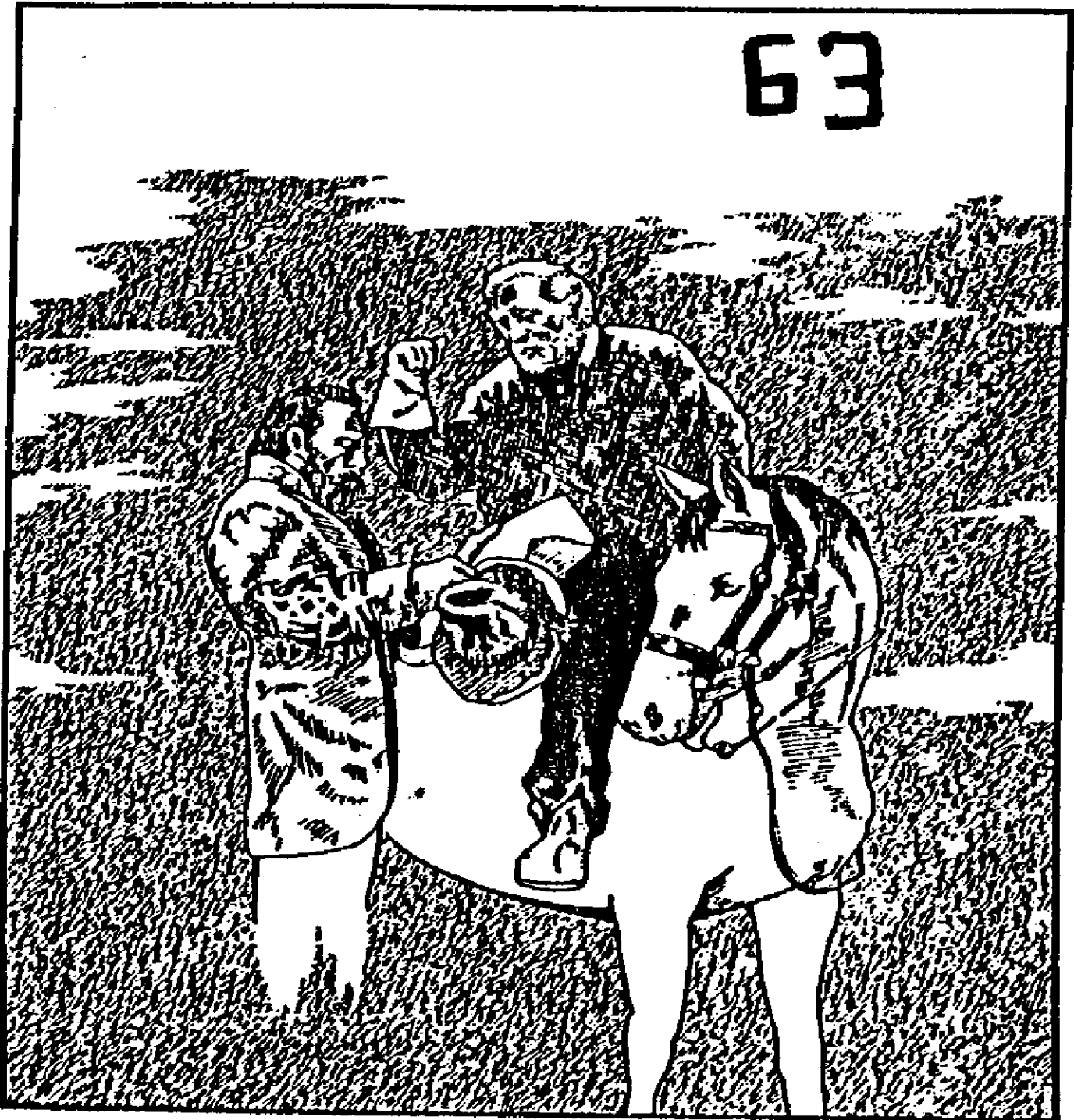


The Appalachian General

63



SPECIAL ISSUE: CON REVIEWS

2

This publication is devoted to playing diplomatic games, of which the most popular is Diplomacy, designed by A. Cahlmer back when force was considered the essential element of international diplomacy. Personally, I prefer variants, but most of them have now ended.. More variants will appear sometime next year. My only current game opening is in Diplomacy You can get 15 issues of this particular edition for ten bucks. If you would rather sample it a few times, this will cost you 75¢ per issue. My address, if you still want it, is:

David K. McCrumb, Route 1, Box 10, Shawsville, VA 24162
Phone: I don't have one yet, and besides, I hate the phone.

13 October 1989

Warships and Trouble Spots are due by 25 October 1989
Mailed moves for all other games are due by 3 November 1989

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DipCon XXII: Fun, Yet Frustrating.....3
 DixieCon III: A Winning Perspective.....12
 From Russia with Love (Comments on Poll Tax)....2
 MegaWhat?.....9
 Notes.....2
 Playing the Game.....10
 Trip '89.....5

Notes from Myself

Don't forget the address change.
David McCrumb
Route 1, Box 10
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No phone yet.

I finally finished the reviews, and here they are. If you think they are a waste of time, sorry, but I like them. Next year, you may even get more of them.

I have had several people request a new Dip Game. I will relent and open one now rather than wait until the new year. The game fee will be \$5.00, and I will be using European rules. In other words, Spring/Spring Retreats will be one turn, and Fall/Fall Retreats/Winter will be the other turn. Winter 1901 will be separate, but all other Fall/Winter turns will be combined. The advantage of playing this way is that you don't have to conduct negotiations based on contingencies.



Comments on Poll Tax From Russia w/ Love Tony Brooks

Germany's suicide attack on Russia obviously did not work. Unfortunately for Russia, Germany was actually a pawn for England throughout the whole game. Germany did not once move to defend her homeland from an obvious attack from England. I felt I could have defeated Germany, but everyone else decided to get into the act against me.

I think I did pretty good considering I had to defend against England, Austria, Turkey, and the suicidal German. It was definitely an interesting game, WW II repeated itself up to 1944. However, it must be a hollow victory for England, since she didn't have any enemies. It was interesting, good luck to all in the next war, even Germany.

This years DipCon was an extravaganza which tried to cover every aspect of the Diplomacy hobby. Variants, computer, and ftf gaming were played, as well as a history test and various exhibits offered.

I didn't participate until Saturday morning, so I missed a few events. Friday afternoon, Larry Peery hosted an open house for those who had already arrived. In the spirit of a decathlon, they held a brick toss. Matt McVeigh of Britain won this event by causing its cancellation after his throw. It seems that Larry fully expected the 140 feet of his back yard to be large enough, but when Matt let loose with a discus style throw, the brick sailed 150 feet and landed on top of a red Firebird. I understand that the damage was settled and Matt was not deported.

