big, short-lived crash- like a sonic boom but not as loud. Shannon slept through it all and Ryan was comfortable in Cathy's arms. An interesting experience, and a wake-up call for the region to be prepared for the "Big One," which is long overdue for the whole west coast.

During the summer the Verlot area had two noteworthy wildlife sightings. Wayne and Tim, employees here at Verlot, were driving up the Mt. Pilchuck road when they saw a "wolf" dart from the shoulder of the road into the trees. I said, "didn't you just see a big dog or coyote?" and they said "no way," they were sure it was a wolf; it was too big and it had a shiny black and silver coat and a massive head. Another sighting was a mountain lion, which crossed the highway in front of a man's car, about 100 yards from the Verlot compound gate and went into the woods behind my house! I called Cathy from the ranger station, "make sure the kids and the pets are inside." So it's kind of exciting that we live in an area of the country which still has some wildness left.

In June two 10-12 year old boys were injured in the Ice Caves. They were with a YMCA youth group out of Seattle, were told not to go in the ice caves, so what did they do? They went inside the ice caves. They were goofing around and the boy's buddy threw a rock into the ice ceiling of the cave and a big chunk of compact snow and ice fell on top of them both, knocking them down, cutting one kid on the head and bruising the other's collar bone and ankle. They were able to walk out to the trailhead, where an ambulance took them to Everett General. The TV station came out and interviewed me (we hiked in to the scene of the accident), so that was kind of fun being the "ranger" having a TV camera shoved in my face.

My mother from the Chicago area visited us for 2-1/2 months from May into August. It was great having her here with the grandkids, as she is creative, doing little projects with the kids- little nuances that only grandmas can do like painting ponies and rainbows on stones for Shannon. We did a great deal of sight-seeing during that time- took a ferry or "bus-boat" (as Shannon called it) to the San Juan Islands, drove to Vancouver, Canada, saw Mts. Baker and Shuksan from Artist's point (an awesome overlook!), hiked to the Big Four Ice Caves (which is like being in a primeval rock garden, with the sheer cliffs of Big Four Mountain rising 4,000 feet above us), and drove along the Mountain Loop Highway through the mountains along the Sauk River. Also she and I painted the bathroom and our computer-office. My sister Paula also came out for 10 days in September. Unfortunately the weather had turned rainy, with the Cascades getting a fresh dusting of snow! Paula got to see "Ranger Eric" in action, hiking with the school kids on a field trip to the Ice Caves.

Joan Extrom and Ken Corbin visited us for a weekend in August, and no sooner than they got here on that Friday I was dispatched to a forest fire in northeastern Oregon, about 60 miles south of Pendleton. I gathered up my gear and caught prop-flights to Portland and Pendleton. That part of Oregon is a land of extremes, with frost common in the summer and 60 degree day/night temperature swings (90 at day, 30 at night!). I was a part of a security team in fire camp on the Bull Fire, which consumed about 10,000 acres. Two other fires in the vicinity, the Summit and Tower fires, blackened about 50,000 acres apiece. One moment of excitement was helping the communications unit leader set up a radio repeater on the top of Desolation Butte, in which we had to drive through part of a burning area to get there. The highlight of my three week tour was the evacuation of our fire camp, when the Summit and Tower fires were making a run. The fire crews had

just returned for dinner about 7:00 pm, and we were evacuating them back to their school buses at 9:00. The smoke in the sky was just totally black, like a tornado was going to hit. It was a chaotic evacuating what amounts to a small city (1,500-2,000 people) in about an hour, and the place looked like a ghosttown afterwards, with empty tents everywhere (a couple were rolling around camp in the wind- I called them "nylon tumbleweeds"). Fortunately no one got hurt and it turned out we weren't in danger- the fire complex never moved closer to camp. But you can never take chances when it appears the fire is coming your way. Overall I liked the experience and might become a security manager someday. What impressed me the most was how diverse the people working the fire were- including Hispanic and American Indian crews. The overhead team was based out of Atlanta.

My supervisor (the security manager) is a colorful individual who is half Cherokee Indian and owned a ranch in Oklahoma. He and I had some lively discussions on states rights (he was pro-states rights, I was the loathesome Federalist). The funniest statement he said was he was convinced the South lost the civil war because each southern state had it's own railroad gauge. None of the tracks lined up to move the troops and war materials quickly, so when a train would reach a state border they'd have to unload and load onto the other train. Meanwhile, the industrialized North had a standardized track width. Anyway, he was linking the Civil War as a war over states' rights and I said, "that's right, the Feds did some good!" by pointing out that without the Feds you'd have 50 independent countries with none of the train tracks lining up (an extreme example, but my point being that yes, some things are best left to the states, but the Feds do have a role to play in setting national standards and regulations beneficial to the nation as a whole.

Another funny thing happened while a group of us security folks were milling about for a few minutes (no, we weren't eating doughnuts and drinking coffee, it was a slow period during the afternoon) talking about something and then I spotted one of those infamous unmarked black helicopters fly over our fire camp. I looked up and pointed to the others, "that was a black helicopter." I thought black helicopters were the stuff of legend, in the figment of the imaginations of anti-government militia groups, and here it was: an unmarked black helicopter, probably on some clandestine mission of the U.N. against the United States. After it passed, the conversation picked up again where it left off, and about a few minutes later I confirmed again in a deadpan voice: "that was a black helicopter." Everyone cracked up.

Another highlight was being able to shake the hand of then Chief of the Forest Service Jack Ward Thomas, who was touring fire camps in the Blue Mountains of Oregon. Another legend, he looked just like Santa Claus. I told him I thought he was making a difference and he said he hoped we all were.

Our fire camp was fairly quiet- a couple of stolen wallets and lots of lost and found items. I was in charge of the lost and found, and also drew up maps of the fire camps, showing locations of all the facilities and sleeping areas (the drawings became complicated affairs, and updated them every couple days (my drafting skills came in handy here). Overall, although I slept on the ground in my tent for three weeks and it was hard being away from the family, the overtime pay was worth it.

Probably the most profound experience from the trip was when I got home and walked through the door I was astonished that Shannon and Ryan looked different- how they had grown and changed in only three weeks! Shannon was speaking in complete sentences and Ryan walked right up to me. I don't know how a parent can be away from their kids for extended periods. I nickname Shannon "Goldilocks" as she has long blonde curly hair. And she has these compelling steel gray eyes...ah, she's going to be breaking the boys' hearts someday and Daddy's going to be chasing them away. Since Ryan started walking he's a go go go! Take your eyes off him for a minute and he's gone in a blink, and if he's quiet it means he's into something he shouldn't be: like pulling out all the index cards out of my address card box.

What a drag to sort and realphabetize them, so I've learned to keep such things five feet above the ground. When I ask Ryan to "go bring me a book" he walks over to the book bin and brings one back to me and sits in my lap for a story. Ryan still has his strawberry blonde hair, with wisps of curl on the ends. Cathy and I have a bet on whether he'll keep his Grandmother Ozog's blue eyes or if they'll turn gray like Shannon's. I'm amazed with our children: their exceptional beauty and their unconditional love.

Lastly, Cathy and I witnessed the total eclipse of the full moon in September. I was driving home from Marysville after swimming, and had a darkened blood-red moon in my windshield most of the way back. Once again I dragged Cathy outside to see another celestial event we might not see again in our lifetimes. By then a sliver of the bright moon was reappearing, and we watched it grow for a while. Kind of a nice way to bring a close to the summer. Also reinforces that, yeah, the earth is round and orbits the sun and all that.

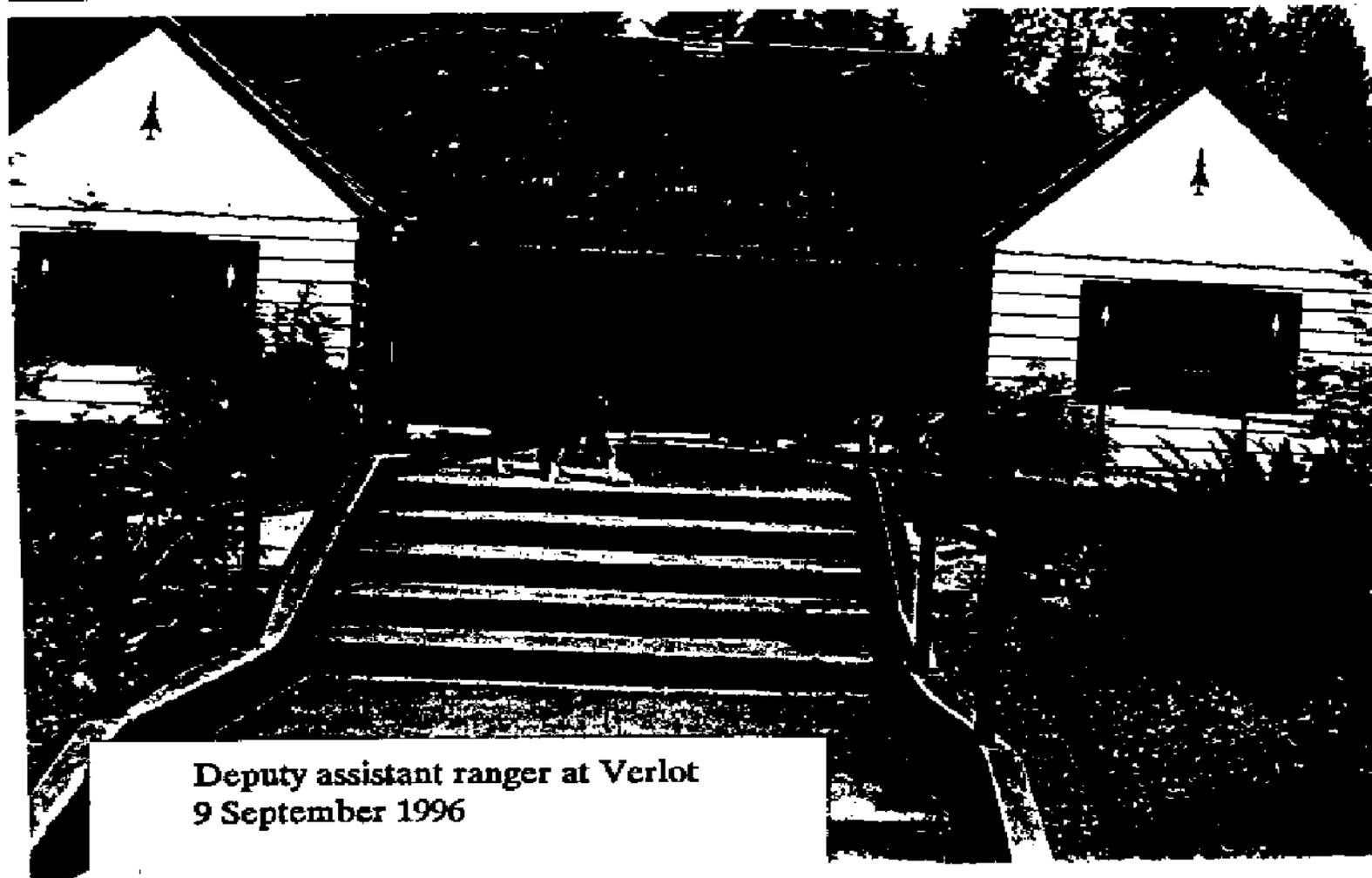
Also looking forward to the family reunion I'm planning for this summer. The Muschas (my mother's family) will be getting together at Flagg Ranch Resort in Wyoming, right in between Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks. It will be the first major road trip with Ryan and Shannon (the south end of Yellowstone is roughly an 850 to 900 mile drive for us, so it ought to be a pretty exciting adventure). Shannon: "Daddy, are we there yet?" (said in a whiny voice every 15 minutes). Daddy: "Cathy, can I have another sandwich?" Ryan: "Waaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!" Mommy: Eric, turn this car around RIGHT NOW, I want to go home before I totally lose my mind!" Who knows, the report of this zany trip might make up Issue 55 of RBM. Stay tuned.....

Movie Review - Star Wars

Recently, Cathy and I saw the remake of the first Star Wars movie on the big screen as a Valentine's Day dinner date. The added city-scape scene of Luke and Obi-Wan driving into Mos Eisley Spaceport is spectacular, as well as all the additional humanoids and critters added to the city streets. This gives you the feeling of really being in the hustle and bustle of a major port city. The enhanced special effects of Alderaan and the Death Star blowing up are excellent. The reinserted scene of rebel pilots Luke and his friend Wedge wishing each other good luck is okay.

One big-time unnecessary addition: the scene of Harrison Ford talking to a digitized Jabba the Hut looks totally phony. Jabba looks smaller and fragile here, while he appears lifelike, large, and menacing in the original third movie. You can tell Jabba is a digitized image. What a waste, George Lucas didn't have to add this one. The dialog is lame: Han didn't say anything new to Jabba that he hadn't already told Greedo. And it made no sense for Jabba, a king-pin gangster, to go out 'in the field' to contact Han on his own when he'd already sent his flunky Greedo. Why should Jabba take a chance leaving his lair without the protection of his muppet/D&D creatures? To top off this loser scene, Jabba acts like a total wimp, letting Han off the hook easy for "frying" Greedo, just saying "okay, bring me my money when you get back, have a nice trip," when to begin with, Jabba sent Greedo to collect and/or kill Han in the first place. What a fake.

Oh well, Darth Vader is still a great "hands-on/the buck stops here/do it yourself" kind of villain, but they didn't shine up his helmet to a high-gloss black like Movies 2 and 3, because in original movie No. 1 it looks like molded plastic with fingerprints on it. Overall the movie is definately well worth seeing on the wide screen again, as the clarity, color, and hi-fi sound is superb, albeit the sound is a bit loud. You realize how much gets visually compressed and lost in the transfer to video cassette. Although hard-core fans probably will snap them up, I don't recommend buying the "enhanced videos," as it will not buy you much. Just enjoy the original videos and save your money for seeing Empire and Jedi at the theater.



Deputy assistant ranger at Verlot
9 September 1996

BULL FIRE

September 2, 1996

FIRE UPDATE

Today is the day fire crews have been laboring toward. For more than three weeks crews have been attempting to encircle the Bull Fire with a fire line. If the winds stay light out of the west and the burnout is successful; crews will have turned the corner on containing the Bull Fire. However this last piece of line could be one of the most difficult to complete.

To complete the fire line crews must burn out a one mile section of line from Saddle Camp Ridge down slope through sub-alpine fir to the North Fork John Day River. The fire line is narrow, only 18 inches wide in the wilderness area, and spot fires are a constant concern. But wind may be the most critical element. It is forecast to stay out of the west to north west until evening. This will work for the burnout if it does not get to gusty. But by late afternoon the winds are forecast to shift to the southwest which will turn the wind at right angles to the line and create containment problems for firefighters. With luck the fire will be tied into the North Fork John Day River by the end of the Labor Day shift.

On Sunday the northern flank was tied into the river. The line extends over five miles from the 1010 road and, because of the long hike, crews have been spiked out on the fire for the last two nights. The line has been made more secure by burning out the fuel between the fire and the line. This burnout has been successful and the northern line is holding.

Other crews placed along the eastern side of the North Fork John Day River are also being spiked out. Their assignment has been to catch any spot fires that cross the river. So far all spot fires have been contained.

Jack Ward Thomas, Chief of the Forest Service, made a planned visit to camp yesterday and had nothing but praise for the work that firefighters had done.

On Tuesday, Dave Luken's Blue Mountain Team will transition with Kearney's Team. The Southern Area Interagency Team, which has been managing the fire since August 15, will be demobed on Wednesday.

WEATHER

The weather for Labor Day will be a repeat of Sunday. Temperatures will be in the 60-70 degree range. Winds will be mostly up slope 8 MPH. Ridge top winds will be westerly with gust to 25MPH. Winds will shift toward the southwest late today.

FIREFIGHTING RESOURCES

There are 931 firefighters assigned to the fire. This includes 33 20-person crews, 10 engines, 2 dozers, and 5 helicopters.

