

The Scribblerist

Larry,
I'm afraid that I'm
going to have to cut the complimentary
subscription due to increasing financial
constraints. I would love to have you as a subscriber
and I'm very sorry for doing this but it is quick
becoming a financial necessity. Well, let me
know and take care.

Issue #8 -- "Weebles Wobble But They Don't Fall Down ..."

7 April 1989

Opening Shot -- Urbane Scrawl Part I

Oops, almost forgot: This is, in fact, a Wigadoo Publication. I still have no idea what it all means but I don't mind the company I'm keeping. But I digress ...

Yeah, this issue is out a little later than promised. So sue me! Chalk it up to three "all-nighters:" one spent preparing a presentation, one a paper, and another spent in Washington DC with a young lady I'm a'courting. Work really begins to pile up towards the end of the semester which means that work on the zine gets a lower priority. Between now and May 12 I'm faced with four 10+ page papers, a revision of an earlier paper, two in-class finals, three take home finals, lots of reading, a wedding, a formal, a few mixers, the Foxfield Steeplechase, and the Violent Femmes/Fishbone/Indigo Girls concert. My plan for TS in the interim? I'd like to put out one more issue in early May, then publish a first anniversary issue in late May. This would put me at #10, which is where I had hoped to be. It will be interesting to see if I can pull it off. Yawn.

Most people seem to like the new format, expressing thoughts along the lines of, "Much easier to read!" et al. A few have expressed a desire to see me go back to digest format. Maybe, when I get more time to play around with WordPerfect 5.0 I'll see what I can do. Right now full page saves me a lot of cut and paste time.

We're up to issue eight of THE SCRIBBLERIST which purports to be an amateur publication devoted to the play of Diplomacy [invented by Alan Calhmer and copyrighted by Avalon Hill] but which actually is nothing more than the soapbox so desperately sought by its editor so that he may bellow and bluster and act as if he actually knows something. There's a letter column (all made up, none of those people actually exist; in fact, I believe the entire hobby to be nothing more than a figment of the editor's imagination), editorial meanderings, hobby news, a subzine, and anything else that the editor sees fit to spit up. Subscription prices just went up AGAIN! You now get ten issues for \$7.00, but only if you send the check and a sub request to Mark Lilleleht, PO Box 3166, Charlottesville, VA 22903-0166. He's the editor. Where were we? Oh yes. Trades are welcome and actively solicited, as are overseas subscribers (who get special rates since they're such special people). Game openings? Still thinking about it; maybe over the summer. Oh, phone number is (804) 971-8294. Feel free to call anytime, day or night, though be prepared to answer to a machine if: 1) I'm real tired 2) I'm drunk, or ...3) I'm hung over, OR ...4) the off chance that I'm gettin' lucky. Sigh.

Financial update. TS costs a lot to produce and is heavily subsidized by myself. Even with the past two price hikes I'll still be pumping a lot of my own money into the zine. That's fine. I honestly have no problem with paying as much as I do as long as you, the readers, are happy with the product. Put simply, I don't want to send you the zine if you're not interested [i.e. it just gets put aside then dumped]. If, at any time, you're dissatisfied with TS and simply don't enjoy it, then for god's sake tell me and request a refund of your sub balance or cut the trade. This doesn't mean that I expect a letter out of each of you with each issue, far from it. I simply ask that you be honest with yourself. If you enjoy getting TS then I'm more than happy to send it to you. If, however, you could care less, please excuse yourself; personally, I don't want to have to pay for the privilege of having your canary take a dump on my hard work.

It just dawned on me: the people to whom the above is directed probably didn't read it anyway. Ghad, I sure hope Tweety ain't got the runs tonight!

I was pleasantly suprised by a phone call not to long ago from one Brad Wilson. You know, The one who publishes VERTIGO. He and a friend were on their way back from the NCAAs in Lexington when Brad decided to pop in and pay little ol' me a visit. Not much hobby talk (thankfully); rather, the talk revolved around individual drinking (and consequently, booting) stories, the Tournament, and assorted other nonsense. Brad, you are the first "Hobbyist" I've met face to face; feel honored ... or cursed (no smart-ass remarks, Nash!). Hopefully I'll get to meet a few more of you down at DixieCon, though that's still iffy depending on how my search for a summer internship turns out.

I'm sure we've all read in various zines those pathetic meanderings that the editors insert at the bottom of pages in order maximize text and minimize white space; you know, (all together now) SPACEFILLERS! Actually, I really don't have all that much space to fill. Ghad, I guess this means that I have to start revising that paper that was due, uh, fourteen hours ago. Well, I'm out of here. Enjoy this ish.

Catcalls From The Cheap Seats -- Part I

This issue we're trying something new: I'll be chopping the letter column into two parts. There's no real rhyme nor reason to such an act, I simply want to experiment with some different arrangements of material. Also, looking over last issue, it would seem as if the lettercol appeared a rather daunting chunk of material. Maybe if I break things up a bit it will prove a little more readable. Not as much response as I was hoping for, but not disappointing. Those who did write provided for quite a bit to think about. Enough talk, find out for yourself ...

Dick Martin:

<<This was 'scribbled' on the back of an envelope.>>
So who's going to publish first, Mark, you or me?!

MLL Hah, hah, I win! Not by much. I bet this issue comes out before the next Retal, though. By the way, how come I always hear from you instead of Julie? I'm beginning to wonder, hmm...

Tom "Nasty" Nash:

How did you ever let George Rifle con you into believing he's a novice. His knife is already quite messy with my blood from a game in The Armchair Diplomat. Novice indeed! And wait till you see his press; he's the 2nd coming of Jimmy Williams!

You saw Don Williams' comments in Fiat Bellum re. stealing me. I have a firm offer from him. My agent will be contacting you to renegotiate; I expect a signing bonus, a no-cut, no-trade clause, and full health insurance, plus a hefty share of the sub money!

MLL So what's wrong with Jimmy Williams. If George's press is anything like Jimmy's letters then the NOVICE game should be a great one. Ooo, Nash got stabbed! "Happy days are here, again..."

Is the above to be taken as a threat? Hell, who needs ya? GET OUT! Get the hell out of my zine!! I've got a firm offer for you: quit your whining and just send me the damn subzine. Sub money? HAH! You want to cover some of the production costs? No? I thought not! No, I won't cut you; in fact, I'll force you to continue if need be. Don't push me, Nash, you wouldn't like this whole thing to get real ugly, would you?

David Orne:

IT'S HERE! IT'S REALLY, FINALLY HERE! QUICK, WITHDRAW MY LETTER OF COMPLAINT TO THE POSTAL SERVICE, BEFORE MY LETTER CARRIER LOSES HIS JOB! HE REALLY WASN'T STEALING IT! (Sorry, I couldn't stop myself. I'd been holding it in for so long.)

The format is fine; neat and legible. However, as a former cartographer, I must point out that underlying is not italics. Also, entire paragraphs become hard to read when they are underlined. If you have real italics, please use them instead.

Also, your WordPerfect program has a spelling check feature. Please use it. The one word that really got me was "candidate," which was often used in the "primary" discussion. Speaking of which, I was pleasantly suprised at the responses on my opinion. I agree with Audi about the electoral college, but not with David Hood about "rotating" states. What would that solve? So what if New York, Texas, Illinois, or another large state came late in the season instead of California? And having all the large states go early would discourage voters away from the polls in the smaller, later states. The thing that would hurt most would be the state/local elections in those smaller states, not the Presidential outcome. And that's the greatest danger of the network practice of reporting eastern results before the western polls close. Therefore, I don't believe Audi's "24 hour polls" would change much. Sure, it would be more convinient, but people don't vote as soon as they open, they vote when it is most convinient for them, usually on the way to work or on the way home. Changing the time of day the polls are open wouldn't keep the networks from reporting the results as they come in, and the Eastern Time Zone will still be three hours ahead of the Pacific. People there will still vote three hours ahead of their western counterparts, because it fits their schedule better.

...I must say that I agree with Monsieur Cuerrier; you should concern yourself with the written order only, not the intent, and follow the rulebook.

What? You're still not taking a geography class? You're taking "Kinship and Social Organization" rather than geography? From the section on kinship I remember from Anthropology 101, you'd better drink a lot of coffee before that class. But of course, by now you know that.

About the "speed of dark"...I hope you didn't have your sense of humor removed when you were treated for your burns. "Xyns?" Is this guy for real?

MLL I apologize for the false italics of last issue: the computer says one thing but the printer doth protest. For that reason I'm abandoning the idea of italics and switching to this format. We'll see how it works out; let me know, will ya? As for the spellcheck feature, well ...I told you I hadn't had time to get fully acquainted with WP5.0. I will, however, see if I can't find the time to run through this thing with the spellchecker.

