

Home with the Armadillo #60 is brought to you by Liz Copeland of 3243 165th Ave. SE, Bellevue WA 98008. Phone number is 425-641-0209. Email is received at lizc@nwlinc.com. Started in September 2003, for SFPA 235.

It's now a month after my surgery for my super-sized parathyroid adenoma. The normal one weighs 80 milligrams, mine came in at a whopping 2.4 grams. My doctor, who has been doing this stuff for 25 years, said it was the largest she's ever seen. "Funny, that's what the urologist said about the kidney stones," quipped I. We agreed this only made sense. Unfortunately, because of the size, the scar is about 5 inches wide, and even if it totally disappears because of the cosmetic closure (as I have been assured), there's still the ½ inch scar from the drainage tube hole. I know what the ones on my back look like and I'm not thrilled at having one at the base of my throat. However, it does beat the alternatives.

I suppose I could do a better job of counting my blessings if my biochemistry wasn't totally out of whack. And I was sleeping during the night rather than from 9-3 during the day. I've gone to get acupuncture once, and it's helping some but I still feel foggy, and I run out of energy fairly quickly. However, things are supposed to get better with time. Being impatient me, I'm going to go see my doctor and have some tests done.

In the meantime, I'm reading Heinlein. This started because I had run out of library books to read, had already re-read my series that I keep for that, and was reminded of **Friday** by something I read in the paper. So, I borrowed Jeff's copy and found it as enjoyable as I remembered. But then I wanted to see where it fit in with the rest of the stories about this future. So, I now have a stack of Heinlein from the library, sitting ready to amuse me. I did read **The Cat Who Walks Through Walls**, and now remember what I didn't like about some of his mid-80's books. This one started out well, but about halfway thru, it switched from being a story being shown to us, to an explanation of this time lords conspiracy without actually tying up the loose ends. Very unsatisfying. I hope the others are better.

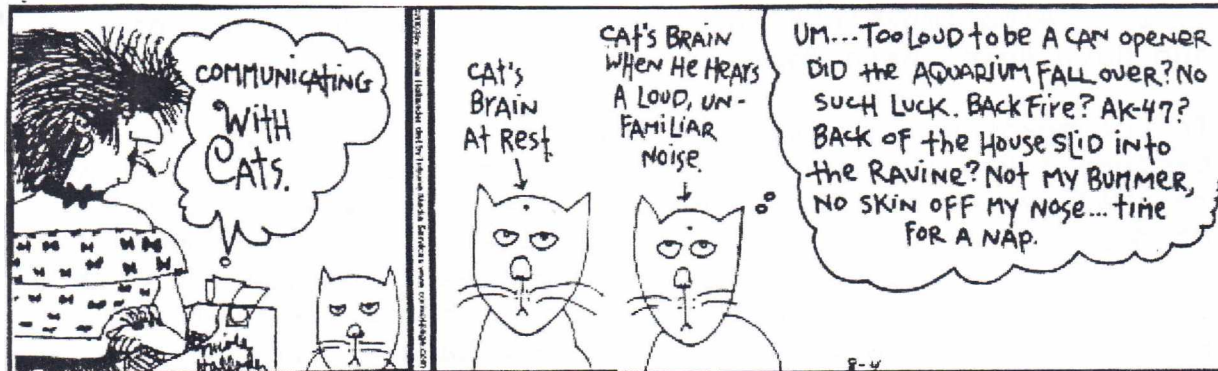
In my last zine I promised to explain how I get comics online so that Toni could do the same if she wanted. It's

actually very easy. Go to comics.com and mycomicspage.com and sign up. There's a nominal fee of about \$10/year for each of them but then you get the comics you want emailed to you daily. This allows me to get Sylvia, and Get Fuzzy, and Betty, and over a dozen others that I like that aren't carried by our local papers. Next to my subscription to Budget Living magazine, this is the best subscription I get.

I've included some of my favorites from the last few emails here. I have to admit that my quilt group has already decided that orange alert level means eat dessert first, but I still find this one amusing.

See ya in 60...