Hopelessly Human --by Kansas

It's a strange aberration, this brainstorm of youth
Though it's lost in translation from fancy to truth
It's hopelessly human both inside and out
A joyous occasion, no reason to doubt
It's easy somehow, what once was elusive is calling me now

I am waiting, I am patiently
Doing nothing, in a reverie
Climbing higher, seeing everything
Interacting, slowly spiraling
I am giving, while I'm watching the
Life I'm living, precious energy
Escalating, what was once just a game
It's never the same, no one's to blame

It's a strange situation, there's no cause for alarm
All these hot licks and rhetoric
Surely do you no harm
They're helplessly human, both inside and out
A joyous occasion, there's no reason to doubt
When each word is read, would you know the difference
If nothing was said

All is rhythm, all is unity
I am laughing, as it's meant to be
Just amusing, I am using the
Word was given, making harmony
Moving slowly, dancing aimlessly
Endless circle, turning fearlessly
Resurrected, falling down again
Introspected, I'm just stating my views
Now you can choose, what do you feel
It is for real this time

Bull on the Run

Twenty years from now in a well worn den
Sits a man in his favorite old chair,
Surrounded by walls of family pictures
And beside him a wife that still cares

In his lap sits a boy, his own son's son
With questions that seem to never end
Saying "Pops, tell me about your life.
Tell me how it was back then."

It had been a while since the old man thought
Of his life in such a reflective way.
But when he spoke, it was with eloquent ease
Because he was clear in what he had to say.

"Son, I remember where I was when Kennedy died,
And when man first walked on the moon.
I lived through the tragedy of Vietnam
Fifty thousand men died too soon.

I've seen great man rise, and great one's fall
There's been sad times and there's been fun.
But the most humble I've been, except for your dad's birth
Was seeing the Bull on the run.

It was a hot and dry August back in 96
The northwest was all ablaze.
From across the nation, men and women came
To put an end to the carnage and craze.

I was a worn out sawyer with ten other men.
We were sent down Oregon way,
To join two thousand others in a worth while cause.
Along a river they call John Day.

Our ego told us we would knock this out,
Like we had so many times before.
This complex of fires was no match for us.
We'd whip it and move on to more.

We settled into the old fire camp routine,
Too long hours and then to bed we'd go.
But on a certain Sunday night, when the sun went down
There arose a most ominous glow.

Three great beasts were on the prowl that night
Eating all that came in their way.
These wind driven fiends had lulled us to sleep,
And now they had something to say.

Taking turns the three doubled in size.
And then they did it again.
We'll show you who rules this desolate land
Because that's the way it's always been.

You think your two thousand can stop we three.
You think that your strong and tough.
Let's make it clear that we rule here.
It'll end when we've had enough.

Two thousand men hung their heads that night
And backed on down off the hill.
To take safe haven and avoid a fight
And to leave the fires at their will.

Son, never forget what I have told you here.
Your long life has just now begun.
In every man's life, when he starts getting proud
Comes a Bull on the run.

ARVIN



Historical File

Save the Wombat

[by Bob Osuch, from Diplomacy By Moonlight #35, November 1981]

Eric, "Save the Wombat" is a campaign I'm starting to bring you back into the good graces of the hobby. Aren't you pleased? As you know, the Wombat is an endangered species. So are you.

Eric has asked me to write an article for his fine dipzine, Diplomacy By the Light of Incinerating Bodies, or whatever he calls it. Thoughtful guy that he is, he gave me all of one day to write it, so I am typing it up without the aid of a rough draft, so if you see anything out of order, blame Eric. Also, I am not feeling particularly interested tonight, so if you don't like this, blame Eric again. It's nice to have a whipping boy, isn't it?

First, I should mention that I hadn't planned on attending Louie-LouieCon, but [Gary] Coughlan called one day and talked me into it. That same afternoon Eric called, or at least I think it was him. I answered the phone, but before I could say a word, I heard "It's Eric. Saturday. 6AM. Be there. Aloha," followed by the dial tone. Weird boy, that Eric.

I was ready in plenty of time. 6AM came and went. Still no Eric. At 6:15 the phone rang, waking the baby. It was Ozog. "Sit tight," he instructed, "Ashley's not here yet."

"So leave without him," I suggested.

"I can't do that, he's my puppet," he replied, then hung up.

"Damn punk kid," I mumbled in disgust. "No, not you son."

A little after seven, Eric, Peter Ashley and Dwayne Shreve finally arrived, and we departed. I should explain that Eric and Dwayne are both Oaklyn clones, and Ashley is a Boardman toady, so you can imagine my excitement at the prospect of embarking on a 5-1/2 hour car ride with these clowns. I was anticipating it as enthusiastically as I would a severe case of leprosy, or is it leprosy? Well, you get the picture. Anyway, the conversation naturally turned to Diplomacy, and I must say, the boys had me outnumbered. Having yet to meet Michalski, they had already deduced that he was an asshole. I guess because of what John had to say about their heroes, Boardman and Oaklyn respectively. So it was decided, Michalski was to die at all costs. I tried to reason with them, but they were all holding their own personal vendettas. Eric believed he had received general shoddy treatment from John, including a recent MASS MURDERS press release about Ozog, "charging out of you mailbox and into your jockstrap," which Eric attributed to Michalski. Shreve was pissed because John had forwarded some letter written years ago to Boardman. It was sort of vague and I didn't pursue it due to lack of interest. Ashley was upset because Michalski had abused "The Father of Diplomacy," whoever that is. That wasn't so bad, but then the subject changed to Oaklyn. God, what a fantastic guy he must be, at least if you listen to Eric and Dwayne talk. After four hours of "Bernie this" and "Buddy that" I couldn't wait to get there.

We arrived at 12:30, or thereabouts, and finding nobody home, went to McDonald's (barf) for lunch. After that, we all went and puked (oh, did I mention we picked up Bob Kluge), and then went and got some booze. I split a fifth of vodka with Pete, but he didn't drink the whole time because he was hung over from punkrocking all Friday night. After that, we went back to the hotel and met everybody. They were all there: Coughlan, a sleazy looking guy with a permanent devious sneer. I had expected to find Gary to be friendly, but instead the opposite was true. There wa Rauterberg, who I knew from past experience to be a professional graduate assistant, or as we used to call them, grad-asses. There was Scott Hanson, who reminded me of a cute little munchkin, and Jim Williams, who's unassuming attitude went well with his unassuming appearance and his "Party 'Til You Puke" T-shirt, and there was Michalski, the balding (but not particularly fat) Polack. There was

Chicagocon 1982

[by Randy Ellis, from Diplomacy By Moonlight #43, July 1982]

BZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ... What? What's this stupid alarm clock doing? Going off at 5:15 A.M? I must have screwed up. I'll just reset it for a reasonable hour like noon. Wait! Hey, that's right! I set the alarm for 5:15 because Stuart Lancaster's mom is going to pick my brother Jeff and I up at 5:30 to bring us to the train station so we (Jeff, Stuart and I) can board the train that leaves for Chicago at 6:45! Fortunately, Mrs. Lancaster didn't show up until 5:45 so surprisingly, Jeff and I were all ready when she stopped by.

Here we are, riding to the train station listening to Mrs. Lancaster warn us about "weirdos" that have tendencies to molest males. She had to warn us to act calmly if approached by any of these types. "Yes, we'll be alright" and similar statements had to be made multiple times before the subject was dropped. Finally, we arrive at Kansas City's Union Station at about 6:15. The train was already boarding when we arrived there so I didn't have time to throw away my quarters on the video game coin stealers that inhabit this particular train station. I picked up my sleeping bag, my suitcase, and my trash bag that contained my Frenchman costume, and walked toward the train followed by Jeff and Stuart who looked even sleepier than I did. After Stuart kissed his mom good-bye (just like a good little boy), we boarded the train. Jeff ended up sitting a couple rows behind me and Stuart who had a minor disagreement about who would sit next to the window. After a few seconds of debate, Stuart settled the argument by sitting his 170 pound body into the window seat and I had to settle for the promise "You can sit next to the window on the way back." Meanwhile, a tall dark-haired man seated himself next to Jeff who was still a couple rows behind Stuart and I. After a brief discussion with Stuart concerning guesses on when our train would actually arrive in Chicago (the train schedule said we'd get there at 3:15, but you know how close trains stick to their schedules, right?), the train lurched and started to slowly roll.

"Ah," I thought, "and to think if this was a regular Friday, I'd be getting ready to go to school now!" I watched out the window as best as I could (Stuart makes a much better door than a window) for a while before drifting off to sleep. ZZZZZZZZZ.

I woke up and realized that the sun was pretty high overhead now. I guessed I must have slept till 11 o'clock or so. Stuart, who had dozed off about the same time I had, was now wide awake and studying the Missouri rural terrain as our train rolled along at about 45 miles per hour. "Perhaps now would be a good time to memorize those French phrases that French school teacher wrote down for me. "What?" you're probably saying to yourself. Let Monsieur explain. You see, Stuart brought to Chicago an outfit that made him look like a 1900 Russian (complete with sword and scabbard) and I brought along an outfit that was supposed to make me look like an 19th century French nobleman. We planned to put our "uniforms" on when the Diplomacy began on Saturday. Sort of to liven things up a bit you know? Well, I asked a French teacher at my school to write a few phrases down so I could memorize them on my way to Chicago. Somehow though, I just didn't feel like going so far as to memorize those stupid phrases. I crumpled up the piece of paper and threw it away.

It was nearing 1 P.M. now and Stuart, Jeff and I were about to die of boredom. Jeff got up out of his seat and strolled over toward Stuart and I. He wanted to know if Stuart and I wanted to play "21" with a deck of Amtrak cards he bought. Stuart and I thought it was a pretty good idea so we all made our way to the dining car where we could sit at a table, order rip-off priced soft drinks (only 60 cents for a 12 oz. can of Coke!), and play cards. Since I'm the world's undisputed world's worst card player, I declined to put any money on the games. Stuart and Jeff bet between themselves who would win while I played but put no money on the games. At one point, it got to where Stuart owed Jeff \$3 or \$4 but then Stuart made a comeback that made

it so that Jeff owed him about a dollar when we all got sick of "21" and the overpriced cokes and stumbled back to our seats (I say stumbled not because there were alcoholic substances in our coke but because train aisles aren't very wide in the first place and when the train's moving at 60 miles per hour, it's difficult to walk through the isles as the train cars sway from one side to the other.)

After getting back to my seat, I watched the Illinois farmland gradually give way to the industrialized Northeast area of the state. When the train stopped at Joliet, I knew we were very close to our destination. After what seemed like an eternity, I sighted the tall, grey buildings of Chicago and the unmistakable Sears Tower. "Finally," I thought. The train slowed down and in a few minutes, it stopped. The three of us grabbed our luggage and I gave Jeff a red, white, and blue umbrella hat to wear. Why? Well, we told Eric to look for three teen-agers with one of them wearing a very unusual hat. I must admit, the hat did stand out quite a bit and Stuart and I had trouble attempting to carry our luggage while laughing so hard at Jeff's ridiculous appearance. I tried to console Jeff by saying, "Look at it this way, Jeff. I'll bet we find Eric quick with you wearing that hat. It just attracts attention."

The three of us got off the train and walked in the general direction everyone else was walking in. We made it to the gate of Chicago's train station with no real problems. Of course, Jeff's hat got a lot of stares, but so what. The next thing I knew, we entered the waiting room and spotted a mediumly built blond-haired, scraggly-bearded, Eric Ozog in Jordashe jeans. It was great that we found each other that quick considering he really didn't know what we looked like and we didn't really know what he looked like.

After brief introduction, Eric helped us carry our bulky luggage to his car where we put everything up. After a little bit of discussion, we decided it would be best if we waited until Chicago rush-hour traffic had died down a bit. We decided to go visit a planetarium. I can't remember the name of the thing but I do remember that it didn't cost us a thing to go to it. It was a great deal for free. We observed various space artifacts and the like until we were all knowledgeable space scholars. Next, we went to the shore of Lake Michigan. We just sort of sat around talking and enjoying the cool lake breeze. I went down to the water's edge and was surprised to see that the lake actually looked relatively unpolluted. I always had the impression that Lake Michigan, at least around Chicago and Milwaukee, was a bunch of fatal chemicals and pollutants with a little bit of lake water and dead fish mixed in. I was wrong. It appeared instead to actually be a lake with only a few hazardous chemicals within and I spotted only two dead fish.

After discussing such things as DSP, philosophies on stabs, Road to Ruin (a game that Jeff and Eric are in the zine IRKSOME) and all sorts of other goodies, we left the shore of Lake Michigan to be introduced to Chicago traffic. WOW! Being a Kansas boy, I was amazed at the traffic in Chicago. And I thought rush hour in downtown Kansas City was bad! Whew! After a long time of riding and listening to some rock group I'd never heard of before that didn't sound too bad [Camel], we arrived at the honorable house of Eric Ozog. There, we were introduced to his mom, a nicer mom there never was, and Eric's two dogs- a big friendly mutt [Pippin], the other a small, grouchy little pipsqueak that sounded like a human mutant when it barked [Molly]. (Sorry Eric, I had to say it!)

After establishing who slept where and resting, we dropped by Burger King before going to all sorts of people's houses [Andy Lischett's and Jim Williams' parents] to play something I never played before- gunboat Diplomacy. My inexperience showed through as I was clobbered in every game I played. One game stands out in particular. I was France. In S'01, Italy occupied Piedmont, England waded out into the Channel, and Germany bounced my A Paris out of Burgundy. I never had more than three centers that game while Italy (Eric Ozog of course) picked up Marseilles, Trieste and Tunis that season. AGGGGGHHHHH! Jeff and Stuart didn't do very well either. Finally

we went home at about 4 A.M. Saturday. Everyone was to meet at Eric's house at noon on Saturday so not many people were to get a lot of sleep. We went back to Eric's house and went right to sleep after being up for about 20 hours.

I woke the next morning around 10 A.M. I groggily stumbled to the bathroom and forced myself into my hot, caped, uncomfortable Frenchman costume. I felt a little weird when I stepped out of the bathroom with my French blue vest, ruffled sleeves, black cape, French hat, and of course, a sword. Regardless, I wore the thing to breakfast where I got quite a few laughs out of Eric's little sister [Paula] as well as his mother. "If Stuart chickens out and doesn't wear his costume, I'll kill him," I thought to myself as I chomped away at some excellent pancakes that Eric's mom was kind enough to bestow upon me. After eating, I went upstairs to Eric's room to make final adjustments to my costume. I then headed down to the basement where I was surprised to see Dave Carter, Art Haehnel, Paul Rauterberg, Pat Conlon, and others already there. I felt a little uncomfortable being the only "Frenchman" there but I left the costume on.

Later, the rest of the "gang" trickled in. There was Jim Stillman, Don Swartz, Garry Hamlin, Jim Williams, Dick Martin, Julie Glass, Gary Coughlan, Michael Quirk, Scott Hanon, Bill Becker, Russ Rusnak, Andy Lischett and so many others I can't remember everyone. The "serious" Diplomacy playing started around noon or so. "Here's my chance to make up for my shoddy gunboat performances!" I thought. My first game (the first game played in fact), I drew Austria. I got Italy (Art Haehnel) to start off with a Lepanto while I convinced the stupid Turk (my brother Jeff) to support me into Rumania. What do you know? I got three builds in W'01! The next season I stabbed Turkey and took Bulgaria and I stabbed Italy and took Venice because I saw France (Don Swartz) heading in Italy's direction and I wanted to get a piece or two out of it. Unfortunately, French forces were a bit slow in coming and the Turks, Italians, and Russians saw to it that I was reduced to six centers by W'03. Jeff and I had our own private little war while the English (Jim Stillman) and French alliance cleaned up Germany (Garry Hamlin), Russia (Jim Williams) and Italy. By 1905, the E/F alliance had 23 centers between them while the ignorant Turk refused to draw up a peace treaty. At that point, I decided to throw EVERYTHING I had at Turkey and let France pick up any centers he wanted in Trieste and Vienna. The game ended in '06. The result- an E/F draw. My result- a tie with Turkey for 3rd place with a paltry five centers.

In my next game, I drew Turkey. The situation in my area was totally chaotic as I would stab Russia (Art Haehnel), Austria (Stu Lancreature, er, I mean Lancaster) would stab me, Italy (Jim Williams) would stab Austria, and Russia was getting murdered by Germany (Mike Quirk). I had four centers in 1902, 1903, 1904, and in '05, when the game was voted a F/G/I draw. Yuck! I had to get the bad taste out of my mouth so I played another game.

