

DAGON

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I'LL SEE YOU IN THE FUNNY PAPERS

LXIV. Siegfried Meets Groo

Yes, but before we get to either of these redoubtable warriors, we will first have a retrospective about one of the most beloved cartoonists, and one of the most beloved characters, in the history of comic art. Despite misgivings when the project was first announced, the revival of Pogo under the auspices of Doyle and Sterneky has not only worked out in its own right, but has stimulated or accompanied a nostalgia boom in Walt Kelly's original creation.

Pogo was originally a spear-carrier in a feature entitled Albert the Alligator, which made its debut in Animal Comics #1 in 1942. However, as minor characters in comics frequently do, he advanced in status, until later strips in Animal Comics were headed Albert the Alligator and Pogo, and although Albert remains a major character, the feature has been Pogo ever since its debut in the New York Star on 4 October 1943.

Albert was originally the heavy. In the first Animal Comics feature he threatened to eat Pogo, a boy named Bumbazine, and a birthday cake that Bumbazine had baked for Pogo out of an unlikely list of ingredients. However, he gradually reformed, although his reformation was regarded skeptically by other swamp critters, and even in an early comic strip feature he went on trial for eating the Pup Dog - a case that was actually in court when the prosecutors opened Albert's cupboard and found the Pup Dog there, alive and well, where he had been trapped while trying to borrow a cup of sugar.

The swamp was originally located in Florida, though it later was moved to the Okefenokee Swamp, a great morass which spans the Georgia-Florida border and does indeed shelter most of the indigenous animals which have appeared in the comic strip. Bumbazine was a small black boy, not drawn as a caricature as African-Americans so often were in those days. Other people, both black and white, appear in small parts in some of the Animal Comics stories; as Albert drives a locomotive off the tracks some excitable blacks chase after him, while two white hillbillies pass a jug between them and remark that it must be strong stuff to produce such visions.

Eclipse Books, whose "Trading Card" series have already been favorably reviewed in these pages, is currently engaged in "reprinting in chronological sequence...Walt Kelly's entire comic book output." Two volumes have already appeared in this series at \$9 each, and bring the Animal Comics stories up through #14. In addition, Eclipse has published Mark Burstein's Much Ado: The Pogofenokee Trivia Book.

I sometimes read Animal Comics as a child, and some of these reprinted stories have stuck in my mind. I particularly remembered "Albert and the Noah Count Ark" from Animal Comics #14 (April-May 1945). The joke is basically the same as the one in Chaucer's "The Miller's Tale", in which gullible types believe that Noah's Flood is about to repeat itself. This time the panic is spread, not by a horny student in love with his landlord's wife, but a pig who makes, as far as I am aware, his sole appearance in the Pogo canon. His name is Francis Ferdinand van de Dandy, and time out for laughter from those who recognize where that name comes from. This one may be found in the second Eclipse collection, At the Mercy of the Elephants.

For reasons explained by Steve Thompson in the introduction to this collection, Bumbazine was gradually written out of the story even before the end of its run in Animal Comics. The dialect also altered. "A sort of southern-friend hash was once sopen here," Kelly once explained. (However, Uncle Antler, the moose, spoke in an al-

together appropriate New England twang.) According to Burstein, Kelly "began experimenting and finally created a patois which combines the residual Elizabethan English still found in the South with New Orleans French, some black speech patterns, and his own creative liberties with the mother tongue." Yiddish expressions such as "Hoo Boy!" also sometimes found their way into the dialog.

Several Walt Kelly covers from Animal Comics also appear in the Eclipse Books collections. Since the venerable Uncle Wiggily appeared as a comic art character in Animal Comics #2, the covers sometimes showed Albert and Uncle Wiggily together. (If you know the Uncle Wiggily books, you would realize that they would never have fit in the same story. For one thing, one of the villains in Uncle Wiggily was "the Skillery-Skallery Alligator".)

Some of the story lines from Animal Comics were later used with changes in the comic strip and book collections. Albert would sometimes swallow things, through accident rather than malice, and they would always be recovered - sometimes in a sequence that would go on for weeks and leave everybody looking silly. The "swallowed" Pup Dog was anticipated by the story in Animal Comics #10, in which we also meet the most commonly encountered child in Pogo, "Rackety Coon-Chile".

Rackety Coon-Chile, and his father as well, bore the name "Delishus" in Animal Comics, and in the early strips as well. In fact, the child's first appearance shows him wearing yellow shoes, and red shorts with two big buttons on the front - obviously a souvenir from Kelly's days with Walt Disney Studios. (Incidentally, why is he almost never mentioned in any Disney-based books about the early years of Walt Disney Studios? I suspect that the reason may lie in the bitter 1941 strike at Walt Disney Studios. Kelly left Disney at about that time, probably as a consequence of the strike. Since the Disney organization consists of the pettiest, most mean-spirited people in comic art, Walt Kelly was probably an "un-person" around there forever after.)

In the Animal Comics story, a tiger has escaped from "Tingaling Bros. Circus", and wanders into Albert's house (a tree-trunk, of course) shortly after Rackety Coon-Chile came there to borrow some salt. Albert, having put some fish on to fry, has fallen asleep, and sleeps through both visits. So Rackety Coon-Chile gets trapped in Albert's "salt, sugar, and flour (mixed) box," while the tiger gulps down the fish and leaves. When Albert wakes, he finds the fish gone and concludes that he must have eaten them in his sleep. When he mentions that they were "dee-lishus", the other swamp critters conclude he must have eaten the Coon-Chile, and his name is cleared only when men from the circus, looking for the tiger, find the boy alive and well in the salt-box. Meanwhile, Albert and Pogo capture the tiger and return it to the circus.

The comic strip routine with the Pup Dog is similar, except that here the searchers are a bear and a bear who make their sole appearance in Pogo, and only because they have heard there was a reward for the Pup Dog. It is they who find Albert asleep and flip his fish, only to have them disappear down Albert's throat. ("A tragic trajectory.") Albert awakes, tells of his dream that he ate something "tasty", and then finds that "Tasty" is the name of the Pup Dog. A full-scale trial is staged, with Howland Owl as judge, Seminole Sam as the prosecutor, Porkypine as Albert's lawyer, Mr. Rackety Coon Sr. on the jury, and Churchy La Femme as the major witness. When the prosecutor tries to reconstruct the "crime" by bringing Albert's bed and cupboard into the court, the cupboard door is opened and out pops the Pup Dog, who proves to be Beauregard's nephew. The investigators claim that this proves Albert's guilt, since he could have eaten the Pup Dog. However, Albert is triumphantly acquitted, much to the disgust of Wiley Catt, who has walked several miles with Ma's clothesline to hang the culprit.

Much Ado will prove just as interesting to the long-time Pogo reader as it will to people too young to remember anything but the Doyle-Sternecky revival. There are illustrations, some from foreign editions of Pogo. Miz Mamselle Hepzibah, the French skunk, speaks with an Italian accent in the French translation of Pogo. There is a certain appropriateness to this, since the French regard Italians much as Americans regard the French - a people more polite and cultured than themselves, but politically

and economically weaker, and whose women had a reputation for great beauty and charm, but flirted a lot. On opposite pages, Much Ado shows the same sequence in French and Italian editions, with Miz Mamselle speaking each language with the accent of the other. ("Osgi ho rapportat mon amic," says Porkypine to her in the Italian edition, and "Ozourd'houl ze apportare oun' amico" in the French edition.)

