

Cats on Ritalin

Cats on Ritalin is the sixty-fourth SFPA-zine (volume two, number forty-one) from Jeffrey Copeland. It is intended for mailing number 234 of the Southern Fandom Press Alliance and selected others. The text of *Cats on Ritalin* was composed using the T_EX typesetting system, and is set in 11-point Palatino. It was published by Bywater Press, 3243 165th Ave, SE, Bellevue, Washington 98008, on 29 July 2003.



So we got Allie graduated from high school, which much folderol and family visiting. We threw a party the Saturday before the event — why do they insist on doing graduation on a Wednesday, which maximizes the during-the-week travel required for out-of-town family members? — which, since both of my siblings and my parents would be in town, required inviting all the relatives within Washington. (It also required having cousin Laura for breakfast on the intervening Tuesday, but that's another rant.)

In any event, I raised a toast to Allie, of whom I *am* rather proud, saying much the same things I wrote in my last zine, but adding something like, *"As we kick her out cf the nest, how high she flies will be controlled not by anything Liz or I have done, but by her own considerable strength cf character. Low flying satellites will just need to get out cf the way."*

Our across-the-street neighbor posited later that this indicated just how sad I was to see her go. Not having children himself, I think he didn't fully understand that this really is the natural progression of things. We've done our job in getting her ready for the world, now it's our job to get her out there to do it. I'm proud of her, yes, and *will* miss her — not that I really see her now — but it's time for her to be on her own.

Since my family was here for Allie's graduation, we took an airplane outing for Father's Day. We began by running down to the Museum of Flight, where they've just finished re-restoring the last surviving Boeing 307 Stratoliner, the first pressurized passenger plane. The first time they restored it, they took it out on a check-flight, and managed to run out of fuel — nobody had any idea what its consumption rate was, and it doesn't have something as simple as fuel gauges. Because Boeing's most senior test pilots were sitting in the cockpit, they managed to glide to a landing in the safest place they could. Unfortunately, that was Elliot Bay, so it spent another fourteen months getting dried out and re-restored. Now it's off to the new collection at the National Air & Space Museum.

We set off from the Museum of Flight without letting on to my father what our destination was. It took him a while to realize that we were heading in the wrong direction. "Wait: we're not heading home, are we?" "Another airplane museum, Dad. Don't worry, you'll enjoy it."

When we arrived, he looked across the field and said "Hey! That's a B-24!" As I've mentioned before, my father flew B-24's out of Italy bombing targets in France and Germany until he was shot down on the way to Avignon in July 1944. And as I've mentioned before, the Collings Foundation owns the only remaining functional example of a B-24, which they barnstorm around the country each summer, along with their B-17. They reached Olympia the weekend of Father's Day.

We walked up to the plane, to reveal the further surprise: My brother asked, “So, how would you like to fly on it?” “Hell, no! The last time I was in one, it didn’t work out well.” Once he realized Ian was serious, he was enthusiastic about the adventure. Collings funds their restoration and barnstorming by selling rides on the planes. Unfortunately, it was sufficiently expensive that I wasn’t able to join Ian and Dad. (Ian, as an executive for a worldwide construction partnership headquartered in the Bay Area, has slightly more disposable income than I do.)

At his advanced age, it wasn’t as easy for Dad to get in and out of that plane as it once was — he’s about thirty pounds heavier, about sixty years older, and significantly less flexible in the knee — but once he was in it and the traverses were all horizontal, he knew how to get around — particularly across the cat walk spanning the bomb bay — with great ease. He watched a fair amount of the flight from his old post, above and behind the pilots. Apparently, it’s much more interesting to fly in an unpressurized airplane at a thousand feet than ten thousand, and much more fun if you’re flying over Olympia and *not* being shot at.

The pilots spent some fraction of the flight quizzing this grizzled, grey, and tattooed man about his interest in old bombers. When they figured out that they were talking to someone who had survived a crash in one, they were much more interested in hearing his stories than telling him what the plane was like to fly and how much mechanical effort it took to keep it flying.

And when it came time to help him back out of the tail-gunners’ hatch, the pilots thanked *him*.

When we last left Liz, she was recovering quite well from her hysterectomy. She had great energy levels, and was enthusiastic about life, and getting organized again after six bouts of surgery in seven months. She had even gone into her regular doc for a series of tests to figure out why she had kidney stones.

Turns out the issue is something called a parathyroid adenoma. Roughly, the parathyroid controls calcium uptake, so a wonky one would explain a lot. There are four nodes, two on each side, attached up and down to the thyroid. Now, we’ve heard the word adenoma used once, and we’ve heard it described as a “growth”, a “nodule”, a “malfunctioning node” — no doc involved has wanted to use the more normal interpretation, “tumor.” It’s almost certainly benign, and almost certainly not life-threatening. It will get excised in out-patient surgery the week after we take Allie up to college. However, Liz’s reaction approximates that of the bowl of petunias in *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*: “oh, no, not again.”



Reviews


🐱 *The Honourable Schoolboy* is John LeCarré's second book in the series beginning with *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*. We see our hero George Smiley trying to undo the damage done to his agency by the mole he unmasked earlier. The geography wanders around southeast Asia, centering on Hong Kong. Being the middle book of a trilogy, it's clearly glue, rather than plot.


🐱 *Kissing Jessica Stein* is a little titillation from Fox's "little studio," Fox Searchlight. Jewish girl in New York can't seem to meet a nice guy, so she answers a personal ad from a woman who's disillusioned because she seems to meet too many men. Confusion ensues — at least for Miss Stein — as she can't figure out what she really wants, and can't really feel comfortable declaring herself publicly. Too neatly wrapped up at the end for the angst that everyone's been caused. [*Daughter married a shiksa.*]


🐱 Before I started reading the Hugo short fiction shortlist, I did a quick pass through the 2001 edition of Gardner Dozois' *The Year's Best Science Fiction*. Two stories of note:


- Dan Simmons' "On K2 with Kanakaredes" has a trio of human climbers taking on K2 with an alien. The bribe: if they succeed, the aliens will take them to Mars to climb Mons Olympus. Very nice characterization. Good plot. Clearly Simmons — who now lives on the Colorado front range — is either doing some mountain climbing or hanging out with climbers.
- Nancy Kress' "Computer Virus" is the story of an AI taking refuge in the considerable computer inside a private house, and holding the residents hostage. Kress touches her usual points of biology, gene manipulation, and the meaning of humanity. Nicely done, and Kress has the *chutzpah* to not wrap her stories up

with a neat bow and a clean conclusion, leaving us with a clear view of unfinished business and no way to know how it's going to turn out.