This one I got France. Stuart was playing England and Pat Conlon was Germany. Me and Stuart hit Germany with help from Scott "Frauke's coming next week" Hanson as Italy. Germany was out by 1903 and then I stabbed Italy. The E/F alliance was working great and by 1904, I had 10 centers and my English ally had 8. Turkey (Russ Rusnak) was the only other major power on the board and he too had 10 centers. Then it happened: the English slime drew his sword and inserted it squarely between my shoulder blades; a stab. At that point, I was totally caught off guard because I really wanted a two-way draw but Stuart just had to stab me and go for the win! Then I knew my chances of winning were nil and 0. It was just a matter of who'd win between England and Turkey. I threw all my units in Stu's direction thus leaving Italy free to tour southern France and Iberia while Turkey toured Italy. I was eliminated off the board in 1907 but my goal was accomplished: Turkey had 19 centers to England's 13. Italy managed to keep two. Oh well, at least the red-haired bastard (as Rusnak jokingly called Stuart) didn't win!

My final game was as England. Russia (Bill Becker) started off right at

first out to kill me by ordering A Mos-Stp in S'01 and A Stp-Fin in F'01. I thought I had a German ally in Scott Hanson but I guess he wasn't impressed with my trustworthiness from the other game. Russia took Norway away from me in 1902 and the G/R alliance got into the North Sea in 1903. I knew death was imminent so I decided to throw what centers I could to France (Jeff) just so the German/Russian rascals wouldn't get everything. I managed to give France London and Liverpool but the Russian scum got Edinburgh and there wasn't anything I could do about that. I was out by W'04 and I clenched a tie for last place (with Pat Conlon's Turkey). ARRRGHHHHH! Enough of this!

I didn't care to play any more Diplomacy for 2 reasons- 1) My 4 miserable performances in the last games, 2) it was about 4 A.M. Sunday morning. The guests shuffled out as Eric, Jeff, Sturat and I picked up about 2,047 beer cans (O.K., maybe only 2,046), doughnut boxes, and junk in general. We got the place mostly picked up and then retired to our respective sleeping quarters where we all (Eric, Jeff, Stu and I) talked before we dozed off.

Sunday seemed to breeze by pretty fast. I woke up, got all my luggage together, and put it in Eric's car. We went over to CHEESECAKE pubber Andy Lischett's house for a couple last gunboat games before we had to leave at 2:45 so we could catch the train back to K.C. that left at 3:45. I bid farewell to all parties concerned and reflected back on the whole experience as Eric drove us to the train station. I found myself wishing it was Saturday morning all over again instead of Sunday afternoon. The thought of a 9 hour train ride back to boring ol' K.C. didn't exactly thrill me. Alas, we boarded the correct train and the ride back was pretty much uneventful except for Jeff's Coca-Cola war with Stuart. We arrived in K.C. at 11 P.M. where my mom, who had obviously been "out drinking with the girls" was 45 minutes late. I enjoyed the Con so much that I'll probably try organizing a Kansas City Con sometime in the direct future and I may even go to Baltimore this summer for DipCon. If I go, hope to see ya all there. If not, maybe I'll see some of you in Kansas City someday if I form that KC-CON. Au Revoir! (See! I did learn one French word after all!)

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Toadies' Travels to Toadycon [by Eric Ozog, from Diplomacy By Moonlight #45, November 1982]

Half the fun of the far-flung cons is just getting there. Wichita was no exception. The vast distances would cause some to become companions on the road- people living within the same region would team up and travel together. It makes a more enjoyable trip.

The easterners (Kathy [Byrne], Woody [Steve Arnawoodian], Uncle Al [Pearson]) braved numerous logistics and weather problems to travel across half the country. Kathy took the train from New York to Philadelphia to meet Woody, then they hopped a plane and met Al in pittsburgh (who had flown from Washington D.C.). After delays from fog giving Uncle Al an ulcer, the three of them flew to Kansas City where they met the Munchkin [Scott Hanson] (flown from Minneapolis), then rented a car and drove to Wichita. Whew!

The other Toadyconers came by bus, car or plane. Steve Langley had a long bus trip, but he didn't have to die behind the wheel, only of boredom. Bus for Burgess, although a much shorter distance [Jim-Bob was living in Dalls at the time]. Planes for Mazzer and Coughlan. The Okies had the easiest drive [John Michalski, Dave Pilant, Al Giddings], not so easy for [Keith] Sherwood, who had to drive hundreds of miles on two lane roads. The Kansas Kids Randy [Ellis] and Stuart [Lancaster] could of had an easy drive, but good ol' Randy explained to me about his expensive speeding ticket as he hung his head in shame. Stuart had an equally interesting story to tell:

"Guess what? We should have taken your advise about checking the oil before we left Wichita. We were very (I mean very, very) low on oil and we had to stop at some gas station by the Howard Johnson's and beg for oil. They wouldn't accept our check, and we only had enough money to pay for the toll, so they gave us 1/2 quart which got us by till we got off the turnpike to buy more. Randy's piece of shit car burns oil like you wouldn't believe. Other than that, and getting pulled over for a missing taillight, and not having any music because the batteries in my ghetto blaster went out, and the constant fear of the transmission dropping out of Randy's car (or something similar), we had an excellent ride home. I hope yours was as good as ours."

For the Great Lakes contingent, we didn't have the surprises or headaches of our sister contingent of the east, but we gritted our teeth for the long haul. Mark Luedi arrived at my house from Michigan on Friday eve, Paul Rauterberg and Marc Peters came around 2:30 AM or so. We picked up Bob Osuch of duh South Side and departed in two cars south on I-55. Downstate Illinois was drab as usual, but it was a bit greener than when the Chicago group and I drove the route last October. Mark, Marc and I laughed when we saw Paul's car ahead hit a bump with sparks flying from the muffler hitting the pavement. Later it nearly fell off all together and we stopped at a farm machinery place so Paul could jury-rig it with a rope.

Around St. Louis I had a bad feeling Bob & Paul would blow it once the junction for I-270 came up, the St. Louis bypass route which would link up with I-70 west to Kansas City. Paul was leading, so didn't see my turn signal, so sure enough, he blew it and we split up. I brought the Cougar down to about 50 and told Mark & Marc that Paul and Bob had one chance: if the interchange was a full cloverleaf, they could loop-the-loop their way around to get back on 270. If, that is, Paul had enough split second brains to realize he had to catch the second exit in a couple hundred feet at 60 mph. He did. The Camaro stole up from behind and passed us, Paul and Bob grinning sheepishly.

In Missouri Mark took over the driving and I sometimes dozed and sometimes studied the Missouri countryside. Mark liked the state, I didn't. The land was hilly, but all along I-70 it was burnt cornfields interspersed with grimy gas stations and billboards. However, Missouri looked much better when we drove I-35 north on the return trip.

Oh yeah, a few times we stopped to eat, gas up and empty our tanks. One town stood out in particular, Wellsville, Kansas, a one horse town just southwest of Kansas City off I-35. Bob was driving ahead at the time (I since took over from Mark) and at a moment's notice exited the highway and drove into town. Bob stopped at a small two pump filling station off a cobblestone street while I drove on looking for a station which sold premium gas. No such luck. (My car has a high octane diet, I know the agonies of engine run-on.). We returned to the station where Paul and Bob were. Bob was leaning against Paul's car with a can of pop in one hand looking rather pleased with himself. "Bob, why did you stop here?" I complained.

"I just wanted to stop. What's wrong, don't you like this town?" He then said louder for a few local passersby to hear, "You hear that people? Eric doesn't like your town!"

Embarrassed, I explained to Bob my only reservation was I couldn't buy premium here. This old man who was the gas station attendant approached, saying premium was "scarce in these parts," and I could go further down the road to Ottawa and try there, but doubted that larger town had any either. "Why don't you just buy it here?" he suggested. "I've got damned good gas." So I was amiable as usual and bought his 'damned good gas.' An older lady pumped the gas while Marc walked over to the Wellsville Recreation Center. Once returning, he said some old men were playing cards inside.

Back on the road again. Marc & Mark busied themselves by playing

Mastermind and Evade while I kept myself awake by breathing deeply and cranking up the taped music. The last 4 hour hop from Kansas City to Wichita was the true test of the 14 hour drive. Total, I had driven close to 9 of those hours.

Once on the Kansas Turnpike my spirits rose and my alertness returned, for now the land was changing from the farmland of eastern Kansas to prairie. The Flint Hills they were called, and they were truly beautiful- wild, barren, treeless...not a house or even a fence in sight for as far as my eyes could see- until the oil wells of El Dorado would appear. I experienced deja vu then, for these hills recalled to me one of my other lifetimes as a Mongol chieftain of the Asiatic steppe. Bob Olsen said there were people in Kansas wanting to protect the hills, maybe declaring them a state park.

On Sunday night I brooded over my road atlas, looking over the route back to Chicago, which would take us via Des Moines and I-80 to where Marc's hated "flatlanders" dwell. I said to no one in particular, "Oh I'm so far from home."

Bob Olsen, the greatest host there ever was, said, "Why, homesick?"

"No, it's not that, I just began to understand how vast this country really is."

There was a mixture of happiness/fear/wonderment in his [Bob Olsen's] eyes this weekend. I imagined his quiet lifestyle and musty, moth-eaten existence will never be as it was. The Bob Olsen psyche is this: when we stood on the raised patio deck and I commented on his green grassy backyard he responded, "I had the underground sprinkler system put in after I had the lawn done. Smart huh." Don't worry Uncle Bob, we love you.

Bob gets high marks for his patience with unruly Toadycon attendees. It took all his recently discovered guts to let this zany group have the run of his house- as his cat does. I tend to prefer basement cons as Chicago's was done, where a host does not have to beg for a government financed low-interest loan to rebuild. I don't believe any trinkets/possessions of Bob's were destroyed, just disshelved. There may have been water damage to the house itself from the squirt gun wars. On the way to and from Wichita's airport to meet Mike Mazzer, Keith, Bob and I talked, and every other phrase Bob spoke included the dreaded words, "squirt guns."

After a few hours of arrival in Wichita, my energy level collapsed upon my adrenal gland running out of juice. Yes, the long drive from Chicago took its toll. The full impact of the straight 14 hour trip hit me then with all the hoopla and fanfare of a Wall Street ticker-tape parade. In a semi-depressed state I beckoned to the elder I honored and respected, Bob Osuch of duh South Side and said, "Bob, what are we doing here?"

Bob, who was rather put out at the moment (Kathy was viping him all evening) said, "You want to go home? Let's go right now. We'll switch off driving."

Once agreeing we would be in a better state of mind on Saturday, I went outside on the deck and lay in Bob's lawn chair. The night breeze was warm and very dry, something I haven't experienced before. I could smell the coming decay of Autumn in the air. I lingered for a time in half-consciousness. I think Kathy came out to check on me for I heard her sharp New York dialect. Tranquilized from these new senses around me, I nearly dropped into a sound sleep...

...only to be brought back to cold reality by a cold wet zap! I opened my eyes and saw Gary [Coughlan] standing over me, an evil smile on his lips and moustache twitching, his science-fiction type squirt gun aimed and ready. I was horrified. Gary then open fired again and again and again!!

"You aren't going to sleep, are you?" Gary said.

Mumbling incoherently to this child-soul trapped in a 30 year old body, I staggered back into the living room and joined the others, plopping down on the floor against the wall. Kathy could not believe Gary's cruelty.

Gary had passed out assorted squirt guns. John Michalski got this real neat one which looked like a six-shooter. Gary offered me this wimpy palm-

sized one which I politely refused. Even if I wanted to play squirt gun I would not have stood a chance against John's cannon. So I passed.

When Gary attacked me a second time I wrestled with him a bit, trying to wrench his weapon away without getting soaked. Gary refused to disarm and being the strong, stubborn little cuss that he is, I couldn't hold on. But after Gary broke free I feigned weakness, the gunman instantly relaxed and I ripped the Buck Rogers plaything out of his hand and threw it down the center stairs. I was amused watching Gary run to retrieve it, so I had a satisfying, although short-lived victory.

"I had some doubts about your fabled imagination, your ability to fantasize at a moment's notice, and of course your notorious elvish origins, but hearing you rave about the beauties of the Flint Hills convinces me that there is truly something strange, romantic, and elvish in your soul. Obviously you are a sensitive person of the highest degree if you can see the beauty of this area (it escapes me, for instance, a lot of the time). So...want to buy some land with a view?

"Do you remember passing through the city of Emporia on your way to/from Wichita? It's about 70 miles north of here and may be where you joined up with the turnpike if you came the way I was telling people to come. It's right on the edge (north edge) of the Flint Hills. Well, I just wanted you to know that about six months ago I turned in a series of about 6 prospects in that area, close to the Emporia city limits and also somewhat north and west of there. The Flint Hills as they are are all very fine, but think how much more beautiful they would be covered with oil wells all directly pumping into Bob Olsen's pocket. Now that's beauty! Don't worry though--the petroleum potential of the area is very limited and there are nothing but dry holes in the area. Of course this will perhaps change once my brilliantly-conceived prospects are dilled....

"I had a great time here at Toady Con. Next year, for sure, I will socialize some way again. Origins is a definite possibility, even though Detroit is a mythical place to me, like the Shire, or Moore Oklahoma. But meeting all these mythical personalities was really a great experience--it has totally refreshed my attitude toward the hobby, which was, actually, somewhat lagging from time to time." --Bob Olsen

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A funny thing happened on the way to Kalamazoo

[by James Wall, from Diplomacy By Moonlight #46, March 1983]

This story really all started in a McDonalds the Thursday before I was to bus down to Chicago. You see, I made the terrible mistake of eating a Big Mac for dinner. That nite at 4 a.m. I had a sudden violent desire to show my respects to the porcelain god. After 30 minutes of paying my respects I was in real doubt if Chicago could handle as devout a person as I felt at the moment. Courageously I did manage to make it onto the Alco bus and Eric Ozog here I come!

Anyway, upon arriving at O'Hare where Eric was to pick me up, that ever so intelligent bus driver told me to get off at the international stop. Well Eric and Mike Barno were 20 feet below and about 500 feet away from where I awaited them. Two and a half hours later and several phone calls to the Ozog residence, Eric finally came up with the bright idea of calling home to see if I'd called. So we at last merged into one happy group and headed to the Ozogmobile. On the way to the car I spotted an "I joined the Elfquest"

bumper sticker on a car and pointed out to Eric that this should be his car just as he put the key into the lock. With egg on my face for the second time in less than ten minutes off we went to the lair of the Ozog. I must say that as terrible a diplomacy player as Eric is he does have excellent taste in reading material.

After braving the local Burger King we went back to Eric's to crash. While we were talking and I was showing them the version of Cosmic Encounter Diplomacy that I had been working on, I managed to lose the entire written set of rules that I'd come up with. After an exhausting search I came to the conclusion that Eric had an evil demon in his room and that it had eaten my rules. I went to bed that nite on the verge of a nervous breakdown. The demon must have felt sorry for me because the next morning the rules appeared in my backpack. By this time my face had so much egg on it from all my faut pas' that I could barely see.

It was at this point that we embarked for Kalamazoo. Somewhere in the wilds of Indiana, Barno informed us in a not too subtle way that mother nature wanted to see him so we made a road stop, quick. Anyway while we were waiting for Mike to finish up his business Eric came up to me and accosted me for a quarter so that he could buy a copy of the "BEST MAP OF CHICAGO." I the gullible person that I am gave it to him. The next thing I know Eric is almost in tears because it was a different "BEST MAP OF CHICAGO" so he warned people, if Eric ever wants a quarter for the "BEST MAP OF CHICAGO" inform him he already has the map.

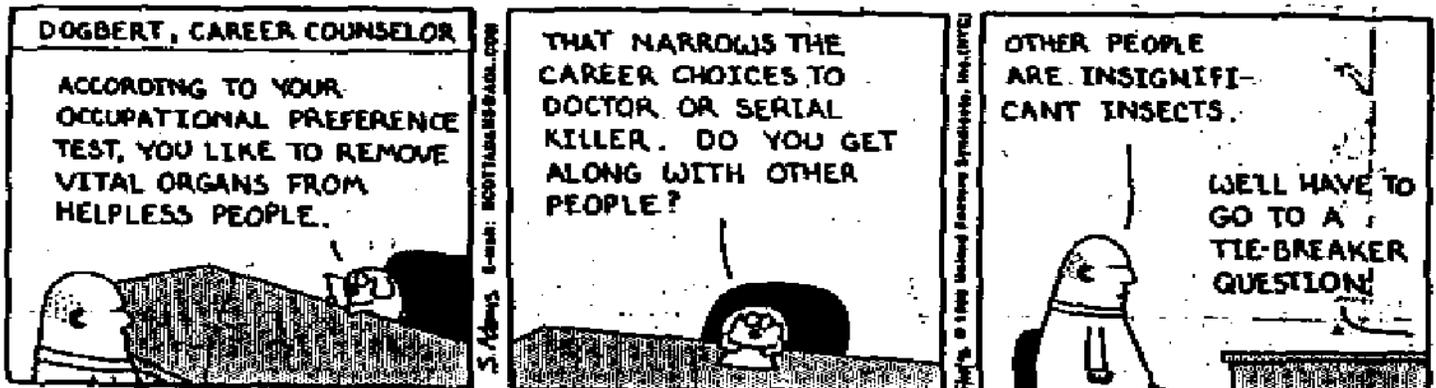
The rest of the ride was fairly uneventful and we arrived in Kazoo. In the grand tournament game I drew Austria and Eric drew Italy, anyway in Fall 01 he took Trieste. I should have known better than to not immediately stomp the life out of him but a little more egg never hurt anyone. It turned out to be the only game I ever took Belgium and Holland as the Austrian player. Mike Barno does deserve special mention due to his staying at 3 supply centers throughout 07 and surviving with 8 supply centers. Mark Luedi showed up and scared the hell out of us during the Dip game as well.

