

DAGON

#667, APA-Q 577

September 2015

THE MINISTRY OF MISCELLANY

Dagon, a monthly fanzine of commentary on science, science fiction, fantasy, mystery novels, comic art, role-playing games (RPGs), and anything else that seems like a good idea at the moment, is published by John Boardman, 12716 Ginger Wood Lane, Clarksburg, MD 20871. My land-line phone number is 301-515-4271. My cell-phone's electric charge has expired, and I can no longer recharge it because something is wrong with the re-charger, so I can presently be reached by telephone only by the land line. **Dagon** circulates through **APA-Q**, an amateur press association (APA) which is edited once a month (if enough contributions come in) by Mark L. Blackman, Apt. #4A, 1745 E. 18th St., Brooklyn, NY 11229. The copy count for **APA-Q** is 15. For information about receiving and/or contributing to **APA-Q**, write to Mark.

I am happy to be able to report that Mark is recovering from his heart operation, and is once again able to mail out **APA-Q**. On 15 July, just after **Dagon** #666 (August 2014) was printed, there arrived **APA-Q** #575, the June-July issue. It consisted of the only 'zines that had come in to Mark for those months, his collage cover and **Blancmange** #495, and from me **Dagonim** #664 and #665, the June and July issues.

In a note he sent with **APA-Q** #575, Mark wrote that **APA-Q** #576 would be the APA's 41st anniversary. He also mentioned that **Dagon** #666 would be in that Distribution, and speculated about the alleged "diabolical" connection of the number "666" in the Christian scriptures. I am not particularly impressed by diabolical allegations, and refer readers to *Asimov's Guide to the Bible*, where Isaac Asimov discussed these claims in the chapter on the book of Revelation.

Mark also sent the text of "The Mute Marine", a folksong about the mis-adventures of Lieutenant Oliver North (USMC) which was composed in 1986 when North was in the news. The song briefly tells of the military and diplomatic shenanigans for which North was responsible, and his refusal to testify about them. There was a brief mention of this song in **Blancmange** #493, and I protested that I had never printed it. Mark sent me a copy, and I have reprinted it on page 9 in this issue.

Dagon also goes to others who have indicated an interest in its subject matter. Subscriptions are 10 issues for \$15 in the U. S., and for \$40 elsewhere.

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A few changes of address have come in since I last printed the mailing list in **Dagon** #665. John R. Biehl's copy of **Dagon** #665 (July 2015) came back in the mail marked "Moved", but I have no idea where. And in July, Guy H. Lillian III sent me a copy of his

fanzine review **The Zine Dump** #34 from yet another new address: 1390 Holly Avenue, Merritt Island, FL 32932. His fanzine reviews include one of **Dagonim** ##660-664. He is rather upset by my comparison of Johár Tsárnayeff (the Boston Marathon bomber) and Robert E. Lee, although I cannot see why. Both men were at war with the United States, and both men took the twentieth-century view (Lee in anticipation) that regards the entire citizenry of the enemy nation as legitimate targets of weaponry. Therefore, both men thought it right to attack any Americans. Lee merely had the means to make bloodier attacks.

Was that treason? At the time the U. S. Constitution was written, most European nations had very elastic definitions of treason. In reaction, the authors of the Constitution therefore wrote a very precise definition of this crime:

“Treason against the United States shall consist of levying war against them or in adhering to their Enemies, giving them Aid and Comfort.”
(Article III, Section 3)

Both Lee and the Tsarnayeff brothers openly admitted doing exactly this.

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While we're on the topic of the Constitution, let us examine the actual text of Amendment II, which gunnies and gun manufacturers claim authorizes the possession of any amount of firearms of any type by anyone whatsoever. Please pay attention to the italicized words in the Amendment's text:

“A well regulated Militia being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed.”

This right, then, is dependent upon the existence of the National Guard, as we now call the militia. Amendment II says that members of the National Guard can own and use arms, and it says *nothing else*. Perhaps the police can also be regarded as a militia under this Amendment, but in practice a good many police forces have shown themselves to be anything but “well regulated”, and this must be corrected before Amendment II applies to all of them.