There are, however, some minor errors in Burstein's Much Ado. Kelly's satire on Senator Joseph R. McCarthy, "Simple J. Malarkey", was not a name change for the red-neck Wiley Catt. When Malarkey first appeared, Deacon Mushrat introduced him as a cousin of Catt. Congersman Frog's full name is given as "Fenster Moop", but earlier it had been given as "J. Mountfroggerly Frogbottom". (For some reason, humor has frequently been found in names which contain the initial "J", as in "J. Fenimore Frog", "Rocket J. Squirrel", "Bullwinkle J. Moose", or Jackeen J. O'Malley.) Albert had another love interest besides the young female tyrannosaurus in Prehysterical Pogo; his scow in Animal Comics was named after a former ladylove, "Rosemary D." Miz Beaver was not a widow but, like Kudzu Dubose's mother, abandoned by her husband, and in one early episode she had a whole slew of children. Lyndon Johnson once made an appearance in Pogo, not as a moose as Burstein claims, but as a longhorn. In Prehysterical Pogo, he was drawn as a centaur, the hinder half of which is the Lyndon Johnson we all know. Furthermore, Pogo may have been run for president by other people, but I once saw him put up for Vice President. This was done in the spring of 1952 at the University of Chicago, where I was then in attendance, and when Kelly was doing his first "Pogo for President" sequence. His nominator was another student, Horace Taft, youngest son of a then candidate for the Republican nomination, who urged "Taft for President; Pogo for Vice President". And an ad featuring Pogo was not the first comic strip ever to appear in the lordly New York Times; some 75 or 80 years ago the Times had a comic strip called The Roosevelt Bears. Finally, Burstein did not recognize the Latin motto on the tombstone which Albert entered in a poetry contest in the early 1950s. Si Queris Peninsulam Amoenam, Circumspice has nothing to do with the epitaph of Sir Christopher Wren, but is the motto of the state of Michigan.

A price is nowhere listed on Much Ado, but it is actually \$5. Despite my nit-picking comments above, it is well worth getting.

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In any dispute of precedence among warriors, Groo must come before Siegfried. Groo reduces the mystique of heroism to its basic element - he is extremely efficient at killing people. Everything else is additions by story-tellers who are trying to make this singularly unpleasant occupation attractive to their audiences.

So we will treat of Groo first. Groo the Wanderer #66, 67, & 68, dated June, July, and August 1990, have come out since last I commented on the misadventures of this overwhelmingly stupid Iron Age warrior. In #66 the con men Pal and Drum encounter a guru who sits under a tree and utters incoherent statements to a large number of adoring disciples. Having taken on more ordinary sorts of religion in an earlier issue, Sergio Aragones now turns his attention to "Newage" types. Pal and Drum summon the Sage, who is only too willing to rake in money by this artifice. Seeing how easy this is, even Groo sets up in business as a guru. But his stupidity makes him a failure even at this, though his sly old Granny Groo sets up in business as what we would call a "channeller" and rakes in the coins. Then Groo's old enemy Taranto gets into the guru business. ("Bring me more students who, like you, will pay me to tell them how worthless they are." Aragones and Mark Evanier have obviously spent a lot of time in California.) Finally, Groo tells his disciples correctly that he knows nothing, and so impressed are the people by his frankness that they take up his teachings and drive his competitors out of town.

Having created this disaster, in #67 Groo slays a dragon. Only, like L. Sprague de Camp's hero in "Two Yards of Dragon", this dragon was protected, and Groo gets into a great deal of trouble for killing it. So, guided by his loving but exasperated dog Rufferto, Groo seeks the aid of the witches Afba and Dakarba, who respectively meet Ambrose Bierce's two definitions of the word "witch". ("(1) An ugly and repulsive old woman, in a wicked league with the devil. (2) A beautiful and attrac-

ative young woman, in wickedness a league beyond the devil.") The best Groo can do to replace the dragon he slew is to get a very young one at the "Dragon Farm", and the two witches are asked to make it into a big, fierce dragon to replace the one he slew. But this is also a flop, and Groo, Rufferto, and the dragon have to flee the town of Gafas.

In #68, the upshot of this disaster is explained by the Minstrel, another of the running characters in Groo the Wanderer. (Sometimes he has to run very fast, if he is so incautious as to sing a song of Groo in a town that has recently had a visit from him.) The Minstrel begins with a brief reprise of #67, explaining how Groo had slain the tame dragon which the town of Gafas used for its annual pageant, and how disastrous was his attempt to replace it. The new dragon turns out to be a "sissy" who cannot act as fiercely as the pageant requires, but can only do a song and dance routine.

Groo tries to sell his new dragon, but prospective buyers run in terror when they see him and the dragon coming. In the town of Lerolero, the people decide to send for a hero to slay this dragon, and we therefore get Arcadio back into the story.

This Arcadio is a hero, like Groo, but handsomer, taller, more muscular, and much, much more vain. He also has long, flowing blond hair, a large, dimpled chin, and muscles on his muscles. (And if in a subsequent issue I learn that Arcadio's father and mother were twins I will not be in the least surprised.) But, when instead of fighting Arcadio the dragon goes into his song-and-dance act again, the people of Lerolero collapse in laughter at their new champion.

Arcadio is not at a loss. He goes to Arba and Dakarba for help in turning the dragon into something so fierce that his victory over it will impress people. They agree, but at a price extracted from him by ugly old Dakarba - the same price that the ugly old woman extracted from the knight in "The Wyf of Bath's Tale" by Chaucer, in a tradition that probably goes back beyond Sir Gawaine and the Green Knight.

In the great showdown, Arcadio flees - er - leads the dragon out of town, where it stumbles off a cliff and is carried away by the river. The townspeople erect a statue in his honor, while Dakarba tells him: "I hope all our children have my nose and your chin!" And, as the Minstrel ends his song and heads out of town, who should appear in the back of the tavern but Groo, harbinger of yet another disaster in the next issue.

For nearly a decade now, the whole topic of heroism has been taking a beating in Groo the Wanderer. And, to judge from the advertisements which occupy 11 of the 36 pages in each issue, Groo the Wanderer is chiefly aimed at a teen-age audience. (Computer "blitz" games, football and baseball cards, acne cures, and monster movies.) This means that for a decade, young people have been seeing heroes as big, dumb, truculent morons, who don't know how to do anything but kill, and who always bring disaster to the side they think they're helping. This is a welcome and long overdue antidote to the military propaganda we've been subjected to in that same period, for as long as soldiers are portrayed as people worthy of respect, so long will we have war after war after war. Rambo may be the myth, but Groo is the reality - and, if released tomorrow, an animated feature film about Groo would vastly outdraw Rambo IV, should any studio be so foolhardy and so careless of its stockholders' money as to produce such a thing.

