

# THE VOICE OF DOOM

#98

August 7, 1984

Circulation: 116

by BRUX

Thanks very much to Greg Ellis for providing me with another batch of Voice of Doom envelopes. They're great, Greg!

I guess I might as well let you folks know right away that this isn't going to be one of my most pleasant issues. There is some mighty nasty stuff going on around the hobby, and some of it involves me and cannot be ignored any longer.

I have been informed by more than one person that Kathy Byrne is spreading a story that I wrote a nasty letter to her daughter, Francine. For the public record, I wish to state that this story is an absolute and total lie. I have never written a nasty letter to Francine Byrne, or to any of Kathy's children. I am horrified and disgusted that Kathy would say such a thing. Kathy has my permission to make public anything I have ever sent any of her children, regardless of how it is labeled. I will pay her \$50 if she can produce a nasty letter written by me (forgeries don't count, of course) to one of her kids. If this tune sounds familiar, some of you may remember that last year I made a similar offer when she accused me of sending her a letter threatening to have her attacked in every zine in America. That letter didn't exist either. I challenge Kathy to produce these letters.

Ironically, in my 5+ years in the hobby, I've only known of one person who was low enough to try to hurt a child with a nasty letter. I am referring to a letter that was sent to Alex Lord on January 13, 1983. I still have that letter and will produce it for anyone who sends a SASE. It was written by none other than Kathy Byrne. It seems a bit hypocritical to me that Kathy is falsely accusing me of something she has actually done.

And now Kathy can sit back in Kathy's Korner and moan about how Linsey and Walker just won't leave her alone. Well, what am I supposed to do? Let her spread vicious lies about me and not answer them? I don't know who else she has told this to, nor do I know what else she is saying about me. If there is anyone out there who feels I should let her lies go unanswered, I'd like to hear why. And if there's anyone left who believes her and not me, why not ask her to produce these letters? I'll admit it -- I'm disgusted. She's been pulling this sort of stuff for years now.

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The deadline for all games contained herein is August 31, 1984.

The Highfield Affair

If you have been reading certain publications put out by John Caruso and Terry Tallman recently, you may have noticed mention of the fact that I wrote a letter to Bill Highfield's naval commander. I confirm this. I did, indeed, write such a letter.

Before you cast me off into the darkness as a result of what Caruso and Tallman have told the hobby, you might be interested in what they didn't reveal. I refer, of course, to the circumstances surrounding this ugly episode. Caruso and Tallman are both well aware of certain relevant facts that they have been hiding from their readers; and in fact, both of them have implied very strongly that the letter was written for reasons which they knew had nothing to do with the whole affair.

What Caruso Wants You to Believe

John Caruso, discussing this incident in Foot in Mouth #10 (An Eureka Express #24), proclaims that "There is a certain element of 'nut-cases' that take this hobby sooooo serious, that they would actually do something to hurt you, personally, especially if they could not get back at you within the hobby... Really makes you wonder if it is worth it to try and have fun in this hobby. I mean, if you don't do it 'their way', they will get you."

Caruso wants you to believe, then, that I wrote the letter as the result of a hobby dispute. Caruso knows full well that that is false.

What Tallman Wants You to Believe

Terry Tallman, discussing the matter in the July issue of NSWC, tells his readers that "For those of you who never saw Bill's zine, Modern Patriot, it was filled with what could only be called right wing raving that he hoped to pass off with the same effect that Michalski achieves. Unfortunately a young man just coming out of his teens was unable to pull it off... My point here is that while I may have believed him to be a raving loony I nevertheless defend his right to be wrong (in my view). No one was forced to read what Bill wrote..."

Tallman wants you to believe, then, that I wrote the letter as a result of Bill's politics. Tallman knows full well that that is false.

The Truth of the Matter

Starting last summer and continuing for a period of several months, Bill Highfield wrote a series of letters to various hobby members, repeatedly and graphically threatening the lives of certain people. These were not the sort of off-the-cuff threats that any rational person would dismiss as "kidding around", or whatnot. These were very serious threats. I'll give you a few examples.

Last summer Keith Sessler wrote a humorous article in his zine Manifest Destiny, entitled "Letters We'd Like to Receive." The article, clearly a gag item, contained "letters" from various well-known personalities, portraying them in a manner radically different than their real-life personas. George McGovern, for instance, was portrayed as a Republican. And Bill Highfield was portrayed as a communist.

Highfield responded with a letter to Sessler threatening repeatedly to kill him. The letter is reprinted in part at the end of this article, so I won't quote from it now.

Kathy Byrne received a letter from Highfield about his ex-girlfriend Christine, stating that "Every time I see her now, I want to kill her. But, since a murder charge would ruin my naval career, and since that would give her immense pleasure and satisfaction, I'll let her live." That's awfully sweet of him. He'll let her live.

In this same letter, Highfield threatens to come to Albany and "kill Bruce" and (still in reference to me) to "castrate the bastard."

In October, Bill sent Eric Kane an issue of his zine with a message written on the outside cover threatening to kill me.

OK, at this point you might still feel that all of these threats were simply gags, and not to be taken seriously. I must differ, and I probably know Bill better than anyone else in the hobby outside his local group in Rochester. Indeed, I spent a week with him once on vacation. And I'm not the only person who knows Highfield very well and considers him to be both irrational and dangerous.

Bill is by nature a violent person. He is a loner and does not generally indulge in kidding around. He is full of hatred for many different people and groups of people. I feel very strongly that under certain circumstances, he might be capable of carrying out his death threats.

Another person who fits the above description has been in the news quite a bit lately. A loner full of hatred for other people. It seems he told his wife that he was going to "hunt humans" before taking a walk to the local McDonalds...

Despite my very real worries, I did try to use restraint. In the middle of all this I wrote directly to Bill and warned him that his threats constituted a felony. I warned him very clearly that if his actions continued, I would press charges and/or bring the matter to the attention of the Navy. His actions continued, and finally in January I contacted his commander and informed him of what was going on. I did not ask for any action. I told Bill's commander about the death threats, enclosing copies of three letters, and adding that "If you do speak with Midshipman Highfield regarding these letters, I would appreciate it greatly if you would get back to me and let me know if, in your estimation, he seriously intends to carry out any of his threats."

And those are the facts behind this situation. I currently have in my possession all of the letters quoted above.

There are several peripheral points that must be made. First of all, the question may arise as to why I didn't handle this as a normal "hobby feud", but instead went outside of the hobby and took action. Very simply, once people's lives were being threatened, I no longer regarded this as a hobby matter. That Bill and I both happened to be in the same hobby was absolutely incidental to the fact that here was someone repeatedly threatening me and others with death. And it would to this day have remained a private dispute, were it not for Caruso's and Tallman's attempts to make it appear that I turned Bill in as the result of some petty hobby dispute, or because of his politics.

Secondly, it was not my motive to take revenge and get Bill into trouble with the Navy, although of course I was aware that this could very well be the end result of my action. I simply needed to put a stop to Bill's campaign of death threats. Had I been out for revenge, well, I recall a certain letter Bill sent me in October, 1982, in which he stated: "I want to kill Patrick Moynihan (NY Senator, Democrat, Communitistic)! DEATH TO MOYNIHAN! LEHRMAN FOR GOVERNOR! Kill Cuomo!" But the Navy never saw that letter.

Third, despite all of the above, I do not urge anyone to further persecute Bill. He is no longer in the hobby and, I imagine, has done a lot of tossing and turning in this bed he has made for himself. For any hobby member to continue to torment him now would be just plain sadistic, and possibly dangerous. He's a sad case. Let him be.

Fourth, I firmly believe I have acquitted myself of the charge that I would go after someone's career based on a hobby dispute or on political differences. I did what I had to do. I am neither proud of it, nor ashamed of it. It happened. I hope it never has to happen again.

Fifth, I also firmly believe that Terry Tallman and John Caruso both have a lot of explaining to do. Why did they deliberately hide the facts from their readers and cover up the reasons for the act? (If Tallman wishes to argue that the threats should not have been taken seriously, then why the total avoidance of any mention of them?) Why did they even feel that this issue needed to be brought into the hobby press to begin with? Could it be that both of them have been casting about looking for ways to try to discredit me, and this matter was the most incriminating thing they could find (provided that the circumstances were covered up, that is)?

Sixth, in case anyone has any doubts about these death threats, part of one of Highfield's letters is reproduced on the following page.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA!

- FOREVER PROUD
- FOREVER STRONG
- FOREVER FREE!



HE DON'T HATE COMMIES.  
Does a ~~dog~~ Vet hate a  
diseased animal he puts to  
sleep? No. He does so  
for the good of society.  
That's why we should  
kill communists for  
the good of society."  
-Bill

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15 August 1983

Dear Asshole,

I'm going to warn you, once,  
and only once. If you EVER, EVER use  
my name to jeopardize my career  
by forging a letter again I'll kill you.  
Believe it or not, people actually read  
your zine! Any one of them could read that  
and not see your stupid statement at the  
top. My security clearance depends on  
everything I do. If I ever get questioned  
about that gross injustice you call humor,  
you'll be a dead man soon after. Your  
career and life doesn't depend on un-question-  
able loyalty. The slightest doubt can and  
will end my career and your life. I suggest  
that you print a retraction and refrain  
from printing "FAKE" (read meaning FORGED)  
letters about or by me.

I also find it a personal  
insult to be called a communist. I  
fail to see what reason you had for jumping  
down my throat. After all, I have done  
nothing to you! I think you're the commie.  
After all, no good conservative would destroy  
a fellow ~~officer~~ conservative's naval career  
(or try to) nor would he destroy the reputation  
of a fellow conservative!

My personal feelings aside, I  
feel that you are digging a deep hole.

((And the letter goes on like this for two more pages, but you  
get the idea. I rest my case. -- BL))

((To the right is an example of one of Bill Highfield's letters, this one  
sent to Keith Sesler.))

O R I O N

1982Y

GEORGIE PORGY, PUDDIN' AND PIE  
MISSED HIS MOVES AND MADE BRUK CRY...

ROBBIE, SLOBBIE, SAME OLD SONG  
CAME BACK...BUT GOT HIS ORDERS 'WRONG!

Summer 1914

GERMANY: NRR! A Mun r OTB

Fall 1914

ENGLAND (Ansoff): F NWY S RUSSIAN A StP, F IRI-Mid (F NAT S)

FRANCE (Williams): F BRE S A Gas, A GAS S GERMAN A Bur

GERMANY (Wittmond): A BER H (F BAL S), A Kie S A Bar (NSU), A BUR S FRENCH A Gas,  
A RUH S A Bur, F ENG S FRENCH F Bre

ITALY (Howerton): F MID S TURKISH F Spa(nc)-Gas (NSO), F POR S F Mid, F WES S F Mid,  
A MAR-Bur, A PIE-Mar, A MUN S A Mar-Bur, A BOH S A Mun, A Vie-TYO

RUSSIA (Beyerlein): A STP H

TURKEY (Leritka?): NMR! A LVN U, A PRU U, A WAR U, A SIL U, A GAL U, A MOS U, A SEV U,  
F BLA U, F LYO U, A BUL U, F WAF U, F SPA(nc) U

Supply Center Chart:

ENGLAND: Lvp, Lon, Nwy, Swe	4, build 1
FRANCE: Par, Bre	2, even
GERMANY: <del>Myl</del> , Ber, Kie, Den, Hol, Bel, Edi	6, build 1
ITALY: Home, Gre, Tri, Mar, Por, Vie, MUN	9, build 1
RUSSIA: StP	1, even
TURKEY: Home, Bul, Ser, Bud, Rum, Tun, Sev, War, Spa, Mos	12, even

Game Notes: An E/W/G/I/R/T draw has been proposed. Please vote by next deadline.

Thanks to Ed Jedry for the standby orders which turned out not to be needed, since Rob Wittmond has returned. Would Pat Conlon, Box 17014, LSU, Baton Rouge, LA 70893 please submit standby orders for Turkey? Thanks muchly, Pat.

Press:

SVANVIK, NORWAY: It was still early in the afternoon, but the Arctic shadows were lengthening as the relieving troops arrived at the forward trench lines above the river. To the East, on the Russian side, the darkness was already well advanced.

The captain of the guard exchanged formalities with his relief, and stayed to chat for a few minutes before departing.

"Anything new over there?"

"Nothing. We've had patrols on the east bank since dawn. Still trying to make contact. What's the news?"

"They say the Turks marched into Estonia last month. Damned if I understand where the Rooshins can be. Or don't they care about their glorious capital?"

"Oh, I expect that they...say, what goes on there?"

There was a brief commotion off to the right, and then a private came hurrying down the trench. Pressing behind him was a tall man in a green uniform with one arm in a bloody sling.

"Sir!" the private began, but the other man interrupted immediately. "I am Colonel Kuznetsov, of General Danielov's staff," he said hoarsely, in Yorkshire-accented English. "We have a small garrison across the river in Nikel. The lines to Petersburg are still open. I am instructed by General Danielov to ask..."

The Captain was already diving for the field telephone. "Get me Northern Forces Command in Narvik -- NOW! What? Of course, you bloody idiot -- I'll wait!" He turned to the Russian and smiled ironically in the gathering gloom. "Welcome, Colonel," he said. "We have been waiting for you." ((ORION continues next page))

ORION (continued)

BRUX to NORWAY: Nice bit of press. I'm sorry about the earlier screwups with your press, and I'll try to make sure they aren't repeated in the future.

ROM: Large shipments of Munich Beer are now being imported to Italy for distribution among the fleets and armies. Winning battles is thirsty work.

BRUX to ROM: It's going to be thirstier still without your ally! Come back, George!

LONDON to CONSTANTINOPLE: An I/T draw? Why the hell didn't you say so!!

BERLIN to WORLD: Excuse me for the lapse last season. Things like that happen when a game starts losing its interest. I will play this out to the end, though, and I wish my allies and enemies to note that despite the loss of Mun, there is a fallback defensive line! To wit: Nwy, StP, Bal, Ber, Kiel, Ruhr, Bur, Far, Bre, Eng, Iri, Nat. Doubtless this will not discourage my good friend George, who is determined to get what he "deserves" (if I/T is the only reasonable proposal, why don't you propose it, George?) and is probably willing to wait for another NMR, but I'm willing to keep going until we catch up with the present. Tally ho!

BRUX to GERMANY: Suggest you check out the VD Houserules regarding the GM's prerogative of declaring a draw in a stalemated position. This game isn't very likely to make it to 1984, sorry!

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Hobbytalk

As by now you can already tell, this issue is rather messed up. Hobbytalk in the middle of the game reports? Where's the ol' format gone to??

Actually, I must start this off on an apologetic note. There have been problems this month. I've barely had a spare minute till now, what with Joan's visit described elsewhere, a very pleasant visit to Rhode Island to meet Dave Lincoln and his family (who are terrific people, I might add, and I had a marvelous time), and many assorted other non-hobby commitments. Hobbytalk will therefore be quite short this month, and it's going right here where I can fit it. The letter column is shortened too; a number of letters are being held over till next month. I don't like to do this, but I just didn't have lots of time this month. #99 is going to be published on Labor Day weekend, which will help immensely.

More apology. I know full well that much of the material in this issue isn't exactly pleasant. That's unavoidable, given some of the nastiness that's flying around the hobby these days. If you can't stand to read this sort of thing, skip the front page, the Highfield article (fine time to tell you this, I know, I know) and my exchange with Walker; and that'll get you by most of the feuding. At least I won't try to do as certain other zines do and pass all this off as "in fun". It isn't fun, and I know it as well as you do.

There's a lot of unpleasant stuff that I didn't print, too. Tallman has threatened me with some rather nasty stuff which I can answer quite adequately if he goes ahead with it. But I'll let him drop his little bomb first, before discussing it here. The Publisher's Statement on Foot in Mouth has been signed by eight highly regarded hobbyists, with three more wavering, two unwilling to sign because (as they both put it) they "don't want to get onto Caruso's shit list", and still several people unheard from. I'm not going to publish it, at least not this month. I want to be as fair as possible to Caruso under the circumstances, and the Statement will remain unpublished so long as the sort of stuff that has appeared in recent issues of FIM is curtailed. I haven't seen any more nastiness in FIM since the statement went out, so perhaps the problem can be addressed without such drastic measures.

Jim-Bob Burgess has been kind enough to send me a copy of his upcoming subzine in Tallman's zine. Jim-Bob speaks out rather harshly against me regarding the Highfield

Affair, but reading what he says it is clear that he had no knowledge of the death threats. Therefore I find it very hard to take any offense at his criticism, since it was based on what Tallman wrote in the last NSWG. I'll be sending a copy of the Highfield story to Jim-Bob and perhaps a few of Tallman's other readers and then let them decide...