After the Dip game ended we all went to Bill Becker's for a game of Luedi version Cosmic Encounter Dip which was even more perverted than mine. That folded when the locals all had to go home so out came the Railbaron game. Sometime around 4 a.m. with my mind on the Geology exam that I had that Monday I began to while to eliminate me from the game, I was doing dreadful but still staying solvent. It was definately an experience of the worst way. those kind souls began to ride my lines just to kep me in the game. I put up with that for about 45 minutes before announcing that I was ready to nuke the board. The geology exam was on my mind. The game was declared a draw and I was the only loser, bum. You'll all be glad to know that I bombed the exam and should have finished the game. Oh well! Somewhere among all this we managed to play a few games of Nuclear War as well.

I guess all this means that if you ever have any desire to go to Kazoo be prepared for a lot of eggs to fly your way and a terrific time as well. Thanx Bill I will get you back some day!

DOGBERT

* * * * *



The Ten Toady Commandments

Top Toady Resigns in Disillusionment

[by Jim Burgess, from Diplomacy By Moonlight #46, March 1983]

- 1) Thy Toad is thy master. He hast brought thee out of the land of ignorance, out of the bondage that enslaves he who will not serve. Thou shalt have no others before thy Toadymaster(s).
- 2) Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any likeness of any toadymaster that is in heaven above (eg. the St. Boardman?), or that is in the earth beneath (eg. Bernie Oaklyn?), or that is in the water under the earth (eg. Allan Calhamer? any one remember him??): thou shalt not bow down thyself indiscriminately unto them, but serve them as thou wouldst wish to be served thyself.
- 3) Thou shalt not take the name of thy Toadymaster in vein.
- 4) Remember the szine day, to keep it holy. Six days thou shalt labor, but on the seventh day thou shalt keep up with all thy szines and all thine correspondence, for the seventh day is a sabbath unto thy Toadymaster.
- 5) Honor thy Toad, lest thy days be numbered in the land thy Toad has granted thee.
- 6) Thou shalt not kill (ie. snuff thy Toads).
- 7) Thou shalt not commit adultery (ie. toady for one Toad at the expense of another).
- 8) Thou shalt not steal thy Toadymaster's supply centers.
- 9) Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy fellow players (ie. never lie).
- 10) Thou shalt not covet anything that thy Toadymaster possesses.

The question may be asked: with the demise (sad but justified) of DBM, who takes over the Toady custodianship? Alas the question has been rendered moot. Actually it could be judged a cause for rejoicing in some quarters. Yes my dear friends, the Toadies are no more (time for cheering &/or crying). As of the publication date of this article I am officially no longer either a toady or certainly (if I ever really was) Toady of the Year. Toadyism is certainly dead. One only has to look around at all the former toadies to see that they are just not doing the job any longer. Even the legendary Bob Olsen has taken a decidedly non sycophantic stance of late.

So what has happened? Why has Toadyism died? The answer has three main parts. Let me deal with each one in order.

The first reason has been best explained in the four page Guest Lunatic section of the latest KK. I don't want to rehash too much but basically the point is that Toadyism has been a fad whose time is past. This has become more and more clear to me and others as 1983 has dawned. The truth of this approach is uncontested but let us probe deeper into the nature of Toadyism as part of the never ending search for truth.

This brings us to the second reason. Also published in this noble szine are the 10 Toady Commandments. Never before have all 10 commandments been published together but when looked at in such an aggregated light, the problems of the toady become clear. It would be a formidable task for any member of the hobby to live up to just one of those commandments all the time. think about it! Haven't you (at least once) stolen that supply center with lame excuses like, "I just couldn't pass it up. It was so close I could taste it."? How many times have you slipped ever so slightly in the trust of your toadymaster? "But I only miswrote the order a little bit...I thought for sure you said that army was going to Switzerland..." Well? Is it any wonder that the toadies have given up in the face of such an impossible task? After all you can only lick and suck for so long before the tongue gets tired (that happens whether you're licking boots or...whoops this is a family szine isn't it?).

The last reason is the most compelling and prompts even as stubborn a toady as I to give up the fight and resign. I'm sure some of my toadymasters must be quite upset (then again perhaps not) by this article. I have notified

most of you in advance so as to not shock you too much. I just want to reassure you that the health of the hobby as a whole is my only concern. Toadies are destructive and a drain on the hobby. As evidence I cite most of your feelings concerning our dear friend Bernie Oaklyn and his collection of toadies (and some sad pseudonyms, but that point is irrelevant to the debate, except to pose the deep philosophical question: Can one be one's own toady? And if so, can nobody do it better?). Is the quality of a Dip game improved by the presence of toadies? The obvious answer is that although toadies may be amusing for awhile (and I'm sure that I could cite 1000 or so Mark Berch articles that belabor this point to a deathly stare), eventually they take everything out of the game. Again to paraphrase dear Mr. Berch, this game (and perhaps all games) is predicted on the desire of all the players to win the game. We all know that the best games are those where all players are trying their damndest to pull out a victory. I wonder if incidence of multi-player draws can be tied to the incidence of toadyism (unless it's just a game of "let the Toadymaster win")?

I leave boring problems like this for Mark to solve. If this issue is ever dealt with in Dip Digest though, be sure not to bother to tell me about it.

So it seems clear. The death of Toadyism was both inevitable and healthy for the hobby. I urge all of you to join me in renouncing this scourge on the reputation of Dipdom. It's our hobby and it's up to us to save it. In that spirit and for all of the aforementioned reasons I hereby resign as Toady of the Year.

* * * * *

Love Letters from Cathy Cunning [from Diplomacy By Moonlight #46

January 2, 1983

Hi cutie it's me again. I just meet Keith Sherwood a bit ago. He does look like John Denver! I wonder what he will tell you about me? He said you were nice, a little weird perhaps but nice. Now Sherwood has the honor of being the first American in the hobby to meet me. He only got to shake my hand though- the rest of me is waiting for you.

I'm glad I got to talk to you, but I wish I had waited for you to call. Oh well- next time I'll wait for you to call. Caruso called me back. I didn't get to talk to him too much the first time. He was in a game and by the time he was free- I had hung up! Oh well, he said that he'll send me a picture of you. I think he was serious. What else did he say about you. Oh he told me that you called at midnight on New Year's but he didn't realize it was you for awhile. He said that Kathy told him it was Terry Tallman?! I don't see how Kathy can confuse your voice with Tallman's, but John did say that you sounded different. You were louder and not so soft spoken. Let's see what else- John might say something to you about being my roommate at Origins. I told him what Woody said about me being his roommate! I told John he had to be a good Dad and protect me. So he said, "Oh you want to be roommates with me and Kathy?" I said no- of course. Then he keep asking me "Who do you want to be roommates with?" over and over again. I finally slipped out your name. He said, "fine, it's settled, Ozog will be your roommate." He said he had ways of convincing you like twisting your arm till it almost broke. I told John not to do that. It's your choice and not someone else's. Besides I'm not even sure if I'll be able to go! The future is so uncertain. But like you said, who needs money? Anyways, if I do make it to Origins and you don't mind having a preppy-witch for a roommate- then the offer is open.

Don't forget to send a real picture one of these days. There's this spot on my wall that's getting all dusty that says "Eric's picture." Oh you want to know something funny? You know how you can have a mental image of someone even if you haven't meet them or seen a picture just by their

Dear Humanitarians, please publish the following in the next issue of your paper.

Dear Humanitarians:

Let me introduce myself as a faithful Eric Ozog toady. It recently came to my attention while speaking to a fellow toady that Eric has recently turned 21 years of age. I also became that Eric was depressed that he still has not had his first date. (Please no jokes about Eric's sexual preferences as I am 100% sure that Eric is straight with a slight tendency toward bondage) Therefore I am asking any interested young ladies to fill out the attached questionnaire to apply to be Eric's FIRST date. You need not worry about your virtue as Andy Lischett has volunteered to chaperone should it be necessary.

NAME Cathy Canning ADDRESS 710 W. Las Palmaritas
PHONE 602-997-1556 BIRTHDATE 10-5-60 HEIGHT 5'7" EYES green-blue

SOFT CONSERVE FLAT COKE REASONABLE BIG
NEED BRACES IN ORDER TO STAND

LEGS SHORTESTUBBY TIGHT & OUT FAT USUALLY HIDDEN SHORT &
LONG & LUSCIOUS NOT WORTH MENTIONING

FACE CUTE SEXY AVERAGE HOMELY USUALLY HIDDEN

FIGURE SLIM MEDIUM HOPELESSLY SKINNY CHUNKY BLIMP

ARE YOU STRAIGHT BISEXUAL SELF SERVING FRIGID LESBIAN
INTO BONDAGE SEM ORAL BEASTIALITY ORGIES

DEVICES JUST GET IT OVER WITH ANYTHING

ARE YOU FRIENDLY PLEASANT CONSTANTLY ON THE RAG SELFISH

A BITCH AN INTELLECTUAL A LIBERAL A CONSERVATIVE
A GOLDDIGGER A TRAMP PERFECT USELESS RUDE
OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY) I could go on and list all my ~~great~~ great talents but that wouldn't be modest which I am also. Just think all this perfection is just waiting for you to come to Phoenix.

WILL ERIC SCORE ON THE FIRST DATE ON THE SECOND DATE AFTER SPENDING \$33 AFTER HE SAYS I LOVE YOU
WHEN HE PUTS A RING ON YOUR FINGER WHEN YOU PUT A RING THROUGH HIS NOSE NEVER

TO ALL LADIES, anyone interested please send the above questionnaire to Eric Ozog at 1826 N. Lawler Ave. Chicago Ill. 60651. Please this is not a joke, Eric is a lonely well intensioned sole who needs company. If you feel that you have anything to add to the above please feel free to drop Eric a note.

writing! When I pictured you as being tall and black hair with very sharp and slanting eyes. Then I find you're blond! Oh well, I love ya anyways. I hate to think what my handwriting makes people think I look like. At least you know the truth!

Oh how's my heart doing? Are you taking care of it? Lucky for me I have more than one of them.

Love ya lots and I missed you New Years Eve! Cathy oxxx

January 9, 1983

I went to sleep and didn't even tell you! Oh well, it was 3:00 am and I was getting tired. I'm more of a night person than a day person. I hate mornings. I guess since I don't seem to become truly awake until 10:00 pm or so. I guess this would go along with me being a witch eh? I will say one thing though. When I was in England, I was up at 7:00 am every morning or 8:00 am at the latest. At 11:00 pm at night everything in London is shut down and there's nothing to do. So which do you like? Night or day?

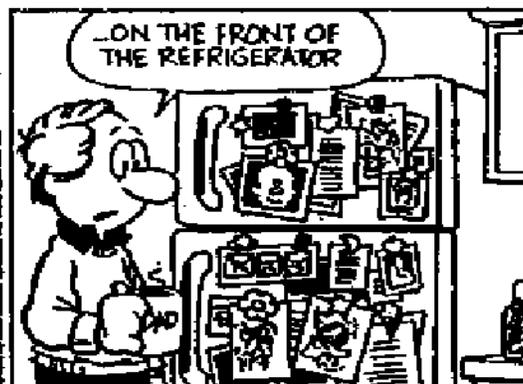
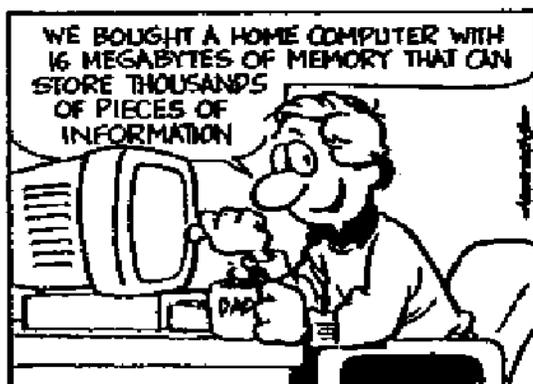
I was reading some of my little astrology books. It says that Gemini's will usually change jobs and locations 2 to 3 times. It takes a long time for them to settle down. They say that you're always moving and looking for new things. As far as Libra and Gemini: they seem to say that we should get along good. We're both air signs- Air = intelligence. We deal more on a mental plane more than a physical one. We both are changeable and want freedom. Perhaps you want freedom more than me. Sooner or later Libras want a place to settle down at- a place that's safe and secure. There's a slight problem in the fact that I'm a cardinal sign and you're a mutable sign. Cardinal = leadership and mutable = changeable. Basically it is that I might try to rule people. I don't like doing that. I hate pushy females with a passion and I hate myself if I feel like I'm controlling a man. I feel everything should be equal with no one controlling the other.

I think the hobby is going through a big change right now. Leave it to me to come in the middle of the change. But isn't there a saying about how if night falls in one place the sun will shine in another place? or if one dies they will be replaced by the birth of a new? Have you ever played with tarot cards? Being a witch, I play with them now and then. Anyways, it's like the Death card in the deck. This card is not a symbol of death but just the end of the old and a rebirth for the new.

How did you like Jim-Bob's little play in NSMG? I thought it was pretty funny though John may not be too happy with it. I talked to Tallman the other day and he explained the "Crane Players" tape to me. It would be so cute to hear you do all those different voices. Tallman said that he thought you were a real flake. But then that was in the days of your youth. What else? Oh in Feb on about the 24 or 25, I'll be moving to Seattle. I'm having my mail sent to Tallman's house until I find a place of my own. I think that's very nice of him to do that for me, since I may have a month that I'll be in limbo and without an address- it could ruin my games. He wants to know how I'm going to explain my new address- like I would move in with him!! I'd die first!! He'll say how I couldn't help but fall in love with him, once I realized that you were an orc. That would be rather difficult since you have my heart. Actually the real story is that I've been sent by my Flushing parents to destroy him and thus ending the upstart in the Northwest corner and placing the power back to the East Coast where it belongs!

lots of love, Cathy

MARVIN



North Sealth, West George

VOL. 1 ISSUE #6 DEC. 1982
A PLACE, A CONCEPT, AND NOW

"THE EXORCISM OF CATHY CUNNING"

IT WAS A DARK AND WINDY NIGHT AND I WAS BEFORE MY ALTERED WITH RECENTLY ARRIVED DIZ SZINES. AS I READ I BECAME TROUBLED. THERE WAS SOME THREAD, SOME LINE OF THOUGHT COMING TO SEVERAL OF THE SZINES BUT I COULDN'T PUT MY FINGER ON IT. I WENT BACK THROUGH THE LETTERS FROM NEW PLAYERS AND SIMPLY SAW THE SAME CONFUSION I MYSELF HAD GONE THROUGH A YEAR AGO.

AND THEN I FOUND IT. TRACES OF DIP DEMONS! IT WASN'T THE CLEAR, STRONG SIGN LEFT BY THE ARCH-DEMONS SUCH AS BERNIE, SACHS, WALKER OR BERCH.

RATHER IT WAS THE SPOOR OF A PAIR OF LETTER DEMONS.