 For my birthday, my family took me to see the new version of *The Italian Job*. Nicely rendered, *much* better than the last Mark Wahlberg movie, a remake of *Charade*. We still have a flock of Austin Minis (though now they're BMW knockoffs) as getaway cars, though now we have two separate robberies, with a number of twists and turns, crosses and double-crosses. Nice chase, good use of Seth Green as the nerd (played by Benny Hill in the original), excellent appearance by Donald Sutherland as the Old Man, and spectacular performance by Edward Norton as the smarmy bastard. Best sign on the state of women as movie characters: there's only a hint of sexual tension between Mark Wahlberg's character and Charlize Theron's until the last reel. (And we know that Theron can be play the sex bomb: see the scenes in *Reindeer Games* where she and Ben Affleck have just met.) [*Who Needs the Gold?*]

 Jennifer Crusie's *Faking It* is more-or-less a sequel to her *Welcome to Temptation*. Not quite as hilarious because we don't have the amusement of meeting the characters for the first time again, but it is certainly still has the same silliness, the same headbanging sex (though this time it takes three tries to get it right). Where it gains over its predecessor is that it has a wonderful French bedroom farce plot, and mostly takes place in an art gallery.

 It's an hour and forty-five minute action sequence, with well-chosen music, and a giggle just under the surface. It's got Lucy Liu in leather, Cameron Diaz in a disco dress, Drew Barrymore in a punk T-shirt, and Demi Moore in a bikini. It was made at a movie studio where the laws of physics were suspended. It's another of this summer's blockbusters, *Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle*. [*Check brain at door.*]

 Dan Brown is this summer's hot mystery author with his new book *The DaVinci Code*, which has encyclopedic detail about the geography of Rome and the Vatican. I thought I'd start with his earlier *Digital Fortress*, which is a thriller about cryptanalysts. It seems to me that if the advice to writers is "write what you know," the inverse should apply too: if you know nothing about computers* or applied math or cryptography or the NSA, you shouldn't try to write a book about them. Don't even try to make a scene more tense by having the linguist remember that 4 times 16 is 64, and have to explain it to the computer geek: if the

* But note the William Gibson exception: *Neuromancer* was a good book perhaps *because* he was making up the computer stuff. Now, if he'd just come up with a plot for a second novel...

computer geek doesn't have the powers of two memorized, she should turn in her Ferragamo flats. If you can't tell the difference between a generator and a heat sink, don't suggest that turning one on will short out the other. If you don't know the difference between the isotopes of Uranium, don't try to handwave by claiming that the Nagasaki bomb didn't use Plutonium. Even if you accept that (like *Charlie's Angels 2*) this is happening in a universe with a slightly different set of physical laws, the thriller is still not completely believable. In short: crap, crap, crap, and garbage. I'll be interested to see if *The DaVinci Code* is merely a travelogue, or if there's a plot there.





☛ *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* promised to be a big adventure movie. Even more than *X-man* or *Men in Black* it's a comic book on the screen. Vaguely interesting plot, good acting talent, nice visual effects, but lacking depth. Ultimately aimed at the teenaged boy rather than the adult audience. [*Heroes save world. Yawn.*]


☛ *A Guy Thing* is a dumb romantic comedy which we watched because it's got Julia Stiles in it. Guy meets girl at his bachelor party. Guy wakes up next to girl the next morning. Girl turns out to be fiance's cousin. Guy figures out that he's marrying the wrong girl. The story's been done better before. This is an excuse for marijuana-laced spaghetti sauce, John Wayne imitations, and a long discourse about a hidden pair of panties. [*The Guy Thing? Stupidity.*]

☛ *Pirates of the Caribbean* is a movie based on a ride at Disneyland. Low on plot, high on action. Good swordfighting. About what you'd expect for a no-brainer summer movie. [*Crimson Pirate it ain't!*]

☛ I tremble. Among the trailers we saw a *Pirates of the Caribbean* was *The Haunted House*, which will be an Eddie Murphy movie from Disney at Thanksgiving. That's the second popular Disneyland ride. Will we be looking for *Space Mountain* or *Matterhorn* next? Anything but a double feature of *Abraham Lincoln in the Hall of Presidents*, and *Walt Disney Presents the World of Tomorrow*.

 *Timeline* is Michael Crichton's time travel novel. Academics excavating a castle in France are sent back to the siege which destroyed the castle. The first half of the book is just complicated mumbo-jumbo by way of set up, followed by a two-hundred-and-fifty-page chase scene. One wishes that Crichton would stop writing books that were so obviously novel-length movie treatments.

 *The Recruit* has Colin Farrell as a computer-genius CIA trainee, whose father may or may not have been a spy, being mind-fucked by Al Pacino and falling for Bridget Moynahan. Twists and turns, good guys and bad guys, and a couple of double-crosses.

 *Phone Booth* is a thriller with Colin Farrell as a hack publicist in New York who picks up a ringing pay phone only to discover that a sniper is going to shoot him if he hangs up. Pretty stupid all along. At a number of points early on, Farrell's character could have concluded things by merely walking away. We never answer the question of the sniper's motivation, which is pretty hazy. Don't bother. [*Just shoot the audience!*]

Q: What is your favorite artwork, and why?

A: It may be more engineering than artwork, but the physical design of the book. This is one of those deceptively simple things whose elegance only becomes apparent when you watch someone try — and fail — to improve on it.

— Matt Ruff, in an interview prior to a visit to Microsoft


Mailing Comments on SFPA 232

Gary Brown : *Columbia is Lost* ❖

Thanks for sharing this. And for forwarding the pointer to the facsimile front pages of all those other papers at the time. It was nice to see how the various papers around the country and in other countries were handling the story — both in terms of working through the shock of the accident, and in the design sense of seeing how different papers made the layout tradeoffs.

Ned Brooks : *The New Port News* ❖

ct me: "Well, you missed it a bit in saying that by the time I read this zine, bombs would have fallen on Baghdad. Or at least I guess it would have been on the radio, here in the wee hours of Valentine's Day." That's what happens when you're perennially early, Ned.