John Boardman, writing in Graustark #495, states that "After a succession of unsatisfactory Custodians, it is a great relief to have her ((Kathy)) in that important post ((BNC))." I am inclined to disagree with John's assessment of Kathy's predecessors. It is true that we've had some real losers in the position of BNC in the past (Cal White comes to mind), but the two who preceded Kathy were in my opinion very good. I'm referring to Lee Kendter Sr. and Don Ditter. Boardman is entitled to his opinion, but I feel that Lee and Don deserve a lot of credit for the job they did, just as (in some ways) Kathy deserves credit.

Greg Ellis has just begun publication of Feuilletonist's Forum, which has to be one of the worst names for a zine I've yet come across. FF will feature a section of Presidential Politics and other games, and discussions of politics. A sample can be had from Greg by sending him a SASE at 700 Rio Grande, Austin, TX 78701. Conrad Minshall, 3702 Farragona Lane, Austin, TX 78727 is looking for reliable players to join his new game in FF. I like his policy of a \$5 NMR deposit -- per NMR! Conrad also promises houserules that are "more complete than most, although certainly not as long as Linsey's." Now there's a man with the right idea! Imitate the experts and you'll flatter 'em, but don't essay to outdo them at their own game, hey? (u)

Politesse has not folded, though Wrobel certainly made it sound as though he was doing so a couple of issues ago. I owe Ed a retraction on one point. I feel that I was wrong to criticize him for printing Walker's "obviously not intended for print" post card. Ed may be a lot of things, but he's not a mind-reader. If you don't want something printed, you should take care to say so, and Rod didn't. Mind you, my other criticisms of Ed on that topic (regarding the "don't print this" letter and the Steve Knight letter) still stand. See my exchange with Ed for more on this.

Apologies are also due to Simon Billenness, first of all because I've been misspelling his name, and secondly because I made a snide remark last month about how I'd been trading with him for several months but received no copies of his zine. In the week after I printed that, I received two enormous copies of Flame in the mail. Chalk up one for the trans-Atlantic postal service! But Flame has been coming out, and what's more it's right up there with some of the other great British zines. Simon's address for the next few weeks is c/o Barbara Passoff, 580 Madison Ave, 1st floor, Albany, NY 12208. Why not drop him a line and see an issue of Flame for yourself? Simon also plans to run a game of "Range War", a variant located on the U.S. Great Plains where the units are not armies and fleets, but rather herds of cattle and gangs of outlaws. It looks crazy. Check it out.

Gary Coughlan, writing in the latest Europa Express, refers to me as "BRUK, BRUK, you ignorant slutt...". I feel that this charge needs to be answered. This sort of thing has no place in the hobby press. How would you like to be called an "ignorant slut", Gary? I absolutely assure you that the charge is false. I am not an ignorant slut, and Gary had no business saying that. The fact of the matter is that I'm a very highly educated slut. So there!

Thirty Miles of Bad Road #26 contains a gamestart with seven of the hobby's most famous babies; Samantha Corbin, Joshua Berch, Christopher Brown, James Wall, and so on. It'll be interesting to see how all these little 'uns play with their blocks. Luedi also printed a very funny (and accurate) artist's conception of the next VD.

Latest Whitstonia included a clever parody of English openings, by Bob Olsen. (Sigh) that's really all I've time for this month, folks. I promise that both the Hobbytalk and letter columns will be back in full bloom next month. And, I'd like to plead with you one more time for articles for my annish. There's enough in already for a fairly good issue, but anything you can contribute will be a help. I need your contributions soon.

NO RUM FOR QUEEN VICTORIA TONIGHT -- SHE'LL HAVE TO DRINK PENSA-COLA!

Spring 1912

- AUSTRIA (Lucas): A ROM S FRENCH F Tyr-Nap, A Tyo-Ven (d; r Tri, Boh, OTB),  
A VIEN-APU, A Tri-BUD (A VIE S)
- ENGLAND (Glaspey): F Den-KIE, F Bal-BER, F Bot-BAL, A Gal-Rum (d; r Ukr, Boh, OTB),  
A Ukr-SEV (A MOS S), A LVN H, A RUM S FRENCH A Boh-Mun, F NTH H,  
F Wes-TYR
- FRANCE (Burd): A Boh-MUN, A PIE S GERMAN A Mun-Tyo, A TUS S A Pie, F Tyr-NAP,  
F LYO S ENGLISH F Wes-Tyr, F TIN-Ion
- GERMANY (Howerton): A Mun-TYO, A SIL S ENGLISH A Boh (OTM), A WAR S ENGLISH A Ukr (OTM)
- TURKEY (Sweeney): F ION-APU, F AEG-Ion (F GRE S), F Nap-Tyr (ann), F Ank-BLA,  
A Bud-GAL (A RUM S), A Sev-Ukr (d; r Arm, OTB), A Con-BUL

Game Notes: The E/T and G/T draw proposals both failed. (Under the VD Houserules, NVR = no for both of those proposals.)

Press:

- CON to VIE: There goes Sev!
- CON to LON: There goes Bud! You'd take it indeed!
- LONDON to WARSAW: Den-Kie schön!
- BRUX to LONDON: Yuk, yuk. That was kinda cute...

AUSTRIA: The sound of tiptosing was deafening. The child queen was in a rage. The pauses between her tirades were filled with expectant silence. Soon after the latest press release arrived from Constantinople, all hell broke loose. Most of the staff had conveniently disappeared and those whose jobs required they stay in attendance were on pins and needles. She had been carrying on and yelling so loud she could be heard in the fields outside the castle, but she was at the occasional epithet stage now.

For such a young monarch, she had a rich collection of epithets. Her father had been a master as well, though somewhat prone to mixing things up. One famous statement of his was "We must put our shoulders to the wheel and push the ship of state up Reichstrasse." And on the day before he died, when the Sultan asked whether he wanted to continue their alliance, he replied, "Include us out." It was no wonder that relations with Turkey were strained. Yet the child queen's rages went beyond the message that was delivered. She had long felt deep bitterness over the way the Sultan was mistreating her father. Now that he was at peace, she could put things right.

"So I'm a fool?" The monarch stopped her pacing, and looked around at her staff. Their postures were twisted and distorted from the strain she was creating. "This isn't helping is it?", she said to no one in particular.

"Minister of State!" she ordered, "Dispatch letters to my relatives in England, France, and Germany immediately. Thank them for their condolences over the death of my father, your emperor. Make the letters bridge the gap that has formed between us during the years of my father's madness. Yes use these words, temporary madness." She thought to herself, "The Sultan will soon learn that he can't succeed without dealing with me. He should have talked to me as soon as I came on the scene."

HOBBY SCANDAL TIME: Joan Extrom likes Kentucky Fried Chicken!!! Full exposé on page 43...



SOMEONE'S GONNA BE KLEIMAN THE WALLS OVER THIS...

Summer 1907

FRANCE: F Ion r EAS

RUSSIA: A StP r OTB

Fall 1907

AUSTRIA (Knight): A Bud-SER (A TRI S), A Vie-BUD

FRANCE (Hare): F Eas-ION (F NAP S), F Smy-Aeg (d; r Eas, OTB), F Lyo-TYR (F TUN S),  
F Wes-MID, A Pie-TUS, A Bel-LON (F ENG C)

GERMANY (Heintzman): F Hlg-NTH (F NWY S), A Den-KIE, F Bal-SWE, A Kie-HOL, A Sll-GAL,  
F Bot-STP(sc), A StP-MOS (A WAR S), A VEN S A APU, A APU S A Ven

RUSSIA (Kleiman): A Mos-LVN, A Ser-ALB, A Rum-UKR, F Bul(sc)-CON, F NAT-NWG

TURKEY (Reilly): F Con-SMY (A SYR S, F AEG S), A Gre-BUL, F Ion-GRE

Supply Center Charts:

AUSTRIA: Home, SER	4, build 1
FRANCE: Home, Spa, For, Lvp, Tun, Bel, Nap, LON	10, build 1
GERMANY: Home, Hol, Den, Ven, Edi, Rom, Nwy, Swe, MOS, WAR, STP	13, build 2
RUSSIA: <del>StP</del> , <del>Wes</del> , <del>Mid</del> , Sev, Rum, <del>Bot</del> , CON	3, remove 2
TURKEY: <del>Con</del> , Smy, Ank, Bul, Gre	4, remove 1

Game Notes: The concession to Germany and the F/G draw both failed. Russia wants it publicized that he voted in favor of the concession to Germany and against the F/G draw.

Currently proposed are a concession to Germany, an F/G draw, and an A/R/T draw. Please vote on all of these by next deadline.

Press:

GERMANY to BOARD: Sorry, but the mind has run dry...temporarily, I hope!

REILLY to BRUK: This press war ain't over yet BRUK!

REILLY to RIGEL: It was late in the evening, and your humble narrator was desperately endeavoring to create an effective counterattack in the press wars. It had been many seasons since any of his stories had appeared in the pages of The Voice of Doom... since his last great effort -- "Press Wars" -- which he had foolishly allowed Cupcake Knight to claim as his own.

"Now, what do I do?" I spoke softly to the cat beside me. "Do I tell them the truth? Tell them how 'Press Wars', like all of the other great RIGEL press releases, was in fact mine?"

Whiskers gazed up at me sympathetically as I stroked him gently. He almost seemed to understand...

"It was a mistake, my friend. They will never believe me now. Even though Knight has admitted it was mine, they will credit it to him."

But now, Whiskers was no longer listening. He had abruptly darted from beneath my hand, and was now moving with all possible speed toward the closet. He charged into it, then a moment later, peeked out, and I was startled to see the absolute terror in his gaze.

And then the doorbell rang. Instantly I knew: Kleiman the Cruel had arrived.

"Stay quiet, little one, and stay hidden," I said. "I'll take care of your former master."

Whiskers ducked back into the closet, as I rose and moved toward the door. The  
(RIGEL continues next page)

RIGEL (continued)

bell rang again, insisently. "Just a moment!" I called, preparing myself for the act.

I opened the door, and sure enough, there stood Dave Kleiman.

"Dave! What a surprise!"

"Stow it, Rich! You know why I'm here."

I was caught off guard by his rudeness, but shrugged it off and invited him in. This apparently calmed him somewhat, as he stepped in and spoke again more civilly.

"Rich, we need to have a talk."

"Oh?" I said innocently, leading him to the living room. "What about?"

"About Whiskers, of course."

"Oh..." I said, glancing away, trying to look sorrowful.

"Rich, I've met your demands. I honored my commitments to you and Steve. I apologized to you publicly...but you still haven't returned Whiskers."

I gulped, moving my hands nervously in my lap, still refusing to meet his gaze.

"I know," I said quietly. "I'm sorry..."

He paused, then, "You're sorry? W...what do you mean?"

I looked up at him now, with as mournful an expression as I could, and said, "Whiskers is dead."

He stared at me for several long moments.

"D...dead?"

I nodded. "Yes. It was an accident. He...a dog...chased him into the road... and..."

Dave didn't say a word. He just sat staring at his hands...the hands he had used to torture the innocent creature. Sad, are you? Sad that you'll never get your hands on him again...

"I'm sorry, Dave. I never meant...I mean..."

But then he looked up, glanced about, then looked straight at me, and said:

"You're lying."

"What?"

"I said, 'You're lying.' I can smell her...only Whiskers has a smell like that."

"I...but Dave, it was just the other day...he...I..."

"Don't lie to me, Rich. I know you too well. You treacherous scum...where is he?!"

"'Treacherous scum', is it?! And who is it who invaded whose territory this last turn?!"

"I was just covering it for you!" He stood up, fists clenched. "Now you give Whiskers back or I'll..."

"Never!! Never will I return that poor creature to..."

But I never finished what was bound to be a moving and dramatic performance, for at that very moment I felt a terrible pain on the back of my head, and I fell into darkness.

I awoke to the sound of an engine coming to life, and I stumbled to the window just in time to see Dave and Lori racing off.

Whiskers, of course, was gone.

(Next time: A Visit with Dave Kleiman.)

BRUX: It was late in the evening of August 3, and your humble gamesmaster, diligent editor that he is, was trying to think of something to fill the bottom of the page. He thought and thought, even if only to come up with some stupid joke, but he couldn't think of anything. Deep in reverie, he began to stroke his chin. And suddenly, it came to him. Stroking his chin consciously now, he knew the answer. "There you are, little droogs," he sighed. "Whiskers..."

((RIGEL continues next page))

RIGEL (continued)

Bosnia and Hercegovina, Austria: The Archduke's Southern Command Post ((via FRANCE)):

The shock staggers me. I slump back in the brittle wooden chair as my head begins to spin and thick, chewy lumps of phlegm catch in my throat.

"All... all of them?" I manage to cough.

The Archduke nods solemnly. "All of them."

"The Turks, too...?"

"And the Germans, and the Italians as well, as far as we can determine." Cupcake pours me a cup of water from the ceramic pitcher on the heavy oak table. He then turns to the paneless window and stares off to what I know are Russian military emplacements. We're silent for a few moments, the only sound a faint whistle of the wind rippling through cracks in the tower's roof above us, and my only partially-successful attempts to clear the ropery mucous from my throat. Then:

"What about your troops? And..." The gruesome thought races from my brain to my lips, but the 'Duke is already ahead of me.

"No, neither your troops nor mine seem to be...that way. Why, we don't know. From what my scientific and medical staffs have determined, though, neither of our militaries appear to contain...them." His voice trails off.

I sigh in relief (a blubbery gurgle, actually), then venture, "What about the English?"

Cupcake turns away from the window. "We don't know," he says, staring at me. My scientists tell me they'd need a sample of British soldiers to test. They figured out about the Russians, Turks, and Italians from corpses we've recovered. Same with Austrians and Frenchmen. Unfortunately, we've not had any contact with the Brits and so have nothing to run tests on." He takes a long draw from his cup as I finally hazard to stand and walk about the bare room. I feel very alone here in this stone tower-cum-command post. While the ceiling vaults high over our heads, the smallness of the room and the paucity of windows give it a close and constricting feeling. This aloneness is not alleviated by the knowledge that hundreds of troops, Russian and Austrian, surround the countryside about us, poised opposite each other across the Austrian-Serbian border. In fact, my loneliness is magnified within me by the knowledge that below me, a genius -- a mad, power-addled genius -- languishes in a holding cell.

"Perhaps he," I say, looking down, "could tell you."

"No...no," answers the Archduke. "He is very stubborn. He's refused to tell us anything. We've only been able to put together what we have so far from small parts of interrogations and occasional ramblings in his sleep, or when under heavy sedation. But he's extremely crafty; even under truth-serums, his 'sermonettes', as the doctors have begun to call them, are complexly coded. Much of what we have been able to figure out has been guesswork."

"What is this, then, about the doctors running tests on corpses? You say they're now able to determine..." My query is cut-off by a sharp rap at the door. At the Archduke's instructions, a soldier enters and begins:

"Sir, message from Station 2. Russian mobilization has begun," I spring to the window, "all along our border. Troop build-up has been confirmed. Major Hensa anticipates the Russian attack to begin within 24 hours."

The confident young Archduke acts quickly and decisively. "Inform all units to begin Condition Yellow preparations. Channel and

((RIGEL continues next page))

clear all incoming communications through Lt. Schweibel; list priority one only. Tell Generals Offenstadt and Hinkelstein to meet me in the briefing room at 2200 hours."

The soldier snaps a salute and turns to leave.

"And Sargent," finishes the 'Duke, "send up the prisoner, with two guards. Manacled. Search him carefully first."

Cupcake walks over next to me before the window, and we look out at the movement of Russian soldiers in the distance. "It is time, my friend, to see what Mr. Sweeny can do."

My trip to Bosnia, the 'Duke's summer palace, through the French-occupied Italian alps had been relatively uneventful (and infinitely more comfortable, Bob would later assure me, than his Prussian escort to the grand Austrian capital, through German territory), though perhaps it only seems that way to me now. I'd had much to ponder along the way of that fateful path, which I had been certain would change the course of the entire world's history. Little had I realized the magnitude...but be still, garrulous tongue; we must not rush ahead of ourselves. Let it simply be said that the Archduke's invitation had left me with a curious feeling of exhilaration, in spite of the serious, almost grave, tone of his missive. 'Finally,' I'd thought, 'this mystery unravels and I find myself closer to the Great Truth!'