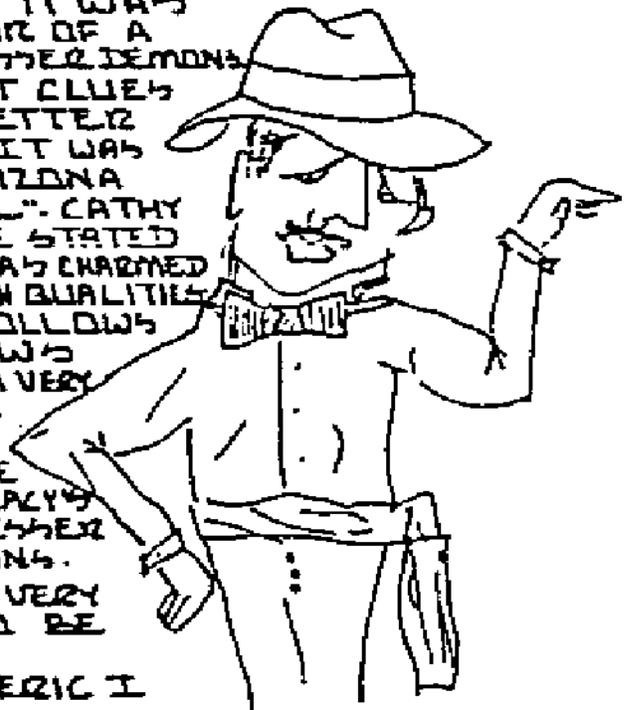
MY FIRST CLUES CAME IN A LETTER TO D.B.M. IT WAS FROM AN ARIZONA "VALLEY GIRL", CATHY CUNNING. SHE STATED THAT SHE WAS CHARMED BY HIS ELVISH QUALITIES. ANYONE WHO FOLLOWS N.S.W.G. 2 KNOWS THAT TO BE A VERY THIN CHARADE.

ERIC THE ORC IS KNOWN TO BE ONE OF DIPLOMACY'S MOST EVIL LETTER DEMONS.

ERIC "THE ORC" ORC

ONLY THE FACT THAT HE HAS VERY LOW HIT POINTS ALLOWS HIM TO BE HELD AT BAY.

BUT IF IT HAD BEEN JUST ERIC I WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN QUERLY CONCERNED. A THREAT TO BAD MOUTH HIM IN A SZINE AND HE DISAPPEARS IN A CLOUD OF CONFUSION.



JOHN "THE WIMP"

CARLSON

"That's a remarkable likeness of you on the cover of NSWG this month. This guy [Terry Tallman] is a true artist; it's like you're about to step off the page and strangle me. And his pic of Caruso is perhaps even better. It's like Caruso is about to give me a big kiss! Hahahaha! Do you realize, I'm the one who's fastened the 'wimp' label on John? All part of a plot to hold him in place till FBI agents can surround the house, you never know what these Mafia types have stored away in the basement after all. I've designated Caruso as 'Hobby Criminal Element'." --Bob Olsen

* * * * *

Origins - DipCon Review

by Cathy Cuning, from Cathy's Ramblings #1, September 1983

Origins- for me it started in Chicago, in the house of a supposed elf, who has now admitted to being Orcish. I will spare you all the details of the long wait and that first kiss between me and Eric. You can thank me by subbing. Sleep was lost the first night due to the time change and the fact that Eric had to wash the Toadmobile at 12:00AM! At some silly time in the morning we were off to Detroit. What a wonderful town. We checked into the hotel at about 12:00 pm. Eric was a bit dazed, but we managed to get to the rooms on top of the hotel. Quite a nice view at that too.

Then we were off to Cobo Hall to find all the hobby big names. The only problem about being with Eric is that everyone knew who I was before I knew who they were. I mean how many strange auburned haired females hang out with Ozog? Anyways where was I? Oh yes the first people we run into are Kathy Byrne and Julie Martin. Julie was so tan!! I'm so white. Has something to do with living in Seattle I bet. They inform me that Woody is looking for me and I better not find him for my own sake. They went off to find some sun and get even better tans. Could that be possible? We ran into Tom Swider and company. I can't remember who all was there! Oh Mike Barno was with them and Carl Russell. We talk and try to figure out where to go next. This is what took the most time whenever we were with a big group - "What should we do?" "Where should we go?" Finally it was decided to go find Kathy and Julie- I wonder why they wanted to find Julie?

There was a crowd with Kathy and Julie by the time we got there. There was my Dad! What a hunk he is too! And was god himself, Mark Berch. Hey I liked Mark, why for being short he wasn't so bad. Why he even made me laugh and it wasn't just his looks that made me laugh. I also was introduced to John Kador. Now I don't catch this guys name and he acts like I should know him and he's trying to be so nice to me. Later I find out it's Kador - the one who had stabbed me not once but twice! Oh well I still like smiling John. Woody shows up and Conlon and a few more faces, whose names escape me at the moment. We decide after some time that (a) it's hot outside and (b) we want something to drink. Once this was figured out it was simple committee work. Soon we took over Don's room and we get some beer. I'm overwhelmed by the whole thing and just stay by Eric. All these big names and little me.

Well onto round one of the Gunboat tournament. Funny thing about that round is I don't remember too much about it except that Eric was on that board with me and Derwood Bowen could never get our orders together. I can see him now with this dazed look on his face saying, "I wish I had known you were going to do that?" I think it was a four or five way draw that I got a piece of.

Round two was much more fun. This put me on a board with Kathy Byrne, Chuck Kaplan, Tom Mainardi and Dave Carter I think. I never did find if that was who the Frog was. We were such good allies too! Why he was so happy to give me his dots, but he had an English sounding accent so I was

easy. Kathy and Chuck were laughing the whole time. It was so funny. I was sure we were going to get kicked out of the tournament. We keep having "officials" trying to keep us quiet. Keep Kathy quiet? Don't be silly. I was a bit of a grump about it. I even tried to keep Kathy quiet and Chuck too. After all I was doing quite good. I'll never forget one of Chuck Kaplan's closing statements, when the game ended with a 3-way with me as the big power. He said, "God, I can't believe that she [me] is winning." That's what I like about Chuck he knows the right thing to say at every moment. That's why I follow his dip style. What a great guy. Well the final score was with Mark Berch coming in first, but I came in 3rd! My big point of the tournament.

That night was the Beer Blast that wasn't. For that matter I wasn't either. I just wanted to go to sleep. Well that was almost all that I wanted to do. I did get to meet Mark Luedi, my big brother. That was nice and many others like Jim "The Wall" Wall and Steve Knight. Anyways after quite some time of trying to figure out what we were going to do someone decided that GREEK TOWN was the place to go and mentioned something about hookers, etc. Why did I get the feeling that that wasn't the place that I wanted to be? The walk was too much for me too and so me and Eric quietly slipped away in an elfish manner.

The next day we spent some time checking Detroit out. I think Eric liked it more than me. I'll never quite get the feel for the Midwestern cities. But then I'm always amazed by any big cities. We missed the panel discussion and Allan Calhamer. Well thanks to my Dad, John Caruso, I did get to meet Mr. Calhamer. That was neat, but I didn't quite know what to say. The Mad Mob had gotten there by then. I found out they had come in at around 3:00AM and had wanted to say "hello" to me and Eric, but sadly didn't have our room # and had to go bother someone else. Lucky for us! Still it was nice meeting Marc Peters, Mark Frueh, Russ Rusnak, etc. Frueh really does look like Puppy! The real Dip tournament begins. Once again I'm on a table with Kathy Byrne. You would think with all the guys here that me and Kathy would get split up, but no. Greg Stewart was also on that board. He could of pulled a win or close to it in that game, but he was too kind to his puppets. He let them live!, either that or he liked having them between him and Kathy and me. That game was a forced 7-way draw! Oh but it was fun getting that draw and the officials coming about saying, "You do realize this will give you no points?" And Kathy, "Yes, who wants points? We're here to have fun!"

That evening was the official Dipcon society meeting. A long affair, but Al PEARSON did a hell of a job keeping it moving. I mean who's going to mess with Al? Afterwards, Eric, Dan Stafford, Derwood Bowen, Porter Wightman and myself went in search of food. We found it in the shape of the ethnic festival. It was nice just to sit outside and relax or talk for a change and not have to worry if someone was going to stab you. Eric and Dan talk about music and life and me and Porter listened to Derwood's tales from the wonderful world of pizza! And who says that Derwood isn't an exciting guy? Done with the food we went back to the hotel and said our good-byes to Dan, Derwood and Porter. Ah alone at last and I was so tired, I thought I would fall asleep where I was standing. Me and Eric settle down for a nice romantic evening alone, when the phone rings. It's James Wall and the Mad-mob and they want to come up and play games or something like that. It's either 1:00am or 2:00am. I forget which it was, i was in such a daze. I tell them they can come up. I don't remember much of what was going on just little pieces here and there. I remember someone - Mark Luedi or Tom Swider? talking about games we could play. Russ Rusnak laying down on the other bed and informing methat if he's still there at 3:00, he will be staying the night and he hoped I didn't mind. Seeing Paul Rauterberg keep falling to sleep and waking up as he sat in one of the chairs andthinking that I wish I could do the same. Finally Mark Frueh gives me his best puppy dog look and said, "Cathy, you don't really want us to spend the night here do you?" Well

to be quite honest I didn't and told them to piss off and so Mark Frueh managed to get them to leave. Even Rusnak, after all it wasn't quite 3:00am yet. Sleep wa the next thing I remember until Eric couldn't stand staying in one place and had to go out to find the boys. So off he went and I got to sleep at last.

Finals round. Eric was on the top board, so this was a big day for him, but for me it was just to have fun and the board I was on sure was that. Imagine having Eric Kane, Tom Swider, and Mike Barno all on the same board together. Add to this myself and Mike Cannon. Quite a game. I was Italy. I get Austria in round one and Italy in round two. Lucky me. Mike Cannon- Russia offered me an alliance, I was quite ready to go for it, but I heard bad news was in store for Russia and I pulled out. I don't think Mike was too happy with me for that. Eric Kane was even less happy with me. I was Kind of Stuck between Swider's England and Barno's Turkey. And Eric - France was just in the way. Nothing personal Eric, but you had to go. It was in general a mellow game. We took an hour and a half lunch break and when we came back the officials were pissed at us. Not that we cared mind you.

Well the tournament ended with a female winning! I'm quite proud of her too! Eric came in second and Dave Kleiman third. All in all it was a great time, I just wish I had had more time. There were so many people who were there that I didn't even get to meet really like jim Williams and Dick Martin. I hope to see you all again sometime and until then - Happy Stabbing!!

* * * * *

PUDGECON, an Odyssey

by Dan Stafford, from Cathy's Rambings #17, October 1985

I. Preparation. Mr. Snatch had been missing since Saturday. Scuttlebutt around the building was that the landlords had rounded up all the stray cats and had carted them off to parts unknown. I would have to leave for Chicago on Thursday but I would do so with a heavy heart if I didn't find Mr. Snatch first. After all, I have been taking care of the little purr for many months now. In fact, since early spring I've kept my window constantly open so that Mr. Snatch could come and go as she pleased. No cat had ever had it so good. But now my buddy was gone, missing for 4 days.

There aren't a lot of people living here in the building during the summer months, but somebody must know something. After asking around, I found a guy who did. He had, in fact, volunteered to remove the cats hoping to grant them a more humane fate than the rental company goon squad would have. "So where did you take the grey and white one?" "Oh, to a farm out in the country." "Can you take me there? I think my sister will have the cat." "Sure!" But while cruising along the freeway to rescue the snatch, we discovered that the two of us weren't talking about the same animal. "Oh, the grey one! I took that one to the Humane Society." A quick 180 pointed us in a new direction and soon we arrived at the animal shelter. And sure enough Mr. Snatch was there. You would not believe how big a hassle those people gave us before they would release the cat. Almost as if they were expecting eight more people to show up wanting that particular animal, or as if they would prefer to slaughter it instead. But not to worry, snatch fans, my precious purr was recovered and is now learning to live with my sister, her husband, their 3 cats and a dog.

Mr. Snatch was safe, PudgeCon was on, and the Mellow Yellow was on ice. All was right with the world.

II. The Journey Westward. The first leg of the trip, from Columbus to Chicago, was largely uneventful. The bulk of the mileage was through Indiana where I was at the mercy of Hoosier radio stations. John Cougar Mellencamp

is the state's favorite son and not one of the rock broadcasters there will let you forget it for more than 20 minutes or so. Despite the fact that my ears took a beating, the Yellow kept me Mellow as Indiana gave way to the Chicago freeway system.

The traffic really wasn't all that bad. However, when I did finally catch up to the rush hour jam, I almost found out the hard way that my brakes were subject to heat fatigue after the nearly 7 hours on the road. It was stop and go for the last few expressway miles, but then came the really scenic part of the journey to ease my tired eyes. Between the "Dan Ryan" and Eric's house lies a sprawling hispanic ghetto. And when you get through that you enter a neighborhood where only one non-black family lives - and that is the Ozog clan.

I quickly made myself at home in the Ozog basement, my home away from home. We looked over a few pictures of their trip to England and generally shot the breeze about old times, new times, and even borrowed times. And then it happened! I picked up a copy of Rauterberg's Midlife Crisis that was lying on the Ozog "game" table and began to read. Contained therein was an article by one Brad "Money For Nothing" Wilson, reviewing some sort of 4th of July concert that he had attended. He heaped praise on the performing bands, namely Joan Jett and the Blackhearts and the Beach Boys, and ended his article with a remark about the "pretentiousness" of bands like U2 - my favorite bunch of guitar heros. I was also informed that Sad Brad might be in attendance at PudgeCon (apparently the bozo had flunked out of the Ivy league and was now attending some non-descript, possibly non-existent, little U. in the Illinois area) so I began to plot my revenge. While fidgeting nervously with a dagger-shaped letter opener that Cathy Ozog had snuck through U.S. customs on her return trip from mother England, I devised fiendish ways to bash, stash, or even crash one overgrown Princeton reject. But alas, he was a PudgeCon no show. No doubt he got wind of my delerious wrath and decided that it was indeed true that caution is the better part of valor. Looking back on this now, I can see that revenge would be redundant upon any individual so intellectually and culturally deceased that he could actually sit through a Joan Jett concert without becoming violently ill.

The next morning, several hours before the crack of dawn, we set off for Kansas. There was a brief but humorous discussion of Linsey's "Buddy" poll and of the massive number of "buddy" votes that he had collected. We all wondered just where we had gone wrong because none of us belonged to the "buddy" club nor did any of us want to.

On the outskirts of Chicago we picked up one Russell T. Rusnak. The two "bad boys" of Dip, myself and Russ, glared at each other for a few hundred miles, but after about 10 hours we warmed up to each other. What followed was an interesting political discussion. Previous to this talk with Russ, I had considered myself to be a pretty conservative guy. You would figure that the guy who favors forced sterilization (snip! snip!) of 50% of the world's population (low I.Q. people and Russians, since you asked) would be the most conservative fellow in any given crowd. Wrong! Russ made me out to be Ted Kennedy in drag and that was that.

Ah, just ahead, Winterberry Circle.

III. The Con. There wasn't a lot of activity Friday evening when we arrived at the con. After all, Byrne wasn't there yet, nor had the Madlads or Molads (the St. Louis gang) arrived. I was dragged, biting and screaming, into an Acquire game with the two Ozogs and Reginald T. Rusnak. Meanwhile, a con tradition was being played out back in the corner as John Michalski and Dick Martin were refighting the Eastern front in one of those silly board games, you know the ones- we all used to play them. Back on the home front, J. Paul Rusnak was laughing all the way to the bank. His hotel wizardry amazed even me, and I've lost at this game to some good ones.

Friday night was interesting. In an effort to actually sleep at this con,

I went outside and crawled into the backseat of the largest car available, the one with Oklahoma plates. Woody, knowing that the Molads and the Madlads would be arriving sometime in the middle of the night, turned off all the lights in the house and left a note on Bob's door indicating that everyone was "out" and that they should go out to Michalski's car to find a "surprise." Needless to say, I was the one who was surprised, several times that night. I awoke the next day without really ever having been asleep thanks to my good buddy, that incomparable Rod Walker toady, Steve Arnawoodenwang.

The early hours of Saturday were spent enjoyably in a rousing epic of Circus Maximus, a chariot racing game of ancient Rome. Ben Hur Rusnak and I both armed ourselves with the heaviest chariots available but instead of picking on our weaker, faster co-racers while we had the chance, we battled it out between ourselves. By the time I had slaughtered off half his team (mmm, good eating tonight!) I was too far behind to be a serious factor in the race. But that didn't stop me from bashing any straggling chariots that got too close, and in fact by the end of the race all the leaders save one were laying dead on the track. My chariot finished second to Cathy Cuning Ozog's. And since her rig was driven by none other than "The Sleaze" I guess I can't really complain about finishing in the top 2 places.