 *"It only took me a few months to get It Goes On The Shelf online — but the volume of text is nothing like what Guy has in Challenger,"* Your task was easier because you kept the machine-readable copies of IGOTS. Guy followed the "I've got it on paper, why

would I need to use the computer version again?" theory. ☞ "...and my archaic FancyFont is fairly easy to convert to HTML, as a lot of it can be done with global search-and-replace commands." One of the reasons I don't like fancy word processing programs like Microsoft Word is that the file you create on disk is some magical morass of stuff. The nice thing about a markup language — say FancyFont or TeX or troff or HTML — is that it's easy to convert into another markup language, even with global search-and-replace commands.

☞ "A risk of 1 in 145 (fairly unlikely) is not equivalent to 99.3% (almost certain)! But I think I know what Glanz meant — a risk of disaster of 1 in 145 is equivalent to a 99.3% success rate..." It looks like in his shock Glanz at the *Times* inverted the statistics. But if the chances are 1 in 145 for catastrophic disaster, and this was the hundred-and-thirteenth shuttle flight, then we're running about twice the predicted disaster rate. (Yes, I know: laws of large numbers and small samples, yadda, yadda, yadda.)

Rich Lynch • Variations on a Theme ♦

ct me: "On visiting Washington, D.C.: 'We ... got to see the Lincoln Memorial first.' That's about the halfway point of my gonzo full-court-press walking tour of Washington I do for visitors here." That's a pretty intense walking tour. Though it does hit all the high points on the Mall, and then some. However, I will admit that our running across three states in one day for the primary purpose of visits to two museums was a little extreme.

"On fanzine web sites: 'The other common error — which I think the Lynches commit with the Mimosa web site — is to try to duplicate the printed page on the web.' You're right we're trying to do that; we've always maintained that the web version is not a separate entity — it's the same fanzine, and therefore should look the same, at least as much as possible." A cleaner way to implement the "it's all one version" decision is to provide a PDF version on the web site.† Like I've said before, change in medium requires a change in design rules. If you make your web page look exactly like your printed page, without regard for the different capability of screen *versus* paper, you've committed the same error as the industrial designer who made the plastic clothes baskets to look exactly like woven wicker, down to the molded staples: plastic is plastic, dammit, not a cheap substitute for a wicker. (I hasten to add, Rich, that I'm not denegrating your content at all, but objecting to the on-line presentation. About *that* I'm a serious curmudgeon.)

Richard Dengrove • Twygdrasil and Treehouse Gazette ♦

ct me: "You were in Washington, DC and you didn't contact me! Of course, you may not have wanted to. Or you may not have realized how close I am." I know exactly how close you were,

† But see <http://www.useit.com/alertbox/20030714.html> for Jakob Nielsen's rant about PDF files. Nielsen's a usability expert who's currently working with Don Norman. I take him with a grain of salt.

actually. When I got caught in the traffic circle around the Lincoln Memorial and had to make a U-turn in front of Arlington Cemetery, we were within about eight miles of your apartment. But our time-constrained goal was to visit Mr Calder and the Wright Brothers. We'll catch you the next time we actually make it to a DSC.

"About you considering yourself authorized personnel. Early on in my career, someone invaded one of the Federal buildings, held a woman hostage and then decided to kill himself. Immediately, security was strengthened in all the Federal buildings. You needed an identification. ¶ Tourists trying to enter without showing identification claimed, as taxpayers, they owned the buildings and it was their right. Of course, the purpose of these measures was to protect them." So, if I can't enter the building without being attached to some tour, can the lobbyist for General Electric? How about the lobbyist for the NRA? Is Newt Gingrich still authorized personnel? How about Tom Foley? Bill Clinton? The difference now is not that I have to show identification and pass through a metal detector to get in — hell, I had to do that the last time I went into a county courthouse, and I was on a jury — but that I can't enter *at all* except on a very carefully proscribed tour. Yes, saying: "I'm sorry, but you can't enter without an appointment" is quite reasonable for an ordinary office building, even a government office building like the one you work in. But the Capitol is *not* an ordinary office building. What happens there is only The People's Business, nothing more and certainly nothing less.

They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety.

— Benjamin Franklin

"You better believe Bush is on board for the attack on Iraq. Just that he hasn't been on board as much as Rumsfeld has. When asked his opinion of what to do about 9-1-1, the first thing Rumsfeld said was 'When are we going to attack Iraq?'" To allow Rumsfeld his due, the first words out of *my* mouth at 6:45 pacific time on the morning of September 11th were exactly "Baghdad. Into glass. By nightfall. Fuck them." Though if he was reading the same briefings as Shrub, Rumsfeld had even less reason to believe that Iraq was responsible at the time than I did. (And truth be told, I had exactly no reason to believe it was Iraq's fault, and reason to believe it *wasn't*. I was pissed as all getout and ready to lash out at anyone in my way. It is my fervent hope that the chief civilian in charge of our military — the person standing between the President and the release of nuclear weapons — does not have this failing.)

On the other hand, as information about Dick Cheney's energy task force has leaked out, we've found out that one of the questions considered was who would administer Iraq's oil production in the case of the government changing. And surprise, surprise: buried in the particulars of the no-bid contract that Brown, Root

& Kellogg† ° was awarded nominally to put out oil fires in Iraq• also gives them the right to administer the UN Oil for Food program for Iraq on behalf of the occupying army.

(Again, I ask the really, really simple question: if it was illegal for Hillary Clinton's task force considering national health insurance to meet behind closed doors, why was it legal for Dick Cheney's task force considering national energy supplies to do so? What is the vital difference between the two efforts? The obvious answer is that the one that *hasn't* released its records has had some its recommendations implemented.)

David Schlosser • Peter, Pan & Merry ♦

*"In listening to all the foreign policy posturing regarding Iraq and Korea, I came across a quote from Teddy Roosevelt while reading Theodore Rex. (Following the resolution of the Venezuela crisis with Germany) 'Do let me entreat you to say nothing that can be taken hold of by those anxious to foment trouble between ourselves and any foreign power, or who delight in giving the impression that as a nation we are walking about with a chip on our shoulder. We are too big a people to be able to be careless in what we say.'" Yes, I'd actually read that TR quote some time ago. I still like it a lot. Been reading a lot of Mike Resnick's TR stories lately, and I'm really appreciating him more and more. Should probably read *Theodore Rex* when I can devote some attention to it.*

"At the moment I'm not sure which scares me more — domestic affairs or foreign policy ... Semi-related you may have heard about Operation Pipedream — a nationwide sweep on drug paraphernalia manufacturers. One company that got caught in that was a local glass blowing firm that had a small number of glass pipes. The owners are under arrest, the company is closed, a number of people are out of work and the company doesn't even fit the profile that the investigators were using..." This is precisely the sort of lunacy I'd expect from these guys. This is the inverse of the faith-based charity stuff: "we don't care what service you actually provide, if you say you're faith-based, we'll pop you to the top of the list."