A second event that afternoon dealt with a scavenger hunt. Corks, painted in the seven basic colors, were spread in a large area. At the command of go, players tried to pick up all the corks they could. Then the trading begins. The object of the game was to trade with the other players until you got 18 corks of your color. If you managed to get 18 corks of another color, you could still declare yourself a winner by announcing a revolution had taken place and you have seized power. Tim (?) won the first game, and Matt won the second. Larry says he would like to try this in a pool next year. Any takers?

That evening, gaming got underway with the variant tournament. The game this year was SkinnyDip II, and the GM was Fred Davis. Steve Smith won this event by capturing a solo win as Russia on Board 2, while Hohn Cho and Erik Adenstedt (from Vienna, Austria) shared a 2-way draw as Austria and Germany, respectively.

Saturday morning, Diplomacy started. The first event was the team competition. A seven member team each plays a different country on a different board. My team, CADs Plus Five, consisted of: A-David Hood (4w+8c), E-Steve Courtemanche (1c), F-Mark Lew (3c), G-Dave McCrumb (3c), I-Vince Lutterbie (3w+7c), R-Mike Pinkerton (1c), and T-Tim Minnig (4c). We came in fifth place, but one distinction we had was that the only other team to have all seven players survive won the contest. The name of this team was Cameron's Californians, even though all the players were not from California. They managed six draws between them, and the seventh player survived with one center. (Remember, Don, you owe me for that.)

The first round of the Individual Tournament was that evening, and the second round Sunday morning. I'll tell you the details of my games elsewhere, but for simplicity sake, I was eliminated twice in 1904, as France and Germany. Hohn Cho won this event in spectacular fashion with an 18 center win as Turkey, and a 2-way draw as Italy. Coupled with his 2-way draw as France in the Team Tournament and 2-way draw in the Variant Tournament, this was an impressive weekend of Diplomacy for him. Place two through five were: Nick Beliaeff, Lance Anderson, Steve Cooley, and Jeff McKee. Nick and Jeff were kind enough to eliminate me in Game 2, and I am currently allied with Lance in a pbm Cline-9 game in which we are going down hill quickly.

There were several other events going on during the whole weekend. One of the most popular was a Gunboat Diplomacy tournament. I don't like to play Gunboat ftf, and so I didn't participate. Bob Aube won this with a 19 center win as Italy. There were three other wins, but with less

centers. These players were: Ron Cameron (England), Steve Cooley (Austria), and Mark Lew (Germany).

A North American Diplomacy Board Exam was given as part of the scoring system this year. It consisted of 25 questions dealing with the game board and various facts concerning the pbm hobby. Edi Birsan, one of the hobby oldtimers (He attended DipCon I back in 1966), got 15 answers correct to win. I didn't take it, but looking it over, I think I would have gotten 13 correct, and possible 3-5 more. After all, who cares when John and Kathy Caruso's birthdays are?

Computer Diplomacy (i.e. Avalon Hill's version) was used as another contest. The major problem with this was that they determined the winner by the amount of real time that it took to reach 18 centers. This turned it into a typing test. It also helped to have played before as the abbreviations are sometimes different and the normal syntax used in the pbm hobby is not used in this version. There are also some serious flaws in the game. For example, certain countries will not attack you when you invade them until it is too late. I was told that Austria can walk right down the Italian boot before Italy responds. Only eight people played, with Jeff McKee winning in 13:10. Hohn Cho took 13:40, while Eric Newhouse took 16:30.

While there were champions announced in every division, an extra this year was that an overall champion was declared. The various games

4
were grouped into two categories, major and minor events. The major events included: Variants, Team Tournament, Individual Tournament, and Computer Diplomacy. The minor events were: Gunboat, the exam, and the open house events. Each major event was worth 40 points, with the winner of the event getting the 40, and those placing below that getting 39, 38, etc. Only the two highest scores counted. The minor events were worth 20 points, with scoring decreasing from the 20, with only the top score counting towards the final tally. This left a total of 100 possible points.

By using this system, the final results were very screwy, to say the least. The winner of DipCon XXII, with 92 points, was Edi Birsan. I know the Edi is a good player, having been eliminated by him over the weekend, but Hohn Cho had a win and two 2-way draws. He only came in seventh! And if that wasn't bad enough, the eighth place was captured by Bill Gallagher who scored 33 points for coming in last in the computer division, 32 points for surviving with one center in the variant game, and 13 points for coming in next to last in the exam. He also earned 23 unused points from the Team competition (even though he was eliminated) and 0.5 points from the individual games for a 4-center survival. There were also some questions about some of the other top ten finishers, but I won't go into that now.

The Awards banquet was very nice. It was an almost formal banquet, with Chicken Kiev the main course. In addition to announcing all of the above awards, several others were given. The Don Miller Award for "outstanding service to the hobby" was given to Doug Acheson. The Rod Walker Award for "literary achievement" was awarded to THE GENERAL for their special issue devoted to Diplomacy. (Ken Hager, Eric Lawson, Bruce Linsey, Rex Martin) The John Koning Award for "best player of the year" went to Marc Peters of the Madlads.

There were a few other awards. Best Poland (quickest elimination) went to Nick Marks (Italy out in F03), Best Peerijavo (neatest orders) to Erik Adenstedt, Ladies Only Event to Cathy Ozog, and Duck Williams Crying Towel to Michael Geifman for walking out of his game. It was announced in the program that there would be awards for cards, and since that was never announced, I personally claim it for myself. In addition to my good play, I also bid and made a 7 No Trump Doubled hand during the afternoon session. Sharyn and I then stayed up until 3:30 playing bridge with Susan Welter and Jeff McKee.

The Hobby Meeting was held on Sunday to pick the site for next years DipCon. There were four bids presented at the meeting. Cathy Ozog presented bids for PhroliCon (Mt. Laurel, NJ), a small science fiction convention, and Origins (Atlanta, GA), a huge gaming con; I presented the bid for AtlantiCon (Baltimore, MD), a fairly large gaming con; and David Hood presented a bid for DixieCon (Chapel Hill, NC), a small Diplomacy only con. There then followed a very spirited debate over which site was the best. PhroliCon was eliminated early because it was felt that they were not really a Diplomacy convention, and the interest of the con administration was unknown as the sponsor of the bid. Robert Sacks, was not present. AtlantiCon received some serious consideration and quite a bit of support during the discussion from the east coast players present, however I feel that it was not well enough known to the west coast to compete against the other two bids. Origins, which rotates around the country to different cities such as DipCon does, had a lot of support. DixieCon was its hurdle, and this proved to much for it to overcome. The major reason was that David Hood was the only sponsor to actually bid for his own event. Both Cathy and I were presenting bids for others who could not be present. Because of this, David was able to answer every little question that popped up. He also recognized that Origins was his major competitor, and pointed out the cost differential and the type of convention each was. DixieCon won approximately 80% of the vote on the first ballot, which came as a big surprise to me because of all the people that had been discussing Origins. However, upon talking to them later, they told me that they had been convinced by David's argument that a Dip only convention would draw better players, and give better games, than a con were anybody who couldn't get into another session might wonder in to play.

