

GOBRIN GAZETTE #2

FEB 6, 1976

GOBRIN GAZETTE #2 is being published to commemorate an important event, to wit, the second anniversary of my original application for landed immigrant status in Canada. It's also to re-assure people that I'm still alive, despite the recent non-appearance of KRATOPHANY (Real Soon Now). Incidentally, just so no one gets a heart attack from suspense, I still haven't gotten that landed immigrant status; but I'm not worried since General Quang (with whose case I feel a mystical kinship) still hasn't been deported.

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I hardly know how to explain this. I guess a simple declarative sentence will do for starters: I've joined a curling team.

No, I don't think that's sufficient. Let's start with basics. "Curling", which is located roughly between "curfuffle" and "curmudgeon" in your dictionaries, is defined as "A game played on the ice in which large rounded stones are hurled along a defined space called the rink towards a mark called the tee." I might mention that a further definition gives "Rumbling in the bowels," but as this definition is obsolete, it need not concern us.

This is getting better, but I still feel the true substance of the game hasn't gotten across. Let me describe my first contact with the sport:

It was my very first night in Regina, almost two years ago. I had come up to visit Susan, and she gleefully informed me at the airport that I had picked an excellent time to arrive, since this was Monty Python night. (This was in those distant benighted days when America was still naively innocent of the infamous Flying Circus.) What we didn't know was that Monty Python had been pre-empted to televise a curling match. So we got ourselves comfortably ensconced in front of the TV, with a bottle of white wine as I recall, and watched for ten minutes before we were sure it wasn't Monty Python!

I guess the game is basically indescribable. I could say it's like shuffle-board played on pebbled ice, but that leaves out the team members scurrying in front of the rock as it slides along the ice, sweeping in front of it with their brooms. (I know that sounds like something out of Lewis Carrol, but it's true! Sweeping is a very important part of the game, not least to keep you from freezing your ass off when you're not throwing.) See, if you don't sweep when your skip tells you to, a light rock might not even reach the house unless the ice is keen, and if you're trying to draw through a narrow port, or going for a come-around take-out, sweeping can be equally critical. That's clear, isn't it?

Ahem. Be that as it may, I seem to have found myself on my office curling team, mostly because Jane (the 4' 10" skydiver who works down the hall (claims she was 5'10" before she took up jumping out of planes)) twisted my arm, pleaded with me, and threatened to take me skydiving if I didn't join. (Parenthetical note: Good friend Susan, when I told her about Jane, said (and I quote:) "You should try skydiving -- it would make a great column." This, in fact, has been the near-universal reaction among what I thought were my friends. Fans can be so callous.)

It's actually been fun. First of all, the rocks, rather than being the jagged lumps of stone I'd envisaged, are polished, perfectly symmetrical, flattened on top and bottom, and have a silver cap on top to which a handle is attached. They look rather pretty, and would make lovely ornaments if they weren't a foot in diameter and about 40 lbs. apiece. Throwing a rock is a highly developed art, and everyone has his own style. I myself have developed a unique method: Beginning in a perfectly poised semi-crouch, I push the rock with a graceful, flowing movement, and follow through with an elegant slide down the ice on my stomach and right elbow.

Yes, I know. It'll make a great column.

Oh -- let me mention that I got a great anniversary present at work: My HP-55 calculator, which I convinced my boss to order for me last July, arrived! It was presented to me gift-wrapped (Jane even borrowed a government car to get a ribbon for it). This is the cheapie \$500 model -- unlike the 65, it doesn't make coffee.

Welcome to side 2. If you have been playing this on your turntable or cassette recorder, stop. If you continue it may severely damage your equipment.

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I have been doing quite a lot of travelling lately, which is understandable if you've ever been to Regina. I just got back from a Federal/Provincial meeting in Winnipeg; in two weeks I'm going to Vancouver for a Janis Ian concert and to visit Susan (not necessarily in that order); and last month I visited the San Francisco-Bay area:

(Yes, it's another trip report. You want I should fill the page up with temperature readings?)

I arrived at the San Francisco airport at 11:45 AM, right behind three Irish not-landed-immigrant-Canadians, who seemed to be engaging a U.S. official in a theological debate over various abstruse aspects of Immigration regulations. This cleverly designed delay meant that I got out of Customs just in time to meet Debbie Notkin, who had parked her car in Outer Mongolia (we had to take an airport bus to get to it, and the parking lot was bigger than the Regina airport). We were soon on the way to her apartment, which she and Tom Whitmore had just moved into about two days earlier. They claimed they'd had to leave their previous place, but it was obvious they'd just moved to make me feel at home, since the apartment was amazingly like mine.-- complete with the same wall-to-wall green shag carpet and light fixtures. (We will ignore the 80° difference in exterior temperatures.) I spent five days being bitten and scratched by their adorable kitten, Meatloaf.

Mostly I remember spending a million dollars on records and eating a variety of exquisite meals. (I had the best pizza I'd ever tasted, in a place called Tomasso's, plus seafood, Chinese food, Japanese food, even lox and bagels!) At various points I saw Tom Stoppard's "After Magritte" and "The Real Inspector Hound" ("One is forced to say, 'Je suis,' in the immortal words of Descartes, 'ergo sum.'"), "Barry Lyndon", attended the post-meeting meeting of the Elves, Gnomes, and Little Men's Science Fiction, Chowder, and Marching Society, ran into Dick and Pat Lupoff while buying lox (don't even ask about One Flew Over Cthulhu's Nest), saw episode 3 of The Prisoner in a museum, and collated LOCUS. I also remember walking around alot in shirtsleeves admiring the weather.

The third day I was there I got a letter from Susan, which is chiefly significant because it arrived in Tom and Debbie's brand new post office box; was, in fact, the very first letter in the box, and not even for them! They didn't speak to me for hours.

Anyway, eventually I had to leave and go back to Regiaa, which I did, pausing only for a brief 4 hour stopover in Edmonton to have dinner with the Barbours (doug laughed at me while I struggled into sweaters at the airport; they had just been to San Francisco over New Year's and were well aware of the transition problems).

The Bay Area is such a lovely place. I'll miss it when it falls into the ocean.

Gobrin Press Publication #15. Feb. 6, 1976

Eli Cohen
2920 Victoria Ave., Apt. 12
Regina, Sask. S4T 1K7
Canada