Guy Lillian • Spiritus Mundi ♦

ct me: "[A]s for the Vietnam Wall, it has to be one of the supremely affecting works of design I have ever encountered. ... maybe it's all the notes and flowers and photos and other reminiscences that still, I understand, pepper its surface." There was a Christmas tree when we were there, with cards on it addressed to people whose names are on the wall. ☞ "I wonder, two hundred years from now, when everyone who either fought in Vietnam or personally

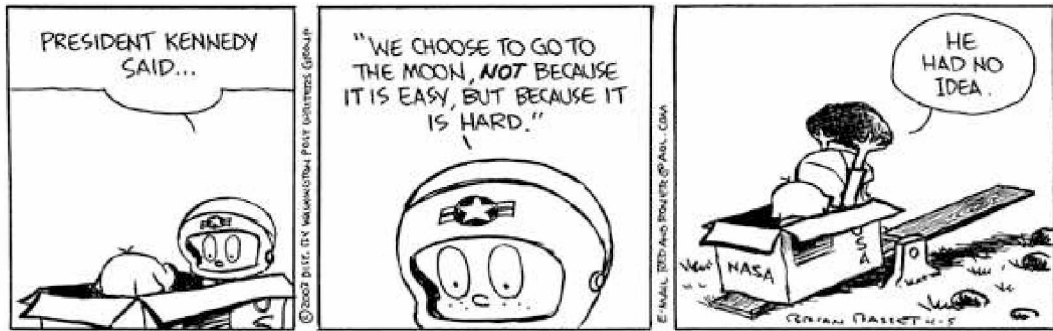
† For those not keeping score, that's a subsidiary of Halliburton.

° For those not keeping score, the last CEO of Halliburton was Dick Cheney.

• For those not keeping score, most of the oil well fires in Iraq were actually put out by Kuwaiti wildcatters.

knew one of those etched names is himself dust, will the Wall still have an impact? Will people still Get It?" I don't know: do any of us really "get" the soldier-on-horse statues that commemorate battles more than a century ago? On the other hand, I look at the "when the south stood up for states rights" monument in front of the Texas State House and while I certainly don't understand the emotion that led to the war, I understand the emotion that led to the monument. I suspect The Wall may speak to our great-grandchildren in some way, just as the monuments in C J Cherryh's "The Scapegoat" speak to us from fiction.

"Clarke is right about Saturn taking your breath away: it kayos me even to look at it through a telescope. Damn, I say to myself. It's a place!" Part of the reason I like that passage from "Saturn Rising" (written in 1961) is that Gene Cernan provides a wonderful example of life imitating art in words spoken a little more than a decade later — I ran them last time.



"[W]ould such an awful event inspire such cosmic disbelief and horror now? Probably not — it'd be seen as just another depressing proof of the chaotic meaninglessness of modern life, and half of America would probably cheer. We've had terrible days since November 22, 1963 — indeed, one came while you wrote this zine — but none worse: that one marked the end of our American youth. 'JFK — blown away — what else do I have to say?'" I was barely conscious in November of 1963, so I don't have a feel for how accurate the bar scene is in Oliver Stone's movie — that would be the scene where Garrison is watching in horror as events in Dallas unfold on a TV in a bar, and patrons are yelling at the TV that the communist-sympathizing bastard deserved this. This would be in the same part of the country where there were "Impeach Earl Warren" signs in every burg, and they were serious. The point being, while you may have felt cosmic disbelief and horror, I'm not sure that was a universally-held feeling. Would we cheer at the TV today if it announced Shrub had been assassinated? I dislike Shrub, I think his policies stink, I think he's damaging the country, but I would not thrill to his physical demise. That *would* be depressing proof of the meaninglessness of modern life. (I do not feel as though Bill Clinton's demise while in office would have been met by the same equanimity.)

☞ “Take a look at www.challzine.com. I think Patty Green is doing very well at getting Challenger onto the net.” As I said last time, I think Patty’s done a great job on this. Her sense of style and design is excellent.

☞ “By the way, I asked Mark Verheiden which Smallville episodes he’d prefer be tapped for the honor, and he polled his fellow producers. ‘Red’ won. I also named ‘Vortex’.” I had to go look up the episodes (which was not easy given the annoying layout of the WB websites) and think that “Red” certainly has merit. That said, I think Christopher Reeve appearing in “Rosetta” (which episode you mentioned elsewhere) was a dumb gimmick. In the end, even though I object to the short dramatic presentation category, I voted for the *Enterprise* episode “Carbon Creek” — I’d seen about four of the five nominees, and that was the only one I thought even deserved a nomination.

“Like you say, *ad astra per aspera*. You know, that’s inscribed on a little plaque on the Apollo 1 launch site.” Yup. That launch complex appears in the otherwise dumb movie *Armageddon*. When we first saw the movie, I recognized the setting before the camera panned to the plaque, and Allie looked over to see me quietly sobbing.

“...won’t ruin our trip to Australia. I may wear a button, ‘DON’T BLAME ME — I VOTED FOR AL GORE’.” I got a lot of grief in high school because I insisted on wearing a McGovern for President button until the Vietnam peace treaty actually went into force. (Not that the treaty had any effect on the eventual outcome.) Even though it’s now too late, you might also be interested to know that you can get a T-shirt that says “I’m sorry my president is an idiot. I didn’t vote for him” in Chinese, Spanish, Russian, English, Arabic, and French. You can also buy a version with only five languages so your monolingual neighbors in the States won’t beat you up.