By "rotating" the order that states hold their primaries, it would mean that candidates would have the chance to gain exposure in some large states early in the primary process. Sure, there may develop a California-like situation each primary season but it would most likely not be the result of the Iowa/New Hampshire lock. The point of varying the primaries order is not to increase the influence of large states but, as David pointed out, to "[loosen] the grip that Iowa and New Hampshire have over the process."

I think that when Audi spoke of a 24 hour polling period she meant that polls would open nationwide at, say, 6 AM Eastern time (3 AM Pacific time, and lord knows what time in Hawaii and Alaska) and subsequently close at 6 AM the following morning, again nationwide. Granted, there won't be a lot of voters out on the west coast lining up at

he polls at 3 AM but a process such as this will assure that everybody will be able to vote when it's most convenient plus polls will open and close uniformly thereby eliminating the irritating practice of network projection.

"No geography?" There is no geography offered here at the University. I will, however, be taking an Environmental Science class next semester, "The Climates of Hunger." And yes, "Kinship..." is a real sleeper!

You ought to know by now that I have absolutely NOOOOOO sense of humor. If anything, my shirt catching on fire taught me how to laugh at myself [again].

Tom Swider is very real, though I have yet to hear back from him. Grrr, and he's got a buck o' mine!

l Hopcroft:

On the question of beliefs, I would like to submit for your examination a letter I sent to Stephen Dorneman, editor GUIN DIP. His back page last issue included a comment on the case of Salman Rushdie, the writer has been forced into because a third of the world's population want to kill him. I had the following thoughts, and while they're probably much for his letter column, they just might work in yours...

"Intersting that you should mention The Satanic Verses. Why does the Ayatollah hate this book so? Well, look at it says. It suggests that Mohammed may have written the Koran himself. To any detached observer who has not been in Islam, that Mohammed wrote the Koran is so blatantly obvious that it defies belief that it could ever have been otherwise. Yet this is a serious blasphemy. It throws the whole basis of the religion of Islam, and thus of the of people like the Ayatollah, into question. That is why this book is so dangerous. That is why all the nations led by Islamic law have banned this book. That is why Salman Rushdie must die.

"All religious despots must secretly fear this sort of exposure. For years atheist scholars have been looking for the that Jesus rose from the dead. Not only have they failed utterly to prove that claim, their research has given a real indication that there ever was a Jesus at all! Some have even ploclaimed that the Jewish-Roman historian Flavius must have made him up out of whole cloth. This view of history has not received a very wide dissimilation (except among readers of PSYCHOLOGY TODAY who are willing to listen to "crackpot" theories). The Bible itself says that if did not rise again from the dead, the faith of the Christian is for nothing. If it could be conclusively proven that ever even existed, then the whole basis of Christianity would be destroyed.

"But why should the proof be "conclusive"? So far it is the skeptics who have had the "burden of proof" thrust upon at least when it is the beliefs of a powerful body that are being questioned. And the standard of proof is impossibly Even going back in a time machine and recovering the lifeless corpse of Jesus (assuming he existed, of course) to be enough. Yet we are routinely asked to accept, without question, a body of "knowledge" which has little real link world as it existed and does exist: indeed, a body of "knowledge" which contradicts just about everything observation tught us about the real world. If Mary Baker Eddy was right about death and pain being unreal, then how could she have enty years ago?

"In particular, we are expected to believe in a benevolent Creator who dictates all things and does everything in a ar way which he set in stone thousands of years ago, despite a preponderance of evidence that suggests nothing of the a complete lack of evidence for the contention that such a Creator even exists or could ever exist. And to suggest total will of this Diety is expressed in a single book containing his complete plan for humanity is so luicrous that not "established fact" anyone making such an assertion would find himself in a straight-jacket. If somebody told me at they had received God's Master Plan For Mankind (patent pending) on a gold tablet which had to be returned to the o "lent" it to him, I would immediately denounce this scoundrel as a fraud. Yet throughout history such frauds have d suprising power. For example, hundreds of thousands still believe that Joseph Smith was telling the truth about l Malachi and the gold tablets despite the presence of a novel written three years before, the author of which (a y human being) had legitmate grounds for a plagiarism suit. There is no basis to believe that the Book of Mormon is more than an outright forgery of bad fiction, yet hundreds of thousands rever it as scripture. Why does the hold such power? And what makes documents like the Bible and the Koran any less ludicrous?"

...There are times when there is no ethical coherence in religion. Almost every religion declares that there is way to God. Those who do not follow that way will be punished for all eternity. Indeed, all those who have never d of that way will be punished! In the eyes of the fundamentalist Christian, everybody who does not follow his Christianity will go straight to Hell when he dies. Even though this means that something on the order of 99.5% of human beings who ever lived, he accepts this because it seems just. Children who die before they are baptized go to l the Catholics go to Hell for following Christ. All the Jews go to Hell for not following Christ. All those who god other than Yahweh will go to Hell. Ghandi went to Hell. Mother Theresa will go to Hell when she dies. All ngs are so irredeemably evil that it takes a Direct Act of God to make them remotely tolerable. It is little wonder le armed with Divine Writ have been willing to slaughter whole civilizations and destroy everything they do not d or like. God wills it, and all who do not obey God are damned for all eternity and beyond. Their unbearable will never end.

o me, something seems wrong with that way of thinking, much as something seems wrong with all those people who call to return now even though the Second Coming would mean death and damnation for billions of people. Do they deserve o they belong in Hell?

our last bit is a little tough to swallow if only because you take as your example such an extreme view and set iefs. If there is one thing that I've picked up in my many discussions regarding religion that I've had with eving" friends, it's that very few people ascribe to the specific word of either biblical or ministerial law. is such an amazing diversity of beliefs in every denomination that to blame the lot for the overzealousness of nority is to be fair to the great majority of christians (and jews and moslems and etc). According to Dante, gnorant" masses who weren't privy to christianity but still lived moral, upstanding lives won't go to Hell, ; rather, we'll find them in Purgatory. If you believe the Great Philosophers (from Dante's Inferno) it ain't bad place. But I digress...

u are right, there is often little ethical coherence to religion. This lack of coherence, however, is

apparent only to the non-believer. How can one, as a non-believer, attempt to attach some sort of rational, ordered, ethical norm to something as subjective and inherently irrational as religion. I can't. But trust me, the vast majority of religious people don't revel in your damnation, nor are they maliciously praying for the Second Coming in order to be vindicated while watching the rest of the world go up in smoke. High profile "religionists" and zealots are the people who infuse religious doctrine with its malicious character, not your everyday Joe(tta) Blow.

There was an amazingly perceptive editorial in a recent US News & World Report that outlined the general reasons for the great passions that Rushdie's book has inflamed. Zealots are an inherently insecure group who, by their very nature, place an overriding faith in some particular belief or idea. When that belief is attacked, the very essence of the zealot is being attacked, the zealot is fighting for his very life. The Ayatollah rules via zealotry based on the Islamic faith. Rushdie, in his book, is publically undermining the basis of the Ayatollah's rule. As you pointed out, he must die for it. It's Rushdie or the Ayatollah.

Why must the proof against religion be conclusive if one expects to "bring the light" of rationality and pure reason to those ruled by faith? Faith has no rational foundations. Therefore, if one hopes to successfully argue against faith on a rational basis, the argument must be conclusive, complete, and irrefutable. Still, faith will allow the believer to say, "No. That may all be well and good, but I still believe." Nothing wrong with that; that's the nature of faith. To "win out" over faith, rationality must be immutable.

Brux Linsey:

Religion: I'm pretty much an atheist too, unless and until I see concrete evidence that God does, indeed, exist. To me, personally, religion is merely a crutch that was invented by primitive man to explain seemingly miraculous events. With the advent of modern science and technology, we know now that there is a reason for every phenomenon. So why does religion flourish still? Tradition. Lack of education. And perhaps most of all, because of people's inability to accept the inevitable finality of death - the need to believe that there is something better worth living for. I can understand the comforting effect of such a belief, but to me that doesn't make it any more likely to be correct.

MLL You hit on a few good points but I also think that you push your assertion as to the value of science a bit further than is either wise or possible. There is not necessarily a reasonable explanation for each and every phenomena that man is witness to; even scientists acknowledge that there are some things that they have yet to be able to explain. And who's to say that our "rational" explanations of the natural order of things are correct? Who can say that the order that we've discovered is not the order created by a God, whether christian, moslem, hindu, etc.

Lack of education? Some of the brightest minds of the age, the century, the history of mankind, have been devoutly religious. To condemn the 90-95% who believe in God as ignorant would be tremendously unjust and foolish. I think you probably are closer to the truth when you mention tradition. If you're raised christian I'll post you ten to one odds that you're a christian [of varying degrees of devotion] for the rest of your life. Nothing wrong with that; it's simply the way things seem to work out. It's not ignorance, it's simply conditioning. Hell, if I were raised on broccoli I'd probably like it. As of this writing, I couldn't choke it down to save my left arm.