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The first American air mail stamp came out in 1918, and depicted a famous biplane, the Curtiss JN-4, better known as the legendary “Flying Jenny”. The stamp was printed in two colors, a red airplane within a blue border, and had a face value of 24¢. This stamp was also responsible for the most valuable rarity in American philatelic history. In those days, stamps printed in two colors had to be run through the press twice, once for each color. Apparently one pane of four sheets of the stamp was sent through the press upside down, resulting in the

famous “Inverted Jenny” error. One of those sheets of 100 stamps was sent to a post office where it was eventually sold to a stamp collector who recognized the error, and made a huge profit from re-selling the sheet to the eccentric millionaire E. H. Green. No one knows what happened to the other three sheets in that pane - were they discovered and destroyed, or are they resting in a secret collection of postal errors at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing? For the story of this error, see the book *Paper Chase* by Alvin F. Harlow. Such a printing error resulted in valuable misprints by many countries that tried to produce bi-colored stamps, and if Scott’s ever publishes a catalog of postal errors it would be very useful to stamp collectors, particularly to the wealthier ones. In 2007, just one of those 100 “Inverted Jenny” stamps sold for \$977,500.

In 2013 the U. S. Postal “Service” decided to reprint deliberately the “Inverted Jenny” error, with a face value of \$2, in small souvenir sheets of six stamps each. Anyone to whom I have sent a large envelope weighing more than five ounces has probably received some of these stamps on the envelope. But on 23 July 2015 the *Washington Post* printed a report by Lisa Rein, reporting that 100 of those small souvenir sheets had the Jenny deliberately printed right side up! One of those sheets recently sold for \$55,000. These deliberate misprints were unauthorized, and the postal inspector general is looking into the matter. It is possible that more of the “right side up Jennies” may be printed to satisfy the demands of collectors of postal rarities. But at present the USP“S” seems to be uncertain about how to handle the matter of the “right side up Jennies”.

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The August issue of **CAR-PGa Newsletter** begins with a six-page article by Francis Dimento, submitted by M. Alan Thomas II and entitled “Can Playing the Pathfinder Role-playing Game Teach Ethics?” This article is published to obtain comment from readers on its subject matter, and this comment will be taken up in a future issue. Since space is short in this issue of **Dagon**, I will defer comment on this question until others have sent their ideas in to Paul Cardwell.

Each issue of **CAR-PGa Newsletter** contains a long listing of all upcoming RPGaming conventions and their sites. To receive **CAR-PGa Newsletter**, which is published monthly by Paul Cardwell for the Committee for the Advancement of Pole-Playing Games, send \$1.50 a copy or \$45 a year to him at 1127 Cedar, Bonham, TX 75418. (Costs are \$2.25 a copy or \$20 a year to addresses outside the United States. Paul also offers a subscription anywhere by e-mail for \$5 a year.)

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A perfect literary picture of Donald Trump can be found in a work written almost nineteen centuries before his birth. An ancient Roman writer named Petronius Arbiter did it, probably during the reign of Nero, when he wrote a satirical novel entitled *Satyricon*, about the

adventures of two men who circulated through Roman society, sometimes on the wrong side of the law, recording their actions and impressions. I can't give you full details, as I do not have a copy handy at the moment. But the most famous incident in the *Satyricon* (a title that seems to have something to do with aphrodisiacs) is the *Cena Trimalchionis* ("Trimalchio's Banquet"). Petronius's heroes (if that is the word I want) wangle an invitation to a banquet given by a very rich man named Trimalchio. It develops that the newly-rich Trimalchio, who elevated himself from the lowest levels of Roman society, and whose favorite topic of conversation is himself and what he imagines to be his abilities and experiences. Given a chance, or taking one, he speaks with apparent authority on anything he chooses, from his great wealth and how he got it, to his views on public affairs, and to his wife, a former dancing girl. Traditional analyses of the *Cena Trimalchionis* call Trimalchio a satire on Nero. But I think that this may not be altogether accurate. Nero's family had, after all, been the First Family of Rome for a century, not newly rich. Very obviously, Trimalchio is Donald Trump. Read the *Satyricon* and see for yourself.

As for Trimalchio's wife, I know that Trump is married, but don't know how many times, or to whom. But I am sure that we will find out about Mrs. Trump in the course of his presidential campaign. Trimalchio praised his wife's dancing ability in the same crude tones he used for his other topics of conversation. I have seen two translations of the *Satyricon*. One of them calls her act a "country dance". The other, and more modern, translation, calls it a "hootchie-kootchie".