At a more sophisticated level, Groo the Wanderer also demolishes the "bearskin Jockstrap" school of fantasy fiction. At least since the first appearance of Conan, nearly sixty years ago, fantasy writers have been creating Conan types, succinctly described in the cleriheW to the left. Meanwhile, in boring ol' real life, several devastating wars have been produced by people called "heroes" by their respective national leaders. So of course there will be increasingly pointed satires on heroes. Even in ancient Greece, the heroic Herakles wound up as a butt of humor, as a stupid, greedy, truculent and gullible musclem.

TWIN GAPS - II

(The scene resumes in the combination sheriff's office, general store, post office, and filling station of Twin Gaps. Present are REVEREND AGENT D. B. COOPER of the United Network for Christian Law Enforcement (UNCLE), SHERIFF PICHARD M. NIXON, his Deputies TORONTO and CHESTER, and CHESTER's wife GRACIE. Everyone is drinking coffee and eating corn muffins.)

COOPER: ...so when UNCLE heard of the Marcie Anderson murder, we realized its connection with a few other unsolved cases on our books. Could you give me a brief flashback to the discovery of her body?

NIXON: Well, it was very early yesterday morning when...

(We flash back to a dairy farm at dawn. A farmer is just driving his cows into a barn, when one of them is spooked by a black cat, bawls, breaks down a fence, and heads into a cornfield where she is quickly lost to sight.)

FARMER: Nancy, you dang fool critter! Git back here before you eat yer fool self into a case of the bloats! (He follows the cow into the field.) Nancy! (We hear nothing but rustling among the cornstalks.) Nancy! Gotcha, you ornery -
- Suh? - Oh, lord gawd almighty!

(The scene fades to a road beside the cornfield, where the FARMER is talking to NIXON and CHESTER.)

FARMER: ...and I saw her, lyin' there, just about forty feet into the field. (He points.) She's wearin' some funny kind of outfit -

(The FARMER leads NIXON and CHESTER between the rows of towering cornstalks. They shortly come upon the body of a young woman, dressed in a close-fitting outfit of imitation leather. She is also wearing brown suede boots, and has a coil of rope at her belt. A little ways away from her close-cropped black hair is a brown peaked cap of the sort you usually see in Robin Hood movies, with a pheasant feather in it.)

NIXON: Why - it's Marcie Anderson! You know - her father manages Bert Corne's realty business.

CHESTER: Gee - she was just in high school - er, Sheriff - I think I'm gonna be -

NIXON (fatherly): All right, Chester.

(CHESTER dashes into the cornstalks and is lost from sight. We then hear sounds indicating that his pylorus valve has slammed shut, and that he is confiding his troubles to Mother Earth.)

FARMER: Is he all right?

NIXON: Yes, this happens every time we get a case. Last week he blew his lunch when we caught old man Buchanan going ten miles over the limit.

(As a green-faced CHESTER rejoins him, NIXON kneels down to examine the body.)

NIXON: There's a rope knotted tight around her neck - but her face isn't discolored. I guess we'll have to sober ol' Doc up so's he can figure out how she died.

Chester, get the stretcher out of the trunk...
(The scene fades back to the sheriff's office.)

NIXON: ...and when we got her to Doc's office, we found that she was clutching a little figurine in her right fist. Here it is. (He hands COOPER a statuette about two inches tall. It is a female figure clad as MARCIE's body was, and carrying a dagger in one hand and a bunch of skeleton keys in the other. The keys are disproportionately large for the figure, and look as if they might be real.)

COOPER: Umm - yes, this confirms what we'd suspected at UNCLE. Dick, I'm afraid you've got a very serious situation here in this superficially quiet, typical, conventional, Christian, middle-American town.

GRACIE: Well, Reverend Agent Cooper, it's not really all that quiet. Just three weeks ago there was a dogfight right on Main Street. And the shivaree when Chester and I got married lasted until nearly 1 AM!

COOPER: No, this is far more serious. Dick, Toronto, Chester - Gracie - have you ever heard of a game called Wizards & Lizards?

THE OTHERS: Oh, no!!!

GETTING CAUGHT UP

DAGON is published every third Saturday by John Boardman, 234 East 19th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11226-5302. (This may change, in September, to every fourth week. See DAGON #409 for details.) DAGON circulates through APA-Q, an amateur press association which is collated at the same address and frequency. Comments of other APA-Q members on the proposal to go from a 3-week to a 4-week schedule would be appreciated. In addition to circulating through APA-Q, DAGON goes to a number of other people who have subscribed (12 issues for \$10) or whom the editor thinks might be interested in it. The copy count for APA-Q is 35, and the next three deadlines are 14 July for the 318th Distribution, 4 August for the 319th, and 25 August for the 320th.

Incidentally, I'll be needing a little help with the 319th Distribution. Saturday 4 August is the deadline date for the 319th Distribution of APA-Q, the 47th Mailing of APA-Filk, and the 580th issue of my war-gaming fanzine GRAUSTARK. Anyone who wants to help collate these three items should gather here at about 2 PM on that afternoon and help assemble them and diminish the available beer supply.

APA-Filk is the quarterly amateur press association for filksinging, founded in 1979 by Robert B. Lipton. The copy count for APA-Filk is 60, so if you'd like to contribute mail your 'zine so it will get here by 4 August, or show up that afternoon with it. APA-Q and APA-Filk are both available for postage and packing money. Just send a few dollars and you'll get either or both apas, as you wish. For details of the present status of these accounts, see "The Ministry of Finance", elsewhere in this issue.

As for GRAUSTARK, it has since 1963 carried postal games of Avalon-Hill's board game of war and negotiation, Diplomacy, which was designed by Allan B. Calhamer. Currently ten postal Diplomacy games are running in GRAUSTARK, along with a re-run of the serial "The Adventures of Secret Agent O-O-Hate". This serial first ran in 1966-1969, and to judge from the enthusiasm with which the U. S. is promoting military adventures in Latin America, I haven't started this reprint a minute too soon. If you are interested in postal play of Diplomacy or other games, drop me a line.

APA-Qover #315 (me): I don't have quite the unlimited access of photoduplicating facilities that I used to, and thanks to the accident in my workroom which I mentioned in the last DAGON I don't know when I'm going to get that electrostenciller set up. This means that I can't crank out collage covers whenever nothing else shows up. Before you start cheering about that, let me remind you that I put collage covers on apas only when nobody else has sent in a cover.

Blancmange #236 (Blackman): Who's Had Who is now on sale in this country. A quick check of it in bookstores indicates that the American edition has repeated all the historical inaccuracies of the British edition. And Jennifer Fitzgerald is mentioned nowhere! The book does, however, mention the most historically significant event that has taken place at the United Nations headquarters in its entire history - a sexual encounter between the brother of the President of the United States of America and the niece of the President of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic.