Gary Brown : Oblio ♦

“And inside America, if one dares speak out against Bush II, they are labeled as unpatriotic and somehow supporter of all the evil in this world.” I’m amused (well, perhaps “horrificed” is a closer word) at the premise of Ann Coulter’s new book, *Treason*, that anyone who holds liberal beliefs must *a priori* act against the interests of the United States. I want to write a rebuttal volume entitled *Victims of Psychiatric Disorders*. Though it might make more sense to just leave the job to Al Franken, who wrote the nicely effective *Rush Limbaugh is a Big Fat Idiot*.

☞ “‘The Constitution just sets minimums,’ Scalia said. ‘Most of the rights that you enjoy go way beyond what the Constitution requires.’” That’s such a dangerous misinterpretation of the Constitution that I have to question Scalia’s qualifications to be a Supreme Court Justice. The Constitution sets the maximum rights of the government, not the minimum rights that the governed — do the words “Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed” sound at all familiar?

Indeed, I remember Mr Lillian a while back providing us with a one-up comparison of the guarantees of free speech provided by the Bill of Rights and the old Soviet Constitution. That comparison made it clear that in the latter case the right was granted by the government and could be withdrawn by it. Perhaps Mr Justice Scalia favors the Sovietization of our Constitution.

It is not the function of our Government to keep the citizen from falling into error; it is the function of the citizen to keep the Government from falling into error.

— Robert Houghwout Jackson, *American Communications Association v. Douds*

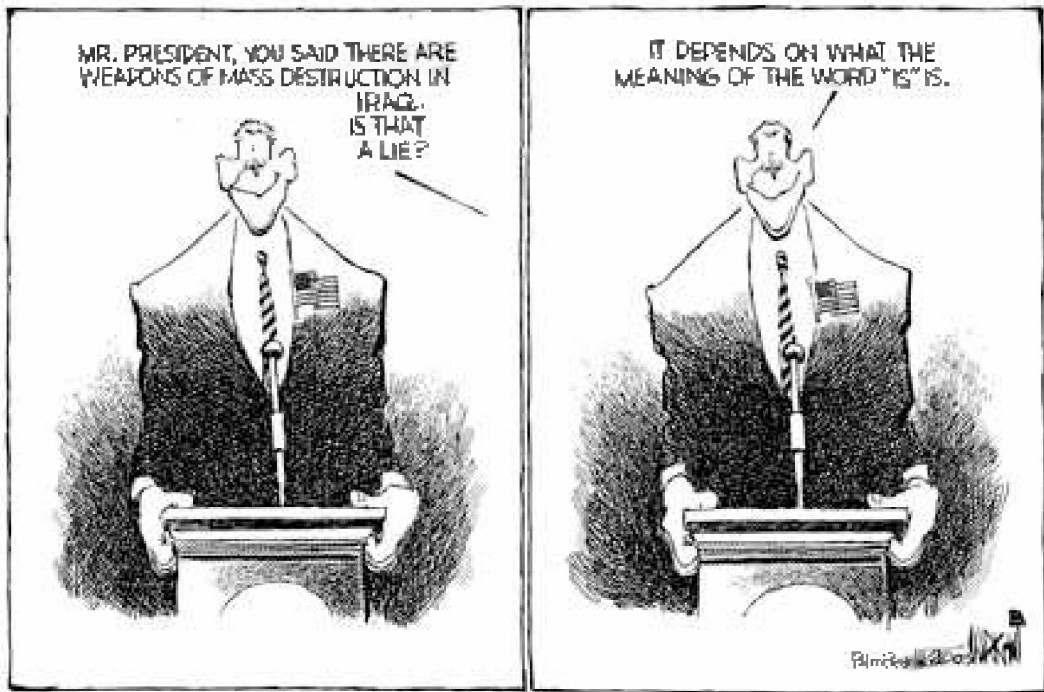
ct OO: “Glad you reinstated the headings for *The Southerner*. I always looked forward to seeing what new you could come up with.” The color masthead makes for some compromises, but I think that it works out on balance. Though I still like the cleanliness of the simpler, text-only design. Now, if I can get the the pre-printed mastheads to run through the copier without smearing the existing color toner, I’d be happier. I may need to print them a little differently.

ct me: “Oh wait, you mean you used a double negative in describing Robert Crumb and Stephen King’s talents. Sorry as an English major that’s a no-no (oops, another double negative).” You perhaps remember the apocryphal grammar lesson in which the teacher is carefully explaining that while in Russian a double negative is a negative, in English, the negatives cancel and you’re left with a positive statement. However, continues the teacher, in no language is a double positive interpreted as a negative. To which some kid in the back of the room mutters out loud, “yeah, yeah.”

“Glad to hear Liz’s kidney woes are close to being resolved. Hope they get the rest of the fragments out.” Her kidneys are clean, but see my comments in the natter.

Sheila Strickland : Revenant ♦

“Michael Moore’s [speech at the Oscars] was nicely over the top, though I’m a bit surprised at the amount of booing. What happened to the traditional Hollywood liberal elite? (They must not have been in attendance this year.)” People who were there in the auditorium were surprised that the booing was what was reported: they heard very little of it. I believe it was Alan Winston who explained what actually happened: There’s a long-standing political gap between the members of the talent unions (who tend liberal) and the trade unions (who tend conservative). Anyone paying attention knew aht Moore had given for a speech at the Indy awards the previous day, and would have guessed that he would say the same thing at the Oscars if he won. The trade union guys — stage hands, lighting techs, sound guys — were already backstage and simply had to gather near the microphones backstage (after all: they knew where the microphones were) and boo to drown out the applause in front of it.



Janice Gelb • Trivial Pursuits ♦

"Of all of the amazing feats of PR the Bush administration has managed, linking attacking Iraq with fighting the terrorism that caused 9/11 is probably the most amazing. I find it difficult to understand how anyone can buy a rationale that says that attacking a Middle Eastern country without provocation will reduce the risk of terrorist attacks! Not to mention the fact that the terrorists were trained and funded by Saudi Arabia (our pals), not by Iraq." Yeah, there's a word in English for linking al Qaeda and Iraq: lie. Too bad none of the democratic presidential candidates were willing to use it. And the Saudis are still being only sporadically helpful in investigating the terrorists they funded. There was apparently great shock among the Saudi government when al Qaeda actually blew up an apartment building in Riyadh during the recent war. See Robert Baer's article "The Fall of the House of Saud" in the May issue of *The Atlantic*: he suggests that with the ever-increasing number of princes on royal retainer, not only is governing the country well-nigh impossible because the princes demand ever more lucre, but a collapse of the Saudi economy is inevitable.