I'd never had cause to meet Archduke Cupcake before the summer of 1907. I'd found him pleasantly young in appearance, cherub-cheeked and firm of frame. Warm and effusive, his sharp wit and bone-dry sense of humour had been honed, no doubt, by his familiarity with obscure literary works and an almost fanatical passion for soccer. Nor had his elegance of style and rich sophistication excluded the pleasures of the Epicurean; oh, no. Immediately having sensed my need for nourishment after a long day's journey, he had led me into a large banquet hall, in which tables lay resplendent with magnificent varieties of exotic dishes from the Far East, the likes of which I'd never seen before. There had been platters laden with bounteous helpings of strange and wonderful fowl which had been simmered in rare and precious spices, game prepared in peculiar ways with sweet and sour and fiery hot sauces, and fish whose scent and taste the Western World had never experienced before and would likely never sense outside China or my gracious host's residence.

Sated beyond contentment with the flavour and aroma of this wondrous feast, and supplemented with copious quantities of rare liquors and wines (and a beer), the atmosphere fairly sizzled with an undercurrent of excitement tinged with not a little anxiety; thus, the conversation eventually drifted around to the mysterious matters of the present.

"Please, tell me what you know of our friend, Mr. Sweeney," 'Cake had asked, reclining comfortably back into the sumptuous chair. I'd sipped the spiced wine and begun to recount the long and curious story of the Now-Not-So-Hated Bob, beginning with his assassination of my clone during France's conquest of England, and continuing through the negotiations with von Heintzman for his transferral to German custody, his cloning and subsequent secret transfer to his Archdukeness' possession, while the clone was forwarded, bomb in place, to the perfidious Russian Czar through German channels. 'Cake had nodded along with my recantation of the events, occasionally asking questions of clarification. It hadn't been until I'd mentioned my beloved Lorique and

RIGEL (continued)

the incredibly strange dwarf, and their disappearance many months ago, that 'Cake's ears had perked up and he'd seemed surprised.

"What do you know of this dwarf?" I'd asked.

"Not much, actually," the 'Duke had replied. "As a matter of fact, your information is the latest we have on the little bugger. My agents had tracked him around Europe for the past several years without too much difficulty. We do know that he was a German agent up until about 2 years ago, when suddenly he vanished -- my contacts in Germany lost him. About that time we noticed a new -- how can I put it -- feeling...an energy, about the German presence. It was most noticeable, apparently, throughout their northern fleets, where my intelligence network is very thin and least effective."

He had paused, as though sifting around for a hidden piece of information.

"Hmmm...It was shortly after this that we picked up a flurry of intranational communications among the Germans. There seemed to be some kind of confusion among the German leaders. Volumes of transmissions between Berlin and the German flagship in the north. We were never able to make any sense of it so we let it drop. You were never aware of any of this?"

"No, I wasn't. Frankly, I'd been so concerned with our southern campaign against the Sultan that I hadn't thought too much about the north. That was von Heintzman's zone of control. It wasn't until that repugnant little midget and Lorique disappeared that I even thought of anything but the war in the south." I'd glumly swirled the Goblet of heady liquid, staring into its burgundy depths. 'Cake had nodded in consolation, then smiled.

"'Lorique'," he'd mused. "Such an obvious cover name...."

"I'm sorry?" I'd said, looking up.

"Lorique -- Lori K. A rather obvious cover...name...." The 'Duke's smile had faded and his voice trailed off as he'd seen my eyes widen in sudden, unpleasant, revelation.

"You mean...," I'd started.

He had nodded, eyes downcast, in acknowledgement. "The Czar's wife."

I had staggered up from the chair. "Mon Dieu! I've been SCROD!" I'd exclaimed, with greater fluency in the former language.

Immediately, though, had I faltered back, and collapsed in the seat as a man who'd been belted. The 'Duke had said nothing for several long moments as I'd ruminated my embarrassing betrayal. Finally, sensing my need to be alone, he had said,

"My friend, come. I shall escort you to your chambers. Your loss is great, I know, and you will need rest to help ameliorate the pain, as well as prepare you for tomorrow's council. For tomorrow the outcome of this wretched war and indeed, future of our world, hangs in balance, and you and I, my friend, hold the scales."

He had led me to my chambers and bid me goodnight; and though I felt infinitely tired, I was unable to sleep, and lay awake until dawn.

The pounding at my door woke me from a deep, deep sleep, and I lay struggling through the haze of just-waking to gain coherency.

"Your...Presidentialness?" came the tentative call, followed by muffled coughs and whispers. Then another short knock.

"Your Presidentiality?" called a second voice, followed by giggling. I paused, trying to make some sense of my surroundings.

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RIGEL (continued)

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"Hey, you!" the first voice came again, quickly followed by laughter and loud shushings.

As I finally forced myself to full consciousness and crawled from the canopied bed, I could hear the slightly-subdued whisperings of the Austrian guards.

"Ve can't call de President uff France 'hey, you', you Kindskopf. Ve must have re-" I jerked open the door with a gruff "What is it?" The uniformed soldiers stood hang-jawed and stunned, terror creeping into their Aryan-blue eyes.

"His...uh...Archduke..." hoarsely stammered the first.

"Er...he, the Archduke, that is,...ah...would like your...um," cleverly continued the second.

"Self! Yes, that's it, yourSELF, when you're ready...uh...at the forward command post...Sir," finished the first one.

"Very well. Five minutes and you'll take me there." I closed the door, took two steps and heard the relieved sounds of none-too-successfully stifled laughs. Jesus, Cupcake was right; good help is hard to find.

Cupcake was waiting for me in the small room atop the well-preserved 13th-century castle which served as Austria-Hungary's command post in the southern province of Bosnia and Hercegovina, just north of Serbia. After a light meal (I was still loudly digesting the previous night's feast), the Austrian leader unfurled a lovely German-language map of Europe and positioned the Continent's military forces in their current locations and strengths. We discussed general strategy and, at greater length, various tactics that might be employed by our fleets and armies.

"You realize," he said, looking up at me across the map, "that much of this could be inconsequential, depending on the potency of Bob's power." And so it began; my initiation into a realm of reality so unreal that even now I sometimes doubt that it actually could have happened.

"I'm afraid," I answered, "that I don't understand at all this 'power' that Bob supposedly possesses. I've only heard from Nelson that Bob had been sought by the Russians, who were to strike some sort of deal with an underground Turkish terrorist organization. This was when your people and the Turks were allied against Russia, of course. Though I demanded countless times," whined for, actually, I thought to myself, "an explanation of what was going on, he refused to tell me. Later on he did tell me that a switch had been engineered; that the Czar would be sent a bomb-loaded Bob clone while the real Bob would be delivered to you. All this came about right after we'd signed the agreement with you and decided that the traitorous Czar must be taken out. Soon after, mobilization against Russia began and all of Germany's attention has been focused in that theatre."

"You are correct. We have had fairly consistent communication with the Germans, but they seem to have lost interest in our friend Mr. Sweeney. It is just as well, in light of the present course of events. With the Germans as strong as they are now, and with the growing evil which has apparently seeped into the German High Command, their participation in the Sweeney Operation could spell disaster for us; probably continued death and destruction and possibly German rule over the entire world. I doubt we could stop them."

I whistled in awe. "Bob's power is THAT great?"

"We believe so. If what we now know is any indication, his potential strength could be greater than anything we can imagine."

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"What do you know?" I asked, my voice a whisper.

"As I said last night," he began, leaning back in his chair, "we have only gained glimpses into what he can do, glimpses gleaned from intensive interrogations, truth-serums, beatings, a Great Dane..."

"A Great Dane?"

"A brutal, ugly affair. Anyway, through these measures we were able to put together bits and pieces -- a line here, a word there. Never anything substantial at one time. At any rate...or maybe I should ask you first: do you recall, when he was under French protection, certain babblings of his? Apparent gibberish. Stuff like, 'Solo Victories for \$30' and 'What is Tiara's real identity?'"

I considered a moment. "Only vaguely," I began slowly. "Of course, after his assassination of my clone, I never saw him face-to-face again. We decided it would be better if he thought he'd actually killed me -- keep him pacified, easier to control. But I do remember French guards assigns to watch him saying that he was really whacko, mumbling weird stuff...."

"Yeah, well we believe that's the key to unlocking his power. Certain phrases and questions acting as code words which unleash this power."

"But what is this power?" I could feel the excitement building within me, but mixed with a hint of uncertainty and fear. 'Cake paused several moments before speaking. When he did, his voice edged with tight control.

"You are obviously aware of the existence of clones, or automatons as they are often called. And possibly you've also heard that it was the British that created -- create them?" I nodded impatiently. Of course.

His voice suddenly dropped. "Tell me: do you have any idea how many of these automatons exist in the world?"

I shook my head slowly. "No...I suppose only a few. Maybe half a dozen. I had one. One of Bob was sent to Russia...."

"No!" 'Cake curtly cuts me off. "No. We believe that there are more. Many more. In numbers ranging in the hundreds of thousands! And we believe..." he stops, breathes deeply and continues, "...and we believe that they have infiltrated the military forces of the world. Ty, we think that all of those Russian soldiers you see out that window, and all the Russian soldiers in the Russian army, are English-built clones!"

It is with understandable apprehension, then, that I stand here while the Austrian guards bring the prisoner: Prime Minister of England Robert Sweeney, a.k.a. The Hated Bob. The Dreaded Bob now seems more appropriate. That the man who controls half of Europe's military forces through some incomprehensible energy should come before us so that we might bend that power to our own benefit seems nothing less than...than...well, nothing less than a violation of the house rules.

"I imagine that the others will surrender fairly quickly, once they learn the control we have over them," I say to 'Cake as I walk over to where he is poring over the strategic map of Europe which is covered with the wooden blocks of Europe's military might.

"You know," replies 'Cake somewhat distractedly, "we may still have a problem. There are still outside powers with which we may have to reckon."

"But you said that Brux had been appeased; that there'd be no

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problem of interference." I sit down across the table from the thoughtful 'Duke.

He glances up, then returns his attention to the map. "No, no. Not from Brux. Brux is quixotic and without regard for the accepted Order of the Orders of the Universe. But there are greater powers, greater even than Brux."

My jaw drops in astonishment. "You mean..."

'Cake nods. "The Dipimaster. He is wise and fair, and his dictums are accepted with reverence by most of the other Powers-That-Be."

My eyes drop to the floor. "What do you think our chances are?" I become less and less certain of myself and our actions. 'Cake's reply is aborted by the guards' rapping at the door. The door opens and a manacled English Prime Minister is led into the chamber. The Archduke's steady face remains passive, but my body convulses in stunned revulsion and I let out a hoarse, breathy gasp; for The Dreaded Bob is clad in a thick, bright, almost shocking orange velour jumpsuit! In summer, no less! My God, has this madman no sense of decency, of couth, of propriety?! I am outraged to the point of doing physical violence, but Cupcake speaks before I can act.

"He's clean?" Addressing the guards.

"Yes, Sir. We found an UZI in one of his false teeth and a Mirage fighter in the heel of his shoe, but that was it."

"Bob," says 'Cake pejoratively, "getting a little sloppy, aren't we?" Bob smiles but says nothing. The Archduke gestures for Bob to take a seat at the map-covered table and dismisses the guards.

"Hello, Bob," I say pointedly to the prisoner. He takes notice of me for the first time as he seats himself, and his eyes grow wide in recognition.

"You! You...live! But I killed you, years ago! I shot you between your bleedin' eyes! And yet you live! God DAMN it! Is this some kind of trick?"

"Why, no, Bob," I smirk, relishing his fear and loathing. "No trick. It's simply that you happened to blow away a clone; one of your own creations, by the way."

"Damn," he mutters.

"Well," says Cupcake, joining us at the conference table, "you two will have plenty of time later to get reacquainted. In the meantime, we've got business to attend to." Cupcake's voice is pleasant; only the slightest twitch of his boyish right cheek betrays his concern for the events of the next couple of hours.

"Of course," Bob nods agreeably. "Feel free to ask me anything you wish. I think, though, that you will get no further information from me. I will tell you nothing more."

"Well, we'll see. Actually, we want to ask you about something we're already a little familiar with."

At this point I must interject an important comment. Last night we'd discussed specifically how and where to use this weapon we believed we'd soon possess. While I was in favour of directing our efforts directly against the Sultan and his apparently disorganized regime (as I believed that is where the greatest immediate gains could be made), the 'Duke's sound reasoning won out in favour of a Russian target. He pointed out that this could only be a trial effort, as we had no idea of the scope or depth of the weapon's capabilities, assuming we could tap them. Thus, with Russian forces spread wide across their homeland, rather than working in tight tactical union,

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RIGEL (continued)

it would probably be easier to direct those forces, instead of the concentrated Turks. But there was another reason. With the German juggernaut rolling unobstructed across Russian territory, it was imperative to somehow slow it down. For in spite of the close alliance between the French, Austrians and Germans, based on the common goals of world peace, harmony, freedom, and all that other garbage, there had crept into the relations the slightest hint of mistrust, of fear that perhaps some inexplicable evil had wormed its way into the German leadership, eating away at the moral fabric which had previously encouraged a shared love for all things good and right. And so it was agreed that White Russia would be the target of the most powerful weapon in the world.

Cupcake continues:

"We believe we've narrowed down the categories, Bob. We believe they are 'Stabs', 'Neutral Centers', and 'Famous Quotations'." Bob sits easily in his chair, the smile playing casually on his flush lips. He nods ever so slightly.

Cupcake's demeanor has been friendly, relaxed up to this point. Suddenly, he swoops menacingly over the map, faced eye-to-eye with the startled prisoner.

"'Stabs' for \$10, Bob." He fairly spits out the words. "Succeeded in allying with all of Europe temporarily before stabbing 3 major powers in one season."

The Prime Minister's eyes grow wide, and his lower lip suddenly begins to twitch violently, grotesquely. Sweat bursts from large pores across his brow and neck, spraying Cupcake's face and tunic. His voice, a mortified whisper, cracks repeatedly as he slurs forth the answer: "What is 'France'? 'Stabs' for \$20, please."

I stand transfixed by the exchange, aware of an energy entering the chamber, an electricity charging the air about us. I gulp loudly as Cupcake looks up at me.

"That wasn't it, but I think we're close -- watch the map."

My eyes shift to a point between the combatants, to the map with the representative slivers of wood, their gay paint a violent contrast to the dark exchange taking place.

"'Stabs' for \$20: 'The most successful and expected stab of the war'," intones Cupcake.

My eyes can't help but lift from the map at the sound of gurgling. The Austrian leader stands sternly immobile before the drooling Prime Minister. Bob's blood-swollen eyes bug savagely from their sockets and his mouth is brutally contorted in a grimace inhuman. The electricity (or whatever it is) charging the room has intensified dramatically, and Bob's hair has begun to rise on his head. His voice, a demonic croak, is barely comprehensible.

"What is 'Germany's stab of Russia in 1906'?"

There is a sharp 'Crack!' and white and blue sparks spatter from Bob's supercharged hair. And...

"My...My GOD!" I whisper. I've caught a small blast of smoke out of the corner of my eye, floating slowly from the map like a cottony grey mushroom. It emanates from a point just south of the Czarist city of St. Petersburg. But I should say the former Czarist city, for the Russian army has vanished and the province is now dominated by black. German black.

"It's...gone. Disappeared. It had -- " I breathe deeply, struggling to maintain control. "It had easy flight into Finland, but...it's gone." My eyes shift from the map to the outrageously garbed

((RIGEL continues next page))



Origins 84 / DipCon XVII Report

by Ben Schilling

Being totally out of my mind (you knew that, right?), I actually decided to go to the Dallas Origins, including DipCon. I was not thrilled with the way that the overall convention was run. The DFW Gamesters show the general fascist mentality of the outside world that is, thankfully, fairly rare in the gaming hobby. On Thursday afternoon, they had several hundred people standing out in the midday heat (well over 90° F) while they admitted five at a time to the air conditioned hall. Not good at all. Did you see their maps? They implied that the exhibit hall was close to the hotels. It was, provided that you think six or seven miles is close.

The Diplomacy events started on Friday afternoon with the Gunboat tournament. A separate report on that will appear elsewhere ((following this article)). Later that evening there was a "1939" tournament. "1939" is a variant based on the post World War I map with the deletion of Austria and Turkey as powers. Because of the power vacuum in the East, Italy seemed to do well in all the games. Due to the five-player set-up, most of the games broke into a three-on-two game. It was fun once, but I don't think I'd do it again. Mike Conner did a good job of running the tournament and we all learned that it's really Sev-a-stop-ol...