Later that evening was the now famous "sausage" Diplomacy game. The line up featured Madlad Dale Bakken as Russia, Eric Ozog in Italy, Julie Martin as England, France - Randy Ellis, Austria - Tom Hurst, Kaiser Wilhelm Rusnak and yours truly playing Turkey. Right away Germany and Austria were ground into the dirt. I then made the fateful and erroneous decision to stab my Russian ally rather than my Italian one. A turn later, the Orc turned on me. After an initial tactical victory of annihilating a green block, I generally got the short end of the oar in the sea of circular stabs that followed. That is until the fateful move in which I was able to take Sevastopol with an army with all of Russia open. "Sausage Diplomacy," Dale Bakken was heard to mutter. Ozog and I looked at each other, then at Dale. "sausage?" "Yeah," he said, "I played that move like a sausage." Definately the best line at the con.

The game ended in an English/Italian draw. Julie was so excited that she ran to hug her bewildered co-winner Eric, generally rubbing her body all over his. Eric was heard to stammer in the heat of the moment, "Well, maybe it was all worth while. A little to the left, Julie." Meanwhile I consoled the other losers, "If only we had known it was a prize game."

Sunday was the day that I took on 3, count 'em 3, Madlads in a Dip game. My France took on Kathy Byrne's England, Marc Peter's Germany, Dale Bakken's Italy, James Wall's Austria, John Michalski's hamburger and Randy Ellis's fires. Fall 1902 saw me with 3 fleets and a tough decision to make. Should I join Peters and trash the mighty Byrne, or move my fleets south to take on Italy whose alliance with Austria was allowing Wall to gorge on hamburger and fries. Indecision gripped me. Finally, I decided to attack in both directions, an unusually bold move for me. Actually, it went rather well at first - Byrne quickly disappeared and I had a 50/50 shot at gaining an Italian dot the following year. But I guessed wrong (or maybe Dale was looking over my shoulder--all's fair in love, war and face to face Dip after all) and it was all down hill from there. eventually Wall's red horde took Munich and with his other hand on Marc's balls, he offered him a deal he couldn't refuse. Peters was to support a red army into Burgundy so that Wall could sack the French capital, or else. Germany took the deal and the Austrians entered my home center unopposed. "This is a wet dream come true!" Wall was heard to say.

Seeing the hopelessness of my situation, I quickly proposed a three-way A/I/G draw hoping to turn Madlad against Madlad. But to my surprise they quickly agreed to end the game. And then they had the nerve to act surprised when they "discovered" that it was we-three-Madlads who were the co-winners. Yes, the mighty Sleaze was beaten by Madlads, but let the record show that it took 3 of them to do it.

Sunday was also the day that Cathy Cunning Ozog decided to try to compete with Julie Martin. Julie's "Diplomacy outfits" are, of course, legend from coast to coast and all points in between. That girl really knows how to give a guy a hard time, though in fairness to Julie, she probably dresses that way all the time- not just at cons. But Cathy rose to the occasion on the last day of the con. Rather than be seen in something that she had worn before, she put on a blouse that had a button missing in a most revealing place. All day long she went about inadvertently flashing one and all. it's true that there wasn't much to see, but as we all know it's the thought that counts, right?

And then there was that ridiculous Naval War card game that Mark Frueh brought. Only a Titan player could get so excited about something like that. It was mindless, it was silly, it was less than pointless. But it did have its moments. Best of all was laughing at Randy Ellis and his whining monotonous monotone commentary about the game. It was an annoyance that would have made even the most ardent of Howard Cosell fans sigh with relief when Eric Ozog finally went around the table to nearly strangle the lad.

Sunday night there was one last Dip game. Believe me, you don't want to read about it - the high point was a 7 player stalemate line. But not to worry, this game was enjoyable as was the entire weekend. And as you've seen from this article, there was something for everyone (even perverts like me) at PudgeCon. Even Bob Olsen was there, I think!

IV. The Journey Eastward. We got a late start Monday morning, the sun was actually up before we set out for Chicago. It was decided that we would "convoy" with the spacious Madlad DipVan as long as possible so that His Majesty George "the third" Rusnak could ride in comfort, a guest of the Madlads. Eric and I amused ourselves by cursing the other drivers, frequently referring to them as "swarthy" so-and-so's. Swarthy motorists, swarthy truckdrivers and the especially swarthy Madladmobile (no offense to you genuinely swarthy types out there, and you know who you are!). Finally, somewhere in Iowa the Madlads gave up custody of Rusnak at a roadside rest area. We were all standing around pondering the actual meaning of the word "swarthy" when suddenly everyone looked at Rusnak. No further discussion was necessary.

V. Cathy's Revenge. The remainder of the trip was pretty uneventful, that is, until I made a remark in passing about the unimportance and insignificance of lyrics in music (pop, rock or otherwise). Cathy Ozog immediately attacked me, physically, for several minutes, digging her claws into my arms at every chance. It seems that Cathy fancies herself as a sort of lyricist and poet and I had inadvertently insulted her to the very heart of her sole [sic]. The immediate damage was minimal, but unfortunately for me, Cathy had been sick all weekend with the plague. She was coughing and wheezing, snotting and sneezing all through PudgeCon. And sure enough, a day after I returned home from Chicago, I came down with the croup as well. For a week and a half I was sick as a dog, but it was a small price to pay for such a con. I'm ready for another one already. So, how about next month, Bob?

I tried to mention as many people as I could in this tale of fact and fantasy. for those of you I missed, well, maybe you won't be so lucky next time!

* * * * *

Pudge Con #6

by John Michalski, from Cathy's Rambings #38, October 1988

Another Pudge Con #6? come and gone. This one just about went by without me, for it was only some 36 hours beforehand that I learned it as August 12-14 instead of Sept 2-5. Then I had the F.F. Reserve due, until I learned that Friday morning that it was rescheduled a week later. Why won't anyone tell me anything?

Anyhow, when my tooth acted up at noon Friday, I left work sick and headed north. That helped it a little. I arrived to find Bob gone for a long wait at the airport to pick up Steve Langley and his children arriving separately, after having earlier fetched in others. Apparently air service is better now than it used to be, when people would fly into Kansas City and drive from there. A couple of characters came to the door to greet me, but I forgot who they were. Let's see if I can remember who was there: Russ Rusnak, Robert Sacks, Dick & Julie Martin, Gary Behnen, Dan Stafford, Pete Gaughan and his Wife, Ken Peel, Larry Botmer, Jason Bergmann, from Dallas, Steve Langley & son & daughter, Bruce Geryk (pronounced Jair-rick, not Jerk like I'd thought); our gracious host Bob Olsen, the Olga the cat, and my apologies to the few whom I can't recall just now. All I remember is the Third Reich game, Jason, Dick and I spent 20 hours on. (Hell of a great half-game though!)

This was another con that was graced by a complete lack of smoking. The only pollution was that godawful rock/taped noise that gets to be a bit much after 2am. The first night it did quit early (about 2); the second night I stayed up straight through anyhow, but did turn it down myself sometime between 3 & 5 am (=1942), for while that stuff is just background trash in daytime-evening-night, it's just too much to put up with 2 or 3 hours into the wee hours of the morning. I suppose to the potheads who grew up sleeping on their ghettoblasters turned to that stuff, it's just fine, but I need a break from that garbage once in a while.

Speaking of garbage, I learned some hobbyists have been at it again, taking their disagreements with other hobbyists to the family/employer/school administrators/etc. of their hobby enemies. Seems like this putrid aspect of the hobby is alive and well. That sicko stuff reminds me of the antics of my ex-wife, another of those immature-irrational personalities I guess. I'd be upset if I were still active in the hobby, but anymore, I'll let others do the slugging and sign the petitions. I've got my own crazed wacko to deal with, the active hobby can deal with their batch, or write defenses of it.

Another thing I noticed from handouts/free issues/petitions/fliers available is that most hobby services are duplicated, one being available from each hobby camp. Better two than none, I guess.

Unless someone slipped one in after I left Sunday, I don't believe we were burdened with a Dip game all weekend. Lots of Titan, and some railroad game, Survive, and Hearts game. I won late Friday night after 16 rounds. (One player hit 100 and dropped back to 50). we were all in the mid 80s when I ran them on a hold hand, and put everyone else out. If I'd wanted to be mean, I could have taken 26 off and let it go another round!

Usually there is no one wanting to play something good like Third Reich at these affairs, but this time there were 4 players there. One, Jason Bergmann, was inexperienced at full play of the campaign game, so after we went out and got a copy locally (no easy task!), we started a practice game that turned out to be pretty interesting. My (Axis) losses were high in Poland and France, but Paris fell in the summer and I declared war on Russia in Fall 1940, followed by an ineffectual flip flop, followed by one in my favor that did disappointingly little in Russia, but an activating Vichy France built up her Syrian garrison which aided in the collapse of Egypt and the Middle East. However, as experienced players can guess, two years later saw little change: the Allies had retaken Morocco & Algeria but were driven out of Tunisia in winter 1942; a Vichy excursion into the Caucasus was crushed with

ease, leaving it to Italy to throw a garrison into NW Persia; but the biggest Mediterranean threat was fear of Russia into Rumania. (The Russian front ran Odessa-Karkov-Moscow-Lake Ladoga, named cities being Axis). I almost won when the Baltic States fell late in 1941, but a winter invasion of Parnu by the isolated Leningrad garrison succeeded at one-to-two odds(!), allowing Russia some winter builds instead of ending the year with no builds and a negative point total. Dick Martin aided in the defense there, playing the Russian front in the latter seasons as Russia followed the comeback trail from a Spring 42 calamity when Leningrad, Moscow and Parnu all fell, the first two in one-to-one attacks. Russia went from 135 to 80 without making a move, but I had nothing in the Murmansk box, and the US made good on it. That may sound like a mistake, but later, SW cleaned Britain's clock so badly that the 1943 YSS saw an unexpected flip flop in my favor! As I said, a very intriguing game regrettably cut short by an early departure I was forced to make for Oklahoma City.

Some interesting changes have occurred: Steve Langley whom I hardly had a chance to speak to, has his hair cut short in back now. Julie was pretty much dressed throughout, but sure hasn't gone to seed. Rusnak has some grey hair now and isn't so embarrassing, though still outspoken. Bruce Geryk has an interesting Statue-of-Liberty spiked hair. The graphics on the computer dungeon games are quite impressive these days: actual inside-the-room pictures of things now, instead of narrative and stick men. High tech again meets American's greatest need: mindless escapism. I guess it's easier than learning the 4th edition of Third Reich. Early Sunday I bought a 12 pack of beer to contribute, for about \$3. It seems that if you're not buying it for yourself, better to spend the money on only a few high-dollar beers than many low dollar beers. My bag of Italian cheese flavored potato chips vanished very rapidly.

Robert Sacks arrived in daily New York attire: black rubber thongs, long yellow shorts, non-descript white T-shirt, then topped it with a decent powder blue sport coat. Sort of the visual equivalent of listening to Rusnak. We started to go to the corner restaurant (Rock & 29th), but they wouldn't let him in! Good restaurant, I guess. So the 11 of us went to a Chinese place, decent buffet, but \$8.03 with tax, no drink. That's double what I'd pay here, drink thrown in. That was the only bad part of the visit, aside from having to cut my stay suddenly short, and missing out on an exciting 1943, plus further socializing that would have been nice. Oh well. There's always next year....

* * * * *

L E T T E R S

Dwayne Shreve

Dear Eric and Cathy,

No doubt, you have been wondering at the infrequency of my beer reports lately. The sad truth is that I have not been getting to many exotic places.

My latest trip, while not of the ho-hum sort, falls somewhere in between that and sort of adventurous. Two nephews and I flew to Cancun of all places. There we rented a car at the airport and headed south to Playa del Carmen.

From there we drove toward Chetumal, then Xpujil, Escarcega, Ticul, and Merida seeing many ruins along the way, and finally made it back to Playa del Carmen. From there I drove the car to the Cancun airport, and headed back to the others to spend some days swimming and dining, the latter primarily in the far less expensive non-tourist places.

It is interesting that even in some big touristy place like Playa del Carmen or Cozumel, if you are willing to walk a bit, you can find real Mexican restaurants, and not just the crappy overpriced tourist ones. In Playa we found a whole street of three restaurants that served nothing but a wonderful

barbecued chicken with achiote, but in different delightful ways.

My feeling has long been that when dining in foreign parts, if I can look all around a restaurant and find that the only visible tourists are at my table I have done well. When the food is good and geared to the locals I know it is the right place. Such cafes are probably even safer than tourist traps, because they rely on the health and goodwill of repeat customers.

As usual, in that part of Mexico there was no question what beer was best. As a delightful dark beer Leon Negra is numero uno beyond a doubt. The only complaint one can make is that it is so damnably hard to find. Liquor stores almost never have it and only some restaurants and other businesses carry it.

Most of the other quaffs there are ordinary sort that can be bought in the U.S. so I did not sample them unless necessary. The only other non-import is called Superior, and provides a decent taste of lager.

I am going to have to drop out of the game and off your standby list. Being in negotiations with a publisher regarding my book, "Finding the Lost City..." and facing a probable rewrite of much of it, as well as my return to Mexico in July to write an epilogue, you might describe me as distracted.

Imagine this-- a blond, left handed fellow from Illinois headed off to Mexico prior to WWII. Six years later, after adventures and attempts to settle down, he finds the ruins, later called Bonampak. Another man gets the credit and he dies mysteriously on his last expedition. I establish it as manslaughter. Oh well, best, Dwayne.

[Take care, it sounds like you have more exciting stuff going on. I appreciate all the travelogue/beer review articles you've sent over the years; they've made me curious about visiting Mexico. I'd like to learn Spanish someday. Good luck with your book, and I can't wait for the movie.]

John Michalksi

Hi folks! I thought I'd shock you with an appearance here on the web, or net, or whatever. Anne and I are using one of those 10-free-hours offers, so I can at least send a back-up set of orders, can't I?

I notice that there seem to be some electronic THIRD REICH games in progress; I'll inquire further if we get some permanent listing. Almost everything seems cheaper than AOL, and provides much more time. Some locally-advertised outfit wants \$20-something, but offers 40 hours of prime (daytime) hours, and unlimited evenings-- weekends, which is the time we'd be most interested in anyhow. Personally, I tend to think that the whole business is kind of like the CB craze of a few years ago: a bunch of weirdos BSing behind the anonymous mask. People may tire of it like they did that stuff. We got some catalog in the mail (--someone at work is selling the employee mailing list--) that offered a new attachment, for big bucks, that would let you take pictures with it, then send the pictures off here into cyberspace. The advertising of course showed it used to send pictures of children to online grandparents and stuff, but of course the real draw would seem to be exchanging the proverbial naked pictures of your spouse with intimate friends, or maybe advertising oneself on the bulletin board, and see who responds. Probably be a good idea to get some hunky friend to pose for oneself, and say that was your own picture. Some rugged, outdoorsy type like you could sell yourself as a stand-in, hey? It should work until two clients each introduced your picture as them on the same bulletin board.

I'd like to look at the Avalon Hill Game Company's bulletin board again, but although I've been in there twice, I can never remember how to call it up. This system is very frustrating for someone like me who does not automatically know that I have to hit the tab button to get the cursor from the To box to the Subject box, etc. The designing cyberfreaks never seem to consider that sort of thing.

ANNZGUY, [John's 1977 Ford Thunderbird] by the way, has 307,000 miles on it now, and is still going strong. Well, OK, not strong, but still going

anyhow. Kind of like its owner.

[My 1978 Cougar has 220,000 miles on it now- I had the engine totally rebuilt at 205,000 nearly two years ago as one cylinder was starting to go out, among other problems. The car is still structurally sound and the body and paint look good so I rebuilt it, saving megabucks over getting a newer car.

Your comparison of E-Mailand with CB radio is interesting; I've often said the same thing about it, having once been a part of the CB fad during the '70s myself. Like CB, some social outcasts and outright dangerous people are attracted to E-Mail because they can BS or do nasty stuff while remaining anonymous. But there are weirdos anywhere. I don't have a problem with consenting adults sending each other naked pictures, but as you said, what you see isn't necessarily what you'll get! On the plus side, E-Mail/the Internet is an excellent communications/information medium and the vast majority of people are okay- exchanging their views in the "global village." Like CB, I don't see the point in "talking" to strangers. Unless you know the person on the other end, E-Mail seems too impersonal to me. Unlike CB, I believe E-Mail is here to stay.

Thanks also for your August letter and interesting book review!]