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Meanwhile, Trump's candidacy for the Republican nomination for president is ramifying all over the media. His outrageous statements and policies do not stand alone. Polls taken among people who identify themselves as Republican voters indicate that he has more support from them than do any of the other sixteen candidates for their party's presidential nomination. Apparently a lot of Republicans believe, as does Trump, that President Obama is an "illegal alien", that other "illegal aliens" will come in through Mexico with the support of its government and will take their jobs or rape their wives, and that this can only be prevented if President Trump forces Mexico to build a wall (at Mexico's expense!) along the border. Trump's belief that soldiers who become prisoners of war are not heroes is also clearly shared by his supporters, who constitute an increasing number of Republican voters. And other Republican candidates are also appealing to these voters. Governor Mike Huckabee of Arkansas clearly believes that such voters are the key to the nomination. He has just come out against the treaty which President Obama negotiated about Iran's nuclear ambitions, by claiming that it puts Israel in danger. Believe it or not, his exact words about the treaty were: "It is so naïve that he would trust the Iranians. By doing so, he will take the Israelis and march them to the doors of the oven." (Jerry Markon, *Washington Post*, 27 July 2015) Huckabee's invocation of the

Holocaust need not be taken seriously, as it is merely a lame, distasteful, and probably unsuccessful attempt to appeal to Jewish voters. But it indicates the notions that some Republican presidential candidates have about what their voters believe.

Polls also indicate that many Republicans, and many more Democrats, reject the Trump-Huckabee notions about what will appeal to them. It is quite possible that if such a candidate gets the Republican presidential nomination, he or she will be rejected by a huge majority of the general voting population in November 2016.

In previous **Dagonim** I speculated that a third-party candidate might run for the presidency next year. At the time I was thinking that a candidate from the Republican mainstream such as Jeb Bush might be rejected by his party's many social conservatives, who would then run someone like Scott Walker or Rick Santorum against the Republican and Democratic candidates next year. But a Donald Trump third-party candidacy, in which Trump seems to be interested, would do even more damage to the Republican Party. Polls show that Hillary Clinton could easily defeat a Republican candidate and Trump. So we may as well get used to Hillary Clinton serving one, and maybe two, presidential terms beginning on 20 January 2017.

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That still leaves the opposition to the treaty with Iran, about which a number of short-sighted politicians are now agitating. They overlook that it is *not* a bilateral treaty between the United States and Iran. It is a treaty approved by almost every nation of any importance in the world - the European Union, Russia, and China as well as the United States. If the United States now rejects this treaty, as the Republican Party seems to desire, it would send diplomatic shock waves around the world.

The treaty makes it easy to detect any violations by Iran. If it did not, the United States and many other powers would not have approved it. As for Israel, against whose very existence the Iranian leadership has fulminated, it has demonstrated that it has the means to take care of itself. Several years ago, before the American invasion of Iraq, Israel learned that Iraq was building a factory to produce powerful though "conventional" (meaning non-nuclear) weapons. Also using "conventional" weapons, Israel bombed that factory out of existence. Does anybody seriously believe that Israel would not do the same thing to Iran?

And if Iran can really get somewhere with a nuclear weapons program, it should not be forgotten that Israel is and has for several years been a nuclear power. Faced by a direct threat to its existence, Israel's use of nuclear weapons against Iran would be understood by most other nations - including *all* the nations with the power to do anything about it.

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Yet another figure has been added to the "racing presidents", who compete between halves of the fourth innings of home games of the Washington Nationals of baseball's National League. The races started a few years ago with figures of the four presidents memorialized on

Mount Rushmore: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt. These wear huge figurines of their heads, on suitably clothed figures of runners whose identities are never revealed. As a “running gag“, Roosevelt never won any of the races until the end of the 2014 season, in which the Nationals (“Nats”) got into the first round of the play-offs.

With the 2015 season, a fifth president was added to the race. This is William Howard Taft, who is not regarded as a particularly eminent president. After one term, he was defeated so badly for re-election that he finished *third*, which has never happened to any other incumbent president. He was, however, the biggest baseball fan ever elected president. He began the custom of throwing out the first baseball of the season, which has been followed by many of his successors, and also the custom of standing up between halves of the seventh inning, the famous “seventh inning stretch”. (It has been suggested that the corpulent Taft merely got up to get something to eat, and that the rest of the crowd, seeing him stand, also stood.)