The development of religion is much too complex to delve into here. Suffice it to say that organized religion simply did not spring out of the mind of "primitive" man. Systems of belief are more likely to have evolved over time [and space] from relatively simple and disorganized beliefs into formalized, overarching, societal superstructures; but then again, that's only a guess.

True, the comforting aspect of religion doesn't make it any more correct, nor should the comforting aspects of faith in a diety be held against religion. If it helps a person cope in this world, why deprive him/her of it? There is nothing wrong with seeking comfort in one's faith; in fact, "reasonably," it can only be seen as a positive aspect.

Paul Milewski:

I read your reply to Francois Cuerrier's rulebook recitation on Pg. 3 of issue #7 in shock and disbelief. He cited the last sentence of the first paragraph of VII. 3b, the meaning of which is that F Aeg-Bul works unless you have a houserule to the contrary. The PBM hobby has traditionally required greater specificity than the rulebook does. Many GMs require that coast always be specified, but it is ignorant to suggest that the rulebook requires it. The reason for requiring maximum specificity is to allow the finesse of the intentionally miswritten order (an oxymoron?) that looks unintentional.

It is not a question of whether he intended to include (s.c.) or not. Where, other than in XII.6 of the "2nd Edition/Feb. '82" rulebook do "intentions" come into play?

MLL I never intended it to sound as if I was citing the rulebook as requiring that coastal designations always be included. My argument revolved around the fact that the rulebook did not make mention of the need for coastal designations in the cases that have been cited. It is precisely for this reason that I feel that I can, "legally" (whatever the hell that means) require that coasts be specified, even if it would be possible for the unit to move to only one of the coasts. What is more, it is a question of the players intentions. However, by including my houserule requiring coastal designations, I have exempted myself from considering such intentions. I read what's on the paper, nothing more. If the player had "intended" to included a (sc) in his orders he/she is now screwed. Tough luck; there's nothing that I, as a GM, can do. I believe that we're on the same side in this argument, no?

Chuck Hanna:

I confess that I don't usually read anything in The Scribblerist except the game reports, but I stumbled onto a letter in the last issue which makes me think you have misinterpreted the rules on the question of specifying coasts in moves.

The relevant rule is the second sentence of VII.3.b. (The "provinces" referred to are Spain, Bulgaria, and St.

Petersburg.) "If a fleet is ordered to one of these provinces and it is possible for the fleet to move to either coast, the order must specify which coast, or the fleet does not move."

Note that it says "to move," not "to be ordered to move." Since it is not possible for a fleet in the Barents Sea to move to the south coast of St. Petersburg, the order "F Bar-StP" is not covered by this rule. The only ambiguous orders covered by this rule are "F Mid-Spa," "F Por-Spa," "F Con-Bul," and a Russian order to build a fleet in St. Petersburg.

Of course, this rule does not say what happens if a fleet is ordered to one of these provinces and it is not possible for the fleet to move to either coast. Since this situation doesn't seem to be explicitly covered by the rules, it seems reasonable that a GM can create his own houserule on the subject. But don't you think that if the writers of the official rules had intended that "F Bar-StP" should be an illegal order, they would have just left out the phrase that I [underlined]?

By the way, if I had written "A Ven-Tyr" instead of writing out "Tyrolia," would you have disallowed it on grounds that I might have meant to order my army to march across Italy and into the Tyrrhenian Sea? If so, I'm going to have to start being a lot more careful.

MLL What? You don't usually read the zine? If you'd rather just get the game reports and want a refund on your sub balance let me know. See front page!

The first two sentences of your fourth paragraph is the exact argument that I'm trying to get across. The rules do not specify what is to be done in the situations you make reference to. Therefore it's up to me to clarify that particular ambiguity. Intentions of the designers? Who cares?!?! They did not include a rule to the contrary so it then becomes the responsibility of the GM to decide which course he wants to follow. Who knows, they may have intentionally left the ambiguity stand to allow for, as Paul calls it, "the finesse of the intentionally miswritten order that looks unintentional."

I do not know what I would do in the case of "A Ven-Tyr." Let's say that you do as you suggest, and are just careful when transcribing your orders. Of course, my houserules do specify the proper abbreviations to use which means that I'd probably end up disallowing it. Hey, I've got a novel idea: What say you to having everybody actually read and abide by the houserules that I drew up? That would save everyone a lot of hassle and grief.

Jef Bryant:

As I've already mentioned the layout/quality of TS is so much better; I hope it keeps it. I should imagine, however, that with WP 5.0 you should be able to get the page numbers printed with the text? I know I've mentioned it before but a couple of staples would work wonders.

As for your request for plugs, I will do my best in the next issue; it seems very difficult to get overseas subscribers. I sent out 100 french and 100 english copies of Dipsomania #2 and I only have about 25 actual paying subscribers. There are quite a few trades, freebies, and others. From my days of fanzine publishing this seems normal. You have to keep sending out samples ALL THE TIME, i.e. every issue, if you want the circulation to grow; it doesn't grow by itself unfortunately. There are exceptions: if you happen to win the odd poll or something like that - or good reviews in the well established zines, this certainly helps. It's rather daunting, isn't it?

...Only one comment I would like to make [regarding religion]: Religion is a question of faith. Atheism is also a faith, albeit a negative one, i.e. atheism is a religion! I prefer the agnostic approach as my reply. It's a little weak-willed, but as a scientist you cannot believe/disbelieve anything without some sort of proof. The only religion I believe in is myself.

In reply to your question, "What is a novice?" it's like saying, "How long is a piece of string?" Seriously, I think someone ceases to be a novice when basically they know or are aware of what is going on, i.e. when they have discovered the majority of Dipdom and can talk on the subject I would say they're no longer a novice. You don't actually have to have played a game of dip, although it would be rather odd. I suppose you could get the situation where a game designer just doesn't like participating.

MLL Consider printed page numbers as good as done. Staples are still a question mark as they have a nasty habit of shredding the zine as it goes through the Postal Service's automatic sorters.

Getting new subscribers is extremely frustrating. I sent out 235 copies of issue one and got about twenty-five subscribers, traders, and freebies. Things started to slowly grow, however, and now I'm up to about sixty. Nice, but I could always use a few more. I sent out about 15 samples of issue 7 and picked up four more trades but no new subs (though I have gotten some requests for samples as a result of some plugs in other zines). So we'll continue sending out samples (an expensive habit) and begging for plugs. Daunting? To say the least.

How can atheism be a faith? Atheism isn't a belief in anything. To say that one has faith in nothingness seems rather paradoxical.

I'm of the same opinion as you concerning the definition of a novice. However, I think there is a difference between being a player and being a novice as concerns the "Hobby." As a player I'd be willing to classify myself as a novice for the sole reason that I'm still a terrible player who has no real grasp of what I'm doing. I couldn't write a "diplomatic" letter to save my life (this from a foreign affairs major) and strategy is something completely foreign to me. But as concerns the hobby, I do believe that I'm slowly coming along. Hi Ho.

News From The U. -- Urbane Scrawl Part II

Boy, have things been strange lately. For all the hell that I've put myself through and regardless of the wringer that I've been put through I must add that I'm having a great time. It's a little disconcerting, however, to be staring four ten to twenty page papers down the barrel, not to mention mountains of reading, all with the realization that I really don't give a damn. I know things will get done; they always do. Scary. Quit being so casual about things, you idiot! What? And totally surrender to homework, spending all but a few hours a day doing school related work? Oh, all right, but not until after the wedding...

No, silly, not mine. Yet.

Ever have that feeling that everything is going right over your head? I do believe that I've gone through my first two years of college in such a daze. That in itself is a frightening thought: I'm just about halfway done with my college career! Shiver. Nothing seems to have stuck. Obviously a lot must be up there, somewhere. Hell, I can carry on a relatively intelligent discussion with my professors and friends, and I can thoughtfully analyze much of what is thrown my way. The problem is that I get back to my room, ask myself what I learned today, and think, "Duh!" A little scary.

The young lady that I'm currently dating is an organization freak which has, in some respects, rubbed off on me. One evening earlier this week, while I was taking a shower (I do all my best thinking in the shower), I mapped out the next couple years of my life. I may possibly attempt to get two Distinguished Majors (in, everybody join in, Foreign Affairs and Anthropology) which would require that I write two thesis'. At the same time I'd probably run for Vice-Prior of my fraternity and maybe even become a Resident Assistant in first year dorms. A lot of work, but who knows. Realistically, this would require that I fold up the zine at the end of the summer of 1990. But this is all in the planning stages so nobody panic, all right? After graduation I'm looking to go to Africa then possibly coming back to work on a doctorate. Oh, to be young again, and dream the dreams of youth!

I guess I ought to get a couple major advisors before I do anything else.

I guess I ought to make sure I pass all my classes.