This was a very fun weekend. While my Diplomacy did not go as well as I would have liked, I did meet a lot of people, some of whom I had heard about, others whom I had corresponded with, and quite a few I had never even heard about. The level of play was the best I have ever seen, much to my detriment. There were seven TAG subscribers present, so we could have had a TAG Team if we could have gotten it organized. (We will have one next year!) I am very glad that I went, and aside from the screwed up scoring system and Piedmont (may they rest in peace) sending my luggage to Raleigh/Durham instead of Roanoke, I was very pleased with how things went. I'll see you next year in Chapel Hill.

The first question that comes to mind upon reading somebody else reminisces about a vacation is, "Why are we being bored with this?" There are actually several reasons for articles such as this. The best reason is so I can read this article again in five or ten years and remember many of the things I did. And regardless of what many think, there are people who enjoy these articles, whether from curiosity or a desire to glean information for one of their future vacations. And so, thinking of those few people, I will give an account of my recent vacation to California.

Our trip started at 5:30 am on July 27 when we left for the Roanoke airport. Our flight was on time, and we boarded and left with no trouble. There was fog all the way to Charlotte, NC until we were about five minutes from the airport, so this was a rather boring hop. In Charlotte, we only had time to check out the gift shop to see if any of Sharyn's book were there (None of the airports we were in this trip had any mysteries except for Christie, Leonard, and McDonald.) before hopping on our flight west.

Once boarding had taken place, we taxied out the runway where we sat for 30 minutes in a long line of planes waiting to take off. Visibility was down to less than half a mile, but by the time it was our turn, most of the fog had burned away. The flight west was gorgeous. This being the first time I had flown in the daytime since the age of six, the sights overwhelmed me. I have trouble picking out highlights. The Appalachian Mountains were a disappointment because my depth perception is not very good. Crossing the Mississippi was interesting because we paralleled it for about ten minutes. You could see the barge traffic moving along it, and the size of the sandbars were astounding for someone who grew up along the Ohio and Kanawha Rivers. The desert was interesting not for the desert, but for the green farms that suddenly appeared out of nowhere. They mainly used circle-irrigation where a central location serves as a water source, and a pipe comes out which is pulled about the field by a tractor, forming a circle. There would be dozens of these circles, with brown desert between and on each side of them.

We had a 40 minute layover in Phoenix, and rather than worry about having to reboard, we decided to remain on board. Twenty minutes later, they announced over the intercom that there was a problem with the plane and there would be a two hour layover. We got off, went to the local gift shop to buy postcards, and then had a very good Mexican meal in the airport restaurant. We eventually got back to the boarding area, and I checked on the plane. They said everything was fine, and it would be leaving two hours late. We sat back to read. Half an hour later, they suddenly announced that the flight was canceled. This had never happened before, so we listened for the instructions on what to do. When they were not forthcoming, I went up to the desk and asked. "Oh, we put everyone on that flight onto a SouthWest Air flight an hour ago." Well, they hadn't, as several of us found out. They made out tickets for us, and we eventually got a flight to San Diego after not making the standby list on the next two flights.

I liked the SouthWest flight the best of all the flights we took. The attendants were friendlier and more relaxed. The plane was comfortable. And the view was gorgeous. I was able to see the depth

much better in the Arizona/California desert, and the mountains were fascinating. You could see every footpath and water run as they worked their way through and around the mountains. San Diego did not impress me on approach like Phoenix had, but it was interesting seeing how spread out it actually was.

San Diego has a very nice airport. We were able to find our luggage with no trouble. In fact, it had arrived three hours before we had. We got our rental car, a Mercury Topaz, which is just a fancier version of our Tempo. The guy that checked it out to us not only had the same birthday as me, but also born in the same year. I have never met anybody with the same day of birth before. His glorious job of checking out rental cars showed me that I am not doing all that badly.

Upon leaving the airport, we only got lost once when we missed a quick turn after another quick turn. We got that straightened out, and headed to the Town and Country Hotel where DipCon was being held. We checked in, lay down for a short nap before dinner, and didn't wake up until the next morning.

One advantage to traveling west is that you have no trouble getting up in the morning. I was able to read the paper before the sun came up, a treat since it doesn't arrive at home until 7 am. We ate breakfast soon after the closest restaurant opened, and planned our day.

The first trip was to Mexico. We drove part way to the border, and caught the trolley the rest of the way. It is a very nice system. The only thing comparable is the DC subway, and this was nicer because it was above ground and you had a view. Of course, the traffic probably didn't like it because they always had to stop. We arrive in San Ysidro about 9 am, got a cold drink at the local McDonalds (Sharyn kept trying to figure out if that was the one where the massacre took place in '84, but it wasn't; that one was demolished), and walked across the border. We walked across at a slow time, and didn't have anybody to follow since we had no idea where to go. We finally decided to take a taxi, after several drivers insisted. We finally agreed on a price of \$2.00 for the trip to down town Tiajuanna. The driver took the interstate down about three miles, circled around three or four times, then came back the three miles and let us off about four blocks from where we got in. He tried to say we agreed on \$3.00, but he took the 2. While he had tried to make the trip seem longer, we did manage to see a little bit more of Mexico.

Tiajuanna was a depressing place. I hated most of it. The place was dirty, smelly, and everyone was so desperate to sell, they would grab you off the street and try and steer you into their shops. I like haggling over prices, but they were ridiculous. We looked at one chess set which the owner of the shop said he would sell for \$40. Within 30 seconds, he had dropped to \$35, \$30, then \$25 without me saying a word. He eventually went to \$18, so we bought it. We mainly bought gifts because there was very little that impressed either of us. I didn't find anything I would want. Sharyn did buy a beautiful hand made table cloth with matching napkins (which subsequently disappeared someplace on the way home) and two small leather suitcases, but the silver and clothes did not impress her.

We then decided to head back. This time, we asked directions, and were able to walk. Customs was interesting. I would like to know how they decide who to search when crossing the border. They made Sharyn open all her bags, and they went through each of them, including her purse. Me, they asked where I lived ("Virginia". "No, what country?"

"United States". ["Stupid", I thought.]), and let me through, even though I was carrying more. We got on the trolley, rode back to the car, and had a quick lunch.

Our next stop was the San Diego Zoo. This is where Joan Embry, the lady on Johnny Carson who brings the animals, is from. We had wanted to see this for a long time. There was a lot of walking, but it was worth it. They had animals from all over. We saw the albino koala bear along with everything else you expect to see in a zoo. The plants were especially impressive. They had more plants than animals, and from all over. They had built a rain forest, a desert (not hard in southern California), and an attempt at grasslands. It was very impressive.