That line about "The winter of our discontent" was also used to parodic effect by Barbara Garson in her 1966 satire MacBird, which cribbed the plot of MacBeth and the lines of numerous other Shakespeare plays (and even a little Eugene O'Neil and Arthur Miller) to cast contempt upon a half-crazed, uneducated, bloodthirsty shitkicker who through a succession of political and historical accidents was then President of the United States of America. At the coronation of King Ken O'Dunc, MacBird grumbles to a croupy, "This here is the winter of our discontent, Made odious by that son of..."

Marion Zimmer Bradley's Darkover, like Ray Bradbury's Mars, is believed by many critics to be science-fiction because the stories are set on another planet. But this is a minor detail for those authors, and the series really qualify, on internal evidence, as fantasy. My own comments on Ray Bradbury's

Once there was the People - Zenna gave them birth.
Once there was the People - and they all hid out on Earth.
Earth, they thought, would make them all wear yellow stars,
But they really came from Ray Bradbury's Mars.

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bars appear in the verse on the previous page, which also plaits into the comment the "People" as defined by Rudyard Kipling in "MacDonough's Song" and the "People" of Zenna Henderson's stories of mutant castaways of some 40 years back.

Jesus, and various saints, are indeed the interlopers into many fine old northern European Pagan customs and festivals which continue to this day. In fact, this was deliberate policy by the earliest Christian missionaries in those parts. If people looked over their stores of grain and hay in mid-winter, counted their livestock, and threw a big feast at which they slaughtered and ate the animals that they couldn't feed till spring, the Christians just made it a feast in honor of the birth of their god. And it continues after Christianity too; as you have observed, even Atheists like us put up Christmas trees.

Christopher Hatton may have other distinctions than the ones mentioned by either you or me. The 1990 Whitaker's Almanack lists in the nobility section one Christopher Denys Stormont Finch Hatton, Earl of Winchilsea and Nottingham. The earl's heir, Viscount Maidstone, is given as having been born in 1967.

A lot of people have surfaced during the late 1970s and 1980s, saying that they once supported the US invasion of Vietnam, but have since reconsidered. That's all well and good, and I'm sure their consciences are at greater ease now. But - where were they in 1965 when we needed them?

Thanks to Roger Rabbit, it seems that short color animated cartoon features will once again make an appearance in movie theaters. And, with television news becoming steadily more pretentious and shallow, we may even see the return of the black-and-white newsreel. ("Today sixty thousand Germans marched in Munich to demand return to the Fatherland of formerly German regions now under foreign rule...French troops put down rioting in Tchad...Indian spiritual leader promises to fast until demands are met...Romanian rioters smash windows of Jewish-owned shops...Soup kitchens overwhelmed as another Detroit factory shuts down...Lone balloonist tries for record Pacific crossing...")

NEVER Bluff a Librarian #69 (Burwasser): You make a good point about "Satanism" being a fantasy rather than a heresy.

Several American Catholic Churches have already split off from Rome. Headquartered in Washington is something called the Catholic Orthodox Church, which thinks that Pope John Paul II is a KGB agent. At the other extreme is the "Michaeline Rite", of which Katherine Kurtz is a priestess and in which she performed a mass at Lunacon. Centered in (of all places) Cour d'Alene, Idaho, is a traditionalist Catholic group which may soon break openly with Rome.

Patrick M. Reynolds, whose Big Apple Almanac I have sometimes cited in DAGON, gave the origin of the name and joke of "Gotham" in the 10 June 1990 issue of Newsday. As "a place for sly fools" it was attached to New York by Washington Irving and a couple of friends in their pamphlet Salmagundi in 1807.

Desmond Seward's approach, in Richard III: England's Black Legend is characteristic of amateur historians who set up in the ax-grinding business. You will also find this approach in those tedious tracts which attempt to prove that President Roosevelt set up the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor to fulfill a burning desire to bring the US into World War II. I have the distinct impression that George, Duke of Clarence really was the sort of opportunistic, double-dealing sleazeball that the Tudor historians said King Richard III was. But, while King Richard was given a bum rap on a lot of matters, I think that two charges of infanticide will stick. The give-away of the title "Duke of Norfolk" proves it for me. That title belonged to the younger of the two princes in the tower, through a pro forma marriage with the little girl who was the Norfolk heiress. But, later in 1483, Richard III gave that same title to his supporter John Howard, in whose family it still is. Under the mindset of the time, he couldn't have awarded it anew unless its previous holder had died without an heir, or been stripped of it by a judicial process. "You do the math," as Sally said to Harry in Katz's Delicatessen.

DAGON #408 (me): I made a few errors in describing the Shakespeare plays which will be presented in Central Park this summer. See "The Ministry of Miscellany", elsewhere in this issue, for details.

I'LL SEE YOU IN THE FUNNY PAPERS (continued from p. 4)

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Thanks to Mark Blackman, I can review here the DC version of The Ring of the Nibelung, done in four volumes corresponding to the four Wagner operas by Roy Thomas, with art by Gil Kane, coloring by Jim Woodring, and lettering by John Costanza. The volumes are \$5 each, and are "Suggested for Mature Readers", which is probably a good idea because blood flows freely all over the place, and the nipple count is high.

The artwork is heavily influenced by both traditional DC superhero style and Japanese manga. Almost everyone, male or female, good guy or bad guy, god, man, giant, or dwarf, has bare legs and calf boots, even though the torso may be heavily armored. Siegmund and Siegfried display the fact that Gil Kane created the DC Conan.

Prior to the actual opening of "The Rhinegold", we get a condensed version of the old Norse creation myth, though Audhumla is promoted into "the living void" rather than being a mere cow, and we never do see where the first god, Berre, came from. (In the Younger Edda, Audhumla saw him frozen into a block of ice, and licked it away from him, releasing him into the world.) As I had suspected, we see the blood of the slain giant Ymir flowing down to become the waters of the newly created Earth, as the gods made the soil of his flesh, the rocks of his bones, the vault of heaven from his skull, the clouds of his brains, and heaven of his eyebrows. (The maggots in his flesh became the race of dwarfs!)

All of Wagner's notions about race are present in the artwork, which hews faithfully to the operas. Wotan is a venerable and muscular greybeard; the other gods are blonds or redheads - except for the fire-god Loge, who has black hair. The Volsungs are fair and the Gibichungs are dark, while the giants and dwarfs are misshapen. However, the gods are arrogant manipulators and the Volsungs and other humans live only for warfare and conquest. The only people we see actually making things are the ugly giants and the sly, sleazy dwarfs - except for the young Siegfried, who learned sword-forging from the dwarf Mime, and of course outdoes him at it.

Volsunga Saga Ring der Nibelungen

Odhin	Wotan
Frigga	Fricka
Freyja/Idhunn	Freia
Thor	Donner
Frey	Froh
Loki	Loge
Vola	Erda
Sigmund	Siegmund
Signy	Sieglinde
Siggeir	Hunding
Brynhild	Brünnhilde
Regin/Mimir	Mime
Sinfjötli/Sigurd	Siegfried
Fafnir	Fafner
Giukings	Gibichungs
Gunnar	Gunther
Gudhrun	Gutrune
Hogni	Hagen

After a brief recital of the creation myth, "The Rhinegold" takes us to the beginning of the opera of that name. The Rhinemaidens are not mermaids here, but fully human and buck naked. They are drawn in the standard comic book "T & A" style, and are also malicious cockteasers.