Boy, life just gets more and more difficult.

I've determined that I'm becoming much too philosophical a person, much too detached from reality. Today I spent two hours standing in a hall talking to a friend about God, religion, the worthiness of philosophical questioning, etc. A very surreal experience.

Did I mention that I've been infatuated with her for about half a year. What was important today, however, wasn't her or us, it was the discussion.

Things are getting out of hand.

View From The Bridge

This is, for the uninitiated, the hobby news section of the zine. It usually doesn't amount to a hill of beans as nobody ever tells me anything. I do, however, pass on anything I do hear and I also try to review a zine or two each issue. The reviews may even become a regular feature. Don't look for anything fancy, however.

The big news this time around is the appearance of this years Runestone Poll ballot and an announcement from Brux Linsey that he will no longer respond to "Feud" related material. The letter announcing this welcome occurrence is reprinted in miniature below. Brux states that for the duration of 1989 he will not respond to any attacks, real or imagined. Yeah! I would imagine that for the vast majority of the hobby (I know Chris, you're not happy about it) this is extremely good news as this could, knock on wood, mean that the end of a stupid, mean-spirited, and childish feud could be near. We can only

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THE END OF THE FEUD
(for now? yeah! forever? we hope!)

Greetings Folks--

A number of you already know what this is all about, but for those I haven't contacted yet, here it is in a nutshell:

For over a year now, our Diplomacy hobby has been plagued by a very nasty feud which I've had the displeasure of being part of. The hobby would be much better off without this nonsense.

I have asked several of my attackers whether we could simply agree to a cease-fire unilaterally. That question has been ignored, with the attacks continuing (and escalating). I can think of four or five zines which are dominated by this unpleasant material.

Well, I've decided on a personal solution to the problem. One side or the other is going to have to back off first, and if it ain't gonna be my enemies, I guess that means it'll have to be me. Therefore, as an experiment, I'm simply going to not respond at all to any attacks on me personally, or on my hobby projects, until at least the end of 1989 (and hopefully far beyond).

I did say "until at least the end of 1989." At that time, if I'm still under seige, I will weigh the situation and decide what (if anything) I must do. That's nine solid months -- plenty of time for my attackers to "get it out of their systems" with no replies from me. And it probably goes without saying, but if the attacks have ceased by year's end, I'll consider the "experiment" a success, and extend the policy indefinitely. I'm even dropping my subs to a few of the hobby's feudier zines, so as to not be tempted to respond.

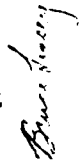
I've discussed this with half a dozen of you. Unanimously, those of you I contacted felt this was a good idea.

One big hope I have is that this new policy of non-response will help reduce the level of controversy about the Runestone Poll. If there is another poll-rigging scandal this year, I will once again discount the bogus votes (that policy has received widespread support), but of course I'll try to ensure that every legitimate vote gets included.

This statement is OK to publish, for anyone so inclined. To hobby newcomers, my message is this: depending on which zines you read, you may hear some bad things about me. Most of them just aren't true, and if you get to know me you'll probably decide that I'm an all right guy. My non-response to attacks is not a concession that they necessarily have any merit, but simply represents my decision to have a policy of not replying. If you have any questions about anything you hear or read pertaining to me, by all means let me know and I'll be pleased to give you the best answer I can.

And that's it. THAT'S IT!!!! I've often told my friends that I could walk away from the feud at any time. Now I'm going to prove it, and boy, it feels great! Good riddance, Feud!!

Sincerely,



hope. I'm interested to see: 1) Whether Bruce can actually hold his tongue and 2) How the "other side" will react to the announcement. Ghad! The end of an era! The maturing of emotionally stunted adults! No! It's hard to believe that these peoples' second childhood may actually be shorter than their first. Hallalujjah (sp??)?!

The Runestone Poll for 1988-89 has surfaced. You should find the ballot tucked in this issue somewhere. Urge you to vote as it is a worthwhile project. Also, I would ask that you dig into your burgeoning pocketbooks and find a little bit of money to make a donation to the pledge drive that is run in conjunction with the Poll. This year the monies pledged will be going to the American Heart Association.

I'll be interested to see how I do this year. Last year, with only two issues out (and I suspect that most people only saw the premier issue before casting their ballots), I ended up either 44th or 45th, can't remember which. I do believe I'll finish a bit higher than that this year but I am not willing to guess how much higher. Don't want to jinx myself. Vote early, vote often, and vote me a ten (or whatever you think this rag is worth)! Don't worry Brux, I'm not offering free issues.

Also, please don't vote in a vacuum! If you vote me low just scribble down the reasons why, stick a stamp on it, and let me know. If you give me a high vote tell me what I'm doing right (and wrong). I know, you guys just filled out a survey; well, not all of you did <<this is meant to make you feel guilty>>.

Reviews next issue.

Oh, I finished 22nd in the Marco Poll. Fiat Bellum and House of Lords won; very well deserved by both parties. I promise I'll talk this one up next year, Pete.

Catcalls From The Cheap Seats -- Part II

Well, we've arrived at part two of the letter column. Same ground rules as before so it shouldn't be all that difficult to follow. Let me know whether you'd prefer to see the letter col split up like this or kept together. It really doesn't matter to me; I'm viewing it as a question of readability for you guys and gals. Quite a bit more on moral relativism and asundry other items...

Nick Sebrell:

Your logical imperfections run consistent. Congrats.

MLL Duh, huh?!? Well, um, okay. Thanks.

Chris Gabel:

I must agree with Jim Diehl regarding moral relativism. In fact, I can hardly believe a good liberal like yourself would defend it with a straight face. (Don't liberals always want to do what's "right," "decent," and "compassionate?")

First, let's make a distinction between moral relativism and tolerance. Moral relativism basically says that good and evil are meaningless terms - nothing is inherently good or evil except within the context of a particular culture - in other words, when a society's collective beliefs give them meaning.

Tolerance, on the other hand, means that I may have some very strong moral convictions, but recognize that each person has a free conscience - and to deny that freedom of conscience is, in itself, immoral. The only limitation on this principle is if a person's free exercise of his/her conscience brings about harm to others. The logical end of moral relativism can best be illustrated by the rise of Nazi Germany. At that time, German theology was exceptionally liberal and rejected most biblical morality. When Hitler came among and said: "Hey, this is the wave of the future - the new order," [the German people] went right along with him. Interestingly, it was a small minority faction of conservative churches (they referred to themselves as the "confessing" church) led by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who opposed Hitler and worked to hide and transport Jews from Nazi persecution. You say that you oppose the KKK & the Neo-Nazis, but by your reasoning you would have to agree with them if you were raised in that type of society.

In your defense of moral relativism, you implied that the opposite is to "accept that which we are told is correct and see all else as wrong." Sorry, but that's grossly unfair. I find myself constantly examining the implications of Christian morality and comparing to other beliefs. To me, Christianity consists of whatever is true. If one plus one equals two, or E=MCsquared, or whatever, then that truth is included in my understanding of Christianity. As of yet, I have not been able to discover a "truth" which is contradictory to the message of Scripture. It is true that Christian leaders have been guilty of opposing ideas we now know to be true - but that is due to an improperly narrow understanding of Christianity - not any fault of Christianity per se.

MLL I applaud you for pointing out the difference between tolerance and moral relativism, and I wish that I had thought to make the distinction. However, the two are not mutually exclusive. I firmly believe that there are no objective truths and that right and wrong are terms defined solely by society. This does not mean that I practice such a belief. I live by a certain moral code which, as with every individual, may deviate slightly from the social "mean" but on the whole is compatible with societal functioning. True, I do not believe in a god, but this does not lead me to a life that is overly disruptive either as it concerns all people or any single individual. If society dictated Jews were thoroughly evil, or that blacks were the root cause of evil in this world, I believe that I would most likell hold onto those same beliefs. Man is an inherently social animal (at least as we stand today), and as such he/she is a creature of its environment, both physical and intellectual. I've been shaped by my parents, peers, and society as a whole. To say that one is privy to certain "objective truths" inherent in the individual is probably the most singularly selfish statement that one can make. We live our lives through other people; it is through other people that we define ourselves and vice versa. How can we possibly know truth except through the company of fellows? For the isolated individual, truth is meaningless.

Your use of the Nazi's as an "example" of moral relativism is a bad choice. Germany was in no way a closed society at the time that the Nazis ascended to power. The rest of the world community continued to hold to a

morality vastly different from that adopted to the Nazis, and that morality continued to affect the people of Germany. The physical and intellectual wall that Nazism threw up around the people of Germany was not absolute; that is why Germans continued to work against the Nazis throughout the war. And the fact that the rest of the world held to a vastly different moral code meant that we were obligated to work against such a repulsive regime.