After this tournament several of the people in attendance attempted to get to a nearby Pizza Hut. The attempt failed rather miserably. We split into several car loads and I ended up in Bob Olsen's car with Nancy Irwin and James Woodson as the other passengers. We followed the directions given us, but ended up in a very seedy section of town. We then spent quite a bit of time driving through several sections of Dallas, including a fairly high-class neighborhood. We did find one Pizza Hut, but nobody else had found that one, so we drove on. We eventually ended up at a Denny's at about midnight. It was an interesting ride with several of the absent hobby members being discussed...

The next day saw the first round of the major event of the con, the Diplomacy tournament. For some reason, it was divided into two sessions. That was an idea which should be dropped as it really caused problems with the second session and the DipCon Society meeting. Pete Gaughan was supposed to run it, but ran into car trouble on his way, so Mike Conner set up the first session's boards. Most of the boards ended up with a mix of postal players and locals. I found myself on a board with four locals, David Baker, and Nancy Irwin. Unfortunately, it turned out that three of the four locals were from the same gaming group. Those three drew England, Italy and Turkey, the other local drew Austria, David drew Russia, Nancy got France, and I ended up with Germany. By the end of 1902 it was apparent that the game had broken into a four-on-three gunboat session. The four locals would disappear, only to return at the end of the negotiations with their orders written. The three of us did manage to hang on against the four of them, finally attempting to break up the alliance by proposing an A/T draw. Surprise, Italy agreed to this draw, because he couldn't return the next day.

The DipCon Society meeting took place that night. In the absence of all the committee members, Mike Conner ran the meeting. There were three amendments which had been proposed in advance and one from the floor. The first and fourth amendments, clarifying the voting rights of attendees and dropping the requirement that DipCon be held with a major gaming convention, were passed while the other two, dealing with proxy voting and a rather blatant attempt to gerrymander the regions were both rather soundly defeated. Both of these were generally thought to be an attempt to steal DipCon for the East Coast Clique. The next order of business was the site selection for 1985. There were bids, one from Los Angeles presented by Dave Manual, one from San Diego presented by Conrad Minshall, and one from Seattle presented by Pete Gaughan. The Seattle bid won. This was followed by the election of officers for the next year. The five people nominated were Terry Tallman, Pete Gaughan, Rod Walker, Ben Schilling, and Larry Peery. The order shown is the order of

finish. Of course, only Pete And I were there and thus eligible for election... That was the last order of business.

The second round of the tournament was held on Sunday morning. Unfortunately, due to the problems of too many wiped out local players, who didn't bother to return, there were only enough players for five boards, down from thirteen the day before. Hopefully, this will not be a problem at next year's DipCon. After all, Seattle is roughly twice as far from Chicago, Detroit and New York as Dallas is and roughly the same distance from Los Angeles. It is closer to San Francisco. In any case, the tournament was won by Jeff Key, of the "Key Opening".

### Gunboat Diplomacy Tournament, DipCon XVII

The Gunboat Diplomacy Tournament at DipCon XVII was not as well attended as that at DipCon XVI. To some extent that was due to two factors: the time of the event, on Friday afternoon rather than Friday night, and the event description in the convention flyer. Who wrote that totally inaccurate promo anyway?

There were twenty-one players this year as opposed to forty-nine last year. Unlike last year everyone returned for the second round. The tournament went fairly smoothly, however, there were a few minor problems. Unlike last year, we did not have a room to ourselves. This meant that we had a Risk tournament in the back of the room. Due to the poor description, several of the players were unsure of the variant rules, requiring longer explanations than would have been the case otherwise. Finally there were the usual players who did not know the rules to the standard Diplomacy game. The final standings are below:

<u>Player</u>	<u>First</u>	<u>Second</u>	<u>Total</u>
Scott Rubin	T-12	t-12	24
Mark Luedi	B-8	G-11	19
Jack Brawner	R-5	R-12	17
J.R. (Bob) Baker	F-9	F-6	15
Doug Ingram	T-5	F-8	13
Dave Kleiman	R-12	F-0	12
Matt Fleming	A-0	A-11	11
Nancy Irwin	T-10	A-1	11
Jared Levy	R-2	E-9	11
Chris White	E-7	T-4	11
Peter Mintline	A-8	I-2	10
David Baker	F-5	I-4	9
Doug McInroy	G-7	E-2	9
Pete Gaughan	A-0	F-7	7
Richard Dawson	E-4	E-2	6
Mark Harris	G-2	G-4	6
David Wrobel	G-1	I-4	5
Oscar Kirzner	I-1	G-3	4
Terrel McDavid	F-4	A-0	4
Guy Hall	I-0	T-2	2
Lanny Myers	I-0	R-0	0

((Thanks much for providing us with the above reports from DipCon XVII, Ben, and six free issues for doing it in VD. Somebody ought to ask those four locals in your game whether they came to play Diplomacy or to play Gunboat. I depise that sort of tactic.

I will always vigorously oppose efforts by a select group of hobbyists to corner the market on DipCons. Only the East Coast Clique seems to have that sort of selfish mentality, though.))

The Gossip Column

From James Wall:

BRUX,

Stephen Wilcox, in his excellent subzine The Little Dipper, told me to vote in the "Ed Wrobel's Favorite Zine" Poll. Since this is of such obvious importance to the hobby, I've decided to take the time to vote. Will take the four offers and explain my vote.

Erehwon. Last place. Claimed to exemplify 60s press. If true, who truly cares? I see no problem with cutting press if size problems exist but to deny a player a proper share of his press space (I'm talking one 2-line space) because he didn't meditate 30 minutes smacks of discrimination to me. No player could truly enjoy this policy -- even Ed Wrobel.

Bersaglieri. I do not get this one so obviously it can't be Ed Wrobel's favorite zine. Aren't I arrogant?

Voice of Doom. Hnummm. I bet you're #2, not #1. Why? Call it intuition. Plus read my Raging Main endorsement.

Raging Main. James showed up at MadCon. BRUX spent umpteen dollars putting out 50-page zines rather than travel. I relate more to this priority, so obviously this is Ed Wrobel's favorite zine!

You can thank Wilcox for inspiring all this drivel.

((Thank him? If he were a subbar here he'd be the first Doonie to have issues subtracted from his sub! Besides, this entry arrived too late to count in the balloting, luckily, since you told James Woodson you were voting for VD.)

From Ben Schilling (7/3/84):

Dear BRUX,

So, how's the hobby's intrepid cricket hunter these days? You should have made Origins. I really felt that the postal hobby, especially the East Coast Clique, decided to take their marbles home and stay away when the (illegal (no major con as required)) MaryCon bid was voted down last year. The rather blatant attempt to steal DipCon through charter amendments further convinces me of that. If this continues somebody is going to make me angry, and I guarantee them that they will not appreciate that. Let's be reasonable, DipCon belongs to everybody, not just one segment of the hobby. The local players were there, but the postal players weren't.

I hope that you can use the enclosed pictures, identified on the backs, for your issue #100. ((He means for the Dippy Photo Album.)) The only question I have about that is: How are you going to top NMR! 50? If you don't "see" that zine, #50 was a thirty-minute cassette tape...

Other information of notes: Caruso (the cat) is dead. That means there'll be another Hobby Mascot vote before too long in LSD. I figured that, as the instigator of that whole mess, you'd like to have that tidbit. I think that Doodah the wonder slug would probably be a good choice.

I'm enclosing my impressions of DipCon and a report on this year's Gunboat tournament. See you in Seattle next year?

((Possible, but doubtful. Thanks for the Con report and the photos. I didn't have pictures of most of the people whose photos you sent.

I agree that some members of the East Coast Clique are behaving very selfishly in their attempts to steal DipCon. I will oppose those efforts, despite my geographic location. As a matter of record, I voted for Dallas last year, not MaryCon, and I'm proud of it. I don't think, however, that you can fault people for not travelling to Dallas -- that's a long haul for some of us.

Trouble, my ex-dog, will always be the hobby's Real Mascot.))

From Ed Wrobel (7/12/84):

Dear "frick face,"

What will I do with all my time when I no longer have to respond to the lies, distortions and inaccuracies you print about me in Voice of Doom?

The Knight letter stated that only a single paragraph was not-for-print. I did not print that paragraph.

The Walker post-card included absolutely no indication that it might be not-for-print. After publication Walker wrote me a real peach of a not-for-printer, full of name-calling and vague threats, stating that the post card had "obviously" been not-for-print.

The full text of the "Don't print this" comment was "Don't print this! Or I'll get into a feud with Bruce!" Since I did not reveal the writer's name you can't feud with him/her and he/she didn't care about it. Only you seem to care because the comments were critical of you. On the other hand, you pulled an unwilling Dave Kleiman into the mess when you listed him among your supporters.

Curiously enough, only you and Berch missed the joke about the Politesse "fold" (or is that so curious after all?) and only you requested a refund. Even curiously is the fact that you never sent any money, only copies of letters you had received. Hence, my little nose-twister about the doubles and triples. How surprised I was to find a dollar fall out of VD! So, I suppose we can do one of several things at this point. (I'll enumerate them so that you can keep all this straight in your records.)

- (1) I send you the dollar back and you retract all the nasty things you've written about me.
- (2) You send me another dollar and I retract all the truth I've written about you as a hobby service. (And thus forfeit any claims to future DipKon funds.)
- (3) We trade month-to-month like reasonable people.
- (4) Call the whole thing off.
- (5) Each boycott KaneKon because the other will be there.
- (6) Continue to bicker as we have done in the past about nearly everything.
- (7) Make no agreement whatsoever but continue to exchange copies as a matter of courtest and mutual respect.

Whatever we decide, let's not tell anybody that you agreed to support me for next year's DMMA in exchange for my silence. (I loved the way you slipped my name into that list with Berch, Coughlan, et. al.! A nice subtle start to getting people accustomed to the idea!)

In paralogism, your simulacrum,  
With affection,  
Ed

((Yes, yes, the Knight letter stated that only a single paragraph was not for print. The following paragraph then said something to the effect of "Don't print the above paragraph as I don't want it made public right now that I agree with you on this matter." That wasn't the exact wording -- I don't have it handy -- but that's the basic idea. And you printed the follow-up paragraph, thereby revealing the content of the not-for-print material. Very clever, Ed. Especially for someone who claims he doesn't like to have technicalities used against him. As for the "Don't print this" letter, it didn't say "You may print this if you do so anonymously." It said "Don't print this." Under those circumstances you were wrong to print it, period.

I didn't pull Dave Kleiman into any mess. I simply stated that he would have ruled as I did on your double orders, a stance he has since changed. My statement was accurate at the time, based on the information I had. You act as though I was trying to draft him (and others) as an ally in the dispute, when in fact all I was doing was questioning why you were never able to answer the fact that a number of other highly-respected GMs concurred with my ruling. Incidentally, how do you reconcile that

fact with your stance that my ruling was necessarily incorrect? You have never even attempted to answer this question. Why is Bruce Linsey necessarily such a poor GM for ruling as he did when many other respected GMs would rule the same way? I'm still waiting for your reply.

OK, so now I learn that you weren't serious about all those multiple issues. Fine. So I still have 8 issues coming (you've sent me one since I last wrote to you), and you still have sub credit to VD #103 -- #105 if you choose to return the dollar. As for who says what about whom, we can discuss this important matter at KaneKon. Perhaps I should continue to publicize your policy on subscriptions and on the printing of not-for-print material as a "hobby service", eh? And you of course can continue to display the sort of politesse you've demonstrated in recent months in your zine. So your number 6 looks like the best course of action.

By the way, since when do "reasonable people" necessarily trade their zines on a month-to-month basis?))

From Melinda Holley (7/6/84):

Dear BRUX,

I don't particularly like the idea of a Houserule Inspector. The Houserules are there for any player to read. Most GMs (if not all) give a new player a copy of the Houserules when the game openings are confirmed. If a player doesn't like a particular set of HRs, then don't play. If enough people don't play (and let it be known why), the GM will eventually be forced to change them.

Chuff's article on the Olympics missed a certain point. The "official sponsors" pay for that title. If they didn't, the taxpayers would be picking up the tab. Look at the shape the World's Fair is in. One reason the Olympic Committee is down so hard on fraud is the amount of money the sponsors have paid for the privilege of using the trademark.

So what is Russia's boycotting? Big deal. The only reason they're making such a stink about it is to draw attention away from something else. Sakharov perhaps. Arms control maybe. Chernenko's health, possibly. Who knows? Let 'em stay away. It'll hurt them more than us. I believe this boycott is just a dry run for 1988...when the games will be held in Seoul, South Korea...a country the USSR does not recognize.

((Oh, goody. That must mean that they don't plan to nuke us for at least the next four years, anyway. Look at the bright side... Yeah, I agree that their motives are less benevolent than they'd like the world to believe too, and I think they'll suffer more for it in the long run than will we.

Ah, but you missed the point of the Hobby Houserule Inspector. The purpose is not to tell people where to play, or some such, but rather simply to determine which games are being run in a "regular" fashion. Although, as I mentioned somewhere last issue, the whole thing was meant facetiously anyway.))

From Jerry Lucas (7/5/84):

Dear Bruce,

Enjoyed #96 very much. I especially enjoyed Ig Lew's letter and your MaryCon report -- it's a rare talent you have, Bruce, to talk on yourself in such a humorous manner (chirp). I read to your point on pg. 33 by July 4 -- do I get a prize -- is it a cricket?

Trivial Pursuit question of the future. S&L: "Where were the final Olympics held and in what year?"

((Doomie Lucas is the recipient of a brand-new smoke detector. Oh, never mind -- that ain't cricket!))

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From Rod Walker (7/14/84):

Dear Bruce:

VD has been greatly improved by your quick reviews of zines received. I hope you always keep that feature. I am sorry you chose only the negative items which appeared in the latest Erehwon, since I also praised Caruso's DIP project and had other things which seem to me to be more worthy of notice. By the way, I did not so much criticize Kathy Byrne for viciousness and so on...I chastized her for being able to dish it out royally in KK, but being unable to take it in Erehwon (she cancelled her subscription because she just couldn't take having criticism or fun poked at her and people she feels are her friends).

Re: the Boardman Numbers. The "irregular" label is in no way "an official statement that the game was an out-and-out variant, or that the GM acted grossly improperly in running the game". Where did you get such an outlandish idea? This ex-BNC is right now telling you that you are dead wrong, the current BNC would tell you the same thing, and every ex-BNC still active in the hobby would agree. Many games are considered "irregular" even though they are perfectly proper games well-run by their GMs. So-called "local" games, for instance; and so-called "telephone" games, which are sometimes coeval with the first category. A game in which the same player plays two different positions at two different times is now (but not in the early years of the hobby) considered "irregular". I see nothing particularly wrong with that being done (using the player twice)...however, even if you don't like it (and I know you don't), you will have to admit that such a game is neither a variant nor conducted with gross impropriety. "Irregular" applies to games which have peculiar circumstances which are neither variant situations nor gross improprieties...three players in the same area code, two relatives in the same game, things like that. (The latter could be a gross impropriety, depending on circumstances, but it is not necessarily so, and the BNC does not make any determination in that respect.) If a game is an "out-and-out variant", it gets a Miller Number, not a BN, so the BNC never gets involved there, anyway. I would say that if a game starts out regular and becomes a variant (this has never happened), the BN would be withdrawn and a MN assigned by Lee Kendter (this would be by mutual BNC-MNC agreement, and you do trust Lee's judgement, don't you?). The "irregular" label is just a flyer to alert Ratingsmasters that some condition exists which is considered by some past or present rating system as disqualifying from being rated. That's all. This is no cause for hysteria. Really.

Insofar as your comments on Kathy personally are concerned: I have seen no evidence that she could or would use the BNC position "as a weapon to be used against people (she) didn't like personally". Were she ever to do something like that, I would say that the hobby as a whole would have to deal with whatever the problem was at the time. However, generally speaking, Kathy's policy with respect to any questionable or problem case has been to seek advice about it from one or more ex-BNCs (and possibly also some other very knowledgeable person). If a question of irregularity arose in one of your games, Kathy would certainly have checked with Don, Lee, Doug, and/or myself on the matter before making a decision. What are you going to say if Kathy declares one of your games irregular and Don agrees with her? Frankly, Bruce, you've set up a straw man here. Your case only stands if the definition of "irregular" is as you've stated it, and that definition is wholly wrong.