The second book, "The Valkyrie", is going to cause trouble out in the Bible Belt. The main plot is the incestuous love affair between Siegmund and his twin sister Sieglinde -- and this love affair is presented sympathetically, while Sieglinde's husband Hunding is made out to be a nasty old spoilsport for objecting to this romantic interlude.

By this time, of course, all of you who have ever heard Anna Russell's account of the "Ring" operas are thinking of her description of Siegfried as "a regular

Li'l Abner type". The young Siegfried gets perpetual mirth from the fears of the dwarf Mime, who had merely saved his life and taught him all he knows about weapons-craft. The battle with the dragon Fafner is done in the best DC superhero style, with cries of "HARRARG" and "THRAKKKKK" coming from the dragon's throat.

But all this is merely the prelude to the rescue of Brünnhilde, and the fatal encounter of Siegfried and Brünnhilde with the Gibichungs. To be precise, there are two and a half Gibichungs: King Gunther, his sister Gutrune, and a half-brother named Hagen, who was sired by our old friend Alberich, the evil genius of the tale.

"Alberich", incidentally, is not a name but a title. It means "King of the Elves", for the Old Norse word alf can be applied to any supernatural being, and is at one point or another given to gods, dwarfs, or elves. In a French modification, "Alberich" became "Oberon", so the nasty little schemer of the "Ring" operas becomes the darkly noble Faery King of A Midsummer Night's Dream.

As you might expect by now, the Gibichungs all have dark hair. Furthermore, the Hall of the Gibichungs is done in comic-book barbarian style, with a spread-winged pterodactyl over its entrance, another over the throne, and the head of a carnosaur on a Gibichung banner. Hagen has a medieval "soubowl" haircut, resembling the one I have seen on what purports to be an authentic picture of England's King Henry V. He also has King Henry's lantern jaw, making me wonder whether Kane was working off that portrait, and whether he thus intended to make a statement about Shakespeare's hero-king and his futile quest for military glory.

Wagner's principal source for the "Ring" operas was the Völsunga Saga, whose characters have a rough correspondence to those in the operas. And the DC treatment follows the Völsunga Saga in making Wotan/Odhin the evil genius, who first sires the lineage of Völsung and then appears at crises in the lives of his descendants. This, I feel, breaks with Wagner's Wotan, who is a noble figure bound by Fate and his own oaths, and who perishes in the conflagration begun by Siegfried's funeral pyre. Wagner's villains are Alberich, whose lust for the Rhinegold sets the whole plot afoot, and Alberich's brother Mime, who tries to turn the noble Siegfried into a mere instrument of his revenge. But, by invoking the Nordic creation myth, Thomas and Kane put the blame on Wotan's power-hunger. We are reminded of another Germanic chieftain whose lust for power led to his death amidst the conflagration that destroyed his empire.

The minor items are well done. The runes on Siegfried's dagger-sheath spell out Roy Thomas's initials. After he drinks the well-known love potion, Siegfried's head is seen surrounded by the bubbles that traditionally indicate comic-book befuddlement. And the heavy alliteration of Old Norse poetry makes frequent appearances, in such lines as "'Oft has Donner doled out giants their due!" and "I, who found you first a fiery blaze."

The nine Valkyries, as drawn by Kane, raise once more a question that puzzles every reader of comics that feature warrior women, from Red Sonja to the Dirty Pair. Why do the clothes of such active types in the comic books differ so greatly from what female athletes wear in the mere Real World?

This is
O At
P Great
E Intervals
R This
A Appears
T To
I Inflamm
O Optic
N Nerves

From warriors we turn, with a sigh of relief, to sex. The 9th issue of Larry Welz's Cherry is out, featuring not only further adventures of his "counter-Archie", Cherry Poptart, but also guest features from Larry Todd and Mark Bode, younger brother of Vaughn of cherished memory. The lead story stars Cherry in that venerable "urban folklore" legend, "The Phantom Hitchhiker". (For further details, see Jan Harold Brunvand's The Vanishing Hitchhiker and its sequels.)

1613

We also see Cherry in a feature which illustrates a motif rather popular just now - a comparison of our own time with the hot and heavy era of the late 1960s and early 1970s. This is particularly relevant just now because the Bush Administration is trying to promote close to \$100,000,000 to send in "advisers" and build "bases" in the jungles of Peru and Colombia, to "help" the local pro-American governments fight purportedly Communist guerrillas. If you are over 35, you may want to dig through your closets and trunks for those old love-beads, bell-bottoms, and the instructions about what to do if you're tear-gassed.

What the teen-aged and sexually active Cherry finds, going through the closets of her attractive, blonde, divorced mother, are the afore-mentioned love-beads and bell-bottoms, together with a headband and a peace medallion. Dressed in this outfit, she fantasizes herself at a love-in, where she gets laid to the tune of a rock band, back when rock was more than musical wallpaper.

After several panels of fantasies on this theme, Cherry tries on a Renaissance

Faire costume. (The name of the Society for Creative Anachronism ought to appear somewhere along here, except that Welz has obviously heard of their pettifoggish and litigious character.) We quickly get into another fantasy, under the walls of a crenelated castle, of the "Ho there, thou saucy wench!" variety. Then she finds her mother's old wedding dress, and proceeds to fantasize a wedding which is consummated at the minister's feet, while the guests all extend the ceremony into an orgy, a situation that probably existed in reality before Europe was totally Christianized.

Cherry puts the things away and gets dressed just as her mother comes home. But her mother asks to borrow an outfit for a party, and in Cherry's closet finds a leather jacket and miniskirt, both festooned with chains. Mom tries this on and is enthusiastic: "...I can see myself taking on a whole gang of hunky bikers in this..." And, thanks to Welz, we get to see Mom's fantasy of just this.

Larry Todd, one of the most under-rated cartoonists of his generation, is represented with "Mad Maxine, the Road Whorrior". This, of course, takes off on Mad Max, one of the best of a bad lot of "Our Barbaric Descendants" fantasies with which s-f has been fooling around for decades. And Mark Bode, who tries to do his brother's style and sometimes gets close to it, is here with a feature in which Cherry meets Sara Tungi, apparently a Bode character who appears in Penthouse. Cherry and Tungi get it on for a while, with the help of a few appliances, but then they get suspicious about all the male fantasies they are expected to exercise, and emerge from the drawing board to find their artists imposing these actions on them with one-handed drawing. The women take charge of the situation; buy it (\$2.50) for details.

A three-page item by Welz shows Cherry and one of her boyfriends separately being browbeaten by high school teachers who disapprove of their ways of life. A female guidance counselor tries to get Cherry to be less "undignified" in her clothing and way of life, and to "build strong moral character". Meanwhile, a male coach belabors the youth's mild character, and says, "Y'gotta be a man!...Y'gotta kick some ass! You have to be aggressive in this man's world or you'll never get anywhere!" And what do we see in the last panel but the guidance counselor, dressed as a stereotype dominatrix, whipping the shackled coach with a riding crop. ("Please beat me! I've been a bad boy!")