We had dinner in the Old Town section of San Diego. We walked around and looked first, but it seemed like any other old settlement to me, slightly different than Virginia, but the same atmosphere. We ate at Casa di Bandini, which was located in one of the older buildings, if not the oldest still standing. We ate outside in the court. There was a roving mariachi band, which was very nice as long as they weren't too close to you (very loud). The food was different, but not spectacular. I had flounder cooked using a Mexican sauce, while Sharyn had something with shrimp in it. (I don't really remember because I couldn't taste it. I am allergic to shellfish, and all I needed to do was get deathly sick the first day in town.) The meal took about two hours, but it was enjoyable and worth going to again.

We drove back to the motel to rest, but decided to go see Batman in the theatre in the mall behind us. This was the first movie I had seen in over two years, and it was not the Batman I remembered from my childhood. It was better, much more realistic. The thing I would have liked to see more of would have been how he developed his 'toys'.

Saturday and Sunday I spent playing Dip. Sharyn had a lecture and autographing in Old Town on Saturday, where over 100 people showed up. Sunday, she got a tour of the rest of San Diego from some of her fans, and then we played cards most of the night. Monday morning, we packed up the car and headed to Los Angeles.

Southern California must be the most depressing area in the United States. Our trip north was boring. There were low hills all around, and sand as far as you could see. Occasionally, you could glimpse the Pacific to the west, and some military helicopters flew over a couple of times, but that was about it. We were waved through their checking station on the interstate, so we didn't get to find out what they were looking for (contaminated fruit, illegal aliens, terrorists?). After driving about six days, we finally arrived in Los Angeles.

What can I say about Los Angeles. It is the most disgusting city I have ever been in. Of course, I haven't been to New York in 15 years, but LA was worse than DC. The drivers were raving lunatics. The pedestrians were either stupid or had a death wish. And the air, well, I can't remember the last time I could see what I was breathing.

We spent most of our time on Venice Beach. For those not familiar with this area, in the opening credits of "Hunter" when you see the girls roller skating, that is Venice Beach. We stayed with the woman who owned the bookstore where Sharyn was autographing. A beautiful little (and I mean little) cottage, sitting on a postage stamp six houses from the beach. Worth in the neighborhood of \$600,000. The house across the alley was being sold for \$950,000, but then it was a three story mansion on a postage stamp.

The beach was beautiful. Pure white sand, tall palm trees, clear skies, and sparkling water. Of course, the water was so contaminated that it was recommended you don't swim in it. And after dark, you don't go out walking because of the gangs. We had looked forward to a nice moonlight walk on the beach, but a row of public phones was only a couple of blocks away, and that was where the drug dealers would hang out waiting for calls about buys. The day was nice, though. We walked along the beach several times. There were souvenir stalls, musicians, and all manner of other kooks out. We bought some souvenir T-shirts, soaked up the sun, watched the guys lifting weights at Muscle Beach, and enjoyed ourselves.

Terry, the lady we were staying with, took us out to dinner that night. It was one of the local "hot spots" that not everybody knows about yet. I just about died when I saw the prices. Evidently, Terry saw how I reacted because she quickly said that the bookstore was paying for dinner, so we could eat what we wanted. I had salmon, and while it was good, it certainly wasn't worth what she paid. And the service was terrible. The waiter acted like it was "our pleasure" that he bothered to serve us. And the idiot just couldn't get it through his head why I wanted to know if there was shrimp in the sauce they used. We ate our meal while trying to talk over the noise. I can't remember ever being in such a loud restaurant, even the dining halls at school weren't that bad. We did see Gregory Hines, who was also there that evening. But overall, I was unimpressed.

The next day we went to Universal Studios. I had not realized what it was, and so was not thrilled about going, but I had a great time, and was glad we went. We saw many different things, some of which I found truly amazing.

The first thing we did was sit in on a simulated taping of Star Trek. They took some people from the audience, dressed them up, and had them do a few scenes while they taped it. They then played it back, inserting some scenes from the Star Trek movies with Kirk and Spock. The acting was not great, but the idea was interesting.

We saw a production of the "Castle Greyskull" characters, whatever their names are. It was very good. Their curtain was falling water and the special effects were very well done. The dragon was great, though the warrior hero got a little close the last time it breathed fire and got his hair singed. The hand-to-hand fighting was overplayed, but since it was mainly for children, I wasn't surprised. The children, especially Spencer, would have loved it.

The tram tour very informative. The thing that impressed me the most was the size of the sets. "McHale's Navy", for those of you who remember it, used a pond about the size of the Capital Reflecting Pool in DC for the whole Pacific Ocean. "Jaws" was filmed on a larger pond, but not by much. This also had Cabot's Cove built along it. "The Chicken Ranch", which sat out in the middle of a huge field in "The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas", had only 10 yards of clear space around it. And Tarzan's jungle consisted of a dozen trees. How they made such small spaces appear so big is beyond me.

We got to see a live taping of a show. It was "American Gladiators", which you might have seen on TV this fall. We sat in on only one segment, the semifinals of the attack section. This dealt with the player attacking a strong point, trying to hit a target with various weapons, while the gladiator shoots tennis balls at them. From the tapes we saw, this was the most interesting part of the whole competition.

One stop showed how they put in some of the visual effects for movies. For example, when Fred Astaire dances across the walls and ceilings, they were actually using a rotating room while he danced, having the camera rotate with the room so it looked like he was upside down. Of course, they sometimes run into problems doing this. Everything in the room must be fastened down. As an example, they showed

8

a picture of one guy playing cards on a TV, then the guide walked into the picture on the wall. Actually, the card player was sitting on the wall. His chair and table were bolted there, and the cards were magnetized to stick to the table.

Their Earthquake was interested, and scared a few people in our car. I found it more interesting because of the engineering forces they had to exert to do everything they did, and then put it back in 30 seconds so the next car could go through. Of course, part of it was made of foam, so that made it a bit more easier.

They had famous props sitting all around. The KITT Car from "Night Rider" seemed to be the most popular, but the children enjoyed the sets from "Honey, I Shrunk the Kids". King Kong's head was large, but looked just like any other artificial mask.

That evening, Sharyn gave her talk and autographing session in Venice Beach. This was the first time I had ever seen her as "the author". Everyone came up afterwards and introduced themselves. Three of the tunnel rats from "Beauty and the Beast" went on for ten minutes about how everyone on the set loved "Bimbo's". We met John Nocack(?) who wrote the book and screenplay for "Born on the Fourth of July", Tom Cruise' latest movie. There were also a few other semi-famous people there, but I didn't catch all their names.

The next day, Wednesday, we did general tourist things. We went to Hollywood in the morning. We walked along the "Walk of the Star", went past the Actors Guild building, and looked around Grumman's Theatre. We ate at a little greasy hamburger joint along the walk, one of the best meals we had on the trip. We drove around trying to get a good view of the Hollywood sign and saw a lot of the city that way. It didn't look any different from any other city such as Alexandria, but you knew you were in Hollywood, and that mad it seem different, somehow.