((Excuse me for interrupting here, but this has to be answered. You are missing a number of major points, Rod. You say that there are conditions for "irregularity" other than the two I listed. Fine -- I concede that point. But you know good and well that the threat Kathy made regarding my games had nothing to do with that sort of thing, which pretty much renders your whole second paragraph irrelevant. An irregular ruling in a VD game would be an official statement that the game was run improperly, since I'm not running any variants, local games, phone games, or whatever. And let's not be so all-so-fired gentle with Kathy for a change, all right? The fact that she's the BNC does not mean that she is "above the law" in this hobby. In my



firmly held opinion, no BNC has the right to call up one of the hobby's GMs in a violent rage, and threaten to declare all of that GM's games irregular for reasons having nothing to do with the games. There. I said it and I'm glad. For once, Kathy is just going to have to take responsibility for her own actions, and either back down or face the music. If indeed the threat was made in the heat of anger (which of course it was), then she should by now have withdrawn it -- but she hasn't.

I like your statement that Kathy would "certainly" check with another party before ruling on the regularity of one of my games. I wish I had some assurance that it were true. Probably she would. But I now want that assurance -- I am entitled to it after the threat she made. To this end, I have twice written to Kathy and very politely asked her to promise me that she would delegate any such decision if it ever came up. If I were the BNC, I would automatically disqualify myself from ruling on games run by certain people with whom I don't get along. However -- Kathy has (as of this typing) not even given me that assurance. And that to me is a very telling point. Under the prevailing hobby tradition, I am at the mercy of Kathy Byrne in this regard whether I want to be or not -- and I most emphatically do not.

An interesting parallel can be drawn here with the fact that as a GM, I have to let Kathy have the final say if she wants it; and the fact that players in my games have to let me have the final say if I want it. But, and this is a very major point, my players have chosen to play under me, under those conditions. I do not and did not choose to GM "under" Kathy under those conditions -- I had no choice because of the monolithic power structure in this area of the hobby. GM under Kathy's thumb, or stop running games period. I vigorously question that entire system, and if you think I would not be questioning it were Don Ditter still the BNC, then you're damn right.))

The custodial project business. This of course would have to get into a long discussion of what these things are and how and why they exist, but basically one can say that custodianships exist to serve the interests/needs of the hobby as a whole rather than the private concerns of an individual. A zine is primarily a private vehicle, which DW is not. It was established, among other things, to serve as zine-of-record for hobby stats, and is required to present as much hobby news as possible, coverage of DipCon, and so on; plus print articles and such on Diplomacy and related subjects only (any other editor can ruminate on any subject he wants; the DW editor cannot).

Please note also: back in 1979, through a long process of discussion the NADF (now defunct) was set up as a peer organization for Custodians only, as a vehicle for resolving such problems as disputed successions and whatnot. Obviously the first question was to define what the Custodianships were. You will recall that in 1979 Jerry Jones was Editor of DW, and that then there was no sign that he would ever need a successor (much less that this would be me), so I had no vested interest in the matter. At that time, there were in fact only five universally recognized Custodianships...the BNC, the MNC, the head of the orphan service, the North American Variant Bank...and Diplomacy World. The list of suggested/probable/possible Custodianships was much longer, but none of the others was considered by all the other Custodians as such, and each other named function drew at least some doubt or dissent. (This is the first time, to my knowledge, that the question of what is, or is not, a Custodianship had ever been raised. Only the five functions I named were considered Custodianships without question.) It seems to me that unless you can show that there has been some significant change since 1979, this fact alone is definitive.

Furthermore, your contention really arises from the notion that a zine cannot ipso facto be a Custodianship. I dispute that. You consider the BNC a Custodian. Yet the primary expression of the Custodianship is a zine, Everything. Indeed, without the publication of Everything, the other BNC function, the assignment of game numbers, becomes meaningless. Everything the BNC does is defined in terms of the production of an ultimate product...a zine. Unlike your usual zine editor, the BNC acts within certain very definitely circumscribed limits, and so does the DW Editor. The

Job of the BNC is a little more mechanical and involves a little less latitude, perhaps, but the two positions are otherwise very similar.

With respect to concessions and draws, I do not believe that a unanimous vote should ever be required. But a straight majority by number of players is an open invitation to votes that establish a draw where a player is just about to win, or a concession to a player when the game is stalemated or about to stalemate. So the size of each player needs to be taken into account. My original approach to that problem was to require that the players voting "yes" had to have a certain number of centers between them, but that didn't seem entirely satisfactory. Hence my current rule on concessions, which is in fact simply another way to establish a requirement for a majority vote. I should, and would, have the same rule for draws; however, the current rule arose out of some choices given to players in the DW Demo Game, and it is simply easier for me to run all my games under identical rules, without worrying about applying this rule to that game and that rule to this game and all that. Your example ((my "x" just stuttered, sorry)) of a 2-center (or 1-center) player having such amazingly advanced perspicacity as opposed to any other player in the game strikes me as being just as far-fetched as having 5 simultaneous 2-center powers. I don't mind a "what-if" if there's some reasonable probability to it. But a "what-if" which is manufactured out of thin air seems pointless.

How does one deal with the sort of hate and bigotry that is written all over John Pack's letter? Obviously a belief in God and an understanding of God are two different things, as John demonstrates so well. He believes, but he does not comprehend.

((Thereafter follow three sickeningly religious paragraphs about the Bible. Rod, I'm really sorry; VD is not going to serve as a forum for that stuff. I realize that both you and John Pack think you read into the Bible justifications for your points of view, and you could argue about your various quotes, passages and definitions till eternity, but you aren't going to do it in VD.))

John's argument about "degenerate society" is such an old chestnut...but the old jokes are best, aren't they? "Degenerate society" is invariably the argument of someone who wants to come along and regiment you out of your mind. Lenin talked about the degeneracy of Russian society, and Hitler talked about the degeneracy of German society, and Qaddafi talked about the degeneracy of Libyan society, and... You can bet your bottom dollar that people who talk about "degeneracy" always have Gulags and Dachaus in the backs of their minds, because when such people come to power that's invariably what they do.

This is an intensely vital problem. The argument of "degeneracy" inevitably precedes the proposal of repression. Our society has problems precisely because we now have the capacity to become truly free and are headed (however slowly and painfully) in that direction. A change that fundamental, even as a potential, is bound to create problems. However, the potential is very largely unrealized even now, primarily because the basic underpinnings are not in place...((and a bit more excised Bibletalk...))

I agree with John, by the way, that the erosion of the nuclear family as a unit of society is a very serious matter and is having some very bad side effects. It remains to be seen, however, whether the solution is a revival of the institution, or finding a substitute for it, or combination of those approaches. The function of the nuclear family and the ding an sich of the family can obviously be achieved without the institution itself, and society...free society...may move in that direction.

John's "social failure" theory of homosexuality is a nice juvenile fantasy, but hardly in agreement with the facts. It simply ignores all that is now known in the fields of developmental psychology and developmental physiology. Although some people who class themselves homosexuals are in fact responding to a neurosis (or possibly even a psychosis), for most of us the homosexual "preference" is set genetically or

hormonally in utero. It is no more "non-normal" than left-handedness. Left-handedness, by the way, used to be thought of as a sign of "degeneracy", too; did you know that? There are always people out there who love to hate and will use any excuse.

Finally, John, a belief in God does not "prohibit" personal toleration of homosexuality; the belief requires the toleration. And it requires more than toleration. It requires agape. (Look it up in your N.T. Greek dictionary.)

((You'll have to forgive me for omitting the more rabidly religious parts of your letter, Rod. But on the homosexuality issue itself, you're right on, of course. Anyone who thinks that homosexuality is somehow not normal is living in the Drak Ages.

Regarding whether a concession vote should be unanimous: I think we'll just have to agree that both viewpoints are reasonable and it's a matter of taste. I'm secure in the belief that mine is the majority view on the matter...which as you may correctly point out doesn't make your view wrong.

On draw votes, you are wrong. You ignored my (very common) scenario of a one-or-two-center power who forms part of a stalemate line. I'm glad you changed that rule, because there's no way that such a country should be voted out of a draw against his will.

On my Erehwon comments last issue; why should I bother to mention something as mundane as the fact that you plugged Caruso's DIP package? So have many other people. The fact is that your criticisms of Caruso and Byrne were much more "newsworthy" items than the plug. I suppose this goes back to the old maxim that most news is bad news, or something like that.

As I said last issue, this business about custodianships is pretty much a matter of semantics. So DW was founded for a specific purpose and must follow specific guidelines. No big deal. I don't really feel strongly one way or the other, so if you want to call it a "custodial project", I won't object any more. Just so long as you don't try to use that label as an excuse to take money from people who aren't subbers to it.

I've a few brief comments to add to my earlier ones regarding the situation with Kathy. Look, I know it'd be great if everybody was nice and quiet and never criticized the ENG, and always played gently with her because she's got a hard job to do, and all that. I realize that mere GMs such as me aren't supposed to attack these sacred cows, and that some people are likely to view my words as disruptive. But in this case, that's just too bad. In my opinion Kathy has far overstepped the bounds of her position in threatening me, and I have absolutely no intention of just sitting back and taking it -- not where my games are concerned. If I'm the one being disruptive by strongly protesting her tactics, then that's just the way it's going to have to be. I refuse to operate under her dictatorship, real or imagined.))

((Oops, almost forgot to print the addendum Rod enclosed with his letter, so here's part of it, anyway...))

COA is folding? How do you know? (Not that I'm questioning, but I've not heard from Arnawoodian in months...)

Re: Rod Walker Award. This was really weak on nominations this year. Larry plans to do something about that. Most of the nominations he got (5 of the 7) were from me. I figured I didn't have to nominate everybody that needed nominating, since supposedly many other people were also going to nominate. I hope it'll be better next year. I forgot to nominate Del Grande's "DipWarz", alas. Larry's attitude is that there was plenty of opportunity to nominate things...why the complaints now, when the barn door is shut? I agree, but I also believe that more could have been done to encourage nominations. Apparently this year most people thought that George was going to do it.

((I've heard from a few sources that Coat of Arms announced its fold several months

ago. I don't know if the fold has occurred yet.

I feel very strongly neutral about the Rod Walker Award. One of the problems with Peery's awards in general is that he doesn't give the hobby enough time to get in nominations and get in votes. In a postal hobby, months are needed for this sort of thing, not just a few weeks.

Another problem with the RWA is that it suffers from the same fault as the Whitestonia player poll: articles which are read by more people are simply going to get more votes even if they're inferior to less widely-read items. I've made this same criticism of the player poll: players in a lot of games must necessarily have a big edge over players only in one or two, because they have been exposed to more opponents. That's part of the reason that I regard both of the above-mentioned projects as being of highly questionable validity.))

From Bob Sacks:

Dear BRUX,

I am informed that you have accused Kathy Byrne, the BNC, of corruption. If the BNC is corrupt, then I am obligated to take action. Please send me your proofs or information as soon as possible, preferably before the end of the month so appropriate action can be taken at the General Meeting at Atlanticon.

((Your source has misinformed you. I have merely related the details of a conversation which took place between the BNC and me. I did not say that Kathy's threat to me constituted corruption. If people think it does, that's their business, My opinion on the matter is at this point private.

I do appreciate your obvious concern about this matter, Bob; but if I were to actually file a complaint of BNC corruption, I'd probably feel obligated to do it through someone important in the hobby, such as Rod Walker. Thanks though.

By the way, please let me know if you'd like to become a Doemie.))

From Duck Williams (7/15/84):

Dear BRUX,

Having just finished reading VD #97 in its entirety (as an English major -- senior level -- I have a tendency to read things as a contextual whole... I'll do that with VD too, even if it means doing it in installments) and enjoyed most of it.

While I normally like to jump into things with both feet, I believe I'll hold off a bit with VD. Probably out of respect for your rhetorical skills and semantic gymnastics. As time goes on I'll become more and more at home with you and Voice of Doom and will probably be among the doomiest Doemies you have. (Betcha can't wait, eh?)

In the meantime, I'd like to say thanks for printing the correction about Fiat Bellum!. (I see Steve mentioned it also...) As he said, it was a minor point; but I felt that a significant number of your subbers would probably be unaware of me and FB! and wanted to set it straight. No big deal.

Thank you, too, for the welcome to the legion of the ~~damned~~ doomed -- despite my close association with various and sundry "other" sorts of hobbyists. Who, me? Y'mean Langley, right? Yeah, I know, not your top level brass, but dammit, someone's got to befriend those old people, y'know?

((I sponse! (w) Say, if you're an English major, how do you explain away the first sentence of your letter? Seriously, welcome aboard (again). You shall from now on in VD be referred to as "Duck" to distinguish you from the real Don Williams, just as I differentiate between Ronald Brown and Ron Brown, the former a Canadian Doemie and the latter Californian. Fair enough?))

From Pete Birks (7/9/84):

Dear Bruce,

Only just received VD 93 (March 20th!). The major cause of this seems to be that it fell apart in the U.S. postal system, only to be re-wrapped in a neat polythene bag and re-dispatched at a rate of knots (unfortunately, in this case, a very slow rate of knots).

As such, any comments will be months out of date. Just thought that you wouldn't mind a letter from across the pond, anyway.

The habit of "editing" letters was started by Rob Chapman in his zine Putty Riff, and it rapidly spread throughout the British hobby. Prior to that letters were printed verbatim as they usually are in American zines. Personally, I have no objection to being edited because I prefer reading zines where letters are edited to topics. (Actually, on reflection, there were other zines which edited prior to Putty Riff, but I think Rob started the hobby-wide trend, so to speak.)

Your point that a well-thought-out letter loses its feeling of completeness when chopped up is valid. When I get such letters I often print them in one fell swoop. More often, however, a letter benefits from a bit of rejigging, and the letter column as a whole benefits. I agree with you that cutting into letters in the middle of sentences, or even paragraphs ((and to that we could add even between paragraphs)) is extremely rude (as is having one's correct spelling altered to an incorrect one, but let that pass), but I suspect this is a different point.

I adore the arguments between you and Eric Kane over GMing "styles". You are perfectly welcome to your style, although I doubt whether I would like the kind of player it would attract, and I think Richard Sharp, for one, would be firmly on your side, and would embrace your house rules -- properly edited to eliminate your verbosity -- with glee. In my experience, however, such rules have and will continue to deter certain novices who may, in time, have come to appreciate their efficacy, but will in the meantime have left the hobby in disgust at what they, and I, call "rules lawyers". Nevertheless, I agree that your system is best for experienced players who (a) know what's going on and (b) thus deserve whatever happens to them if they make any kind of mistake. Where the problem arises, of course, is when you have a "mix" of experienced foxes and novice lambs.

What's nice to see, however, is your emphasis at the bottom of page 2 that Eric is a fine friend. I guessed as much, but it's amazing how people misinterpret things. As you may know, one Matt Quartermain has been doing such "misinterpreting" over here.

I notice that your reliable turnaround and strict rules are heavily popular with players (47 people waiting to fill 24 positions as of VD 93). The slow turnaround of Greatest Hits may have contributed to a fall-off in the number of people wishing to play Dip in these hallowed pages, although I suspect that my decreasing interest in GMing the game may also be a contributory factor (by contrast, I am rediscovering an interest in variants -- isn't it strange how cyclical these interests can be? For me, the cycle is extremely slow, six or seven years or more. For others, it can be as short as four or five months. Could this be the basis of a psychoanalytical breakdown of the drop-out?).

Obscure standby procedures. I once standby GMed a game from which I had resigned, but still had a unit standing in civil disorder. (By way of a sideline, this also produced the loony position of a Russian force of F Bla and A Arm being supported by the supply centres Liverpool and Edinburgh. I use this example as the ultimate refutation to anyone who ever talks of Diplomacy in terms of being a simulation.)

Is the "Pete Ansoff" on your standby list the "Pete Ansoff" of old? I only ask because the name seems so familiar, yet VD is a relatively "new" zine (yes, I know what you're going to say -- but anything started after 1978 is new in my book, Sunshine).

I was sifting through some old zines the other day (my mother is moving, and so the forty-odd feet of zines which have folded are being moved to Turney Road, although

where they will be put I don't know) and the names which appeared brought back many memories. Jerry Doumelle was far more active than I recalled. The whole California and San Diego "scene" (the word seems apposite) had a very different feel from that which I receive from present-day U.S. zines. Costaguana and Saguenay and, of course, the legendary K.35 (short for I can't remember what, but it was very long and in German) all showed Conrad von Metzke at his best, and that was a level which, I think, we all still hope to reach. Interestingly, these were all ditto-reproduced zines in the same size as VD, and were much thinner. The Quarto size zine never really took hold in Britain, although Courier is in that size (with 15-pitch type) and Der Krieg was. Foolscap and (now) A4 were always dominant. The present rage is A3 reduced to A4, although I suppose these continental measuring styles might have you Americans confused.