The inside back cover of Cherry '89 promises a "live action feature length Cherry movie coming your way very soon!" So much for the pack of prudes who are currently trying to censor the popular arts into oblivion. And the inside front cover parodies an over-worked anti-drug commercial, showing Cherry, wearing an apron and nothing else, standing over a stove with a spatula in her hand. There is an egg in a pan over the fire. The egg "is your brain", the pan "is the media", and the fire "is the government". Any questions?

*

The Doonesbury sequence for 11-16 June also did a retrospective on the 1960s. Joanie, whom we first met when Doonesbury and Zonker Harris were "on the road", was already a runaway housewife in her late 30s, who eventually went to law school, was reconciled with her daughter J. J., and has made a life of her own with a second husband and a young son. But now, she is trying to get in touch with her younger self, who obligingly shows up and has a conversation with her. This time the Joanie of the late 1960s is a young mother in a flowered granny dress, with a ponytail and no shoes. The young Joanie is disturbed that the old Joanie has romanticized the years of her youth in the '60s, while the old Joanie is dismayed by the young Joanie's self-esteem problem.

*

Newsday of 15 June had a "ballot" on whom you would vote as "Father of the Year". In addition to such obvious choices as Dr. Clifford Huxtable and Charlie Chan, there were Gepetto and Homer Simpson. But we'll soon have a better chance to compare Huxtable and Simpson. This fall, the Fox Network is putting The Simpsons up against The Bill Cosby Show. This will probably be to Fox's advantage in the ratings, as The Cosby Show has been on for so long that parodies are popping up all over the place, and The Simpsons is probably one of them. If irreverence towards the accepted pieties of American life is now back in fashion, there could probably be a better focus for it than The Simpsons, whose artwork and writing are very poor.

THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE

If you would like to get APA-Q by mail, just send in a few dollars and I'll charge this account for postage and envelopes (25¢ each) as I mail your Distributions to you. As of 17 June 1990, account balances are:

Lee Burwasser	\$10.28	Robert B. Lipton*#	\$18.72	Alan Rachlin	\$18.45
Philip M. Cohen	\$4.18	John Malay#	\$4.93	Robert Sacks	\$20.70
Don. Del Grande	\$15.30	Richard McCluney	\$12.35	Jane T. Sibley*	\$15.58
Robert Hauser	\$8.88	Jeff Poretzky*	\$15.65		

* - Also receives APA-Filk on this account
 # - Gets APA-Q by 1st-class mail.

In the space to the right is the balance after costs for this Distribution:

Accounts which fall into arrears will be suspended. Presently suspended accounts are:

Robert J. Baker	-\$1.10	Liz Ensley	-37¢	Ted Pauls	-39¢
Vinnie Bartilucci	-76¢	Harold Feld*	-19¢	Lana Raymond*#	12¢
Andre Bridget	-72¢	John Hartzell	-79¢	Frank Schildiner	-15¢
Shelby Bush	-\$5.98	Daniel B. Holzman	-\$1.05	Joyce Scrivner	-75¢
Tom & Barbara Byro	-85¢	Mark Keller	-86¢	Peter G. Trei	-73¢
John Colton	-88¢	Barbara Koksäl	-20¢	Gary Tesser	-90¢
John Desmond	-39¢				

THE MINISTRY OF MISCELLANY

The haste with which the 316th Distribution was put together caused me to make at least two major errors. One was rubber-stamping the number "315" rather than "316" on the collage cover. The other was in the details of the Central Park Shakespeare productions this summer.

The former was caught by Mark Blackman and other readers, and if a collage cover has to go on this Distribution I'll pay rather closer attention to the rubber stamps. (If I can find time to get it duplicated, and no other cover comes in at the last moment, you'll find it on this 317th Distribution. It is a collaborative effort by Mark Blackman, myself, and whoever provided the inside front cover, which has been sitting in my files for so long that I've forgotten how I got it.)

As for The Taming of the Shrew and Richard III, I gave some of the leads incorrectly. Tracey Ullman is playing Kate in the former play, and anyone who has seen her TV show knows that she can be expected to give an excellent performance. Playing opposite her as the shrewd Petruchio is Morgan Freeman, fresh from his role as the chauffeur in Driving Miss Daisy.

Yes, one's white and the other's black. Consider how recently this would have sent many people into convulsion fits. It was less than 50 years ago that a riders' strike forced the New York City Transit Authority to put black drivers on its Harlem routes. And racial superstitions are still with us in benighted regions such as Bensonhurst, where the gang of murderers was having a cow about the chance that a local white woman might be inviting blacks to her birthday party.

But, while we wait for Ullman and Freeman to play lovers in the "Wild West" setting that this production will have, we saw last week on the Public Broadcasting System a production of Wagner's Die Walküre in which Jessye Norman (black) as Sieglinde and Gary Lakes (white) as Siegmund played twins and lovers. Even the people who have no objection to the casting may get upset about the incest; what act would follow Robert Mapplethorpe better than Richard Wagner?

A. J. Antoon, who is directing The Taming of the Shrew, has already given us one out-of-period production in Central Park. In 1972 he gave us a very good Much Ado About Nothing, set in about 1899. In the first act of Much Ado About Nothing, a victorious army marches into its home town, and the two principal male leads set about

the business of wooing and winning their ladyloves. But these men were dressed as if they had just stormed up San Juan Hill, and the rest of the cast dressed accordingly, except for the villain and his henchmen, who looked like 1920s gangsters.* It worked very well this way. More generally, the Shakespeare Theater's out-of-period productions are a mixed bag; some work very well, while others have been failures.

"Freeman's Petruchio will be a 'wild, crazy man who's been through everything,'" Antoon said, sketching in a background that includes Petruchio's boyhood during the Civil War and his young manhood as a riverboat gambler." (Allan Wallach, Newsday, 27 May 1990). Furthermore, reports Mervyn Rothstein in the New York Times of 19 June, "the actors wear leather holsters and tote six-shooters they sometimes twirl on their index fingers." Towards this "Wild West" end, Antoon has modernized some of the language. ("Mah super dainty Kate.")

The first production of this play was last night, though in accordance with the Delacorte Theater's custom the official opening, after which reviews are published, won't be until Thursday 12 July. The play will run until Sunday 22 July, and then will yield place to Richard III, which will open on Friday 3 August with Robin Phillips directing and Denzel Washington in the title role.

Yes, that's Denzel Washington, who got an academy award playing a soldier of the famous 54th Massachusetts Regiment in Glory.

The tickets will be distributed on lines by the usual arrangement. During First Saturday, two weeks from today, I plan to organize a discussion as to when would be the best day to have a Line Party. Owing to the Big Hollywood Names that Papp is getting in for his more recent plays, we'd better start getting there at noon. If half the people in the party can be there by noon, we can hold places for the other half if they arrive by 6 PM.