Our next stop was in Beverly Hills. We got lost on the way (don't ever let Sharyn navigate. "Oh, look at that beautiful garden!" "Were do we turn?" "Who cares?" "Augh!"), but finally found it. Once again, nothing spectacular except for the prices along Rodeo Drive. The stores were definitely nicer than most stores, but not that much. Their T-shirt store (yes, even on Rodeo Drive) was ridiculous. The cheapest shirt was \$25.95, much more than the 3/\$10 we paid on Venice Beach for the same shirts. Sharyn had to buy something, so she finally settled on a skirt. We looked in a few of their galleries, were not impressed, and laughed at the prices. It seemed like a lot of hype over nothing to me.

By then, it was getting late, so we headed back to Venice Beach. We packed up, said our goodbyes, and went and got a motel room near the airport. The next morning, I caught my flight east, while Sharyn took hers to San Francisco and the rest of her book tour.

The flight was nice and boring. There were clouds the whole way. I watched the in-flight movie "Major Leagues", read for a while and slept. I arrived in Charlotte with five minutes to catch my flight to Roanoke.

At least this hop I could see, but was unable to figure out where we were until we popped over Mill Mountain were landing at the airport. I then found out that they had routed my luggage to Raleigh/Durham instead of Roanoke. I guess the baggage clerk at LAX thought they were the same.

I got a ride home, played with the children, and read until the limousine finally delivered my found luggage around 1 am.

I thoroughly enjoyed this vacation. It was my first real one in over three years. I am looking forward to the next one already. Now that I have the time and money to travel, I hope to do a lot more of it. In fact, I just found out that we can get airfares for \$125 anyplace in the US until December 20. I wonder where I'll go?

$$ax^2 + bx + c = 0$$

$$x = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$$

THE QUADRATIC EQUATION

Mega What?

Sharyn McGrumb

I started out worrying about my computer, and ended up worrying about the fate of the world.

I write (novels, mostly) on a very big AT computer with two hard disks, more memory than Einstein, and split-second reaction time. For what it cost, it ought to sleep six and cook a turkey in half an hour, but I must admit, it's a sophisticated machine. If you don't like the order of your paragraphs, you can type in a command and switch them around; if you don't like a word you just used, you can push "Thesaurus" and it will suggest some other words you could try. After you finish writing your piece, you push "Control f2" and it will check the spelling of all your words. If it thinks it knows the word you meant, it will offer a suggested correction, like "to" if you accidentally typed in "ot."

It's only a machine. It doesn't know all the words that I know, especially proper names. It questions "Sara" and "Boucher" and "Spencer." It even misses some ordinary words than any child would know, like "ads" and "uncalled." That's okay. I know that machines cannot contain all the millions of words we have in our language, including the ones we've borrowed from other folks, like "safari," and "igloo," and "Ninja." I can accept that.

I worry about the words it does know.

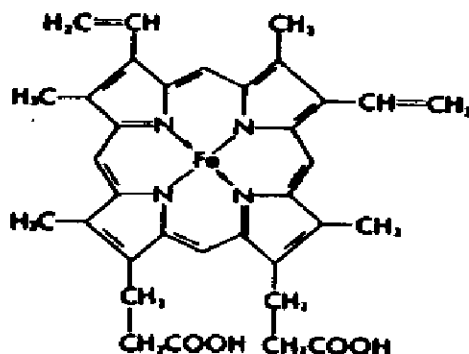
I was working on a short story for teenagers, and for detail I mentioned a thrash metal group called "Megadeth." They give themselves odd names, these rock bands. When I finished a few pages, I spell-checked the text, and sure enough the machine flagged "Megadeth." Fine; I didn't expect it to know rock groups. But instead of just stopping at the word, it offered an alternative. "Megadeath," it flashed on my screen.

No, I thought impatiently, as I pushed the leave-it-alone key. I meant Megadeth the heavy metal band, not Megadeath: that means...I froze.

Megadeath means "one million deaths; used as a unit in atomic warfare." Why does my machine know that word? Why does that word exist? Why are we thinking up terms like that, and why would a computer that doesn't know "ads" know about "megadeath?"

I get the same uneasy feeling about the fact that there is a whole genre of fiction called "post-holocaust literature," which is defined as stories that take place after a nuclear war has ravaged the planet. Harlan Ellison's "A Boy and His Dog" is a famous example; so is "A Canticle for Leibowitz." There's not just one story based on that idea, mind you; there is a whole type of fiction with that one theme.

I think I'm afraid that subconsciously we have all accepted the fact that it is going to happen. And I don't want us to blow up the world, and I don't want us to create a vocabulary that can be used only for that situation. When books, and films, and even a computer starts treating the unthinkable so matter-of-factly, I begin to be afraid. The first step toward making something happen is to put it into words.



HFMF

PLAYING THE GAME

There is not a lot to write about concerning my Diplomacy during DipCon XXII. I don't know what the problem was, but I don't think it was the diplomacy as I negotiated exactly as I did at DixieCon. I do know that my name was well known, as a couple of players told me other players had tried to set up alliances based on this. Since I was an outsider, this may have affected me a little more than the local top players, but then it doesn't explain how some of the others did ok.

My first game was in the team tournament. Our captain was David Hood, and so the name of the team became CADs Plus Five. I was our German representative. The other players in my game were Don Williams as Austria, Larry Cronin as England, Charlie Otte as France, Bob Aube as Italy, Eric Newhouse as Russia, and Brooke Raasch as Turkey.

I decided to approach this game using my normal tactic as Germany, that is, to take out England with French help. Charlie was very willing, and so was born my only real alliance during the whole weekend. I managed a neutrality pack with Austria and Italy, while Russia promised to move south.

Everything went as planned during the first two years. England was in terrible shape, controlling only his home centers, and each of them was threatened. Unfortunately, he had convinced Russia to come to his aid, and Eric had responded to the plea with a vengeance. Part of Larry's long survival was possible due to Turkey's demise in 1903, but the main instigator was Larry himself. He put up such a ferocious defense that he was able to slow us just enough until the Russian units arrived. It did not help him any in the long run as he was finally eliminated in 1905, but by that time, Russia was pressing all over. Italy had allied with Russia to squeeze Austria in the middle, and was now pressing my ally France. I was unable to gain any centers, as the only way for our alliance to be guaranteed gaining ground always seemed to involve me supporting Charlie. It was very frustrating, but it was our only hope versus the R/I onslaught.

We played 1906, hoping to pull off some type of miracle. That miracle did not occur, and we lost a lot of territory. I then told Bob and Charlie told Eric that we would ally with the other and support them to a win if they didn't vote for the 2-way draw. Needless to say, the draw passed. The final supply center count was A-1 (Don, you owe me for that), E-0, F-6, G-3, I-11, R-13, T-0.

My next game was the following morning in the individual tournament. Once again, I was Germany. The others were: A-Greg Ellis, E-Nick Marks, F-Mike Pinkerton, I-Steve Smith, R-Edi Birsan, T-Geoff Richard.