On an evening game with the San Francisco Giants on 3 July 2015, the “racing presidents” were joined by a sixth figure, Calvin Coolidge, also an enthusiastic baseball fan. Aside from that, there was nothing particularly remarkable about Coolidge’s presidency (1923-1929). He was generally known as “Silent Cal” from his reticent speaking style. It is rumored, with little support, that Coolidge saw an economic panic developing in 1928, and declined to run for another term, leaving the resulting economic and political debacle to Herbert Hoover, whom I predict will *never* become a “racing president“.

Other baseball teams have followed this racing precedent, and sometimes two sets of costumed racers compete against each other during a game,. On a recent visit to Washington by the Pittsburgh Pirates, they brought along the “Pittsburgh pirogies”. (Pirogies - the “g” is hard - are a sort of meat or potato dumpling wrapped in dough and baked or maybe fried. They originated in the Jewish cuisine of eastern Europe, and I first discovered them in Syracuse, in the restaurant of a Russian Jew who called the plural “pirogen”.)

Then there came the Nats’ game with the Los Angeles Dodgers on Sunday 19 July 2015. That was *Star Wars* Day at Nationals Park, and fans were encouraged to come to the game in costumes of the various heroes and villains of the *Star Wars* films. The “racing presidents” fell in with this plan. And since they are all male, George Washington got a most unlikely disguise as Princess Leia, but later he re-appeared as Darth Maul, Calvin Coolidge was costumed as Luke Skywalker, and there were “Dark Side representatives standing at attention for the anthem”. Another of the racing presidents was disguised as Darth Vader, but so well that I couldn’t identify which of them wore this disguise. The tale was told in a long report by Dan Steinberg in the next day’s *Washington Post*. However, Jar Jar Binks, whom I regard as the true hero of the later *Star Wars* films, was not included.

The worst mishap in n soccer game is an “own goal”. This happens when a player is desperately trying to fend off a concerted attack by the other team on his or her own goal. Sometimes such a player tries to kick the ball away, only to have it go into the net. This counts as a goal for the other team, and a tragedy for the unfortunate player’s own team.

.This happened several years ago on a game between the men’s national teams of the United States and Colombia. This was an elimination game to determine who would eventually go on to the Men’s World Cup tournament. The Colombian goalie accidentally kicked the ball into his own goal, giving the victory to the U. S. team.

When the hapless Colombian goalie returned to his own country, he was murdered by a disappointed fan. The murderer was promptly arrested, tried, and found guilty, but this of course did nothing to help his nation’s team.

Another “own goal” took place on 1 July 2015 in a semi-final game of the 2015 tournament to determine the winner of this year’s Women’s World Cup. It happened one minute before the end of the game, with England and Japan in a 1-1 tie. The Japanese team stormed the English goal, and one of the English defenders sent the ball into her own net. Instead of a 1-1 tie, to be followed by overtime play and maybe a shoot-out, Japan won the game 2-1 and qualified to play in the final game against the U. S. team, which on the previous day had defeated a strong German team 2-0 to qualify for the final.

But the unfortunate English player was treated quite differently, illustrating the differences between Colombians and English, and also between men and women. The weeping English goalie was hugged and comforted by her teammates and others, and will certainly not experience any harsh treatment on her return to England.

Meanwhile, on 4 July 2015 England’s women’s team won third place by defeating the favored German team, 2-0. And on the next day the U. S. team scored three goals against Japan in the first fifteen minutes of play, The final score was U. S. 5, Japan 2, amd one of the Japanese scores was an “own goal” by an American player, which under the circumstances was not the major tragedy that the “own goal” had been in the Japan-England semi-final. The American victory reversed the final game of the previous Women’s World Cup in 2011, won by Japan.

As always when an American sports team takes the field, I am impressed by its ethnic diversity and its athletic unity. This country brings in people from all over the world, and forges a unit out of them. Names on the American women’s soccer team included Lloyd, O’Hara, Klingenberg, Rodriguez, Leroux, Rapinoe, Rampone, and of course the very efficient goalie Hope Solo. I am convinced from her performances that she could prevent flies from going through the Washington Square arch, and also that she must be a descendant of Han Solo, who lived “a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away”.

