

# WOODEN NICKEL

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WOODEN NICKEL Volume 1 Number 9 Whole Number 9 is intended for the perusal of the 50 people on the elite mailing list of Arnie Katz (59 Livingston St., Apt. 6B, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201) who is the writer, editor and publisher of this very frequent fanzine. This issue published on August 24, 1973, just in time for the gala pre-Torcon Insurgents meeting.

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**PINBALL WIZARD** Shortly after Joyce arrived in New York in 1970, I made the mistake of asking if she'd like to go to a penny arcade. "I couldn't go there!" she gasped. "Nice girls don't go to places like that!" I couldn't persuade Joyce that her image of a penny arcade as a place where muggers crouch in wait behind every machine and sleazy hookers patrol the aisles was a little exaggerated. The mere mention of the penny arcade got her so wound up that I decided to drop the whole thing.

Joyce and I often eat dinner at Nathan's on Broadway to affirm our solidarity with proletarian culture, and because we love their French fires. As we walked toward the subway after one of these meals, we walked past a penny arcade. It was filled with young people trying their skill at the various games.

"Is that a penny arcade?" Joyce asked as she paused in front of it. "Gee, it looks kinda interesting." Her eyes scanned the place, but there was nary a mugger or whore to be seen. "Can we go in?"

"I thought nice girls didn't go into to penny arcades," I reminded her.

"Well, I'm nice and I'm going in, so it must be all right."

Since then, we've become penny arcade fans and usually drop by one of the larger ones every week or so. Not only are the games such as skeeball (I'm a champion skeeballer, I'll have you know) enjoyable, but you can meet lots of fascinating people there, including Bill and Charl Kunkel, who are also penny arcade freaks.

One of the things Joyce likes best about the arcade is that they give coupons for skeeball which are redeemable for prizes. So far, we've won two toy metal mailboxes and a rubber tomahawk in this fashion. No longer content with such small trophies, Joyce is now hoarding her coupons, saving for some wonderful gift worth hundreds of the cardboard chits, something glamorous like an economy-size can of Right Guard.

Aside from skeeball, our favorite game for the past six months has been electronic paddleball. The machine is basically a video screen similar to the spacewar game at LAcon or the Odyssey entertainment system, if you're familiar with either. Each player can move his racket up or down with a twirl of a knob. Contestants hit a blip back and forth with appropriate "pop"s and "ping"s provided by the machine until it gets past one or the other and scores a point.

I was the early master at this game, defeating Joyce, Bill and Charl in rapid succession to the shouts and applause of a small crowd which gathered to watch the duels. Winning against these three was no small victory, let me tell you. Bill has been earning a nice second income hustling teenage Puerto Rican kids on one of these machines out his way, and Joyce has come on to become New York Fandom's champion electronic paddleballer, wresting away my crown in two straight sets. It's terrible when your glory lies all in the past.



Our paddleball game was recently supplanted by a newer version which omits those lovely "pop"s, and now none of us is worth a damn at the game. I think we all got into the habit of judging the ball's carom by sound, and the eerie silence of the present model throws us off.

The four of us have been moaning about the disappearance of our favorite game for weeks, but the arcade has tried to make amends by installing a gizmo that threatens to win our allegiance from classic electronic paddleball.

The new game in town is an electronic skeet shooter. Penny arcade habitues are familiar with the traditional target machines, which have been around for years. While these are much beloved by crack shots like Dan Steffan and Joyce, who shot it out for the fan gun nut title at Lunacon with the High Priestess of Brooklyn Fandom emerging triumphant, they pale into obscurity beside the electronic skeet shooter.

The rifle is free moving, connected to the machine by only a slender cord instead of being bolted in place. Five seconds after the marksman presses the starter, the machine begins arcing silver dollar-size glowing spheres across the screen. The rifleman has two shots at each light before it flies out of range. A hit causes a satisfying explosion which sends target fragments shooting across the screen in all directions.

As you'd expect, Joyce has mastered the skeet shooter after only three or four attempts. She hit 11 out of 12 targets the last time she played. I'm not nearly as proficient, but when I see those luminous globes rising in the sky, I turn off my mind and pretend I'm shooting down UFO's.

LOREN MACGREGOR SPINS      "We had a neighbor buy an elephant recently. It caused a local  
A SHAGGY ELEPHANT STORY: riot, and when it was through the neighbor had moved, the elephant had disappeared, and for some strange reason people stopped buying meat from the corner market." (Why, that's ridiculous. Anyone can tell the difference between elephant meat and the flesh of the sacred American cow. As my father, a notable steak-eater, said to me many times, "Son, you can always tell elephant meat, but you can't tell it much.")

LEE HOFFMAN HOWDIES:      "I am awed by this mad fit of publishing. WOODEN NICKELS are rolling into my mailbox at an appalling rate. Are you getting a kickback from the Postal Service or something? I can think of no other reasonable explanation. (I will admit I can think of several unreasonable ones.)

"I am almost completely out of fandom now (having at last surrendered my tenuous grip on my FAPA membership). In a way this is a good thing. Since I'm no longer overwhelmed by fanzines, I can take the time to enjoy the ones I still do get. And I do thoroughly enjoy WOODEN NICKEL." (I'll let you be in my non-fandom if I can be in yours, Lee. By the way, thanks very much for your Free Will Gift Offering of a clutch of Postage Stamps. This qualifies you to become a sainted patron of the Sacred Shrine of Fannishness here in Brooklyn. Your gift will help spread the gospels of Laney, Burbee Tucker and Willis to the heathens in such beknighted places as Boaz, Alabama and Ft. Wayne, Indiana. A candle will be lit at the Sacred Shrine in your honor and tended in perpetuity by three devoted neofans, none of whom have ever read a word of science fiction.)

HAPPY TORCON              Hey, have a good time at the Torcon, and light one (or hoist one) for Joyce and me. And when you get home again, you'll probably find issues of WOODEN NICKEL stacked up like cordwood.