How "wide" an understanding does one need to reconcile the "truths" of the world with Christianity? It appears to me that throughout the ages men of the cloth have fought against certain principles, pointing to the Scriptures as proof of their righteousness, only to eventually accept the "facts" in light of revised interpretations of the Bible. How many more times will such revisions of thought occur? And who is to say that such reinterpretations are necessarily progressing towards an ultimate Truth?

Chris Gabel (cont'd):

A note to Dave Palmer regarding his objection to "belief." In the same letter he states that he has seen 400 million year old animal body parts and 3.2 billion year old rocks. He was really stating his "belief" in the accuracy of measurement systems developed by late 20th century scientists. Twenty or fifty years from now, scientists will laugh at such statements and say these items are really 20 thousand, or 150 million, or 25 billion years old, or whatever, because our knowledge will have changed. Yet he stated it as an objective "fact." In fact, most things we all accept as facts are not based on our observations, but rather the observations of others with academic or technical training we lack. We are relying on (placing "faith" in) their conclusions. If I were to draw a large circle, representing all knowledge of all things in the universe, mankind's knowledge would be an invisible speck within that circle. If the circle represented all of mankind's knowledge, any one person's capacity to observe and collect that knowledge for him/herself would again be a tiny speck. Yet, based on all this "knowledge" we arrogantly claim to possess, people actually come to the conclusion that there is no God. I would suggest that it requires more "faith" to make such a statement that to believe in God.

MLL If scientific facts are so apt to be false, why is it so hard to believe that one's faith may be displaced? I'm in full agreement that our present scientific conception of the world and universe is most likely flawed in many respects, and I also agree that our "knowledge" of the universe is a mere drop in the bucket; but why does that necessarily preclude its validity? Does Faith answer every single question that is thrown at the believer?

How is it possible that it requires more "faith" to acknowledge nothing than to accept a detached, unknown Creator? It would appear to me that those who claim to be able to explain all things, both known and unknown, are the most arrogant of all people. Scientists acknowledge the fact that there is so much that lies undisclosed, whereas "believers" point to the Bible and the ministrations of clerics as the Ultimate Answer. Mere men, through faith, feel themselves competent to impose an order on an infinite universe which is still a great mystery. That is a terrible homocentric (is that a word??) view of things. For a good long time we were at the center of the universe until, poof, we aren't any longer. Suddenly the Scriptures are not to be read literally. Where does revision end and truth begin?

David Hood:

I don't understand your position on moral relativism. In response to Jim Diehl, you argue that no one particular moral code is superior to another. So cannibalism is not inherently immoral. Yet you condemn Nazism, and the Renamo guerilla group, with a wave of your hand and claim "higher moral ground." I'm sorry, but killing someone and eating them is worse than, in the Nazi's case, blind hatred of the Jews or in Renamo's case, torturing and maiming civilians in Mozambique. Where do you get the right, according to your own brand of moral relativism, to condemn one moral aberration and not the other?

Perhaps your answer is that belief systems are "moral, just, humane, and right only as long as the collective society deems them so," as you said in issue #7. But cannibalism is certainly rejected as immoral by 99% of the humans on earth - why doesn't that allow you to condemn it. And would the immorality of Nazism have changed if Germany had won WWII and a large "collective" European population subscribed to its beliefs? Obviously not. Contrary to all this moral relativism shit, there really are objective truths out there that have nothing to do with how many people believe in them.

John Erb was getting at this when he brought up the book, The Virtue of Selfishness, by Ayn Rand. You claim that the "collective morality" should not be infringed upon by any given individual. I'm not exactly sure what you mean by this, but you are right in assuming that Rand rejects any legitimacy you ascribe to a "collective." Unbridled majority rule can be just as bad, if not worse than, dictatorial rule by a small minority. What matters is that the right of each individual to choose his own path should be protected and respected by whomever is in power. Certainly if you believe in moral relativism than you would be in favor of allowing greater freedom for individuals to follow their own moral code. I'm talking limited government, though, not anarchy - the latter would quickly turn into a Leviathan-like state of nature, which would not at all be conducive to individual liberty.

The bottom line on issues of religion/morality is to acknowledge, as you do, that such issues can hardly be argued in a rational manner. Religion is something for each person to ponder according to the dictates of his own conscience. But what if the "collective" decides that it will impose its form of morality on all others? (USSR - atheistic communism, some parts of Latin America - Catholicism, etc) Your brand of moral relativism would find nothing wrong with this - since it would be the will of the majority. Of course, that view is itself a normative moral statement. The moral relativism doctrine quickly degenerates into deconstructionist, contradictory nonsense. If nothing is inherently "right," then why talk about it?

MLL I didn't realize that my failure to condemn cannibalism outright would prove such a sticking point. Of course, I abhor the practice and find it morally unjust. Granted, that as an anthropologist I am a bit more sympathetic to such a practice as a form of social control in certain contexts. Nazism and the practices of Renamo are practices which, within their respective societal contexts, run completely contrary to the accepted norm of behavior. Who are we to say that if the European "collective" had accepted Nazism that it would still be morally abhorant? If the moral fiber of Nazism reigned over Europe as accepted practice I believe that those born into that particular society would most likely subscribe to those beliefs. We may find it morally repugnant, but that does not mean that

others will feel the same.

Where are those objective truths? Are they not simply our own modern day interpretations of historical record? What makes moral principles absolute? While so much of the universe, the planet, the human structure, sociological structures, the body of perceived knowledge, is in flux, how can we possibly point to a static, immutable morality?

I don't believe that morality is something derived from a conscious consensus of men and women. 'Tis much more subtle than that. I really couldn't tell you how such morality gains acceptance. The best parallel that I can conceive of is with the development of the great bulk of international law through custom and practice.

As I stated earlier, I don't think that moral relativism is a principle that can be put into practice. Rather, the acknowledgement of its role in shaping man's moral code serves as a pathway to greater tolerance and understanding of divergent beliefs.

Theory and practice. A wide gulf separates the two. A gulf that is often unbridgable, sometimes thankfully so!

David Orne:

A couple comments on Nick Sebrell's letter:

While I agree that our government, especially the Defense Department, is terribly inefficient, there are a few points that I would like to address which you did not.

It does not follow that two governments would be in the same economic condition if its citizenry paid equal percentages in taxes. The West German and U.S. governments have many differences of interests and emphasis. I would like to see the per capita of each country that goes to non-military foreign aid.

I would also like to see the other NATO countries put up a greater share for the defense of Europe, but we did take that on ourselves. Also, we rebuilt the German economy with the Marshall Plan, so they could ship BMWs and VWs to us. In Japan, we forced them to adopt a constitution that greatly restricted their ability to defend themselves, obligating us to do the job. It's not inefficiency that draws our taxes, it's the fact that our interests and responsibilities go far beyond our borders.

Don't get me wrong, the deficit scares the hell out of me. Europe and Japan shouldering more of the defense load will help, as will a successful arms reduction program (if possible) in both nuclear and conventional force. I also wish foreign governments that owe hundreds of millions of dollars to U.S. banks would straighten out their internal affairs and start paying their loans off.

But withdrawing into ourselves is not the answer. Mark L. pointed out the political problems, but the economic implications would be disastrous as well. Europe has realized that it represents one economy with very common interests, and we are a part of that economy whether we like it or not. Go out and rent "Network," and watch the scene where Ned Beatty explains the ebb and flow of money from one country or region to another. Very enlightening.

Isolationism died with the Industrial Revolution, and was buried during World War I. Yes, we need to get control over the deficit. Yes, we need to choose how we allocate our resources very carefully. But we need to do it sensibly; the problems of the rest of the world won't go away if we cover our eyes to them, and they do affect us.

MLL Not much to say here that you haven't already covered. You are right in pointing out that we have brought much of the burden that we bear on ourselves. We've also done much to create the present world system and if we wish to regain a competitive edge we must work towards a revamping of the system, politically, but mainly economically. A massive restructuring needs to occur. Of course, this would be grossly unfair to those countries currently flourishing and I'm sure it would be fought against tooth and nail.

It always pains me when people call out to the Third World to clean up its act and start paying off its loans. So often these countries emerged from colonialism in shambles: an economy tied to the colonial power or multi-national geared toward the production of a single commodity, no semblance of a self-governing political structure, complete lack of manufacturing apparatus in a world where dependence on commodity trade is so risky, etc. Loans were necessary but improperly allocated. The blame lies with both the colonial powers and with the emergent nations themselves. Mistakes were made on both ends but it is now the emergent nations that pay the price as they are trapped in the vicious cycle of loans - debt servicing - more loans, etc. The debt service in many countries is so great that there is no hope for development. Something needs to be done. Tabula rasa? Maybe.

Isolationism is definitely not the answer, but the temptation to just run and hide can be so strong sometimes!