(Just in case you, or your readers, don't know -- A1 is massive, A2 is half massive. A3 is big, but reducible on photocopy to half size, which is A4, the size of most European zines, including GH. Thence comes A5 (the size of many of our reduced zines), and the small A6. If you took an A1 piece of paper and folded it in half 5 times, you would get an A6 piece of paper, so long as you always folded the longest side in half. Easy, huh? (Boring too, I know.) )

Well, time calls. Final thoughts on VD are:

- (a) it's an excellent zine which reflects your astounding commitment to the hobby.
- (b) you achieve size by encouraging much press which lots of people (including me!) don't understand, which is not redeemed by the quality of the writing. Better a smaller issue with just good writing than a big one with lots of garbage.
- (c) ditto suits you.
- (d) keep up the good work.
- (e) washington up against the wall.

((Hey, pretty decent letter for an Englishman! Nah, just joshing.

The press in VD 93 was the best press I've ever printed. If you don't think the quality of the writing in "Press Wars" and the "Black Forest" press was extremely high, I'll wager you didn't read them.

You're right; the discussion on type sizes was incredibly boring.

That's the same Pete Ansoff you knew, all right. He's quite a hobby fossil by now, but still stays active here and in some other zines.

I knew that your copy of VD 93 was going to be late, since it was returned to me in the mail and I taped it back shut (the envelope was largely shredded) and resent it. Sorry to hear that it wound up in a doggy bag.

Actually, VD's GMing style is very well suited to most novices. Dozens of novices have played here, many of them in their first game, and the vast majority have been quite pleased, I assure you. There's also a fringe benefit to having houserules as extensive as mine, illustrated by a comment George Leritte, then a novice, made to me many years ago. Shortly after he started playing in the FIREBALL game here, he remarked to me that my houserules were useful to him simply because they told him a lot about postal Diplomacy games in general -- he learned something about the way the hobby is run just from reading the VD houserules. I was flattered, and George is still playing here nearly five years later. So that's a hidden benefit. And while it's true that an occasional novice slips up, it doesn't happen any more often with them than it does with so-called "experienced foxes". And as Bob Olsen once put it, these people don't have to leave the hobby. They can go on to good careers writing about the VD Houserules in other zines. Many have.

Eric Kane and I love to argue about our different philosophies of GMing, and we've been good friends for a long time. I enjoy the arguments in part because I always seem to get the better of him. "Oh no, Mr. Bruce, please don't squash me with another massive dose of your logic! Noooooooooooooo!..."

Um, you won't understand that unless you have "Saturday Night Live" in Great Britain...))

From Michael Lee:

Bruce,

Thanks for the sample of Voice of Doom. I enjoyed it very much, especially the section of what someone says and what they really mean -- that was inspired. I would be honored to have a mutual sub; however, I feel that The Concert of Europe is shamefully slender compared to your behemoth. It isn't often that I receive a novella in the mail for free...

It was nice of Joan to mention my journal to you. I've heard a great deal about you and am looking forward to seeing first hand if you live up to your myth (or should I say myths) -- almost everyone has a different story. Joan's however, seems by far the most reliable based on this sample of VD.

Here's a question -- can I look forward to having each issue of my journal reviewed in the pages of VD as other publishers do? "Golly Wally, have I hit the big time." "Yeah Beav, but now you've got to make each issue count." "Oh no!"

Anyhow, the zine (TCOE) might need a brief introduction. Its goal is to be pretentious and arch. I'm not soliciting plugs because I only really want about twenty (maybe fewer) new subscribers; otherwise I'll have to give up the color maps and covers. I won't turn anyone away intentionally but I'm being careful so it doesn't grow too fast. As it is the circulation is at twenty-three. Perfecto!

As for an introduction of myself I'd say that I'm a music student at the University of Oregon. I play contrabass. I love Diplomacy (I have for ten years). I have no pets. I like Coke more than Pepsi, McDonalds more than Burger King, and the Blue Jays more than the Tigers. I'm occasionally superstitious and have brown hair (more or less). Enough of this! I mention these things only because they matter and I'm interesting in learning similar signifiaca about you.

By all means enter the Bad Poetry contest and I'll see you (well, write to you) at a later date (probably July 28th)...

((Michael publishes the new zine The Concert of Europe from his abode at 3480 Danna Ct., Eugene, OR 97405. Since he has asked me not to plug him, I won't mention that I found the issues I've seen so far pretty interesting and well worth a look. I won't mention the multi-colored maps he uses nor the literary background he seems to have. I won't mention that he'd probably send you a sample for a SASE.

Well, I hope you find that I live up to the myths about me, whatever they are. Since you were at LeperCon, you got to hear both Joan's and Tallman's opinions of me. The most amazing thing is perhaps the fact that they were talking about the same person. (w) Joan invited me to come to Oregon for a week next summer or fall, so if I do I'll want to meet you then.

If you want to continue receiving mentions in my Hobbytalk column, you'll have to pay your \$5.00 Hobbytalk fee like all the other publishers in the hobby do. Otherwise I'll ignore you and nobody will ever think about you again. Fork it over.

As for my likes and dislikes: I don't fiddle around with Minor League teams like the Blue Jays and Tigers. I'm a Dodger fan. And you should be too -- we all know that Oregon is merely a hotbed of jealousy for the Good Life in California, right? Coke is better than Pepsi, but the difference is by and large political. McDonalds is cheaper than Burger King and often has better service, but Burger King has better food per se and is better for avoiding getting shot to death. Dippy is my favorite game, and animals are my favorite kind of dog. I despise superstition and consequently don't believe in horseshoes, four-leaf clovers, or god. And why on earth is all this stuff important, anyway?

Lotsa luck with Concert (which is a much better abbreviation than TCOE). We are mutually subbing.))

From Don Del Grande (7/14/84):

BRUK:

Are you sure about those Runestone Poll results? I seem to remember back in the early 1980s about a fake result list where Life of Monty finished second -- when the real results came out, LOM finished down low. Since then, I've been wary of high results -- especially ones which give LOM the biggest point increase over last year (1.58, and I think Thirty Miles of Bad Road was second with 1.33) and passing 5 of last year's top ten (and 23 sines overall). But what I'm really glad about is that my name wasn't at the bottom of the GM Poll. (One possible reason is that I haven't run a game since the last deadline for last year's poll, so I told Randolph that nobody was eligible to vote for me...).

Did you ever get the "Phyllis Dumps Woody" issue of LOM? (It was the one after the yellow-covered issue with the bad printing, caused by a change from Kodak to Xerox copiers -- I'm back to Kodak.) It reprinted the first two pages of the Foot in Mouth that was in the yellow issue. ((Yes, I did get it.))

Politesses are doubles and triples?

Look, I don't mind that you signed up for a game in Cathy's Ramblings -- it was just an effect of the shock after I read about it. It's about as rare as seeing me in a game start. And speaking of money -- you never did explain how you can afford all of these things (170-page VDs, Doomie Shakes) on a programmer's salary. What banks have you robbed? Maybe you won one of those sweepstakes?

I think I'll try something new this time: THIRD RICH TO BE A STANZIORIGINA TERRIBLES WIFIRE FIGHTTYS BATTLE OF THE EAST IS REDESCENTON CHANCELLORS VIETINATO OPERATIONOLYMANASSAGINCOUREMAGE VICTORY IN THE PACIFRIGATRAVELLEMPIRESNIPIPEREMAGE VICTORY IN THE PACIFIC -- 500 games (well, 29) in about 3 lines. Saves space, time and effort that way (easier to delete).

Haven't you heard the news? Tretick isn't Oaklyn -- he's switched to Eckloff.

Another potential hobbyist -- J.A.F. Brown. (Al Pearson is making a "semi-comeback" in Envoy, from what I've seen.) I assume that Fothergill is Ann Brown's maiden name -- I've heard stories about people who give their children dual last names like this, only to have the father's mother (and occasionally, the father) refer to their grandchildren exclusively by the father's last name.

Keep those Hobbytalk pages coming! (How else can people like me learn what ~~that~~ ~~is~~ ~~going~~ ~~into~~ ~~other~~ ~~zines~~ ~~we~~ ~~don't~~ ~~get~~? Besides, it beats the ~~that~~ ~~goes~~ ~~into~~ LOM...)

((Well, we'll have a better Hobbytalk column next month.

I think your string of game names was pretty clever, you sneaky little thing you. But you do know that you named "Victory in the Pacific" twice, don't you?

I'm not sure now that Politesses are multiple -- Ed tells me that this was all a joke, so I'll believe him, I guess.

Congratulations on your fine Poll finish!))

From Ken Hager (7/15/84):

Dear Bruce,

I just wanted to let you know that I don't plan to resub at this time. My primary area of interest in the hobby is the game-playing which seems to be an area in which VD places minimal emphasis. Best of luck to you.

((OK, thanks for dropping a card and letting me know. It's appreciated. And good luck to you.))

IMPORTANT NOTE: On page 46, already dittoed, I gave August 24 as the deadline for the Doomie of the Year Contest. This is wrong. The correct deadline is Sept. 21.



From James Wall:

BRUX,

Foul! You fraud! I can't believe you stooped so low as to rig the "Ed Wrobel's Favorite Zine" Poll. I voted for Raging Main, not VD. That makes the vote 6-6 and ends it in a tie. Given your lack of ethical behavior I demand an ombudsman and you'd better print my RM endorsement letter next ish. My ombudsman choices are Paul Rauterberg, Marc Peters, or Derwood Bowen. I demand justice. Thou shalt not soil our blessed hobby in perfidious lies and expect me to let you get away with it.

((Whoops, looks like I stepped into a pile of dogshit this time, doesn't it? Well, not quite.

Your vote for Raging Main arrived after the voting deadline and thus cannot be counted. I don't like to be a prick about these things, you see, but we all know that the earth is going to explode if I ever accept anything after a Deadline.

As for your vote for VD, I was going by what James Woodson told me about the way everyone voted in his questionnaire in RM. According to James, you gave VD as Ed's favorite zine. If I discount your vote, then I must discount all the votes that James passed on to me, in which case VD would still have won.

However, I hereby call on Paul Rauterberg to ombud this horrible mess. Paul's affinity for polls is legendary. What's the verdict, Paul ol' buddy??))

Hey! Speak of the devil! Next letter is...

From Paul Rauterberg (7/21/84):

Dear Bruce:

Where do I begin my first lengthy letter to VD in 3 years? Well, discussing politics with John Kelley is where I left off last time, so I may as well continue the thought.

I'm a bit mystified by John's assertion that "liberalism" and "anti-patriotism" are prevailing trends in America today. If that is the case, John, why is Ronnie Redneck Raygun our Commander-in-Chief? True, he may be more liberal than most John Birchers or KKKers would like, but I'd hardly call his popularity a symptom of deeply entrenched liberalism. If this were a nation inspired by anti-patriotism, why do so many Americans cheer the nuclear arms build-up and the interventions in Grenada, Lebanon, Nicaragua, etc.? The fact is that "patriotism" is an acronym for blind support for US policies -- right or wrong. That is the prevailing attitude in America today, and none dare call it "liberalism."

For once, Bruce, I am going to dare to defend Kathy Byrne a little bit. Yes, I know she's "threatened" to label your games irregular, and I know that upsets you. However, you shouldn't bother to attack her for the practice until she, in fact, does it. Then -- and only then -- can we examine her declarations, in a fair light. Kathy does enough controversial/obnoxious things to fuel a hundred feuds, but let's wait for her to do them.

Wow -- I can't believe I took 4th place in the Runestone GM poll! I didn't go through the year without making mistakes, by a long shot. As an eleven-year veteran of the hobby, I expected a better performance from myself; as a player, I pride myself on not making many mistakes. I made so many as a GM that I was really embarrassed about it.

25th place for Midlife Crisis seems fair enough. It is a warehouse with occasional articles and/or letters tacked on. All warehouse zines should be ranked twentieth; all "reading" zines (GMAW, Anduin, 30 Miles, Snafu!, Retaliation, Graustark, to name a few) belong higher; Voice of Doom and Europa Express are in a class by themselves -- number one and two, respectively.

Perhaps my high showing as a GM stems, in part, from my encouragement (and printing all of) entertaining press. I don't hesitate to participate in that press, and often it sounds like an actual dialogue between players, and between players and the GM.

When I first started out as a GM, I wrote out a brief set of houserules (based primarily on those of Cheesecake and Snafu!). I believe only the "Anonymous Game" players ever saw them, because I discontinued published houserules after that time. Yes folks, I am running seven games in Midlife Crisis without published houserules. Over the period of 16 months, only one player has ever inquired as to the whereabouts of those houserules! I ignored his inquiry, and he never repeated it. So much for houserule freaks.

What are my houserules? Common sense and observance of precedents. When a rule is invoked, I do state it publicly, and nobody bitches. Most decisions aren't controversial, anyway. If there is an objection, there are always ombudsmen..

((I seem to have butchered your paragraph on politics pretty badly through the judicious use of typos. Sorry about that. To comment on your comments, "patriotism" is often perceived or defined by various people as agreement with their own particular points of view on the best political course for the country. Thus I would not define someone with a liberal foreign policy as "patriotic", but would accept the fact that he does consider himself so, and probably doesn't think that I'm patriotic.

Your comments about Kathy certainly reflect the majority opinion, and yet I still find myself in an uncomfortable dilemma. Aside from the fact that the BNC has no business making such a threat to begin with, there is the problem that if I wait for her to actually rule on one of my games, then she can always just reply with "Sorry, but I think the game's irregular." In a clear-cut case, that'd be fine, but in a borderline situation, I'd always have to have the suspicion that she's just taking advantage of the opportunity to carry out her threat. Really, I think the proper thing for Kathy to do at this point would be to assure me that any decision regarding one of my games will be delegated to a former BNC, and I have twice written her requesting that she do this. I have had no reply. Lest you think all my noise on this matter derives from pure selfishness, I do feel a certain obligation to protect my players from an unfair ruling.

All you have proved with the information you related regarding your houserules (or absence thereof) is that such a system is workable if the players and GM are comfortable with it. (Though I do think you were clearly wrong to ignore the one request you received.) You have not demonstrated that there is any advantage to having no houserules, unless you want to argue that you've saved yourself a bit of time and space in your zine. Indeed, for the players, I can't see how there could be an advantage -- even in VD, players are welcome to ignore the houserules if that's what turns them on. On the other hand, I can demonstrate that houserules can, by their presence, resolve a sticky situation or answer a player's question without imposing on him the added burden of consulting the GM separately. I have many times had players ask me how I will rule on whatever situation. Most of the time their question was answered in the houserules, and I knew (and they could have known) the answer to their question. There are many situations (e.g. DIAS or no-DIAS, NVR=yes or no) in which "common sense" and "precedent" don't necessarily yield a single answer.

As a semi-warehouse zine whose writing is very good when it does appear, I would have rated Midlife Crisis somewhere in the second ten; perhaps around 15th. Thanks for the vote of confidence. I personally think that EE is head and shoulders above all the rest. I was more or less hoping for a top ten finish for VD. Well, I came close enough...))

From John Kelley:

Bruce-

Tallman is quoted in VD #97 as calling back-patting (as it appears in VD) as "asskissing". This is a common tendency in society. People are unhappy for some reason, so they focus on trying to run down others who are being complimented for their performances. This is accomplished by trying to downgrade the compliments, in Tallman's case by alleging that they are insincere, that people are somehow "kissing Bruce's ass" to curry favor. If everybody looked at positive reactions to good performance the way that Terry does, positive reinforcement would disappear. One of the best ways to see to it that someone who's doing a good job keeps it up is to let him or her know about it. Maybe if Tallman wasn't so sarcastic and negative, he'd get compliments too (for what is admittedly a well laid-out mine with much subtle wit and thought put in).

John Pack hits on a point that is central to my views of the world. Special Interest Groups. SIGs come in all shapes and sizes, and their political arms are called lobbies. There is an ERA lobby, a Washington Student Lobby, a Jewish Lobby, an anti-gun control lobby, a lumber industry lobby, and so on...we have enough lobbies to outfit millions of movie theaters, airports, and dentist's offices. Even when I agree with the point of view of a lobby, I think it contributes negatively to the political process in the manner John demonstrated. It makes certain persons (as members of SIGs) more privileged under the law than others, and seems to me to be very anti-egalitarian. Maybe the USA isn't a democracy, but we wrote a constitution two centuries ago stating that we would always strive for that ideal. The give-a-shit factor in this country is low, though, and everybody wants something for him/herself. Maybe I don't agree with the point of view of the 60s liberal/radical movement, but at least they gave a damn.