Timothy Lurz

A word of explanation about my address [Taiwan]. I work at a computer company doing Chinese-English, English-Chinese translation. But because I don't have a degree in computer science, I cannot get my Resident visa through the computer company. Therefore I teach at night at a "bushiban" (cram school) in order to get my visa and work permit. Crazy, huh?

As I mentioned over the phone, my wife is expecting son #2 any day now. The national insurance pays for the hospital bills as well as one month's salary. After the baby is born, Christina will spend a month at her mom's house "dwzo yuedz" (sitting for a month). She is not allowed to leave the house and her mom cooks some awful smelling medicined chicken that Christina must eat everyday. Her family helps her with the baby during this time. After the month is finished, I have to buy cake and red eggs to send out to family and friends. And because it is a son, I also get to foot the bill for a dinner. (Sorry girls, but boys and girls are treated differently over here. But the boys pay the price later in life; but that story is best saved for another letter.) My two sons are considered "inside grandsons"). They are technically part of my family, but since I am a foreigner and my parents don't think this way, my in-laws get the benefit of having their daughter's sons having the Chang name. My sons have two names (English and Chinese) and will speak three languages at home (English, Chinese and Taiwanese). Perhaps another reason to be working two jobs; I might have to pay for therapy for the kids when they get older!

[Congratulations! I know you've had the new baby for a while now- I bet your family really feels like a family now that you have two! As you mentioned to me before, Taiwan is a completely different world from the Sierra Nevada where you grew up. Thanks for serving as a standby in my games and the best of luck to you- if you're ever back in the States and visit the Seattle area someday, drop me a line.]





John Michalski
 10705 Cecilia Dr
 Oklahoma City, OK 73162-4324

Dear Eric and Kathy,

August 28, 1996

While things are slow around here, I thought I'd write. Things are so exciting around here that I finally finished CHILDREN OF THE JEDI, a 400 page Star Wars novel that would have been a lot better at 275, but turned out better than the title implies. It, like THE COURTSHIP OF PRINCESS LEIA, struck me as good because 1) with those titles, I didn't expect much of them, and 2) in both cases, they had as much to do with children or courtship as A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE had to do with streetcars. After CHILDREN, I hit one of the half-dozen old Nero Wolfe mysteries I found a few months back at a used bookstore, and polished that one off in three days. They, like the STAR WARS stuff, are old familiar friends to me, and the mysteries will usually run only 180-190 pages.

Way back when, I mentioned reviewing the STAR WARS books. The more I've gone through, the fewer I really care to review. The first trilogy looks better now than it did then, after two others and a start on a fourth. The main problem seems to be Luke Skywalker: in the movies, he was a brash young kid, and almost a full Jedi knight by the end of the third movie. That's all the various authors have ever seen of him, to work with. Yet in the books, he quickly changes from full Jedi knight to "Jedi Master", on a par with Joda himself. What is Luke Skywalker, Jedi Master, like? None have the courage to even try, so poor Luke winds up unconscious, or dazed, or wounded, drugged, whatever, throughout most of every story. They can't kill him off--at least not until someone from his "Jedi Academy" gains popularity--but they have never been able to fit him into an ongoing story. THE CRYSTAL STAR is probably the worst case: Luke becomes a semi-zombie early on, and never comes out of it until the book ends!

If you're not familiar with the stories, the main thread is that Han and Leia marry, and have three children: twins Jaina and Jacen, and little Anakin, all strong in the force. Many books go on and on with little more plot than attempts to kidnap the children, to lure them to the Dark Side of the Force; Leia, aiding the government of the New Republic, moves on to become Head of State. Throughout all this, Han and Leia constantly commit themselves to staying home with the children more, but it hasn't yet happened in over a dozen stories.

Most authors fill the books by pairing off characters into different concurrent adventures, and bring them all to one place in the last chapter or two, and that's that. The worst is the "Corellian Trilogy", where sometimes 4 separate groups are running around, trapped, captured, whatever, at the same time. And when the third book ends, nothing is resolved other than everyone meeting again! (The trilogy bylines read "Hon Solo's homeworld erupts in civil war!": well, they do get into a few battles of sorts, but in the end, what resolution is there to the basic questions underlying the series? What will the New Republic do when member states opt to LEAVE the benevolent Republic, and try going their own way? A good point, but all we get are reunion hugs, and they all fly away. What will Han's homeworld Corellia do with the ancient and massive wonder machines that were found, and which no one but baby Anakin could get to turn on? Again, nothing. Just fly away.

So far, the stories cover about 15 years after the movie. One of the better books, the stand-alone novel THE TRUCE AT BAKURA, picks up immediately where RETURN OF THE JEDI ends: I believe it opens with "The ashes of Darth Vader's funeral pyre were not yet cool when the message arrived..." It would have been better if the author hadn't followed the disgusting tradition of trying to make aliens seem alien

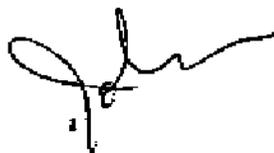
by employing idiotic spellings for them? in this case, insect people called the Ssi-Ruuk. But at least there is a plot line, and starting right after JEDI, she has a more certain galactic situation to write in than do some of the later ones, who are never able to get beyond "the fledgling New Republic..".

One word of caution: these books have all made money, even CRYSTAL STAR, and since George Lucas will be Bob Dole's age before he gets to look at the post-movie period himself, these 'authorized' authors are having a field day with the sequel-period. Regretably, none of them are very inventive. But since anything with STAR WARS blazened across the cover will make a profit, there are all sorts of odd things coming along. TALES FROM THE MOS EISELY CANTINA, and TALES FROM JABBA'S PALACE are nothing but a collection of SF stories with STAR WARS on the front cover; likewise the X-WING SQUADRON books, and the kiddie series subtitled "Young Jedi Knights". Skip that stuff. My recommendation to the casual reader would be to stick to those three stand-alone novels: The Truce At Bakura; Children of the Jedi; and The Courtship of Princess Leia.

Auditing has finally slowed down again. It was slow for a long time, then hit high for a while, with three active audits, but now has dropped off again. For the first time in many years, I have an out-of-state assignment that has not fallen through! In late November, I get to go to Cleveland, Ohio. It isn't quite the same as an Orlando or San Francisco or New Orleans, but it should be more interesting than the motorcycle business I've been at on the west side for the last three weeks. One of my three audits wrapped up; another had their roof blown off in a storm, and went on hold; and the motorcycle one now switches from field work to data entry at our central office for a while. I've decided, in view of that, to take the entire Labor Day week off, plus the following Monday. Data entry doesn't do much for me. With next week being slow (i.e., either in the office, or home here doing keypunch on this little thing), I may forget what auditing is like by the time I get back to real work, sometime in mid September. The only exciting news around here was finding that "chancellery" is in the WordStar spellcheck system. It sure hasn't been from hectic battles raging in my postal THIRD REICH games. And then there's the Democratic Convention on TV... I wish I had more PERRY MASON episodes on tape than I do.

Our 8th anniversary (not 9th, as I'd thought for a while) is coming up at the end of this month. "Pottery and Bronze", according to the charts. Perhaps some additional dishes to wash, and a spittoon for the living room? I guess not. Wrapping up the field work at the motorcycle place today, the old woman in charge there said it was her 48th anniversary. I would have retired 10 years earlier. I guess you get in a rut when you run your own business: can't get out of the old rut. With State employment, that doesn't seem to be a problem.

I hope all is going reasonable well there. I'm envious of you folks when I watch the Weather Channel, and see front after front of real weather rolling in over you. Here, the fronts hit the Kansas-Okla border and are stopped dead by the heat--and this August has been cooler than normal! After Labor Day, we're visiting Milwaukee for a couple of days (3 weeks too late for GenCon); I'll let you know if Chicago is still there.



The Outhouse

Washington AC (Above California)

Le Grande Fielde Marshalle's just back from an overnighiter to Henderson, Nevada. No great excitement this trip. Was short about \$218 upon return but that includes ALL expenses. flight down & back, hotel room, meals, tips, airport parking & dog kennel fees in addition to gambling so \$185 a day for two people, it wasn't a BAD vacation.

Some of you may know, Fielde Marshalle also works with Cub Scouts, primarily WEBLOS which are older Cubs. They go camping twice a year in their activities.

On flight down to Henderson, I happened to listen closely to Stewardess on plane & got to thinking about Scouts & camping as well. This brought to mind following. Picture, if you will, one of them (non-essential? just had to get that in Eric) Government workers - a Forest Ranger - welcoming a group of campers to a Park.

"Welcome aboard Camp Run-A-Muck. My name's Ranger Bob, Federal Regulations require me to ask if you packed your own knapsack? We'll be camping at 5,000 feet & expect a little rain. Your tent's waterproofed but in event of a leak, it's equipped with ponchos. If needed, place hood of Poncho over your head & pull down sides over body. If your camping with small children or handicapped personnel, please don your poncho before assisting with others. Camp Run-A-Muck's a non-smoking camp & outhouses are equipped with smoke detectors. Any tampering with, or attempting to by-pass them, is considered a Federal Offense. Because we're at 5,000 feet, we're considered in Bear Country. Though we're not expecting any Bears, should a Bear enter camp, your reminded tents are equipped with two exits, one to front & one to rear. Should two Bears enter, your reminded there are also two Emergency exits that can be made through sides of tent as well. You'll notice Old Ranger Bob's wearing Nike tennis shoes. Keep in mind that I can't outrun a Bear, but then I don't have to, I just have to be able to out run YOU! We hope you'll enjoy your camping & welcome aboard. We'll be around with Complimentary Cocoa & Cookies later."

Fielde Marshalle's figured if he camps in Bear Country with anyone, he'll take a small 25 automatic pistol along. Realizing a 25 automatic won't stop a bear that's chasing you, keep in mind it doesn't have to. Just shoot your camping buddy in leg to slow HIM down. I've often thought my LAST thought when camping & running with a buddy from a Bear that MY last thought might be - Man can that other guy really run FAST!

With Christmas Season just over, we've a bit of Trivia for you. Realizing most of you may NEVER have seen a 78 RPM record, most popular ever sold anyway's been listed as Bing Crosby's version of "White Christmas". What's SECOND most popular 78 record ever sold? We'll give you a bit here to ponder that.

Here's one to argue around coffee pot at work. Friday was named after a Goddess. Why doesn't line read; "Thank Goddess It's Friday"? If your ready for 78 record #2, it's "Peg o' My Heart" by Harmonicats' 1947.

Jack Jewert

[Thanks, Jack, for the witty articles you have contributed to RBM over the years! Maybe Le Grande Fielde Marshalle will make one of our Housecons someday!]

La Grande Fielde Marshalle's back with an extract from a diary:

NOV 12: Moved to new home in New York State. So beautiful here. Mountains so majestic. Can hardly wait to see snow covering them. Truly Gods chosen Paradise.

DEC 14: New York's most beautiful place on earth. Leaves have turned all colors & shades of red & orange. Went riding through beautiful mountains & saw some deer. Their so graceful. Certainly most wonderful animal on earth. This must be paradise. I love it here!

NOV 11: Deer season starting soon. Can't imagine anyone wanting to kill such a gorgeous creature. Hope it will snow soon. I love it here!

DEC 2: Snowed last night. Wake up to find everything blanketed with white. Looks like a postcard. Went outside & cleaned snow off steps & driveway. Had a snow ball fight & when snow plow came by, had to shovel driveway again. What a beautiful place. I love New York.

DEC 12: More snow last night. I love it! Snow plow did his trick again to driveway. I love it here!

DEC 19: More snow last night. Couldn't get out of driveway to get to work. Hills to icy for driving anyway. Am exhausted from shoveling. Damned snow plow!

DEC 22: More of that white crap fell again last night. Have blisters on my hands from shoveling. Can't get up any of icy hills, even with salt on them. I think snow plow hides around corner & waits until I'm done shoveling driveway -- butt face!

DEC 25: Merry @#!???# Christmas! More friggen snow. If I ever get my hands on that SOB that drives snow plow, I swear I'll kill him! Don't know why they don't use more salt on roads to melt damned ice so you can get up blasted hills?

DEC 27: More white crap last night. Been inside 3 days except for shoveling out driveway every time snow plow goes through. Can't go anywhere, car's stuck in mountain of white crap. TV says expect another 10" again tonight. Do they know how many shovel fulls of snow 10" is?

DEC 28: TV was wrong! Got 34" of white crap this time. At this rate it won't melt before summer. Snow plow got stuck up road on a big hill & SOB came to my door & asked to borrow shovel. After I told him I had broken 6 shovels already shoveling all that crap he pushed into my driveway, I broke last one over his knothead!

Jan 4: Finally got out of house today. Went to store to get food & on way back, on an icy hill, a damned deer ran in front of car & I hit it. Did about \$5,000 damage to car. Damned beasts should be killed. Wish hunters had killed them all last November!

May 3: Took car to garage in town. Would you believe thing was rusting out from all that @#!???# salt they put on roads!

May 30: Moved to Georgia! Can't imagine why anyone in their right mind would ever live in that God Forsaken State of New York! It's just a Hell of a place.

Ah yes, how quickly they change & then there's always that - Grass is always greener on other side of fence theory.

The Ex-Chief's Advice

In My Opinion - Jack Ward Thomas

Forest Service needs a bipartisan effort to clarify its mission

The Forest Service has a reputation among scholars of government as a "superstar" agency - the "can do" agency. A clear vision of what the Forest Service is to do rests with elected officials.

That vision must be produced by a bipartisan effort. Only a unified drive could clarify the muddy morass of uncoordinated laws, out-of-date regulations, shifting policy direction, budget decisions, overlaps in agency responsibilities, disagreements between Congress and administration and inconsistent court actions that combine to "guide" the agency.

Since my retirement as Chief of the U.S. Forest Service in late November, numerous interviewers have asked, "What are the primary problems that you faced." Among those were:

1. Lack of clear mission.
2. Operating under laws that mesh poorly with effects exacerbated by overlapping responsibilities of several agencies and a wide-range of sometimes confusing court decisions.
3. Micromanagement, in other words politicization of agency activities by Congress and political appointees.
4. Continued downsizing with inadequate consideration of what is expected of the Forest Service.
5. Demoralization of the Forest Service by extremes in the debate over public land management.

Such problems can be addressed through bipartisan action over the next two years.

Why now?

Republicans gained House and Senate control in 1994 - partially from a backlash against extreme environmentalism. Some perceived a mandate to dismantle environmental laws and public land ownership. They failed and suffered for the effort.

In the meantime, Democrats maintained that no problem existed except compliance with the laws.

Both were wrong.

Problems are worsening. It is time to face reality. Maybe the time has come for a bipartisan overhaul of the laws that effect the Forest Service.

In addition, micromanagement by Congress inhibits rational management - particularly during downsizing. For example, the Forest Service must have clearance from six separate congressional committees to close a ranger district or to combine two of them. The agency's budget requires spending on pet congressional projects causing resources to be diverted from higher priorities.

Micromanagement from above the Chief's level is even more disconcerting. Direct orders from Agriculture Department and administration levels to the Forest Supervisors that bypass lines of authority produce confusion, consternation, inconsistency, embarrassment and a breakdown in discipline and

order.

Appointed officials should set policy and hold the agency responsible to carry it out. Mixing of policy and execution functions produces disorganization.

As downsizing proceeds, the administration and Congress tend to increase centralized control. That is a mistake. During downsizing, managers need more flexibility, not less. The heart of government reinvention was decentralization of authority and encouragement of innovation.

These problems lead to a tendency to scapegoat employees for their performance under the situation described earlier. Though politically convenient, it is inexcusable over the long term.

The seeds of failure lie in the worsening situation that has been allowed to drift for over two or more decades. Federal courts have been reluctantly thrust into this vacuum to interpret intent of the mishmash of law, regulation, regulating activity and poorly related court opinions.

Scapegoating has helped foster increasing violence against personnel and property. Forest Service folks continue to do their best and wait for cries of outrage and effective response from political leaders.

Enough!

It is time to address underlying problems and eschew political temptation to wag fingers at the executors of confused policy, judicial mandates and divided management authority.

The national forests and grasslands, all 194 million acres, are our lands. This heritage is unique in the world. We all have a stake in those precious lands.

Some would take advantage of current confusion and turmoil to devolve these lands into other ownership or control. I have little doubt as to what such a move made in the name of efficiency today would produce over coming decades.

Almost as threatening is the temptation to political figures, facing the consequences of government operations under a balanced budget scenario, to use national forest lands or timber as trading stock to achieve pressing objectives of the moment.