Well, that's all for this time. I thank all of you who wrote and encourage the rest of you to join in the fun. Looking back over a couple of my responses I get the feeling that some may have been a bit aggressive. Hey, nothing personal, just the mood I was/am in. New topics? Lordy, the world is filled with all sorts of interesting characters and events. Surely you can think of something! Serious question: Is there any such thing as "history?" I've begun to have my doubts lately, especially in light of the fact that the existence of absolutes is something that, for me, has been called into question as of late. Well, write in with your responses and I guarantee that you'll see print <<ooo, ahh>>!

Gamestart ... Well, Still Not Quite! Grrr!

Well, things got just a bit complicated after I sent out issue #7. Stephan Weiss expressed his regret that he would not be able to join in on the fun. Hmm. This required that I find a replacement novice. Up popped Audi Jaxon with gamefee and preference list clutched in one hand and a jar of maraschino cherries and a booklet entitled "Fun With Food" in the other. Needless to say, I heartily welcomed aboard. Still not a word from George Rifle, however. Then I get a phone call from him saying that sub money and a pref list are getting put in the mail. Once I get those I'll assign countries and let everybody know who's who and what's going on. Kickoff will probably be in the 1st anniversary issue; how appropriate.

So, signed up are: Nick Sebrell (OK), John Erb (OK), Steve Mirra and Larry Garcia (OK), Erik Wingren (OK), Alan Collingwood (OK), Audi Jaxon (OK), and, sigh, George Rifle (need pref list and sub). We'll get this baby off the ground yet!

BEEN THERE, DONE THAT

Been There, Done That is a Diplomacy subzine to both Mark Lilleleht's The Scribblerist in hard copy and distributed through the U.S.P.S., and Ken Hill's The Archair Diplomat in electronic format and distributed via download from Data Library 5 of the Gamer's Forum on the Compuserve Information Network. Players, standers by, a few traders, and anyone else whom the fancy strikes me will also receive it through the mail. Diplomacy is owned by the Avalon Hill Game Co., and was invented by Allan Calhauer. But you already knew that, didn't you?

MUSICAL NOSTALGIA

I don't know about you, but I am rejoicing in the news that one of the truly original and creative bands in rock and roll history is reforming - I speak of course of the Jefferson Airplane. Yes, I know, in their latter days they suffered from both excess and a good deal of pure and simple loss of creativity. But for a few years and few albums, in the late 60s, they were one of the best things going. Although Surrealistic Pillow is in usually thought of as the "progressive" music at the time still has a worn copy of, to me, After Bathing at Baxter's, the follow up to Pillow, and the absolutely incredible Bless Its Pointed Little Head, playing as I type this, and still just about the best live Rock album ever in my humble opinion, are the best this band produced.

I remember getting an FM radio for my birthday in 8th grade in large part so I could hear the Airplane... and the Who, Cream, and Hendrix. The year was '66 - '67, and most of these bands had just released their first albums. N.Y.C.'s first "progressive" rock station was just on the air... WOR-FM. It became the EDGE of my 8th grade class (you have to remember, this was a "progressive" school in Greenwich Village staffed almost entirely by aging beatniks) and our house without an FM radio! I begged, and got it. From that time on, for the next 4 years, I became almost a weekly visitor to what was then known as the Village Theatre, but which later became known as the Fillmore East. The constant search for the ultimate musical experience began, usually, and you have to remember the decade this was in, aided by... er... well modern psychopharmacology. Country Joe and the Fish, the Doors, Moby Grape, Big Brother and the Holding Company with Janis Joplin, the Grateful Dead (25 times before 1973, by which time I felt they had dried up creatively and become, along with "the Dead Heads" pathetic caricatures of what they had been, an opinion I mostly still hold although I liked their last album a lot and a young co-worker talked me into going to a show last year - I had a good time I must admit, and they even played some of the old faves, but mostly I felt real sad for all the people in the audience who haven't changed, haven't grown, one iota in the last 20 years, desperately hanging onto who knows what....), Hendrix, Cream, etc. Some great, great shows, and

some wild combinations (how about Moby Grape and Cream, with the Soul Survivors - "Expressway to Your Heart" - opening?). And the reality was, on a good night, the Airplane could blow any of them off the stage. I remember one Sunday afternoon in particular in Central Park where they gave perhaps the most intense set I have ever experienced.

The Key, to me, was always Jorma Kaukonen on guitar and Jack Casady bass. Especially Jack Casady on bass. Nobody has ever played a bass in rock in rock the way that man does! I used to feel that they were the only band where the bass was the lead instrument. Listen to Bless Its Pointed Little Head with both the volume and the bass turned up real loud, and if you can stay in your chair through "That's The Other Side Of This Life," or "3/5ths of a Mile in 10 Seconds" you have more self control than me.

Of course it remains to be seen how the band will sound, now, 20 years later. Self-indulgent? A self-parody? Churn out the old songs for the nostalgia market to make a quick buck? Paul Kantner with all his years in the loathsome Starship certainly showed himself capable of all that. But Grace is clean and sober, and with the uncompromising attitude Jack and Jorma always showed, I have hopes for something really creative. At least I'll buy the CD!

Baseball Musings

As appears to be the tradition amongst certain Hobby members who publish dipzines (and in a parenthetical sense of wonderment, why is it so many postal Dip players share the obsession with baseball?), your humble subzine editor will go out on a limb with his predictions for the 1989 baseball season:

A.L.L. East

- 1) Toronto
- 2) Milwaukee
- 3) Boston
- 4) New York
- 5) Cleveland
- 6) Detroit
- 7) The Oh-nos

N.L.L. East

- 1) New-York
- 2) Montreal
- 3) Pittsburgh
- 4) St. Louis
- 5) Chicago
- 6) Phillies

N.L.L. West

- 1) Dodgers
- 2) San Diego
- 3) Cincy
- 4) Houston
- 5) Giants
- 6) Braves

I've picked Toronto the last 2 years as well. They keep coming close. They lost a little pitching this winter (Clancy), but this is their year! The Yankees pitching flat out stinks, and I give Dallas Green until mid-August before the personality conflict with George gets him fired. My beloved Orioles truly stink. They are doing all the right things in terms of rebuilding, stocking themselves with everybody with "potential" that can walk, but about 3 years late. This is exactly what Hank Peters wanted to do in '84, but was over-ruled by Edward Bennett Williams, who instead stocked the club with over-the-hill free agents who cost the team draft choices. The Eddie Murray trade was one of those rare ones that helped both sides. The Os mostly by getting rid of a very unhappy, very unpopular, basic pain in the butt.

Oakland is simply too loaded to be seriously challenged. It'll be interesting to see how they respond to getting whupped in the Series when they should have breezed. Too bad for the Twins because they're a

good team. Too thin in starting pitching to make a serious run, though. Texas may not be all that good, but I'll certainly be interesting after all the trades. K.C. could surprise if the old timers stay healthy and the kids come through. Will Bo finally emerge this year?

The Mets have to win the East. Even with all the clubhouse bickering. I think the Pirates will have a down year from last year. The Cards have little talent, but Whitey will pull out a 4th place finish. The Phillies stink.

I like the Dodgers again. I was about the only person in the world who liked their chances last year, but it was ultimately an emotional choice, as they are my favorite team. Emotional choices rarely work. This time it did. It probably won't this year, but with a renewed Eddie Murray and their pitching... I like 'em. San Diego looks pretty awesome too. They could run away with it. The Braves stink.

I will, of course, entertain and respond to any of YOUR thoughts.

LETTERS

George Mann: "The last issue of BLDT was, well, uh, you know what I mean. I do hope you understand there's a pseudo-quasi relationship between pro wrestling (the greatest sport on earth) and Diplomacy (the greatest game on earth). I'm not the only one to figure out this connection (ask Eric Shaffer, Bob Olsen, James Wall, and others about it)!"

"I guess I'll inform you about your standby list problem with the so called Mark Lilleleht. I thought it would be obvious to everyone. I am Mark Lilleleht! I use that name as an alias. In Welsh it means 'afraid of conflict.' I obviously couldn't sign up my pseudonym Mark Lilleleht as I'm already on your standby list. At least I can publish two zines this way and no one will think I'm a sick, perverted individual who does nothing but watch large, bulky, flabby, sweaty men in tight huggers hug each other!"

((Nice try George/Mark, but it's not working. Everyone in the hobby who's aware of you already thinks you're a sick, perverted, etc etc.))

Paul Milewski: "Received #3 of BLDT. Bizarre, wacky, interesting. I am suitably impressed... Just received my first issue of The Scribblerist ((gee, I'm sorry)) and noticed it came out after the 2-15-89 deadline for your subzine."

((Thank you Paul, for that totally unsolicited praise. Now what was you wanted me to do in the games we're in together? Yeah, IS came out almost a month after the deadline set in the issue of BLDT that was included in it. Have no fear, though. All players in the 2 games in BLDT get the game results by flyer... electronic or hard copy. You see, Mark has this fixation on Alan Stewart, and a dream to win the Runestone. He figured since Stewart took Aug-Feb off, he should take a few months off himself. Besides, in his alter ego of George Mann he had a few issues of SON OF ELDR to put out. Where does he get the energy??)