There are two kinds of prejudice that make life difficult for homosexuals in this country. Legal prejudice and personal prejudice. We can (and should, I feel) eliminate legal prejudice with little difficulty. Personal prejudice will take a lot longer to dump, though, but that day is coming too. A century ago women were chattel, 99% of blacks were second-class citizens, and most people felt they should stay that way. Both groups are now rapidly accelerating a rise in social status that has been coming for decades. Someday anti-gay hatred will be like anti-Semitic hatred or anti-black activism: relegated to splinter nut groups like the Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan, who hate everything else anyway. As far as gays molesting straights, it simply doesn't happen much. Far more frequent and tragic is heterosexual rape, which ruins the lives of many Americans every day. If we're going to campaign against something sexual, let's campaign against rape.

((Bravo for a letter both cogent and well-written!

Ironically, one of the obstacles to the removal of legal prejudice against gays would be certain of the SIGs you mention in the paragraph just before. Then again there are gay SIGs as well as anti-gay SIGs, no doubt. I agree with you that prejudice against gays will eventually become the territory of a few fanatics, and I shall speak out in the hope of hastening that day.

What can one say about Tallman that isn't already obvious? He is a clear example of someone who tries to build himself up by tearing down others with more talent than himself: Walker, Berch, Kane, Coughlan, and me just to name a few. Among intelligent people (and this hobby consists by and large of very intelligent people), this strategy doesn't tend to get one very far. Glib with words and fast-and-loose with facts, he's built himself a small group of supporters. But heck, I've got more strong supporters than he has subbers. Did you see the latest issue of NSWG? In it, he boasts about letters he sent to Denver Glont which, he says, were designed to incite great agony in several American publishers. What a guy. I'd give you the exact quote, but I don't want to be sued for copyright violation...))

From Jerry Lucas (7/16/84);

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Hi Bruce,

Thanks for the note on #97. It was another enjoyable issue. I usually procrastinate about reading larger issues like yours and Peery's, but lately I've found I'm consuming yours very quickly. I find I read the full size zines first and procrastinate on the digest size. I guess I'm getting old.

Noted your quote of my quote from Murdering Ministers. Doesn't anything get by you? I suspect not much. I've noticed that a great many zines have been plugging the International Subscription Exchange. It occurs to me that a piece is missing. I suspect not many in the hobby know of which zines are available in the British hobby. You mention a few as do Gary and Cathy C.

I really like Mark Lew's writing. Hope to see more of it.

I plan to respond to Chuff Afflerbach's roundtable discussion, Doomie Static, after a few more comments. ((I'm flattered that you thought it was Chuff's. Check back and you'll see that I wrote it.))

Did you really have to conclude your answer to John Pack's letter with "...if a homosexual attacks you personally, you have every right to beat him off."? I thought I was the only one allowed to make double entendres. Speaking of which, I'm might proud that Judy Winsome ended up so well in the GM rankings. She'll be commenting on that in her next issue, something about how good it feels to end up below Mike Mills but on top of Mark Luedi.

I'm glad to write to Kathy Byrne for her side of the story ((on 1983AY)). I haven't heard any more from Ron. Regarding your comments on the power of the RNC, they sound pretty confusing to the uninformed. As they say in the current jargon, your readers probably can't figure out where you're coming from, and I hope they never do in this case. From my perspective, power is something you give someone. In Kathy's case, she only gets the power over you games that you let her have. Similarly, she'll only have the power over the Doomies who play your games that they let her have. If a person's power is a derivative of what other people are willing to allow, your protection from Kathy's threats is only as strong as the loyalty you have from your subscribers. I'm afraid Ron's ((Ron Brown of California)) in a similar situation. I haven't settled in my mind why I feel this all affects me, but I feel it does. If her actions drive Ron from GMing, or you to discomfort, I question what I am doing. I'm just not sure what I should do.

Touché on your Diplomacy Euphemisms about Judy. She used to try to say enough about the question in her Cheap Answer so the reader had an idea of what the question was. She has since departed from that practice in large part, and has a Red Letters section instead. The title is a takeoff from The Scarlet Letter and "read letters".

Now for my answers to Doomie Static:

CASE A. There is nothing else to do but call the player back and tell him that you are no longer OK, or that the condition of your condition is uncertain. It is your obligation as a GM to defuse the situation immediately. Then take sidebets on your friend's condition when you lose his orders in the mail for two seasons in succession.

CASE B. The correct procedure is to steam the unused stamp from the envelope so you can reuse it in mailing out your next issue. Then place insufficient postage on the letter and send it postage due to Kathy. Kathy will never suspect what happened, you haven't interfered in the game, and you have helped defray the costs of publishing. Smart, huh?

CASE C. There is no question but that the Code of Ethics requires you to take your life. Having lost your job, there is no way you can finance sending out the next adjudication.

CASE X. All of the above. You let the guy's moves stand as they are, replay the season with standbys for the two victims of the tidal wave, and change your house rules to allow for all of this. GMing is simple.

CASE Y. This is by far the most difficult question to answer. Besides, it's not my problem. It's Father Berch's.

CASE Z. Insert all the Ig Lew's into the games. Since they all knew Ig's secret plans, none have an advantage. The games will go down in history. They will be the only games played without a capital letter.

PS. Now both parties have a Bush on the ticket.

((That's really gross! But it's still a riot. Heh, heh...

So how do you know all of Judy Winsome's plans and thoughts? I like her way of handling letters now better than the old "Cheap Answers" technique. There were times when I couldn't determine what the exchange was all about.

Well, I think you're right that I was sort of leaving my readers in the dark regarding my comments on Kathy and her power. But anyone who reads this issue carefully enough will know where I'm coming from. I probably should have been more explicit early on, instead of beating around the Ferraro.

Regarding 1983AY: I received an earlier letter about this game from Jerry before last issue went to press. I decided not to print it at that time because I felt I should write to Kathy and get her side of the story as well, and present both views at once. To that end, I twice wrote to Kathy and told her that she was welcome to state her views in VD this issue. But, as is certainly her right, she didn't reply.

Those of you who don't get Murd'ring Ministers will not be familiar with this whole affair. In a nutshell, here it is. 1983AY is a game being guest GMed by a rookie GM, Mike Coburn. Ron Brown, the publisher of MM, is a player in the game, as is Jerry Lucas.

There have been some minor (in my opinion) GMing indiscretions -- none of the parties involved denies that. At the beginning of the game, a non-involved party (Dan Kuszynski) assigned the countries by random draw. And at one point during the game, the GM let it slip that one of the players was resigning (although he ultimately stayed in the game). When it was thought that the player (Dan Stafford) was going to resign, the GM asked Ron for help in finding a player to fill the position, and Ron chose a name from the MM standby list -- but the standby ultimately did not get into the game.

Based on these circumstances, Kathy Byrne has declared the game irregular as the result of a player (Stafford) complaining of "illegal GM-player collusion". Kathy herself notes that there was no deliberate attempt by the GM to bias the game, but nonetheless she feels that "one player did have too much contact with the GM concerning different phases of the game".

Let me address the three points above one by one. First: the drawing of the countries. Unless Kathy (or Stafford) is going to argue that the draw was rigged or somehow not random, it doesn't matter who assigned the countries. Even if a player himself had done this, a random draw is a random draw. Now I would be leery of letting a player assign the countries even by random draw, but in this case it wasn't even a player who did so -- it was an uninvolved party. Random is random. I have seen nothing to indicate that anyone had anything other than a one-in-seven chance to receive any given country, just as there would have been had the GM assigned them by lot.

Second: the GM let it slip that a player was resigning. Potentially serious, and yes, it could have affected the game. But apparently it didn't -- and in light of the fact that the player ultimately stayed in the game, it really couldn't have.

Third: the choice of a standby. Again, this is potentially serious. But the whole point is totally hypothetical, since the standby never got in. So it's a red herring. A game cannot be declared irregular based on what might have been.

In light of the above, I personally do not agree with Kathy's decision, although I know of two very highly respected hobbyists (including a former HNC) who do. And I'll admit that I've only heard one side of the story -- but I tried to get the other side and was ignored.

I do wish to note one very relevant point here. A large part of the furor is based on the fact that GM Coburn did not assign the countries, which is of course a function of the GM. But wait a minute. Who says that a GM can never delegate these functions? Who GMed Steve Arnawoodian's games while he was in Europe last year? That's right, Bob Olsen took over the task. Clearly, adjudicating games is a function of the GM. Are Arnawoodian's games therefore irregular because he delegated the task of adjudicating for a season or two? I don't think so, even though I personally wouldn't allow it for a VD game.

By an accident of coincidence, I could very well have been a player in this game (I was originally invited to play). I sort of wish now that I had accepted. But there are still several reasons why I'm involving myself. First, of course, is the fact that I received these two unsolicited letters from Jerry Lucas on the matter, and I see no good reason not to allow discussion of it in VD.

Secondly, I have spoken with Ron Brown, and this business about "GM-player collusion" has affected him to the point where he may never GM a game again. In a sense, he is being accused of being a cheater. Now, let me tell you folks a little something about Ron Brown, speaking from my own personal experience as a player in MM. In my opinion -- and I'll stake my own reputation on this -- he is a man of the highest possible integrity. There is not the slightest doubt in my mind that he would never indulge in anything underhanded. To label Ron with this stigma would be manifestly and grossly unfair. I strongly feel that if the hobby loses Ron Brown because of this unfortunate incident, it will be a tragic loss for the hobby. Ron has been a friend to me in the past, and I'm not going to let him down now, but even despite my personal feelings, I truly believe there are none finer. I don't really know Mike Coburn well, having spoken with him only a couple of times, but if Ron says that the countries were assigned randomly, that's good enough for me by a long shot. If I were looking for game openings, MM is one of the first places I'd look.

However, despite all of the above, I will admit that the final decision is Kathy's to make. The way the hobby is currently structured, she does have this power. And there is no appeal for Ron Brown or Mike Coburn.))

The following letter from John Pach is undated, but old. It was delayed in the mail by several weeks.

Hail BRUX, and salutations too,

I received the latest issue. I really enjoyed it cover to cover. Hope the cricket didn't spoil your nerves during your diplomatic efforts. I'm glad to hear that there'll always be a BRUX. Your last line in reply to my letter sounded like a Voice of Doom, eh?

OK, OK, I can take a hint. I made a "bad" remark about the RIGEL press without reading it. I have now repented of my "evil" at the expenses of several good hours of time. However, I agree now that RIGEL press (#93 in particular) is really good. However, 32 pages is substantial. I'd probably vote for Germany in the Press War, but they all seem to be very good.

I enjoy toadystashing a lot and a lot of other people have told me they do too. Actually, if used sparingly, tactics which could result in a lost game may help win it...I couldn't resist sending an article after you gave me such a nice welcome. ((This refers to the "Reverse Psychology" article in VD #97.))

I'm for prayer in school (private though, not public). After all, if one kid knows that  $2 + 2 = 4$ , he can use that knowledge on his tests. If another realizes that God exists, he too can utilize that knowledge, in whatever situation it may apply. It goes with freedom of thought and religion, etc.

I'm a right-winger too. Reagan is an itty-bitty messed up, though. Too liberal. On the Brad and Monopoly bit ((("Playing to Win", VD #93)), there needs to be a balance between fun and "win or kill". If someone doesn't enjoy losing too, maybe

they shouldn't play (especially Diplomacy where 6 players lose every time ~~7/11/84~~). I think I will give MM a SASE to see what I come up with.

On Jake's fire-starter, I'd pick (in Sec. A) Ronald Reagan, Nixon, the Russian leader what's his name, uh, Chernenko (?), Began, and BRUX (who knows, maybe someday I'll meet you someplace, eh?). In part II I'd take Adolph Hitler, Einstein, Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Edison, and Jesus Christ. Of course, I'd make sure the first two sat on opposite sides of the table so we wouldn't get into any of this discrimination stuff. In the third part I'd take the resurrection of Christ, the Munich Conference "Peace in our time" bit, D-Day, the signing of the Declaration of Independence, and the fall of man (ie. the Garden of Eden). Of course, the explosion of the first A-bomb made here in LA would be up there too.

I don't know about everyone else, but I enjoy being a dreg. I've included the color photo you requested. It's a tad light, but fairly good. ((You forgot to include it, though.)) The only mistake the "Press Wars" author made is that he didn't call it an article and get the free issues for such a fine piece, esp. if he wants to make you go broke.

((Well, maybe Steve Knight was writing the piece for the pride of RIGEL rather than the 30+ free issues he would have earned. Either that, or maybe his GM bribed him...))

Something tells me that if you sent a dinner invitation to "Began", he wouldn't even begin to think about coming.))

From Mark Luedi (7/15/84):

Dear Bruce,

You are once again to be castigated for disrupting the production of Thirty Miles of Whatchamacallit. So, get castigating! If you're unwilling to do it to yourself, I'm sure that someone can be found who is more than willing to help you.

Complaint number 2 (another trend in the hobby -- Luedihashing?): How dare you invalidate my "Ed Wrobel's Favorite Zine" Poll ballot and embarrass me in front of zillions of loyal Docies?! I followed instructions by sending my ballot to you, and not sending a ballot anywhere else. If Mr. Woodson somehow thinks that I voted for Whitstonia/KK, he is surely mistaken. I recall making an offhand comment about this, but I am most certain that it was made prior to the announcement of the poll. I fully anticipate a full retraction in the next VD. As for Mr. Woodson, I shall deal with him later. Boy, do I need a feud to calm my nerves...

Complaint number 3: It has not gone unnoticed in these far-fetched regions of the midlands that a conspiracy has been formed with the expressed purpose of indulging in "Indiana-bashing". Yes, Bruce, you stand among the accused (with Mark Lew, Rod Walker, and others as yet unferreted, though certainly there). Need you be reminded that two of this hobby's past great editors are Hoosiers? (Walt Buchanan and Bob Sergeant.) And that two of this hobby's present great editors are Hoosiers? (Dave Kleiman, and... modesty prevents...) Who knows what the future holds? Now, I'll grant you that Indiana doesn't have a whole lot of things going for it (basketball, some pretty good universities, a relatively peaceful sedentary pace of life, central location, etc.), but neither does it have anything bad (especially if you lop off Lake County where Gary and Hammond and East Chicago are). Let's face it, for those unfamiliar with it (and for a few who are), Indiana is in many respects the epitome of mediocrity. But I'd rather live here than in New York or California! Realistically, most people are likely to toot the horn of the state/region they live in or would want to live in.

Anyways, Dave Kleiman and I have discussed this recent outbreak of "Indiana-bashing" and will do whatever is necessary to combat its further spread among the hobby ranks. In fact, we dare any and all to come to Indiana to show us just what is so bad about the place (preferably in late October). I'll await responses before

further comments.

Brad Wilson's letter and your responses generated a lot of thought, too bad I've forgotten most of it. Chuff Afflerbach as per usual, had me rolling around holding my belly. "Which is more important" -- indeed! Which reminds me, I should be getting back to work on Whatcamacallit.

PS. Famous Hoosiers (contemporary, partial list): Michael Jackson, Johnney Courgar, Kurt Vonnegut Jr.

((I feel honored at having a hand in the delay of so many issues of whatever-it-is-you-call-your-zine. Also that you mistook my "Doomie Static" for Chuff's writing. Go back and check... (v)

Me? Indulge in Indiana-bashing? How could I? -- there's nothing there to bash!

Re the Ed Wrobel's Favorite Zine ballots: James Woodson told me you had sent him one. Boy, this whole thing is getting scandalous! But your ballot wouldn't have made a difference either way.))

From Steve Langley (7/18/84):

Dear Bruce,

I got a call the other night that started:

"Brrng...brrng..."

"Hello?" I answer the phone with an interrogative.

"Don't try to act innocent with me!" came the response to my question -- in a voice I easily recognized.

"What!?" the obvious response, I'm afraid.

"I was just trying to prepare you for the new batch of feuds on the horizon."

And the conversation continued from there onto more rational topics. Still, there does seem to be a whole new batch of feuds. Such is the world of Dipdom, I guess. I'd like to make the official announcement that as of 18 July, 1984, I'm a free agent open for bids. I have no affiliations and as such, may not be worth much as an ally, but I do have a sense of humor and can be sympathetic. Maybe I ought to open an hospice for tired feuders instead. If you are discouraged and despairing and want a kind word, call me and I'll let you talk to Daf.

I wonder what makes John Pack think that he is attractive to gays. From his letters on the subject it sounds as if he thinks he's a real gay hunk. Relax, John, it probably isn't the case. Gays are probably as abhorrent of you as you are of them, maybe more.