*

"It's not over till the fat lady sings," is a commonly heard phrase, usually at a sporting event where the members and partisans of the team that is behind utter their hope that victory can be achieved by the end of the game. This expression probably comes from Wagner's opera Siegfried. We are sometimes told that it has something to do with the singing of the national anthem at sporting events, but this is done at the beginning of proceedings, not at the end.

There are no female characters on stage in Siegfried until after the hero slays the dragon and wins the Nibelung hoard. Then his exposure to dragon's blood makes it possible for him to understand the twittering of a "Forest Bird" who tells him that a woman worthy of him sleeps behind a wall of fire and can be won only by the greatest of heroes. This, of course, is Brünnhilde, whom Anna Russell reminds us is Siegfried's aunt. (And there's another bit of incest for the censors to get upset about.) So Siegfried rescues her, kisses her awake in the best mythological tradition, and they have a love duet, in the opera's last scene.

By an operatic tradition which long ago transcended the stage and entered comic art, Brünnhilde is traditionally played by a rather large woman. This tradition was certainly followed in the only Ring opera I actually saw in an opera house, nearly 30 years ago in the old Metropolitan. Siegfried was sung very well by a handsome, blond, muscular Hans Hopf. But the Brünnhilde he rescued looked just like all the Brünnhildes of caricature - a large, shapeless woman in a large, shapeless, pale blue robe. (I later learned that the singer cast in the role couldn't make it, and that this was a substitute Brünnhilde. She looked more like a substitute fullback.)

And so, at the very end of Siegfried, "the fat lady sings". This has to be the origin of that phrase.

In the PBS production, Brünnhilde was sung by Hildegard Behrens, the same one on which the Hall of the Gibichungs collapsed in a Met production of Götterdämmerung on 20 April. She by no means fits the standard caricature of Brünnhilde. In fact, she

* - Actually, those guys whom Teddy Roosevelt led up San Juan Hill got into deep doo-doo, as our present President would say, and had to have their butts rescued by a unit of African-American military laborers - a little matter that "T. R.'s" admirers somehow never managed to remember.

Looks like an older version of Amanda Bearse, who plays the yuppie neighbor of the Bundy family in Married with Children.

*

Marty Newman (Mr. Mimeo), purveyor of mimeograph supplies to many New York fans, has recently announced his summer hours. He will be closed on every Friday in July and August, and also for a period of over two weeks from 19 July through 3 August. In addition, he will be closed on every Wednesday from 27 June through 29 August except for 18 July, and also on 2 July.

His address is 1140 Broadway (Room 1001), and his phone number is 212-889-7781.

*

It now seems fairly obvious that this Distribution of APA-Q will actually go into the mail on Wednesday 27 June, although it is dated the 23rd. The deadline for the 31st Distribution remains Saturday 14 July, and I anticipate no difficulties that will prevent it from getting out on time.

*

A couple of weeks ago I was on West 42nd Street when I saw a man setting up a sidewalk table of books and magazines. These have proliferated in New York City since a court decision determined that the First Amendment made books exempt from the usual laws against going into business on a sidewalk. Such dealers fall into two kinds: entrepreneurs who are selling titles designed to appeal to a general readership that includes a lot of children ("Mommy, buy me that!") and dealers who have heaps of used books and magazines, usually one of each. I would guess that this latter class consists of people who have fallen upon hard times and are selling off their personal libraries.

This dealer was of the latter class, and as I looked over his table I suddenly saw a book I have wanted to own for years. It was The City Without Jews, written in 1924 by Hugo Bettauer, the Salman Rushdie of his time. The City Without Jews is a satire on anti-Semitism. It is set in the Vienna of Bettauer's own time, but could apply equally well to any country, any era, and for that matter any minority against whom it may be currently fashionable to raise the hue and cry.

Bettauer had a long and colorful career behind him when he wrote this book. He had been a journalist in New York, and was a veteran of Hearst's German-language New York newspaper. In post-war Vienna his American dollars went a long way in that inflation-riddled nation, and he not only wrote novels, but also started his own magazine.

The appearance of The City Without Jews created a sensation. It went into 54 editions in less than a year, and was translated into many languages. And, for this literary triumph, Bettauer was murdered in 1926 by a 20-year-old Nazi student, who accused him of "degrading German Kultur."

Despite the vast difference in their literary styles, the case of Hugo Bettauer calls to mind that of Salman Rushdie, author of The Satanic Verses. As the Nazis did with Bettauer, the Moslems have put out a death sentence on Rushdie. So far, the Moslems have not been able to do what the Nazis did. Rushdie is in hiding, but he is completing another novel, and his articles have appeared in many literary journals. So far, the only people to die in the controversy over The Satanic Verses have been Moslems, shot by other Moslems.

In the long run, it does not matter whether Moslems are able to carry out their death sentence against Rushdie. His ornate literary style will be studied in English Literature classes long after everyone has forgotten what an "ayatollah" is. Bettauer's The City Without Jews will stand on my bookshelves next to The Satanic Verses as not only very readable books, but as symbols of the ongoing fight against the forces of censorship and religious bigotry.

*

I am very sorry to have to report to the members of APA-Q and the readers of DA-GOII the death of Adrienne Fein. Adrienne, who was frequently our guest at First Saturdays, had been hospitalized as the result of an auto accident. While she was there, she was diagnosed with cancer, which had metastasized. She died of the effects of an embolism on 23 June 1990.

I'll have more about the memorial service for Adrienne in the next issue, as this one is already late.

*

The second round of the World Soccer Cup tournament is over, and the quarter-finals are coming up. Forthcoming games are given below. All times are Eastern Daylight. The games are broadcast in English on TNT cable and in Spanish on Univision, which in the Greater New York City area is Channel 41.

Saturday 30 June, 11 AM: Argentina vs. Yugoslavia, Florence

Saturday, 30 June, 3 PM: Ireland vs. Italy, Rome

Sunday 1 July, 11 AM: Czechoslovakia vs. West Germany, Milan

Sunday 1 July, 3 PM: Cameroon vs. England, Naples

The semi-final games are each at 2 PM on these dates:

Tuesday 3 July: Argentina-Yugoslavia winner vs. Ireland-Italy winner, Naples

Wednesday 4 July: Czechoslovakia-West Germany winner vs. England-Cameroon winner, Turin

The losers of these two semi-final games will meet at 2 PM on Saturday 7 July at Bari. The World Cup Final will be settled at 2 PM on Sunday 8 July in Rome.

The big surprise of the World Cup thus far has been the feisty, enthusiastic Cameroonian team. This is the first African team to make it to the quarter-finals in the 60-year history of the World Cup, and their victories over mighty Argentina, Romania, and Colombia have made them well-liked by soccer fans. England's record has not been outstanding, and there is a possibility that Cameroon may advance even further.

There are other reasons why a win by Cameroon over England would be welcome. If England wins its quarter-final game, it will go on to a semi-final in Turin. Turin is the home of Juventus, whose game in Brussels against Liverpool a few years ago was the occasion for the murder of over thirty Juventus supporters by the notorious English soccer rowdies. The people of Turin are probably not anxious to have an English team among them.