Dick Martini: "Tom, I see that you're starting a 'McKee for BNC' movement to 'ease' his entry into greater dipdom... what have you got against poor McKee? Talk about thankless tasks, why, you know I'd have to viciously attack him just on general principles."

"On second thought, that might be fun...."

((Attacking McKee for any reason is always a guaranteed good time)).

"Reviewing all the new zines this time, huh? Julie's trading with a bunch of them (Son of Flip, News from Bree, Upstart), hasn't heard back from a couple others (Dark Mirror, Get them Dots Now!), and will have nothing to do with Carrier in any way shape or form. There's another new one or two that you may want to check out:

Q-WHOP? by Russell Rowe (411 Wells Mill Rd, #84, Oxford, OH 45056) **

DLOADSDODDAB!, by Phil Reynolds (2896 Oak St, Sarasota, FL 34237)

Shawn Erikson's new zine (6313 22nd Ave NW, Seattle, WA 98107) **

COMPUTERMEASURE, by Bill LaFosse (65 Barber St, Trenton, Ont K8V 1Z6 Canada) *** - haven't seen a copy yet.

"Phil Reynolds' zine looks really good, an excellent first issue. -Vertigo, like I said, is usually illegible. Last few issues have been heavy on the feud material, but I think that's just a phase it's going through. Lots of sports talk (Brad being a sportswriter, that figures), lots of music talk, some good dip games. Not too big (like Refal is). Of course, since I've known Brad for about eight years, we like the same sports and the same music, that may color my judgement...."

((Dick is referring to a review of some new zines I wrote in The Armchair Diplomat. Since then I have seen both Dipadedoodah and Shawn Ericson's Victims Wanted. They are both excellent looking new zines with lots of variety in the game openings.))

"I agree with your theory of feuds, and have made the same argument myself on occasion. There seem to be a couple of other factors at work here too -- the biggest feuders tend to be the worst players. Linsay, Walker, Coughlan, Carrier, Sacks, Boardman, Tretick -- none of them could stab their way out of a wet paper bag. So they look for other outlets and power trips. (The Carusos are an exception, but I think they're mostly involved out of self-defense (though they seem to have taken the offensive lately). Julie and I are in much the same boat. Either we sit back and take it, or speak up for ourselves. I tell you, if not for the way Bush went after Dukakis in the latest campaign, we'd probably still be pretty quiet here. But the election demonstrated that it just doesn't pay to ignore personal attacks. Who can say that you can't learn from the political system in this country?)"

"There also has to be somebody willing to escalate the feud. Linsay has filled the bill admirably for the last several years. Before him, it was Gary Coughlan. Before that it was the Tretick witch hunt. Before that... I wasn't around."

"And Julie already spilled the beans on feud fact number three: for the last ten years, almost every feud has started as a GM-player dispute. Someday I'll tell you how this whole latest series of feuds started. You will be utterly amazed."

"Boast already uses fax? Too bad, Julie wanted to invent the PBF Dip hobby."

((That's right, Herb Barents, one of the lowest of the low tech publishers in existence - could there be an uglier zine than Boast? - takes orders by fax! I have actually availed myself of the service once. The fax machine at work, however, is in the comptroller's office, the cheapest, most penny pinching SOB in the office - he'd surely throw a fit if he saw me using his precious fax to submit game orders! So I must use it... er... judiciously.))

Jeff McKee: "Nash, how do you do it!! You stab thousands of players every day, and then you come on here with some authority and blab on about how I smooth-talk my way into a commanding lead in a game of all novices, when first off, it's not all novices playing, and second of all, you and I both know a 7 center Russia can disappear faster than you can say "Jack Robinson." I'm probably the only player on the planet you haven't victimized, and you even victimized me but it never hit paper. So how many heads do you have in your collection anyway?? Huh?

"You want me to be BNC, well how about I become BNC and rule every game you are associated with irregular? Sheesh. Irregular. Non-human Player. Which microprocessor do you run on anyway? You probably stab Melinda Ann Holley in your dreams. Come on! Have YOU ever played with her in a game?

"Yeah, one more thing, for all I care you can publish this! <GRIN><GRIN><GRIN><GRIN><GRIN><GRIN><GRIN><GRIN><GRIN><BELCH>" ((Well, actually, I'm in two games with the illustrious Ms. Holley, or the Huntington gamer's syndicate, if we are to believe David Hood. Oh Jeff... you're nuts!))

David Hood: "ELDI makes good reading... anyway, good question as to what a "Hobby Events Coordinator" is to do. I'm not sure. This is one of those Larry Peery ideas that ends up going nowhere. The original plan was for me to act as an info clearinghouse and overall resource person for Con hosts. BUT since there are so few full-fledged cons out there, I have had very little to do.

"Then I decided to pursue a "Hobby Events Handbook" that would be such the same kind of how to book that Once Upon a Deadline is for publishing. But with law school, marriage, DixieCon, etc, I have had no time to follow up on this idea. Now I think Larry keeps listing me as HEC to make me part of the DIPLOMACY WORLD "staff" - that way he can con me into submitting articles every issue. If I were just a Joe Blough with respect to DH, Larry couldn't lean on me quite as much to produce DH material.

"Of course, if you really want to pursue this, I suggest getting Sacks (Sax? Sachs? Saks?) to name you HECUC (Hobby Events Coordinator Under the Covenant) and then we can both sit around and do nothing. You might even be able to get some NYGB money. ((Brilliant idea! Why didn't I think of that! Finally, the position of Hobby power I deserve! HECUC. I LIKE the sound of that! Lilleleht, eat yer heart out!))

"Have you considered coming to DixieCon this year? Chapel Hill is only 5 1/2 hours from Baltimore." ((Not just considered, I'm coming. DipCon is out due to my second child's expected arrival in the world the week of the Con. So DixieCon it is. I'm signed up to play for David McCrumb's team. Besides, as the person personally responsible for at least 3 of Morgan Gurley's 4 eliminations at last year's DipCon, I'm anxious to wipe him out again. He's such a bad loser it's impossible to resist the temptation - just kidding Morgan ol' pal!))

Confidential to David Orne: It's not the same Mike Morris. He says "Pearce-Ford Tower" means nothing to him. Sorry.

The Stand By List

Jason Bergmann, Tim Moore, Steve Helnowski, Paul Milewski, Stephen Dorneman, Vince Lutterbie, Jimmy Williams, Stan Johnson, John Crosby, George Mann, George Rifle, Mike Morris.

Elio Chacon

1989J

Spring 1901

All moves succeed!
Russia proves "Write does NOT make might!"
Powers (and GM) agree: "Williams is psychotic!!"
Austria (Nickel): A Vie-GAL; F Tri-ALB; A Bud-SER.
England (Hunter): F Edi-NRG; F Lon-NTH; A Lvp-YOR.
France (Moore): A Par-PIC; F Bre-MID; A Mar-GAS.
Germany (Rifle): F Kle-DEN; A Ber-KIE; A Mun-BUR.
Italy (Lutterbie): F Nap-TYN; A Ven-TYO; A Rom-VEN.
Russia (Williams): F StP(sc)-BOT; A Mos-STP; A War-SIL; F Sev-RUM.
Turkey (Hoffman): A Con-BUL; F Ank-BLA; A Smy-ARM.

Press

Berlin-Europeg. Who's responsible?
<London>The Royal Navy ventures forth to express her natural domination of our allied nation Norway. We greatly hope the Czar will not take our moves as provocative. No threats are intended.
<Moscow> I now all about the F/I/A Axis I know all about "Boh"! I know all about Codename "Gifelte"! I know all about the six thousand gold francs deposited in my London account! ITALY: Stay out of Tunis! My Lord Turkey has given Tunis to me!
Italy-Germany. This is not a declaration of war - purely a defensive move. It allows me to attack you, support something vs. Austria, or Piedmont should either of them turn out to be baddies.
Italy-Russia: I appreciate the comments, but I'd rather hear from a Czarina or two (or 3).
Italy-Austria: I guess you and Turkey slug it out for Greece.
Italy-France: F Tyn is just there to keep Austria and Turkey talking to themselves. If I wanted wine I'd have hit Pie. Now all I'll get will be German, Austrian, and Turkish whine. Hardly a vintage year as it's such a common lot.