While I dislike triple alliances, I allowed myself to be talked into forming one with Mike and Nick. I was sure it would work, and for the first year it did. Then, and I have no idea why, Nick stabbed me in 1902. I tumbled from 5 centers down to 2. And I continued to attack Russia. Everyone else thought I was crazy, but I really had no choice. I could turn on England and his superior forces and allow Russia to walk into my remaining two centers, or continue against Russia, hoping that I could gain something before England took me out.

I didn't gain anything against Edi, but I did manage to hold him off. I also managed to convince Nick that I was vital for his future campaign against Russia. He evidently agreed, because not only did he allow me to survive, he actively supported me in Berlin.

During 1904, Nick got greedy. He asked me if he could take me out before Russia took my remaining two centers. Hating to be eliminated (having never been eliminated from a tournament game before), I said no. It did no good. He came at me that spring, so prior to the fall season, I tried to work something out with Russia and Italy. It failed, and I was out in 1904, my first elimination, after 12 games.

The game continued only one more year or so. I think I was the only elimination, but it was an E/F/I/R draw. I think this was a mistake as any two of these four it could easily have made it a 2-way draw after only two more years.

I usually do not like playing two games of Diplomacy in the same day, but my first one was so short, I felt ready for the second round that evening. I drew France, a country I have always done well with. My opponents were: A-David Myers, E-Nick Belioeff, G-Jeff McKee, I-Bob Aube, R-Dave Villadsen, T-Tim Minning. I can remember classes in which there were as many as seven Davids, but I never saw a Diplomacy game with more than two, and that a rarity.

After my first two disappointments, I was ready to do good in this game. I didn't want a triple in this after my previous experience, so I had to choose between England and Germany. Both gave good offers, but I felt more comfortable with England's offer. I had felt out Russia for his help in Scandinavia, and had gotten only a lukewarm response. I decided to attack Germany, and would spend the first year setting up for it.

Things went as I expected. The west saw each country gain two new centers. I jumped the gun and made a grab for Munich, but Italy also went there, and so we bounced. I later found out that this was arranged, and Bob was not attacking Jeff, a move that Bob would later come to regret.

After my aborted attempt at Munich, my builds of two armies came as no surprise. England's builds of fleets, and Germany's split were not surprises either. Italy built another fleet, and I got worried. However, I figured I could hold off Germany with the armies and my fleet could move around to block any feeble Italian attack.

The second year was devastating. England stabbed me as hard as possible. I didn't lose any centers, but the stab went very deep. I took it personally, I am sorry to say. This was my third game that was going down the tubes, and I was damned if he would get anything out of it. And if I say so myself, I put up an admirable defense.

I knew that I would eventually lose things to him, and to prevent this, I offered my centers to Germany. I was hoping to allow him to gain them quick enough to get England worried, and a war break out between them, allowing me to survive. I was rather nasty and vindictive about it, refusing to even talk to Nick over the table. Jeff was a bit leery about my offer, but once I supported him into Burgundy, and then Marseilles, he got the idea that I was serious.

Since I had very little diplomacy to do aside from telling Jeff how I would support him into my centers, I had 15-20 minutes to wonder around talking. I found out Rod Walker and Ken Gestier were interested in playing bridge, so we rounded up a fourth and began. In between hands, I ran back to the board and arranged for Nick (much to my despair) and Jeff to take my four remaining centers than fall.

The game went on for another three years but it eventually ended in an E/Q draw. The final Supply Center was: A-1, E-11, F-0, G-11, I-5, R-1, T-5. The draw was preordained as soon as I capitulated. And while I did give up to go play bridge, my decision was not based on this alone. As soon as England attacked me, I started warning the east that E/Q was getting ready to roll. Nothing happened, unless you count their futsing around with each other. Warnings each season went unheeded. By 1904, I felt that it was too late, and decided my leaving would only hasten the inevitable. And it did. Once they saw my quick demise, they organized to try and stop Nick and Jeff, but I still feel that without my fall, they would have screwed around even longer.

There was a very interesting psychological phenomenon that I came across in this game. This was what I refer to as the "Fuck the World, I Want It Over" syndrome. Once I was stabbed, I had no interest in the game. I have never felt that way before, but I now understand why some players suicide out of a game. You reach a breaking point, and continuing any further feels like torture. It wasn't even mainly caused by my last game, but rather the previous two. I have been soundly stabbed before, but after three rotten games in 24 hours, I had had enough.

The Bridge that afternoon was very enjoyable. I was originally partnered with Ken, while our opponents were Rod and a rotating fourth, mainly Susan Welter. For the longest time, me and Susan seemed to be playing every other hand, usually to just under game. I then got the hand you always dream about. I had 26 points, 3 aces, 3 kings, 2 queens, and a jack. All I had in clubs was the queen. Susan, who had dealt, passed. Ken bid 3 clubs, signifying he didn't have 13 points (not surprising since I held all but 14 of them), but did have 7 clubs. Rod passed, as expected. I figured that between us, we had 8 clubs, and even if Ken had the 7 lowest, we wouldn't lose more than 5 tricks, so I decided to find out what he had, and bid 4 No Trump. Ken's jaw dropped to the table. My bid had asked him how many aces he had, and he assumed I was screwing up. He bid 1 diamond (1 ace, which had to be the club), I bid 5 No Trump (how many kings?); 1 Diamond (1 king, which had to be the club); 7 No Trump. Ken put down his hand and left, evidently too nervous to watch. I had some trouble setting transportation between the hands so that I could use Ken's clubs, but I managed, and came away with the hand. My finest feat of the weekend.

We played a while longer, switching partners. Susan and I played together, and we communicated together even better than Ken and I had. We rolled over Ken and Rod. Susan then left for a few minutes, and John Gault took over for her.

For those of you who remember Glen Taylor, John Gault (I assume that this is a pseudonym) is the spitting image of Glen. I had noticed John Saturday morning while I was eating breakfast in the hotel restaurant, but felt uncomfortable about approaching him. Over the weekend, I noticed he had the same mannerisms, movements, and walk that Glen had. Talking at the table, he sounded like Glen, and to top that, he was even as cocky and know-it-all as Glen ever was. It was scary. I could not concentrate, making bidding mistake after mistake. I eventually gave up, made my excuses, and went back to the motel. I did manage set up an evening game for after the banquet for Sharyn and myself, a bit of relaxing bridge to calm the nerves.

While I didn't enjoy it much at the time, upon looking back at it, I did enjoy the Diplomacy gaming. I got my but stomped, but I had it coming after doing so well for so many tournaments. And there is always next year. Besides, my bridge game made up for the losses. Now, if I could just do as good in everything next year.

DIXIECON III A Winning Perspective

DixieCon continued on its rise into becoming one of the top Diplomacy Cons in North America. Not only did the attendance improve over the previous two years, but the geographical distribution of the attenders spread. There were players from at least five states, California being the furthest traveled. The friendly atmosphere and warm hospitality were still present, as was the high caliber of play.