Sylvia by Nicole Hollander



Subject: Krugman 2003-08-12

Date: Fri, 15 Aug 2003 21:35:45 -0700 (PDT)

From: "Jeffrey L. Copeland" <copeland@alumni.caltech.edu>

To: lizc@nwlinc.com (Liz Copeland)

Thanks for the M.R.E.'s _____

[The New York Times]

August 12, 2003

OP-ED COLUMNIST

Thanks for the M.R.E.'s

By PAUL KRUGMAN

[A] few days ago I talked to a soldier just back from Iraq. He'd been in a relatively calm area; his main complaint was about food. Four months after the fall of Baghdad, his unit was still eating the dreaded M.R.E.'s: meals ready to eat. When Italian troops moved into the area, their food was "way more realistic" – and American troops were soon trading whatever they could for some of that Italian food.

Other stories are far worse. Letters published in Stars and Stripes and e-mail published on the Web site of Col. David Hackworth (a decorated veteran and Pentagon critic) describe shortages of water. One writer reported that in his unit, "each soldier is limited to two 1.5-liter bottles a day," and that inadequate water rations were leading to "heat casualties." An American soldier died of heat stroke on Saturday; are poor supply and living conditions one reason why U.S. troops in Iraq are suffering such a high rate of noncombat deaths?

The U.S. military has always had superb logistics. What happened? The answer is a mix of penny-pinching and privatization – which makes our soldiers' discomfort a symptom of something more general.

Colonel Hackworth blames "dilettantes in the Pentagon" who "thought they could run a war and an occupation on the cheap." But the cheapness isn't restricted to Iraq. In general, the "support our troops" crowd draws the line when that support might actually cost something.

The usually conservative Army Times has run blistering editorials on this subject. Its June 30 blast, titled "Nothing but Lip Service," begins: "In recent months, President Bush and the Republican-controlled Congress have missed no opportunity to heap richly deserved praise on the military. But talk is cheap – and getting cheaper by the day, judging from the nickel-and-dime treatment the troops are getting lately." The article goes on to detail a series of promises broken and benefits cut.

Military corner-cutting is part of a broader picture of penny-wise-pound-foolish government. When it comes to tax cuts or subsidies to powerful interest groups, money is no object. But elsewhere, including homeland security, small-government ideology reigns. The Bush administration has been unwilling to spend enough on any aspect of homeland security, whether it's providing firefighters and police officers with radios or protecting the nation's ports. The decision to pull air marshals off some flights to save on hotel bills – reversed when the public heard about it – was simply a sound-bite-worthy example. (Air marshals have told MSNBC.com that a "witch hunt" is now under way at the Transportation Security Administration, and that those who reveal cost-cutting measures to the media are being threatened with the Patriot Act.)

There's also another element in the Iraq logistical snafu: privatization. The U.S. military has shifted many tasks traditionally performed by soldiers into the hands of such private contractors as Kellogg Brown & Root, the Halliburton subsidiary. The Iraq war and its aftermath gave this privatized system its first major test in combat – and the system failed.

According to the Newhouse News Service, "U.S. troops in Iraq suffered through months of unnecessarily poor living conditions because some civilian contractors hired by the Army for logistics support failed to show up." Not surprisingly, civilian contractors – and their insurance companies – get spooked by war zones. The Financial Times reports that the dismal performance of contractors in Iraq has raised strong concerns about what would happen in a war against a serious opponent, like North Korea.

Military privatization, like military penny-pinching, is part of a pattern. Both for ideological reasons and, one suspects, because of the patronage involved, the people now running the country seem determined to have public services provided by private corporations, no matter what the circumstances. For example, you may recall that in the weeks after 9/11 the Bush administration and its Congressional allies fought tooth and nail to leave airport screening in the hands of private security companies, giving in only in the face of overwhelming public pressure. In Iraq, reports The Baltimore Sun, "the Bush administration continues to use American corporations to perform work that United Nations agencies and nonprofit aid groups can do more cheaply."

In short, the logistical mess in Iraq isn't an isolated case of poor planning and mismanagement: it's telling us what's wrong with our current philosophy of government.

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