This is The part of Maryland where I live is not the urbanized or suburbanized region around Washington and Baltimore. Frederick and Montgomery Counties are in the foothills of the Appalachians, which lie to the west and are heavily forested. And, at about this time of year, numerous reports of black bear sightings are reported. The bears reported are usually undersized and presumably young.

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These reports are seasonal news, because summer is the time of year that Mama Bear casts out the young ones to find their own food, as she will probably be giving birth again during the next winter's hibernation. So a number of half-grown bears will be scouting for food on their own, probably investigating back-yard garbage cans. People are warned not to get too close to them, because despite their lumbering gait they can run faster than a human, and are formidably armed. Or maybe they are misbehaving because they are really bipolar bears.

While you are recovering from that one, more unusual news about stray, or straying, wild animals came in during late July from Milwaukee and its environs. One or two lions, or perhaps a lioness and her cub, have been reported there. No local zoos are reporting missing lions, so the animals are probably mountain lions, a North American feline also variously called a puma, cougar, painter, or panther. By the time this issue reaches you, the question will very likely have been solved. Or maybe it will be solved with the realization that Milwaukee brews and drinks a great deal of beer.

GETTING CAUGHT UP

Just after I had finished writing **Dagon** #666, which appeared in **APA-Q** #576 (August 2015), I received **APA-Q** #575 (June-July 2015) from Mark Blackman. It consists of a **Qover** and **Blancmange** #495 from Mark, and the June and July 2015 issues of **Dagon**, #664 and #665, from me.

APA-Qover #575 (Blackman): I see that I'm not the only person who thinks the *New York Times* puzzles are too tough. I have the impression that when most crossword-puzzle composers send their latest efforts to a newspaper publisher, they think, "That'll give his readers a good mental exercise." But when composers of puzzles send them to Will Shortz at the *New York Times*, they think, "They'll never solve any of these!"

Blancmange #495 (Blackman): Your problem finding a surgeon who accepted your insurance indicates that, whatever the merits of the Affordable Care Act, this country will

(continued on p. 10)

OLLIE NORTH, THE MUTE MARINE

(This, according to Mark Blackman, to whom thanks, was originally a scene on *Saturday Night Live* in December 1986, with William Shatner as Oliver North, and seven other actors dressed as Marines and standing in front of a huge American flag. The tune is that of "The Ballad of the Green Berets", which was written by Sergeant Barry Sadler during the American invasion of Vietnam to create popular support for a unit of elite soldiers. But you may know the tune better as a malicious parody called "The Ballad of the SS Troop": "Trained to meet the Führer's goals, Trained to deal with Jews and Poles, Men who fight like Jürgen Stroop*, Courage take from the SS Troop.")

Fighting soldier in Vietnam
The perfect son to any mom
He's one part man, one part machine
He's Ollie North, the Mute Marine.

He traded arms with Iran
For hostages - what a great plan!
(fist pump in approval)
The chances for success were zero
And yet he's still a national hero.

He mined the harbor of Managua
Planned the invasion of Grenada
But soon cruel fate would intervene
And he'd become the Mute Marina.

Two Swiss accounts were in his name
Diverted funds, but who's to blame?
The time had come to tell his tale
Here's what he said to stay out of jail.

At this point, Oliver North held up his hand as if to swear to tell the truth, repeatedly opened his mouth to speak, but nothing comes out, and he stands there in silence. At this point, a chorus of Marines sings:

He'd like to talk, but cannot speak
His will is strong, his case is weak
We may never know just what he's seen
The man they call the Mute Marine.

(Oliver North and the Marines hold their hands to their heads for a salute)

* - Jürgen Stroop, a German general, was, with nine other high-ranking Nazis, hanged for war crimes in Nürnberg in 1946. Unfortunately for the author's rhyme scheme, Stroop's surname rhymes not with "troop" but with "soap".

GETTING CAUGHT UP (continued from p. 8)

Eventually have to follow (belatedly) Great Britain and Canada into a "single-payer" medical system - the "single payer" being the government. Whatever the faults of such a system, which are largely invented by people fretting about the alleged evils of "socialized medicine", they are preferable to the jerry-built systems of insurance that exist in this country.

More later. Much of this issue of **Dagon** was prepared weeks ago, and I just want to get it off to its readers.

Dagon #667
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Interest to you on page ____.