I approached the con this year with an entirely different frame of mind than the previous year. Last year I went with the full intention of winning the whole thing. I played very well, and managed fourth. This year, I decided to have fun regardless of how I finished. Surprising as that may sound, I actually won the tournament. All I can conclude from this is that it takes more than determination to win, other factors also play a big part. After all, this is the first time I haven't had to play against Morgan Gurley, one of the best and most consistent players I have ever had the pleasure of playing against.

I broke with tradition right from the beginning and agreed to play in the first game of the tournament on Saturday morning. We actually managed to start at 9:30, half an hour before the tournament officially got under way. I had never played with any of these players, and had only ever heard of two of them. I drew England, the first time I have ever played it in a game of Diplomacy. (I have never played Turkey either) I was very worried with the starting lineup, as Dick Warner (Russia) and Luke Pinschmitt (Germany) were both from the gaming club at Mary Washington College in Fredericksburg. I had faced a similar combination two years earlier at the first DixieCon, and did not look forward to this combination. I decided the best thing was to try and take out Germany before Russia could threaten me directly. In aid of this, I approached Pete Fuchs (France) to try and get help vs. Germany, while getting Bernie Oaklyn (Austria) and Mike Lowroy (Turkey) to combine against Russia. I tried to pull Bob Odear (Italy) into the plot, but he was the only one that showed no interest.

Much as I expected, Russia went all out for Scandinavia, so much so that after W'01, he had F Swe plus A Fin and A StP threatening Nwy. I managed to keep Germany in fair check with some great help from Pete. The worst problem turned out to be an A/I attack on Turkey. This prevented Turkey from pressuring Russia as he had promised, thereby allowing all the Russian strength in the north.

The S'02 diplomacy started a tradition which was to continue throughout the rest of the game. This was a discussion between Russia and myself prior to talking to anybody else. The fruits of these discussions were very advantageous to both of us. Dick wanted to demilitarize Scandinavia (he had three units in or bordering on it, while I had two plus two more only one move away). With great trepidation, I agreed. I figured if I lost Norway, it would not be a "great" loss, plus I could put my full strength against Luke. Russia had built an A StP, so an attack by him would be slow and easily stopped. Pete was still willing to wipe out Germany since he had no problems in the south. If things worked out, I was set up.

Things did work out. Dick pulled south, I pulled south, and we were cooperating on chopping up Germany by F'02. We chopped in 03, while Turkey fell to the A/I onslaught despite some Russian support. 13

The third year was not memorial as far as move go, but there was a lot of diplomacy concerning my two W'03 builds. Both Dick and Pete put a lot of pressure for builds that were not threatening to themselves. I had no idea what to do. Pete had been a great ally right from the start, but Dick and I had managed to defuse a very tense situation. I finally decided to go with Pete, and built F Edi and A Lon rather than F Lon and F Lpl. I anticipated convoying into Norway, taking StP, then marching south. I would also head west through Germany with French help.

Dick was flabbergasted. "I don't want to fight you", was the first thing he said to me. And do you know, we worked out a plan where my builds would actually help me better in an attack on France than on Russia. Pete, knowing that my builds signaled an anti-Russian campaign, moved everything into the Med. I moved F Nth-Eng, F Edi-Nth, and F Ska-Hol. That fall, I convoyed into Brest (he couldn't stop it), took Bal, and supported Germany back into Munich. I consider this one of the best stabs that I have ever pulled off.

I must give Pete credit. He did not fold up and die like I have seen so many other players do in this situation. He fought me tooth and nail. He also got a lot of support. Since Italy basically owned Turkey, Bob gave up a few centers to Pete to prop up his fleets, a very smart move since Bob's fleets were still in Turkey and he had no home defense otherwise. At this point, the game had fallen into an E/R vs. A/F/I, with Germany to leave in 1905.

Both Dick and myself were making slow headway when lunch was called. We had a new rule this year, which I think was very important for keeping the flow of the game going. All of the surviving players had to not only go to lunch together, but they had to sit at the same table. This did not allow for one clique to gang up on one player during the meal break and disrupt the power structure. It made for a more continuous game. I was impressed with this idea. At DipCon back in 1986, I had a good 2-way alliance broken up this way, not because of any direct attack, but rather we didn't know what had been said (and how long the discussion had been) with the other side in the game. This game ended up in a 7-way draw because of this.

After fighting a couple of more years, Bernie saw that he was not getting anywhere, and actually falling back some. He came to us with a plan for a 3-way draw. He would turn on Italy with his armies, which would allow Russia fleets to enter the Med from the east, and would turn on France with his fleets which would give me access to enter the Med from the west. We agreed (of course). Prior to reading the moves, either Pete or Bob proposed a 5-way draw. Dick very quickly said no, to which they answered, "Going for the 2-way, huh?" "Actually, Dave and I have never discussed it," he responded. Which was true. The first draw proposal mentioned had been by Bernie. After Dick stabbed the hell out of Bernie after Bernie stabbed Bob and Pete, we still waited another game year to discuss it.

After this point, the game quickly deteriorated into a major mess. Bernie got pissed, saying we had no honor because we had not intended to include him in a 3-way draw and had stabbed him "against our word". Of course, when we (all four of us) pointed out to us that this was no worse than his stab of his former allies, he responded by saying that his "moves had been made to gain a better tactical situation, and were not a stab." Yeah, and I have some beach front real estate in Arizona up for sale.

We wiped out Bernie, which was a blessing because we no longer had to listen to him whine. Dick then offered to support me into an 18 center win if I would help him to collect the other 16 supply centers. I counter-offered a 17-17 2-way draw, but he said that I had played a great game and deserved the win. While I did play a good game, I also felt that he had to, but I wasn't about to give up something as good as a win.

Bob and Pete then came up with a perfect plan to stop us. They insisted on conducting negotiations for the required 30 minutes. So we sat around for an hour, knocking them down to Rome and Naples. It would take another hour to wipe them out, by which time it might be too late to get into the evening rounds. I was willing to go for it since Dick had been such a good ally and I was not that interested in the evening rounds, but Dick wanted to play that evening, so he agreed to give me Berlin for the win. We ended up with 14 centers, while Bob and Pete each had one.

14
Dick gave me this win because he felt I deserved it. I did play good, but the situation controlled me more than I controlled the situation. I only demilitarized Scandinavia because I couldn't protect it anyway. I only stabbed one of my allies because I had nobody else to attack. I picked Pete not because I felt Dick would be a better ally, but because I saw a good opportunity after building for an attack on Dick. While I was making slow progress on forcing the Med, I really managed to flood in because of Bernies stab, which was instigated by Dick. So, from my perspective, Dick played the better game. Of course, now Dick has me owing him one, so next year at DipCon he can ask me to return the favor if we should happen to be in the same game.