[Review] "The Peter Wimsey Mysteries, Dorothy Sayers — At Boskone, Eve was shocked when I said that I'd never read these. In the past month, I've read four and plan on more. They're quality stuff: literate, amusing, and the mysteries aren't bad either." I, too, am shocked that you've

never read them. They're good. Any series which begins with the main character pounding his fist in a cab saying "Damn! Damn! Damn!" can't be all bad. I find Peter's evolution to be fascinating. If you can ignore Harriet Vane being Sayers' way of including a wish-fulfillment version of herself in the books, the Peter-Harriet romance is fascinating, too.

ct me: "Re my review of *Shadow Puppets*, you say that there is a logical progression to where Bean ended up, and then mention how interesting it is to find out how Peter comes to be the Hegemon. I agree, and have liked reading the Bean side of things. But I said that this last book had him behaving in ways that were not consistent with his character in the previous two books. Your comment doesn't really tell me why you disagree with that. Could you tell me a bit more about how you felt about that particular book rather than the Bean series? ... " It could be that I had the titles mangled in my head and that when you were making comments about *Shadow Puppets* not following logically, I thought you were making that observation about *Shadow of the Hegemon*. The Bean in *Hegemon* follows quite logically from Bean in *Ender's Shadow*. However, I haven't read *Puppets* yet, so count me confused and out of order until I have. And I know *how* Peter becomes Hegemon, but not yet what he does with it — that's the part of the story I'm itching to find out. Now I just have to find time to read the damned book.

mike weber • Then and Now ♦

ct me: "The IMDB points out that there are explicit/implicit references to all of the previous nineteen Bond films in this one. Some of the things they cite sound pretty strained." I noticed a bunch of the references — in fact, pointed some of them out to the kids when we originally watched the movie — but I can't find the list at IMDB. 📖 "Brosnan's Bond is a lot tougher-minded than his Remington Steele would lead one to expect." My immediate smart-ass response is "perhaps that's why they call him an actor?" But as I've said, I think that Brosnan does a very nice screen version of the print Bond, a man who has a very dangerous job, at which he's rather good. I think that Roger Moore (or at least the writers of that era) veered too far into silly, and that Timothy Dalton veered too far into cruel and vicious. Brosnan is a nice compromise — *vide* his line in *Goldeneye* as he draws a gun on Famke Jansen in the steambath: "No, no, no: enough foreplay."

ct Schlosser: "If it comes to city fighting in Baghdad, and the US populace turns out to not be as bloodthirsty as it likes to think itself and support for the war evaporates in mid-battle, we may well be 'humiliated'." Well, even though we've declared the war over, and even though they're dancing in the streets of Washington over the Hussein sons being dead, it's certainly not over, with a couple of American soldiers getting killed every week.

📖 "A Joint Memorial Affirming Civil Rights and Liberties; Declaring Cpposition to Federal Measures that Infringe on Civil Liberties." There was a lot of fussing in the runup to

the recent war about cities and counties which passed resolutions against the war. "They're interfering in what is the business of only the federal government. States can't set foreign policy." This, on the other hand, seems completely appropriate. This is a state saying "we think that the federal government has overstepped its bounds, and we choose to not cooperate." Of course, the same objection will be made, by the same folks who think that federal law trumps state law in matters such as possession of marijuana and same-sex marriage. (I gotta wonder where Strom Thurmond was when the federal government wanted to clamp down on Oregon and California's marijuana laws.)



Randy Cleary • Avatar Press ♦

"Don't Fear the Reaper: The Best of Blue Öyster Cult" I notice that album is missing my favorite BÖC song, "ME-262," a calm ballad about the first jet fighter plane. But I've always been fascinated by their progression as a band, which is pretty clearly delineated in steps: they went from the most popular bar mitzvah band on Long Island, to the prototypical heavy metal terrors ("The Red and the Black"), to comparatively placid commercial respectability ("Don't Fear the Reaper"). And I think "Godzilla" is just plain fun.

ct me: "The most likely reason for not releasing source code is probably shame." I'm forgetting the context here, but if we were talking about my current employer, I think that does play into it. Hence the argument made by the company in federal court a year or two ago that went roughly, "we can't release our source code! it's so badly written that anyone reading it will be able to see security holes that we've been unable to patch because of bad design." On the other hand, I've made the argument for some source code to not be released for trade secret reasons — we don't want to make our algorithm public quite yet. (Caveat: never do that with a cryptographic algorithm. If a crypto scheme isn't secure unless the encoding scheme remains hidden, you've already blown it.)

Gary Robe • Tennessee Trash ♦

ct Schlosser: "The US economy depends on American consumers to keep goods moving through the system. The problem is that those goods are now almost universally made elsewhere so the compensation for making those goods now flows out of the economy instead of staying in it." Remember the economics of the exploration of the New World: Spain and Portugal were so successful at it that there was so much money floating around the Iberian peninsula that the economies collapsed. There was too much money chasing too few goods. Saudi Arabia's about to collapse in a similar way — it's got too many members of the royal family being supported by a collapsing supply of petro-dollars. It's possible that the US will, in our children's lifetimes, end up in the same position as England after WWII: a collapsed economy, without a native means of production, supporting a population principally of copyboys and clerks.

Eve Ackerman • Guilty Pleasures ♦

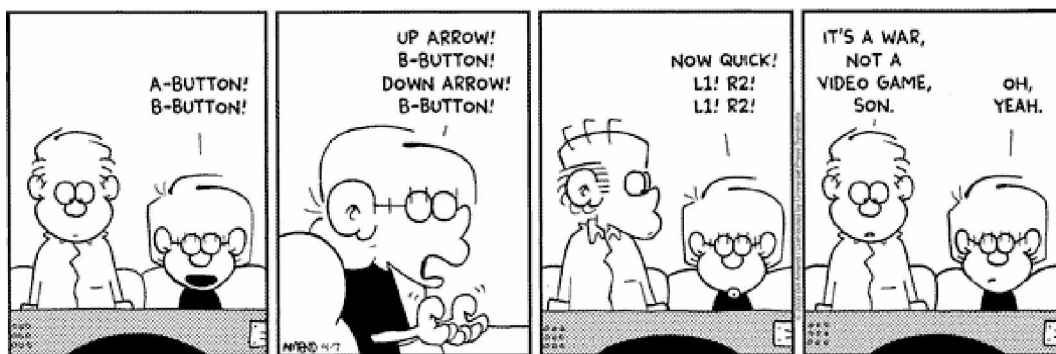
ct me: "And your arguments against the war make sense too." Well, I was taken to task recently by an old and dear friend for my arguments *in favor* of the war. And frankly, I was completely wrong in those.