Italy-GM: There's got to be a special Dipwit award for you. I think Botimer has some ideas on the subject.
GM-Italy: Sure, bring the awards on. I already swept this year's Ferdies in The Archchall Diplomat. But Botimer, ideas, in the same sentence. What doesn't fit this picture?
Italy-GM: "Floss Daily" is now in print. Since subject matter is difficult to grasp, the editors are chewing over the final cuts.
<Moscow> I declare war on France! I have been offended! I declare war on England! I have been offended! I declare war on everybody! So no one will be left out! I laugh in the face of Europe! Come and get it!!! I have a secret weapon. I have many secret weapons! I have #5 at stake!!! Tremble at my wrath you worms!!
Russia-Europeg: Yes, of course I realize A War-Gal, A Mos-Ukr, F Sev-Bla, and F StP-Bot is the only sane opening move for Russia. I guess I'm just a "go along" kinda guy. Mr. Helpful. a DORK! Well at least it

takes all kinds to lose at Dip. Still, NO EXCUSE! I get exactly what I deserve ((a sentiment shared by many in this game I will wager, Mr. Williams)). Nice thing about Dip. No room for weenies! ((Well, we did make room for you in this game, Jimmy)). Nyuck, Nyuck! Well, I sure can go along with that, yessir!

Russia-Turkey: Please don't kill me! Please! Please! Please let me live! Please! Please!

Par-Mun: I am glad we agreed to a game-long accord. I think we can sweep the board with it!

<AP> Authorities were still looking out today for that crazed madman, the former leader of Mother Russia who escaped from his cell at the St. Petersburg Crazed Wacko Mental Hospital. Calling himself Jimmy Williams, he has been spreading lies and vicious rumors to all of Europe through the postal network. Random gossip and deceitful falsehoods have been sent to all the leaders of Europe. Authorities in Moscow have been given the OK to shoot to kill when dealing with this obviously deranged individual. Sources in Zurich have learned that a unilateral death sentence on this precipitator of war is being arranged by the countries he has blasphemed. Details will be brought to you as soon as they happen... stay tuned!

Era-Eng: Come on, have a heart! When was the last time you saw France attack England?

Era-Ira: What kind of sacrifice does the Pope desire?

<(Obviously not the kind you sent...)>

Era-Rusi: Keep 'em coming! You've got my entire circle of friends rolling in the aisles!

Notes:

- 1) The vote on how to handle NMRs was underwhelming. One for WAP, one for all units hold. I am casting the tie breaker for all units hold, due to the fact that the player voting that way felt so strongly (see Jimmy's letter next issue), and that with such a minimal vote I feel the more traditional approach is appropriate.
- 2) Jim Nickel's address is, of course, 429 E. Columbia St, Falls Church, VA, 22046.

Choo Choo Coleman

1988HE

Spring 1903

Austria (Aube): A Boh-TRL; A Irl S A Boh-TR(r-Vic); F Alb-ADR.
 England (Hunter): F MID-Par; F ENG-Mid; E NTH-Eng; E HEL-Nth; A BRE H.
 France (Morris): F FOR S A War-Spa; A PAR-Brs; A War-SPA.
 Germany ("Great Satan" AKA Smith): F Bel-HOL; A Ruh-BUR; A Kie-RUH;
 A DEN H; A BER-MU.
 Italy (Welter): F WES S E Por-Spa(INLANSO); F Ion-ALB; A VEN S
 A Tri-Tri; A Tri-Tri; A MUN H.
 Russia (McKee): A RUM S A Ser; F RUM-Bla(double ordered); A Ser S
 A Gal-Bud(r-OTB); A Gal-BUD; A War-GAL; A UKR-Ser; F SEV H
 (unordered); F SWE H.
 Turkey (Tabor): A Bul-SER; A GRE S Bul-Ser; F AEG S Gre; F Smy-EAS;
 A Con-BUL.

All proposals failed. The only proposal we have this time is to go to twice monthly deadlines... the 1st and 15th of the month. PLEASE vote on this! It takes a consensus of those voting to pass.

Press:

<London> The Royal Marines continue to hold Brest supported by elements of the Grand Fleet. Extensive naval maneuvers are expected to result in a strong position to push for the final destruction of Napoleon's Empire. "It has been the dream of my house for a hundred years to wipe them out and I shall be eternally happy that I was able to accomplish it" the King was quoted as saying.

<Con-Alt> Not that I'm really the object of these intentions, but frankly I refuse to vote for any early draws that do not include Mr Nash. Here's another ex-hippy, Pere Ubu fan who's eaten both macrobotics and lutefisk. (Did I get all that right?) I mean, geez, this guy could be me! How could I exclude him. Funny thing, my old freshman college roommate and partner in psychedelica was named Tom Nash. And I finally tracked him down after ten years loss of contact about the time ChooChoo started. Ooo-eee-ooo-eee. Synchronicity?! Or what? Really, that proposal is out of the question. I mean it. Seriously. (ps-Lutefisk tip #47: only eat it in rooms with open windows or large potted plants. With a little practice you can slurp the melted butter off, fooling your elders into thinking you eating it, and then slide the cod into the asparagus fern in the corner.) GM-Con> Gee, Al, looks like you'll have to come on out to Baltimore some weekend. We'll put MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR and Anthem of the Sun on the CD player, cook up some vegetarian couscous and soyburgers, do some kundalini yoga, and talk about the good old days of peyote and S.D.S. marches, eh?

<Con-Rom> Turkish troop movements should not be interpreted as anything other than an attempt to remain predictable in a chaotic world.

Deadline for Fall/Winter 1904 is midnight April 15th, EST.

ODDS AND ENDS:

From the inimitable Ronster, Ron Cameron, comes by far the best lame excuse for a stab I've ever heard. He stabbed me, he says, not because he wanted to, but to keep a novice from dropping out of the hobby! Bless you Ron. The hobby can sleep safely tonight.

The Archhall Diplomat has voted on and presented its annual Ferdie awards. Modesty prevents me from saying who won Best Player, Best Stab (perpetrator), Worst Stab (intended victim), Best Feud (with Steve Smith, the Great Satan himself), and was a player in Best Press Game. But let me say this, it wasn't Lilleleht.

NEXT ISSUE

I already have a bunch of material lined up: the Jimmy Williams letter on NMRs that I was planning to run this time, but seem to have run out of room (this will show you all what it is like to have the truly unique experience of being in a game with or GMing a game with Jimmy... Kind of like a very bad, very intense, acid trip), a little essay on fakes, a comment or two on what I am seeing in the plethora of British zines I've just started getting, and plenty of Lilleleht and McKee bashing. Be there or be square.

And, lest we forget, Been There, Done That is published by Tom Nash, 5512 Pilgrim Road, Baltimore, MD 21214. (301) 254-2836. CIS #74676.3310.

Backwash -- Urbane Scrawl Part III

Well, we're reaching the end of yet another exciting issue of THE SCRIBBLERIST. I'm a bit disappointed with this issue. Maybe it's because I didn't quite get the level of response that I expected from issue seven. It could also be because I've got a lot of other stuff weighing pretty heavily on me at the moment and as a result I haven't been able to put as much into this issue. Who knows, maybe the majority have simply lost interest due to the long delay between issues six and seven. That'd be a shame as I feel like I'm beginning to hit my stride.

Look for issue number nine sometime around late April/early May. It will be sent out with the next INTERLOPER which should be coming out around then. A quick note to all Snowball Fighting players. Everything is adjudicated but I can't seem to find any maps for the game. I'm asking Pete to send a new master copy ASAP. As soon as I get it I'll put out the game report.

Just another plug for the Runestone Poll. VOTE!! Can't hurt, can it?

One of the things that I find most distressing about this day and age is the demise of classical letter writing. There was a time when letters which were exchanged provided a window to the mind of the individual. Now, we're much too "busy" to sit down and draft a coherent, intelligent letter. Instead, we rely on the phone to exchange personal information while gathering our knowledge of the world from 30 second "soundbites" from the nightly news and half column news analysis' in the newspapers and magazines. It's like eating a candy bar; you get a brief charge but are left with nothing of substance. The written personal record left for future generations? A few sentences bragging about the kids scribbled on the back of a hokey Hallmark Christmas card. Arf!

What would people think about me running an International game of regular Diplomacy? A continental European, a Brit, an American, one or two Canadians, and a "wildcard." Just a thought. Any interest?

Ghad, I want to be in love again!

I'd like to get circulation up, especially as regards Overseas and Canadian subscribers. Plugs, putting the word out, or whatever else I can convince you to do would be most appreciated.

And yes, Jef, I'll get FoH #2 off to you shortly.

SEX ISN'T EVERYTHING! But it ain't a bad way to pass the time until the bars open!

In five weeks I'll be in North Myrtle Beach, in a beach house with sixty fraternity brothers and a couple dozen cases of beer, finished with exams and reveling in the drunken debauchery of it all. Ah, heaven!

Well, the best I can do is hope that you've enjoyed this issue. I would appreciate some satire or humor, if only to lighten up the letter column a bit. Tain't nuthin' wrong with a smile.. Write, WRITE, WRITE,,WRITE, WRITE!!!

Take care of your collective selves.

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