The Italian team has been doing its usual efficient job of sweeping down the field in the face of any opposition. And the luck of the schedule has given them relatively weak opposition, including the U. S. A., Austria, and Uruguay. The first team Ireland ever sent to a World Cup has done very well in getting to the Quarter-finals, but they're not in the same class as Italy. At this point I look for Italy to become the first nation whose national soccer team wins a fourth World Cup.

Argentina has been fighting its way back from the humiliation of a 1-0 loss to Cameroon in the tournament opener. And, as you might expect, it has been dirty fighting. The notorious Diego Maradona diverted a Soviet goal shot with his hand, which is old stuff for Maradona but still against the rules of soccer. As usual, the referees refuse to see major violations by Maradona, leaving opposing players to assert the integrity of the sport by playing very roughly against him. (He was fouled over a dozen times in the Cameroon game.) The Yugoslavs are a pretty rough lot in their own right.

In the New York Post of 8 June 1990, Mike Barnard tried to predict which of the 24-team field would advance to the second round. He had Austria, the USSR, and Sweden making it; they didn't, and Sweden didn't get so much as a tie. They were replaced by Colombia, Costa Rica, and Romania, which Barnard missed, and which were all eliminated in the second round.

By the time many DAGON readers get this, it may all be over. And then it will be our turn, since the U. S. will be host to the World Cup in 1994. Our guests then may have to get used to a narrower field. Most of these games will be played in stadiums originally designed for football, and a U. S. football field is usually rather narrower than a soccer pitch.

*

Don Del Grande seeds along some speculations on the question I raised in the last issue, as to why the divorce rate is higher among artists than among scientists. "Perhaps it's because artists (the emotional ones) are more likely to get married on the spur of the moment, while scientists (the logical ones) are more likely to wait until they are fairly sure they are doing the right thing with the right person." This seems to me to make sense.

Don also votes in favor of extending the APA-Q deadlines from 3 to 4 weeks apart. So far, only he and I have sent in opinions on this point. Don also observes that Philip K. Dick's Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? has been re-published in paperback under the title of the movie that was made of it: Blade Runner. This he regards as the replacement of "s-f" by "sci-fi".

*

The "cold fusion" farce is drifting from error into fraud. In What's New of 8 June, Robert L. Park tartly observes that "tritium contamination of the palladium used in cathodes has been identified as the source of some of the persistent 'Elvis sightings' that have kept the spark of hope alive in the breasts of cold fusion loyalists." Aside from the University of Utah, where cold fusion has long since been elevated from science into Utah boosterism, confirmatory reports have been coming from Texas A&M.

This presents two problems. One is that Texas A&M has long been an academic laughingstock in the southwest. (Some "Aggie" jokes have even got this far east.) It is primarily a military school, whose undergraduates are called "cadets" rather than "students". They are obviously desperate there for something that would cause the name of Texas A&M to be linked with something other than football and "Aggie" jokes.

The other problem is - how does tritium, the extra-heavy radioactive isotope of hydrogen, get to pollute palladium cathodes? At first it was claimed that this contamination was in palladium from one particular supplier. But in What's New of 15 June, Park cited a Science article of that same date which raises the suspicion of deliberate fraud. "A strong circumstantial case is made that cold fusion cells in the Chemistry Department...were deliberately spiked with tritium." Texas A&M has responded by criticizing Science for making the controversy public. Those of us who have seen political or economic or business leaders respond in this way to allegations of misconduct know what this means. It can usually be interpreted as, "Yes, some hanky-panky is going on, but it's not nice of you to say so before we have our cover story straight." If it works for Reagan and Bush, it'll work for Pons and Fleischmann.

Elsewhere in these issues of What's New, Fork addresses what is likely to be the next big collision between the physical sciences and politics - the claims made by irresponsible writers about alleged ill effects of electric power lines. These claims first surfaced in that eminent scientific journal The New Yorker, and have been repeated by the stop-science lobby wherever electric power lines are under construction. People are even being scared about electric blankets, since these like every other electrical appliance in the household are plugged into 60-cycle power lines.

Repr. Frank Pallone (D-NJ), whose party has traditionally been the more hostile to new developments in science and technology*, has introduced into Congress the "Electric and Magnetic Field Research and Information Act". This bill would spend \$34,000,000 over the next five years to study alleged health effects of exposure to electric and magnetic fields. However, much of the research Pallone wants is already under way in a National Cancer Institute study.

On the basis of other government investigations of everything from flying saucers to Communist infiltration I can confidently predict what will happen. After immense infusions of public money, a federal study will conclude that there are no significant deleterious effects of alternating current electricity on the human body. Then the enthusiasts will screech "Coverup! Coverup!", and try to win by political

* - Does anybody remember Walter Mondale's 1984 pledge to stop the space shuttle program if he was elected President? For that matter, does anybody remember Walter Mondale?

methods what they cannot prove by scientific methods. For models see the campaigns against nuclear power plants, the teaching of evolution, and transfusion of blood from blacks into whites or vice versa.

*

It now appears that there will be a specially designed cover for this 317th Distribution of APA-Q. I am therefore going to make this issue of DAGON the last item in this Distribution, since it contains all the bibliographic information. Another such cover will probably be printed & ready for the next Distribution, and used then if no other cover comes in.

*

Bruce Schneier, whose last mention in these pages concerned his comments on the shoddy construction of the old "Berlin Wall", has a new address: #1, 1935 W. Pratt St., Chicago, IL 60626.

*

Anthony, freshly turned six, is in town this week; on the drive up from Maryland he demonstrated his new expertise in reading road signs. He's not up to town names yet, but he's been taught about all the warning signs. Next Saturday he'll be handed back to his mother at his Aunt Karina's birthday party, which will be held at her father-in-law's house in Morrmouth County. But we hope that he'll be able to pay us another visit later this summer.

Next summer it'll be us who pay the visit. On 10 August 1991 my parents will mark their sixtieth wedding anniversary, and that will be the occasion for a major family reunion.

*

We recently bought a computer and printer from Karina and Dean. The computer is a Tandy PC clone, and the printer is a daisy-wheel, though not strong enough to cut mimeograph stencils. If I can find out how to work all the necessary machines, my fan-pubbing may go over to word-processing the first draft on the computer, and then making a stencil out of it on the electrostenciller, and finally printing it on an elderly Gestetner.

Over the years of the Computer Age, I have from time to time been told that a daisy-wheel printer is capable of cutting a printable mimeograph stencil. When put to the test, this assertion always proves overly optimistic.

With the computer and printer we also got a huge heap of manuals and software. I expect to renew my acquaintance with the classic Adventure, and also make a little more progress into the intricacies of Wizardry and Zork than has previously been possible in intermittent attempts on someone else's computer. I may not carry this enthusiasm to Temple of Apshai, however; it is my impression that for this primarily insect-ridden dungeon a sword or bow is not as useful as a can of Raid would be.

DAGON #410

John Boardman
234 East 19th Street
Brooklyn, New York 11226-5302

() - You may be interested
in the item on p. ---.

In this issue: SIEGFRIED,
GROO, AGENT COOPER, and
other heroes.

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