You, Bruce, do not win the press war in just one season. Now if the bunch in RIGEL wimp out again next season you might have a case, but one season does not a press war win make.

I liked your Diplomacy Euphemisms. I had to laugh at the wit and accuracy of many of them. Sort of felt left out but I couldn't come up with one for myself so I can hardly expect to be included by you if I can't even include myself.

Since you were unable to answer the Demo Game question to either of our satisfactions, I expect Mark Berch will have written to you on the subject. Was I right?

My skydiving experience is all second hand. I love to watch skydiving film and I feel some strong physical symptoms in relation to the sport. I suffer from vertigo, and even talking about high places causes me to break out in a sweat on my palms (I'm experiencing it as I write this).

When I was at JPL, one of the technical engineers (which is to say he put stuff together rather than worked with pencil and paper) was a long-time skydiver. His face was a mass of scar tissue from various trees that jumped into his landing areas. He claimed to have broken all his arms and legs multiple times. He also said it was worth it. There was a younger gofer working with us, about 17 years young, who thought it sounded like a thing to do, and so went up with the scarred one one weekend.



He came back with his left arm in a cast and walking on crutches. It seems that the pilot, knowing that it was his first jump, told him to jump before he got to the jump zone, expecting him to hesitate. Instead, he jumped and landed in trees. He said he was going to do it again as soon as he got out of the casts. He did, too. I guess free fall must be addicting.

Your experience sounds a lot more professional. I guess that is the way it works. Someone tries something that turns out to be fun. He tells some others who bring more people along. Pretty soon, if it is dangerous enough, someone comes up with the idea of regulations, and pretty soon, what used to be people jumping into trees because their pilot guessed wrong turns into a well thought-out process that allows people to experience something like skydiving in as safe a manner as can be devised.

Your article didn't give me the idea that you are as addicted as the kid with the cast on his arm or old scar face, but if I'm wrong, have fun. It sure does look like a very exciting thing to do.

((I don't really know if I'll actually go again, though I'm considering it. And that kid wasn't really a fanatic -- after all, didn't you say that he waited till the casts came off to go again?

Looks like Ty Hare and Rich Reilly agree with you that the press war ain't over yet. I'll wear these guys down sooner or later, though.

How about it, Mark Berch? An explanation of the term "demo game", please?

Sadly, the "batch of feuds on the horizon" seems to have hit. I sensed them coming a few months ago, too. The hobby, as always, will survive. Thank goodness.))

From Rich Reilly (7/24/84):

Dear BRUX,

I've been meaning to write you a letter for some time now, but haven't been able to get around to it...until now, of course. I've been doing a terrible job writing letters lately; I just never feel like doing it. I should be writing Diplomacy letters right now, but...well, I sort of feel like my interest in postal Diplomacy is fading. Probably it'll only be temporary; it's a feeling I've had before. In the meantime, my negotiations and press suffer.

Dave Kleiman (publisher of that excellent zine, The Diplomat) may well have the good fortune to meet your humble narrator in the very near future, as a friend and I will be travelling east, sometime in early or mid-August. The friend, one of my best, has academic matters to take care of at Purdue University in Lafayette, Indiana, and has invited me to drive back there with him. Lafayette, as you probably know, is only about an hour (I've been told) from Indianapolis, and thus from Dave. I certainly intend to drive up and visit -- the friend, unfortunately, is not into Diplomacy -- and so Dave will become the first of the non-Idahoian diplomats to meet Richard Reilly. Of course, he and Lori might be sorry that they ever allowed me into their home (better keep Whiskers hidden, Dave!). I'm looking forward to meeting all three of them.

I've recently begun reading H.G. Wells' Outline of History, a most interesting book; and that reminds me...

H.G. Wells; Jesus Christ; Aristotle; John Adams; Benjamin Franklin.

That's my historical list of five people I'd like to invite to dinner...inspired, of course, by Steve and Ruth's lists. Actually, several of those on Steve's list were second choices for me. If Aristotle couldn't make it, I'd ask Socrates or perhaps Plato.

I won't give you a contemporary list...it would look silly compared to Ruth's.

Five books I'd like to have with me on an uninhabited island? Surprise; two of Ruth's are also on my list...



A Visit from Joan

Last weekend I had the pleasure of meeting for the first time one of my very best hobby friends, Joan Extrom, and her husband Deadwood (nicknamed Ken) and baby daughter Samantha. I had been looking forward to this for a long time. Joan and I have been close for over a year now, talking and corresponding very frequently, and I was dying to meet her. I arranged everything with my boss; there was no problem with my taking off work on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. Ruth Glaspey, who had met Joan just a few days before I was to do so, had told me that I was in for a real treat. I was not to be disappointed.

On Sunday, July 29, I drove down to Kathy Byrne's apartment to pick up Joan, Deadwood, and Samantha. Relations with the Flushing crew being what they are, I had arranged to meet Joan downstairs from the apartment, so our first meeting took place on the sidewalks of New York. Joan had been deathly ill for several days but thankfully was nearly better by the time I got there. Nonetheless Deadwood, who had originally planned to go straight to Ithaca from Flushing, decided to come along and help take care of Samantha till Joan felt totally up to the chores of parenthood again. He ended up staying till Tuesday, and despite the circumstances, I'm glad I got to meet him.

Traffic was very heavy in The Bronx, but we finally made it out of the city and headed up the Thruway to Alex's house in Hamacroix. Joan had enjoyed many of Alex's articles in the past and was eager to meet her. We stopped in for perhaps an hour and had drinks, enjoyable conversation, and overall a very good time. Samantha particularly got a kick out of meeting Alex's dog Bailey, who is large and very friendly. Alex's father lent me a cot which was to come in very handy for the next three nights. We got to hear an earful about Al's trip to Spain. Joan had visited Spain too, ~~w~~ when she was Alex's age.

As we left Alex's house, Joan exclaimed, "What nice people!" -- a typical reaction for someone who has just visited the Lord farm for the first time. Then we headed up to Albany to meet my mother and sister. There we had refreshments, including toasted cheese sandwiches, before heading for Dalton and ending a long day. Upon getting home, we were all quite exhausted and went straight to bed.

Monday morning found Joan feeling much better and Ken decided he would stay one more day. Joan took a nap in the late morning while Ken went down to meet my next door neighbors (whom I have never met!). The little girl next door had a wading pool, which of course made Samantha very happy as the weather was rather hot and humid. Joan and I had arranged to call Melinda Holley on lunch hour, so at the appointed time I woke up Joan and we had a very entertaining chat with Melinda, with whom neither of us had ever spoken. Then we were off to a local restaurant for lunch, where we met Grouch (Jim) Makuc. Joan and Grouch spent much of lunch discussing how they are planning to secretly ally in their Whitestonia game and dominate the board.

Monday after noon, Samantha decided to pursue a new hobby record and spilled her Cheerios on my floor twice. This was only the beginning, too; by Wednesday she had clearly established herself as the undisputed world champion in this event with a grand total of four such Cheerio mishaps. General Mills really should change their name to General Spills. Anyway, Joan and Samantha went into the bedroom for another nap and Deadwood spent the afternoon massacring me at backgammon.

Upon awakening, Joan, who is a notorious health food nut, came up and very calmly asked me whether there was a Kentucky Fried Chicken in town. After they revived me from my faint with a few splashes of cold water, we piled into the car and headed to the local KFC. Following this, we drove over to visit my cousins Rob and Jill Proskin. Joan kept referring to Jill as "Jane". Now where on earth did she ever come up with a name like "Jane Proskin"? We spent a very enjoyable evening there. Samantha got along famously with the kids, Danny and David. David is just ten days older than Samantha. Joan later told me that she really loved meeting Rob and Jill and that it was great for Samantha to get to play with Danny and David, so we ended up going there

again the next night. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

Tuesday morning, Joan was almost entirely recovered from her illness, so we took Ken to the bus station and shipped him off to Ithaca. Then Joan and Samantha and I went to lunch at the New England Chowder House, where Samantha made friends with a very nice waitress. Upon our arrival back home, Mike Barno called to talk to me and Joan. He tried to talk to Samantha as well, but all she would do was hold the phone up to her ear and flash him a nice big grin. Then Joan and Samantha went in for their nap, and I did the same.

Later in the afternoon, we all awoke and Joan and I had a long talk about the hobby in general and rews in particular. I had earlier promised to take her out to dinner when she came to visit, so that night I treated Joan and Samantha to Polynesian food at a local restaurant called the Luau Hale. Joan's lo mein was superb, but I found I didn't care for the lychee duck I had ordered. Following dinner and another visit to Rob and Jill's, we went back to my place and I gave Joan a slide show from my 1976 trip around the country. Rob came over to see this, too. Then it was late, so Rob left and we all went to bed. I offered to give Joan a demonstration of just what I could do with my, uh, reproductive equipment, but she was too tired. Oh well. Another time, she'll get to see my ditto machine in action.

Wednesday morning, I received a rude introduction to the joys of taking care of an 18-month-old. Joan had left me and Samantha reading The Little Red Hen while she went in to take a shower. Halfway through the book, I smelled a horrible, familiar smell.

"Who's pooping in their diaper?" I thundered.

"Not I," said the duck.

"Not I," said the cat.

"Not I," said the pig.

That left Samantha. Having had no experience in the art of diaper-changing, I quickly called Joan out of the shower to handle this emergency. Samantha had pooped the poop of a lifetime, and it was all over everything: the chair, her legs, her back, the floor, and so on. So into the bathtub she went. Much later, Joan finally got to take her shower as I again read to Samantha, who just sat there with the most mischievous little grin on her face. I have this theory now that babies develop their sense of humor even before their ability to utter a word. After Joan showered, she packed up as Samantha and I played cards (read: 52-card pickup).

On our way into Albany, we listened to NMR 50 on my car cassette. Joan was in the mood for pie, so I treated her and Samantha to lunch at Grandma's Pie Shop in Albany. Then I took them downtown to the Empire State Plaza (also known as the South Mall; it's Albany's biggest tourist attraction), where I'd taken several other Doomies before on their visits to Albany. There was a fair bit of walking involved, so I carried Samantha in a backpack, the first time I'd ever done this. Joan was particularly interested in the Shaker Museum, and we also got to see the New York State Museum, a free movie, and the view from the observation deck at the top of the 42-story tower which dominates Albany's skyline. Eric Kane and Alex and I had once gotten lost in the parking lot here, but Joan and Samantha and I had no such problem as we left.

Next stop was Barbara Passoff's apartment to visit her and her fiance Simon Billenness, who publishes the British zine Inflammatory Material. Joan was impressed with how obviously in love Simon and Barbara are. I dunno. It wasn't so obvious to me. At least, not till I'd been there about ten seconds. Simon was kind enough to give Joan a copy of his latest issue. And while we were there, I recalled out loud a joke that Joan had told me earlier. It concerns a hearse that is driving up a long hill on the outskirts of a city, when all of a sudden the back door of the vehicle flies open and the coffin rolls out the back, and down the hill all the way back into the city. It reaches an intersection, makes a sharp right turn, rolls down the main

street of town. Stop me if you've heard this one. Finally it reaches a drug store, turns and rolls into the place, and rolls right up onto the counter. Then the lid opens, the corpse sits up and says to the druggist...

Damn, I didn't mean to get off on that tangent. By the time we left Simon and Barbara, it was evening, so we headed to my mother's house for supper, where Joan enjoyed her first home-cooked meal -- a turkey dinner -- in over a week. Then we piled into the car one last time and I took Joan to the motel where she had arranged to meet her in-laws. Regretfully, we said our goodbyes, and I left her and Samantha.

I believe Joan really enjoyed everyone she met here either in person or over the phone: my mother and sister, Alex and her parents, Simon and Barbara, Mike Barno, Melinda Holley, Grouch, Rob and Jill, Danny and David. Maybe even me! After all, she did invite me to come to Oregon for a week next year.

Deadwood is a great guy who I really enjoyed getting to know, and Samantha is a lovely baby. As for Joan, what can I say? Just what I told her when we parted, I guess. She's a wonderful friend, and she's a very special person. The hobby and the world could use a few more like her.

The visit produced a few notable quotes:

"That's Mark Luedi?! Ha ha ha ha ha..." -- Joan, looking at the Dip Photo Album

"Uh oh!" -- Samantha

"Sounds like you need a vacation from your vacation!" -- Debbie Lord, upon learning of Joan's illness

"How can I stop this coffin?" -- Joan

"K-K-K-Kentucky F-Fried What?! " -- me

"Uh oh!" -- Samantha

"Bye bye, Samantha!" -- Danny Proskin

"I'll let you roll again if you want. You don't want to open with a 6-1" -- Deadwood

"Now, here's how we're going to wipe out Cathy and Melinda..." -- Grouch

"That's OR-A-GIN, you Easterner!" -- Joan, to Rob

"You ((Simon)) introduced Cathy Cunnig to the hobby in England, I met her in Detroit, she stayed with you ((Joan)) in Oregon, and now here we all are in Albany. Small world!" -- me

"Uh oh!" -- Samantha

"Enough talk about these hobby feuds. Let's talk about something simpler -- like world politics." -- Joan

"Isn't Uncle BRUX weird, Samantha?" -- Joan

~~~~~

Golly, this issue did wind up getting a bit more pleasant toward the end, what with the last few letters and the above article. I'm glad. This is the type of issue I had hoped never to publish again. I apologize to anyone who didn't like it (and I'm sure that's most of you). Sometimes, things cannot go unanswered.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** On page 46, already dittoed, I gave August 24 as the deadline for the Dooms of the Year Contest. This is wrong. The correct deadline is Sept. 21.

I guess by now even the casual readers will be aware of the error...

I'd like to make one last pitch for material for my fifth anniversary, and it must be in pretty soon. I need...articles...letters...responses to the "Player Ethics" article in VD #97...cartoons...Dooms of the Year entries...and you RIGEL players know what I want from you! Please help out; I don't have many contributions as of this typing. It's up to you...don't leave it all to someone else...do you want this 100th issue to be a really good one, or just some run-of-the-mill piddling 60-pager? Please help out.

What else? Oh, I just got thrown out of Bersaglieri for saying that it was "perhaps the weakest zine I'm currently receiving." I guess that means it's no longer the weakest zine I'm currently receiving. (w) That's OK, Tom, I still think you're kinda neat.

Doomie of the Year, 1984

46

This is the official announcement of the Doomie of the Year contest for 1984. I've decided to run the contest early this year so as to get the results into my fifth annish. Apologies to Mark Berch, whose reign will be therefore shortened by two months. The winners in previous years were Bob Olsen in 1980, Gerry Hamlin in 1981, Alex Lord in 1982, and Mark Berch in 1983. Previous winners may not win, although essays about them will be cheerfully printed.

For newcomers in the audience the object of this contest is to write a humorous, satirical, or just plain lighthearted essay about the person who you feel deserves the title, "Doomie of the Year, 1984". The subject of your article may be any person who has been mentioned prominently in VD over the course of the last year, and the article should stress in some way his or her involvement. From among the entries received, I will choose a first prize and a second prize, and print these as well as possibly others. First prize will receive four free issues of VD, while second will receive five free issues! The authors get the issues, not the subjects of the articles. Entries will be judged on the quality of the writing and the deservingness of the nominee. The deadline for this contest is Friday, August 24, 1984.

Who will be the winner in 1984? You decide!

- \* Brad Wilson, for eliciting the longest response ever to a letter in the Gossip Column?
- \* Steve Knight, for entertaining the masses with his fabulous "Press Wars" releases?
- \* Ed Wrobel, for officially having VD as his favorite zine?
- \* Ty Hara, for dragging his terrible face all the way across the USA to BRUKCON?
- \* John Pack, for writing that queer letter?
- \* Joan Extrom, for visiting BRUK for three days -- and escaping alive?
- \* BRUK himself, for running contests like this one and being a general weirdo?
- \* Steve Hutton, for letting his zine serve as a proving ground for VD's great ideas?
- \* Steve Langley, for winning the Quotes Contest?
- \* Eric Kane, for his utter inability to comprehend BRUKian Houserule Theory?
- \* Dave Kleiman, for putting his RIGEL opponents in Jeopardy?

Or maybe it'll be someone else -- Samantha Corbin, John Kelley, Rod Walker, Nelson Heintzman, John MacFarlane, Ruth Glaspey, or who knows? Why, it could even be Judy Winsome! That's up to you readers. Get out those pens and start busting on your favorite Doomie now!

And remember, it's all in fun.

BRUK

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Your sub expires with issue # 97