We had Colin Powell providing evidence to the UN that Iraq still had a WMD program. We had the president address accusing Iraq of attempting to buy uranium in the State of the Union.[◊] We had Ari Fleischer on April 10th saying, "[Weapons of mass destruction] are what this war was about." And yet, now that we've declared victory, there's exactly no evidence of any real WMDs. It was the immediate threat of those weapons that drove the administration's urgency. Worse, the press is running around concentrating on the pedigree of the uranium accusation in the State of the Union address, utterly ignoring the pattern of behavior on both sides of the Atlantic spinning intelligence to fit the preconceived notions of the Bush administration. This is a pattern of behavior unmatched since the CIA was modifying intelligence reports during the Reagan administration, to paint the collapsing Soviet Union as a greater threat than they were, and to drum up congressional support for an invasion of Nicaragua. And I, for one, fell for much of it.

So we had our war. A war of fascinating video-game violence in jerky stop-motion images transmitted by satellite phone.

(That's not to say it wasn't compelling television: I saw a bit of really, really

[◊] And ignore the administration's attacks on Joseph Wilson, former US Ambassador to Gabon, who *at the behest of the CIA* went to Niger last fall and determined that the uranium reports were forgeries. In the process, "senior administration officials" intentionally outted Wilson's wife, Valerie Plame, who was an undercover CIA agent specializing WMDs.



compelling reality TV Saturday evening April 12th. Liz was off on the other side of the Cascades bird watching for the weekend, so I flipped on CNN as I was getting undressed for bed. I got to watch, realtime, as CNN's non-embedded reporter in northern Iraq explored abandoned military bases in Saddam's hometown of Tikrit, discovering all the equipment still in place. And then watched, transfixed, as his convoy had to shoot its way through a militia checkpoint on the way out of town — the militia started shooting first when they saw it was a couple of Land Rovers full of CNN guys coming toward them. "OK, nobody's hurt, though two windows in the lead Land Rover are shot out. Now we're heading at about a hundred and twenty miles per hour north on the road to Mosul. We're going to lose signal here shortly, but we're okay." My already-dubious feelings about the war didn't make it any less interesting. Indeed, it was fascinating to have the studio guy explain about how the CNN independents hired mercenaries to travel with them.)⁴

We declared victory when the Iraqi people tore down a statue of Saddam Hussein. Except that the US military needed to do it for them. And the crowd of Iraqi people in the square at the time numbered about fifty. And those fifty were mostly members of the Iraqi National Congress, the exile group headed by Rumsfeld's buddy and convicted bank fraudster Ahmed Chalabi. And the American soldiers draped the statue with an *American* flag, which was in such poor taste under the circumstances that it made me sputter.

We've declared victory, but we've actually met exactly zero of the stated goals of this war: we've not found WMDs, we've not actually found Saddam Hussein and brought him to justice, we've not brought democracy to Iraq,⁵ we haven't prevented

⁴ I'm afraid some network executive is going to decide that it's good ratings to throw a war. Worked for Hearst in Cuba, right? But see Daniel Marcus' short story "Killed in the Ratings" from the January 1997 *Asimov's* about how what goes around comes around.

⁵ The puppet governing council whose every decision has to be ratified by the US administrator

a resurgence of al Queda,* we've done no building of democratic institutions, can't consistently keep power on or get water running in Baghdad or Basra, and we keep flip-flopping on removing Baath Party functionaries from government posts. To top it off, we've got the likes of George Will complaining that fighting this war makes Shrub a traitor to the conservative cause because the last thing a real conservative wants is to be involved in nation-building. (Here's a clue George: we still aren't involved in nation-building. At the moment, we're occupying Iraq, not restoring its institutions.)

Roughly speaking, the American people were rolled. I seem to remember using the phrase "excuses not reasons" to describe the arguments put forth by my government beforehand: now, I'd like some elected official of my country to tell me why we *really* undertook this war.

(But, see the back cover for Dan Piraro's take.)

(And I'm sorry that you got the rant, Eve. You just happened to light the fuse.)



☞ "Smothered sounds like a show I'd really enjoy watching... I'll look for it on Bravo." It looks like it's available on DVD, though Bravo does tend to cycle these things so it'll show up again. I may have said earlier that one of the interesting things for me was the realization that *The Smothers Brothers* was the career beginning for a set of guys we take for granted now: Steve Martin, Mason Williams, and Rob Reiner to name three.

☞ "I've got the soundtrack for K-19, The Widowmaker. I've never seen the movie but I've been assured it's the best part." That would be correct from my point of view. Though for submarine movies, the soundtrack to *Hunt for Red October* is really up there.

☞ "Oooh, The President's Analyst! What an incredible movie... even if some of the references

doesn't count as democracy.

* You'll note there was a major al Queda attack *in Riyadh* (talk about biting the hand that feeds you!) during the war.

will be dated." Yes, it's a really, really fun flick. I suspect that even with the dated references, its point is still as sharp. It does have one of the most wonderfully understated sex scenes I can remember: the camera follows a rising balloon. I *do* need to find a copy of that to watch with James.

☞ *"I hope by the time you read this Liz will be fully recovered."* Again, see my comments in the natter.

George Wells • Insert Dignified Title... ♦

"Of course, I would not bother saying this but I am desperate to someday appear in one of Jeff Copeland's quotation collections." But, my friend, you do. An exchange between you and Ned Brooks is a very early entry. But there are also some quotes you provided, so you additionally appear by reference. ☞ *"Hey Jeff: stinky to bed and stinky to rise, makes a man a pollutant."* Nope: try again.

Toni Reinhardt • Yngvi is a Louse ♦

ct me: "Re the Shuttle accident: I think the question is not so much the odds, since I don't think we have enough flights to make a statistically valuable statement, but whether or not it was preventable. And I suspect it was. Have you heard any more about this?" By now, you'll have heard the inquiry results, too — indeed, as the daughter of a rocket scientist, you may have more knowledge than I do — but insulation falling off the solid rocket booster put a hole in the wing 16-inches long. The simple bureaucratic stupidity of ignoring a known problem ... *again* ... is just unbelievable.