The National Forests were put together too laboriously, meticulously and expensively over a century to be dismantled piecemeal to accomplish political objectives of the moment. This precedent is politically seductive but potentially disastrous over the long term.

The men and women of the Forest Service are among the best in the world at what they do. They need only a clarified mission and adequate flexibility to be the superstars they have been for a century.

The people of the Forest Service can and should be conservation leaders for the third millennium. They can - but only if the described problems are forthrightly addressed.

That can be done. But it requires leaders with a clear vision, and the guts to take on such a contentious subject.

The Forest Service has a new leader - the 14th chief in a long green line. Michael Dombeck is a career professional with extensive Forest Service experience. He packs all the right gear. But he needs help.

Steering a ship with a malfunctioning rudder and too many co-captains is excruciatingly difficult. I know from experience. He, the Forest Service and the American people deserve better.



FOREST SERVICE PEOPLE DESERVE OUR SUPPORT

[Albany Democrat-Herald, Nov. 9]

This would be a good time to look up your friends working for the Forest Service and tell them they have your support. It may not do them any practical good, but it might reassure them that not everybody is out to get them.

Forest Service workers have for years caught some of the flak thrown up in the Sagebrush Rebellion, that loosely knit movement trying to wrest away federal control over land in Nevada and other places, including some counties in Oregon.

They also have suffered the consequences of sharp disagreements in the public about how the national forests should be managed. Industry types think the foresters are dragging their feet getting more timber to market. Environmentalists try to put the brakes on the process any way they can. And the radicals block forest roads and even dig them up to prevent even the few sales allowed.

As bad as all that was, now it is worse.

At the Detroit Ranger Station, a Forest Service pickup was set on fire and threatening notes were left. The Oakridge Ranger Station has been leveled by arson, a crime which the Eugene Register-Guard properly described as the worst attack on a federal installation in the U.S. since the bombing and mass murder in Oklahoma City.

And as though the physical danger to employees and the destruction of property and research records were not enough, the Forest Service continues downsizing its operations, letting people go, because of the drop in timber sales. The Siuslaw National Forest is contemplating closing the Alsea Ranger Station and combining its operations with the station in Waldport.

Needless to say, our friends in the Forest Service do not deserve any of this. They have spent their careers taking care of our national forests the way Congress told them to. All the rangers and others we have ever met in 30 years of reporting were conscientious, knew what they were doing and took seriously their role in carrying out the policies that Congress had made.

The sharp disagreement on how forests should be managed is not the fault of people at forest headquarters in Corvallis or Eugene, or in the ranger stations. At one time their mandate was to harvest trees as much as possible under the concepts of sustained yield and multiple use. Now the mandate is to minimize timber harvesting and pay more attention to wildlife and other considerations.

Anybody who knows anything about the attacks and threats on Forest Service installations has an obligation to tell authorities what he knows. Attacks on our foresters are attacks on the American people as a whole.

TORCHING RANGER STATION NOTHING BUT TERRORISM ... LANS ON TIMBER HARVEST AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION CAN'T BE INFLUENCED BY CRIMINALS

The News-Review [Roseburg, November 14, 1996]

The recent destruction of the U.S. Forest Service's Oakridge Ranger Station was an act of domestic terrorism that is hard to fathom.

This reprehensible activity should be condemned loudly by public and private groups.

Mountains of records, representing 20 years of research on the Willamette National Forest, are lost forever. More than 70 Forest Service employees, who merely follow political policies, were burned out of their workplace.

The ranger station arson wasn't the only criminal action. Just three days earlier, a Forest Service truck was set on fire, and anti-logging graffiti was painted on the Detroit Ranger Station 70 miles away.

Fingers are being pointed at fringe environmental groups, who point back at timber companies. No one has taken credit, and arson investigators have not announced any findings yet. It is hoped that a \$15,000 reward will draw someone out of the woodwork.

It's a shame to realize it has come to this. This destructive, terrorist action flies in the face of all the public involvement and meetings that have brought the debate over timber and the environment to this point.

The laws regulating timber harvest today were hammered out in public and political circles. Burning up the Oakridge Ranger Station will have no effect on that, and was only a classic act of stupidity.

The Clinton Forest Plan and salvage logging rider are the key laws regulating timber harvest today. These are established in the political arena, and are totally insulated from such criminal action that has taken place recently.

Acts of terrorism and arson, directed either at Forest Service property or the property of logging companies, can't be tolerated by civilized society.

Forest Service Chief Jack Ward Thomas summed it up succinctly in Oakridge Wednesday: "This is not a third world country. This is not acceptable. This is what people do who don't understand how to operate in a democracy."

Ideally, federal arson investigators will come up with the culprits. In the meantime, every environmental organization or pro-timber group that has sway over its members must ask itself if inflammatory language has driven people to this point.

This type of activity must be condemned. To be quiet about this type of terrorism is to condone it.



LITTERS OF NEW PUPS SWELL POPULATION OF YELLOWSTONE WOLVES -- Because five wolf dens are alive with new litters, biologists have predicted that the wolf packs introduced into Yellowstone National Park from Canada during the last year and a half will thrive on their own. "Wolf reintroduction is done, unless something unusual happens," said Ed Bangs, a biologist with the Fish and Wildlife Service who helped coordinate the controversial project. The population of wolves in the park has tripled since last year. Biologists counted eight new pups in two litters and are confident that three more females gave birth in late April. The New York Times 5/12/96

HIGHWAY CONGESTION

Let the cities thrive

Mr. Munson "Congested highways: Examine underlying cause." Letters, Jan. 16) is correct that an improved transportation system will attract new businesses but it isn't the commercial traffic that fills the highways but commuter traffic. Additional population would not appreciably increase highway congestion if the (new) people lived close to where they work.

There are three underlying causes to highway congestion. First, the highway system permits people to live a great distance from where they work. Second, people have concluded that our cities are unfit to live in. Third, economic conditions require two workers to provide sufficient income for a family and work situations don't permit husband and wife to car pool.

Any solution to the highway problem must include convincing the people that living in the city is more socially and philosophically acceptable than commuting from a rural area and that living in the city is an economically wise decision.

People have deserted the cities for four reasons. First, they have been convinced that owning a house in the country is socially superior to living in the city. Second, it is assumed that living in the city is more dangerous than living in the suburbs. Third, it is assumed that city schools are inferior to suburban schools. Fourth, equivalent housing is cheaper in the country than in the city and all things considered, it is cheaper to pay the commuting cost and save the housing cost.

The core cities are cutting their own throats by supporting the Regional Transit Authority for it will permit people to move further into the countryside and still commute into the city for work. They will earn their money in the city and spend it in the suburbs.

I suggest a humongus increase in the road fuel tax, say 50 cents per gallon and a corresponding decrease in the annual tonnage tax with the money used to subsidize core city services. This will make the cities more livable, and discourage commuting while not penalizing inter-city trucking.

BILL WALD
Everett

CANADA

WOLF attacks: A group of timber wolves kept inside a compound at a wildlife reserve attacked and killed the woman responsible for feeding them, police said Friday. Tricia Wyman, 24, was apparently giving the five wolves their regular feeding when she was attacked Thursday, Ontario police said. Her mangled body was found in the evening by two youths. Constable Ron Buchanan said officers called to the scene had to kill three of the wolves to get to the body. Wyman was one of about a dozen employees at the reserve.

MILITIAS

Citizens need to be aware

Kudos to The Herald for your courage and your great public service in publishing the Oct. 8 article on the Snohomish County militia movement. More than ever citizens of Snohomish County must understand hidden agendas of organizations, referendums, initiatives and political candidates which we support through our financial donations and at the polls.

My own experience with Snohomish County militia members was short, but not sweet. On Earth Day 1985, I attended a town meeting organized by my congressman, Jack Metcalf. This meeting was held at the Everett Library Auditorium, and many of us arrived before the doors were opened. I happened to hear about 10 men talking about the recent Oklahoma bombing, blaming Attorney General Janet Reno and environmentalists for the deaths. They were also big on conspiracy theories, and claimed that Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt would throw everyone in Snohomish County off their land, and that the U.N. would take over most of Washington state.

When I went up to the group to express my concerns about their beliefs, and about my fear that they were supporting anarchy, not democracy, the response I heard was that, "There is no more middle ground. We will have to have blood in the streets and many people would have to die before we regain our freedom." No one contradicted that speaker.

A fringe element? Well, once Congressman Metcalf started his Town Meeting, he took a few questions, and then allowed one of the militia supporters to get up and state their case. The group received rich praise from Mr. Metcalf. I found this so scary that I left the meeting before it was over.

Indeed I would agree that federal law enforcement officers, at times, may have gone too far. This should be investigated, and checked. On the other hand, the solution to any extremism on one side is certainly not to support even more extremism on the other side.

Life in the 1990's is complicated. There are no simple solutions because there are no longer simple problems. A citizen of this county is a citizen of America, and must be an informed, thoughtful person, or surely we risk revolution and anarchy. For those who point to the 18th Century American Revolution as good for democracy—I would concede that point. However, look at history. How many revolutions led to positive change? How many revolutions led to violence, chaos and fascism?

Now indeed is the time for all good men (and women) to come to the aid of their country. A little more concern about our responsibility as citizens, and a little less concern about our rights as individuals would go a long way in bringing this country back from the verge of social collapse.

BONNIE PHILLIPS-HOWARD
Stanwood

OWLS, timber: How natural order greets Earth Day

BOSTON—The problem is that the spotted owl has no respect for private property. Birds are like that.

A toddler can be taught not to step on a neighbor's lawn. A schoolchild can learn not to chase a ball over the fence. Adults can carve a rambling topography into square subdivisions, and allot ownership over mountains, valleys, prairies.

But birds claim territory by an entirely different set of rules. The rules of nature. The rules of their nature. And when those rules are broken, they disappear.

So it is that two ideas, about property and about the use and ownership of nature, came into conflict before the Supreme Court on Monday.

The case pitted the timber industry, the private owners of millions of acres of forest, versus the government, the public protector of the environment. The issue was whether the 1973 Endangered Species Act—itsself an endangered species of law—was meant to protect only animals or their habitats as well.

On the face of it, the debate played out like the theater of the absurd. The law had made it a crime to "take" an endangered species. The government regulations said that "taking" a creature meant killing it,



ELLEN GOODMAN
Boston Globe Columnist

harassing it, harming its ability to breed or find food and shelter.

But the question before the court was whether chopping down a forest was the same as killing the creatures that live there. Justice Scalia seemed to believe that the law was intended to penalize people who harm animals by hunting, not by logging.

The lawyers for the timber industry argued that felling a forest that houses an animal was not the same as deliberately shooting

down the animal. You could destroy the habitat without destroying the species that live in it and off it.

They argued for a neat, legal way to separate what nature had put together. Though the beauty of their legal argument might be lost on an owl.

If the case of *Habbitt v. Sweet Home Chapter* is widely accepted as a crucial one, it's because this is a moment when environmental laws are at risk. So is the movement.

Today the adjective "environmental" comes with a ready-made noun: "extremist." As Earth Day approaches this weekend, many Americans seem to love the environment and scorn the environmentalists.

Every business colors itself green while "the greens" are caricatured as government intruders,

Human beings who live less than a century claim land that has been there since the dawn of time as "ours." We maintain the right to "develop" this land, to behave as if the only time frame that mattered were our own lifespan.

bureaucratic busybodies. The new crowd in Washington has found it easy to attack the Endangered Species Act while portraying themselves as the protectors of the little guys, not the agents of big business.

But the case is also crucial because it brings up again the conflict between our desire to protect the environment and our belief that someone can do whatever he wants with his own property. It raises the question: What does it mean for a person to own 400-year-old trees, or a mountain, or a forest?

In his book "Slide Mountain," Theodore Steinberg writes about "the folly of owning nature." He describes it in terms of our desire to control the whole world, to possess something as fluid as water, as ephemeral as air, as enduring as land.

He details legal battles over water rights to underground streams, air rights to buildings in the city, property rights to the moon. He talks of the dilemmas of "living in a culture in which the natural world has been everywhere, relentlessly, transformed into property."

Indeed, in the 25 years of a full-scale environmental movement, we've had difficulty moving from

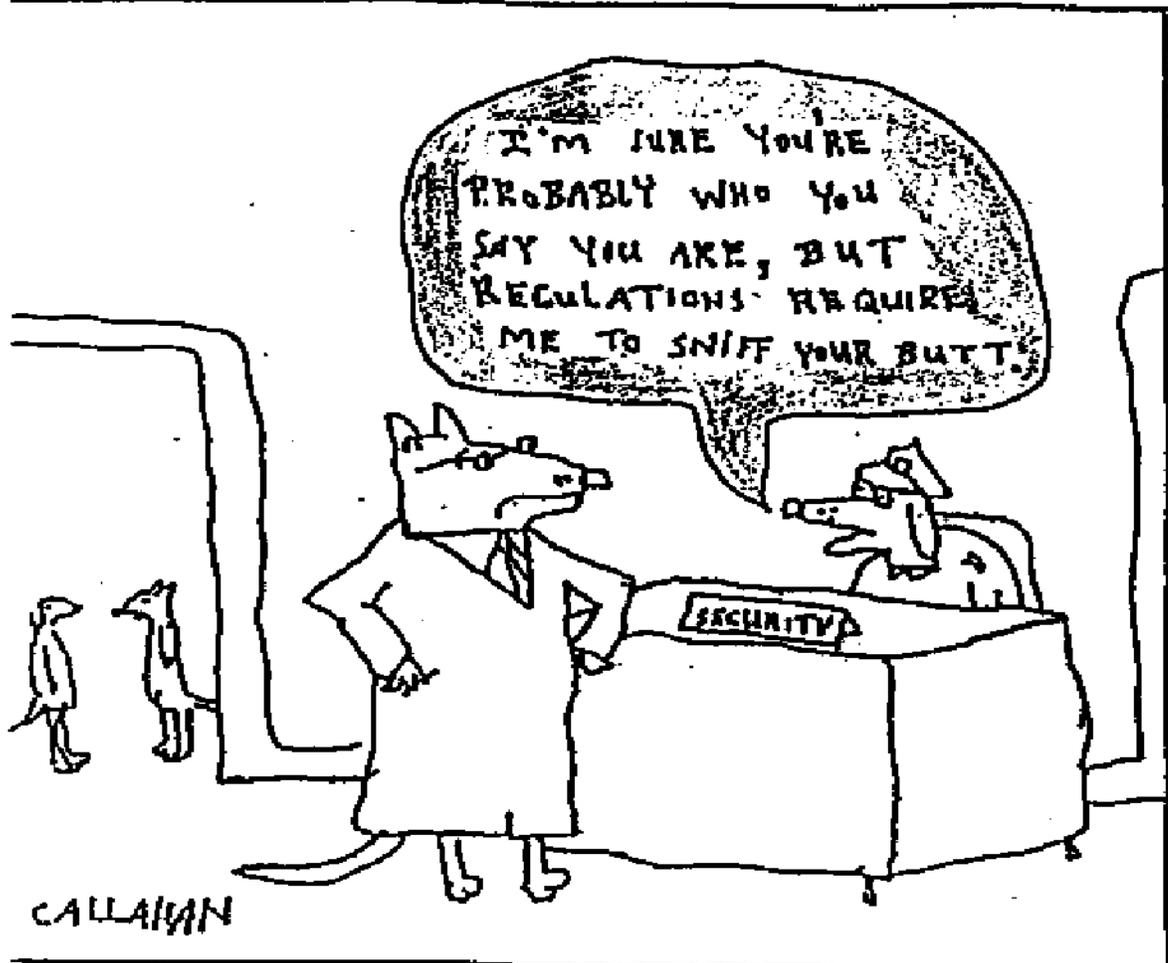
a concept of ownership to one of stewardship, from possession to caretaking. Property rights are still, in Steinberg's word, our religion.

Human beings who live less than a century claim land that has been there since the dawn of time as "ours." We maintain the right to "develop" this land, to behave as if the only time frame that mattered were our own lifespan.

It isn't just big businesses that want to pave Paradise and put up a parking lot. It's also homeowners who feel outraged if their back lot is designated as a wetland when they want to use it for a garage. And it's workers whose jobs are threatened by another species' protection.

But in the end, we don't own nature any more than we own the birds at the feeder. Or the owls in the forest. Whatever fine points the lawyers for the timber industry can draw in a court, nature draws other laws. We can't save the owl and cut down the forests, any more than we can destroy our own habitat and survive.

As Henry David Thoreau wrote in words fit for any Earth Day, "Man is rich in proportion to the number of things which he can afford to let alone."



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