My second game, on Sunday morning, was fantastic. I did play a great game here, and while I should have gotten another win, some great play by the other players managed to hold me to a 4-way draw. I drew Italy this time, my favorite country by far. There were two players in this game that I was familiar with, Mark Stegman (Austria) and Mike Gonsalves (Germany). I had allied with both of these players in the past with very good results. Mark and I had managed to force a 4-way draw at DipCon in 1986 against overwhelming odds after eight hours of play. I had a 2-way with Mike at DixieCon last year in which we both picked up best country awards. I knew I could work with both under pressure situations.

The other players were all new to me though I had heard of some of them. Jack Kiel (France), from the Mary Washington group, and Rick Henderson (Turkey) were complete unknowns. James McDonald (England) seemed familiar, while Dan Sellers (Russia) had been on my list of "people to play" for several years.

For some reason, I went into this game with the sole intention of winning it. I don't know why, but for some reason I wanted two wins during this tournament. (Does anybody know if this has ever happened before?) I felt that I could do it, especially since I was playing Italy, but a few things had to happen first. My number one priority had to be to get rid on Mark. There was no way I could win if he was still around. I respected him to much. Secondly, I had to keep Mike occupied until I was large enough to push for the win. And thirdly, I had to set up Dan for a stab as quickly as possible.

Diplomacy went very well. I asked Mark if I could move to Tyrolia to give Germany support against the E/F alliance I had heard about. He was very leery, so I told him I wouldn't do it. Meanwhile, I was egging Jack into attacking Germany, and while I didn't completely convince him to do so, he did not threaten me. I set up a great alliance with Dan and Rick to destroy Austria which meanwhile also allowed me to set up against Turkey.

Just as I had expected, Mark moved A Tri-Tyo. This was great because I had moved A Ven-Tri, while Russia went A War-Gal. As if that wasn't great enough, the fall season went even better. Turkey supported me into Greece, I supported Russia into Vienna, and Austria went A Ser-Bud attempting to block any Russia move into there. As a result, Mark was a one center after F'01.

There were several other advantages that were in my favor at this point. Russia had gained three new centers, taking him to seven. This made him the early threat, and everyone reacted as such. England allied with Germany to stop Dan in the north, and they convinced Turkey that he also needed to help stem the tide from the south. Mark was soon to be gone, and while his A Tyo was a nuisance, it was easily disposed of in 1902. My fleet in Greece was in a perfect position for my stab of Turkey, being able to support armies into Bul, or fleets into the Aegean. Plus, with Rick turning against Dan, his southern flank was completely exposed.

The next couple of years were great. Dan was stopped in the north, while he was slowed in the south. Picked up the majority of the Balkans, plus a Turkish home center. It was at that point that I decided to stab Dan. I don't know the exact year because I didn't write down the supply center chart, but it was one of my best stabs ever. I picked up two Russian centers, supported Turkey into a third, while picking up my second Turkish home center and guaranteeing the third. It was at this point that I began to seriously push for the win.

Mike approached me about this time and proposed a 2-way draw, good enough to allow me to win the tournament and good enough to give him a respectable finish. I agreed. The deal was that I would clean up the east, while he cleaned up the west. We were not to interfere in each others sphere of influence except to give token supports.

I broke this agreement right from the start, even though I was not obvious about it. I was able to play off Jack's lack of experience at this point. We arranged a bounce in the Western Med, which we both did.

I also went F Tus-NAf, and pretended that he should have gone F Matl-NAf. He apologized for screwing up, and then that fall I supported myself into the Western Med, moved F Tus-GoL, and A Ven-Pie. There was no subtlety here. Mike finally recognized that I had every intention of going for the win, and started using his armies, which had penetrated deep into French territory, to prop up the French units, blocking me pathway.

In the east, I had not eliminated either Russia or Turkey, but I kept playing them back and forth against each other. They remained about the same, but I kept getting bigger. Eventually, Dan agreed to support me to the win in exchange for survival at his present size of three centers. I accepted, and we started to do away with Rick.

Poor Jack. He made a mistake with his fleet supports, allowing me to force the Mid-Atlantic. Mike totally blew up. He called Jack just about everything he could without using a swear word. He called it the stupidest moves he had ever seen, and that he could not believe that Jack would abandon that good position for the second place finish I had promised Jack. Jack, visibly upset and afraid of admitting that he had just screwed up, said that he had made those moves to make the game more interesting. Whatever the reason, Mike forced Jack into my camp even though he would rather have stayed allied with Mike. I didn't complain, never said that I had not offered Jack a second place finish, and gave Jack all the sympathy I could, beaming with glee on the inside.

We tried to get to fancy, and made little headway against the E/G blockade. Turkey was knocked down to A Sul. And I had set up perfectly for my final stab of France.

I convinced to England to support my F Iri-Matl. He was more than willing, since it was a direct threat to him. Unfortunately, I also told Dan that I was going to stab France. He immediately ran to Mike and told him. He also said that he would stab me that turn. That stab by his three center power stopped me cold. It wasn't so much what he did, but he gave the others hope, and they all jumped on me hard.

After thinking about it for about ten minutes, I finally agreed to a 4-way draw of E/G/I/R. I was at 15 centers, which was enough to give me the points needed to win the tournament. Morgan Gurley had managed a win and a 3-way draw the preceding day, but my having those 15 centers did it.

I think I played a great game. My one mistake was in telling Dan my plans on another part of the board which did not concern him. A very funny thing occurred in this game. Early on, maybe even before we began, somebody was talking about stalemate lines. I made the comment that I had never found one that couldn't be broken. I must admit, I was wrong. After much thought, I discovered that I had a stalemate line set up at the end of this game even though nobody realized it at the time. Mike will probably disagree, but look for yourself. At the end of the last turn (a spring season, I don't remember the year), I would have been at 14 centers and had the following units: Armies Bul, Ser, Bud, Tri, Tyo, Ven, Pie; and Fleets Spa(sc), NAf, Wes, GoL, Con, Aeg. I don't remember all the units for the other side except for Russian F Sev, but it doesn't matter. Sev/Arm was the only place to break through, but they needed an army to do it. A fleet could be easily blocked.

I know I went on about this quite a bit, but I had a lot of fun in these two games. Winning helped, but I actually enjoyed my second game more than my first one. I also proved one thing wrong. After my solo win the first day, everyone kept telling me I would be a target the second day. This was not the case, rather everyone sought me out instead.

What else did I do? I played Kremlin Friday and Saturday night. I enjoyed both games. While I made my run for victory in each game, I fell short both times. I can't remember who won Friday, but they managed it by sending everyone else off to Siberia. Rick Dorsey won Saturday night by having the most amazing luck on health roles, getting three perfectly healthy Party Chiefs in office on three consecutive turns. Sunday night after the official con had ended, we began a six-player Empire Builder game. Just as it was getting interesting, most everybody decided to quit. I was a bit upset, but I did have to get home anyway, so I took off.

This was a great con. I think that it would be able to host a very good DipCon/World DipCon next year, and hope they get the bid. If not, I will still be back. After all, I have been told that everyone will be gunning after me next year.

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