Mailing Comments on SFPA 233

Ned Brooks • The New Port News ♦

ct me: "You really think the invasion of Iraq was the 'right thing'? In my opinion even if it appears to be successful – it was wrong." No, I think that stripping Iraq of its nuclear weapons and deposing Saddam Hussein was the right thing. I think the method used to do so was wrong. And now, it appears that even the method was unsuccessful. But see my long comment to Eve above.

☞ *"Have you noticed that there is no Islamic democracy, and never has been? I think the reasons for this are historical – the Islamic culture has had neither a Reformation nor an Enlightenment."* For the sake of argument, I'd point out that Saudi Arabia is a democracy but that its voting population, while large, is restricted to the male descendents of Abdul ibn bin Saud. On the other hand, during the flowering of Arab civilization, say five hundred years ago, there was no need for an Arab democracy, *per se*, because the monarchs were pretty damned enlightened.

Rich Lynch • Variations on a Theme ♦

Thanks for reprinting the appreciation of Harry Warner from the Hagerstown *Herald-Mail*. It amazed me that their original bare-bones obit of Harry didn't even mention that he'd worked for them for fifty-some years.

ct OO: "Some of the 'Miscellaneous Business' items seem like they're holdovers from the previous mailing..." Yup. That was a bad cut-and-paste accident. As was the typo in table of contents in 233 which transformed Sheila into Arthur's zine title. I already made fun of myself in *The Southerner* for mailing 233, and have again this time. Never trust a man who hasn't had enough sleep to operate a computer.

ct me: "[The Wachowski brothers, in addition to *The Matrix* and *Bound*] were also the screenwriters for a guilty pleasure movie for me, *Assassins*, with Sly Stallone, Antonio Banderas, and Juliette Moore... A month or so ago, TBS seemed to be showing it about every other evening." TBS has to show a movie on successive evenings — they show five minutes of movie and then twenty-five of commercials for next week's movie. Suddenly the evening is gone and they have to show the next reel tomorrow. (Our strategy has become "oh, there's an interesting movie on TBS: let's run over to the video store and rent it so we can see it.") Actually, *Assassins* has been on my list of movies to see for quite a while, along with another Stallone action movie from about a year earlier, *The Specialist*.

☞ "On the Oscars: 'I was disappointed that *The Two Towers* did so badly.' Winning three Academy Awards is 'doing badly'?" My count was two, and they were both craft categories: sound editing and visual effects. For visual effects, I'd argue there was really no competition.

Arthur Hlavaty • Nice Distinctions ♦

"At Bernadette's insistence, I went in for a colonoscopy.... The last time I tried that (15 years ago), they sedated me insufficiently, and I screamed in pain and terror until they gave up." There's a joke about the road less travelled here, but I'll pass it up to point out that when our only President took it up the ass last year, they completely knocked him out, too. I seem to remember I had no sedation at all when I had a colonoscopy about a decade ago. Of course, they were only checking the lower 50 cm or so.

☞ "The cell phone is a Sprint, so I named it *Bullet Bob* after Bob Hayes, the great 60s sprinter." A woman we know refers to her vibrators (including the bullet-shaped ones) generically as BOB, battery operated boyfriend. I leave you with that little brain-worm for the next time you reach into your pocket in response to a little buzzing sound.

☞ "(Would a civilized society see a successful middle-aged woman with a toy boy as any less enviable than a middle-aged man with a trophy girl?)" I don't know about a civilized society, but the paparazzi's reaction to 40-something Demi Moore taking up with a 25-year-old MTV boy has been entertaining. Though the paparazzi's reaction to her

going to a movie premiere with the boy, her ex-husband, *and* their kids was near apoplectic. Jeez, you'd think she'd been wearing a blue dress with semen stains.

☞ "I'm in favor of banning ambient music from stores and such. This is partly because of my hearing problems, which make it hard to pick out speech directed at me from the musical background..." My father has gotten deafer and deafer over the years, so I certainly sympathize. And since both my paternal grandparents were deaf as posts, I have the nagging suspicion that this fate awaits me, too. Annoyingly enough, I'm beginning to have trouble resolving voices in settings with high background noise

(which is affecting our choice of restaurants), but when my doc sent me for a hearing test last year, the diagnosis was "no problem: you're normal."

☞ "Columbia: They died for us, and for the hope that some day we won't be ever-increasing billions trapped together in a cruddy little gravity well." Perhaps they died for us, but it was tragic that they had to die because of a bureaucratic foul up rather than some real accident.

Richard Dengrove • Twygradasil and Treehouse Gazette ♦

I'll start by extending my sympathy about your father's death. I hope your mother's transistion to assisted living went smoothly — that, too, must be quite a travail. I'm quite fortunate that my parents' failing health is physical rather than mental, and still in the annoying, rather than life-threatening, stage.

ct OO: "Didn't we have the Curt Phillips TAFF ballot in the previous issue?" Yes, we did: see my comments to Rich Lynch above.

ct Brooks: "Soyburgers taste enough like hamburgers but their texture is more like a vegetable's than a meat's." Well, they taste enough like hamburger if you put onion and ketchup on them. But then with enough ketchup, anything tastes like a burger.

☞ "I got a CD of the Oxford English Dictionary for \$229. I bet I could have gotten it for \$199 if I had waited till the end of the year and merchants wanted to unload the old versions." Or you could use the on-line version at <http://www.oed.com>, which I used to finally look up *fanzine*.

ct Lillian: "The Doofus' insurance company paid for a chiropractor? I knew that they have good



luck with bad backs. ... But I didn't know they were that respectable yet." My sense is that insurance companies are more-than-willing to pay for chiropractors nowadays. They're considered an acceptable alternative to physical therapy for a range of things.

☞ "So, Guy, can I assume you like the Mardi Gras, especially as it is celebrated in the French Quarter? That tits for beads is your thing?" Beaded tits? It's possible that Guy, like me, was weaned a bit too early.

☞ "And, by having a constituency of ranchers who ate up his swill, James Watt was that much more evil." I'm not sure: he may have been surpassed by his protégé Christie Todd Whitman, who turned her staff at the EPA into personal errand boys.

☞ "We will see whether the Democratic candidates who have been antiwar have a foot up in 2004 or have committed political seppuku." We'll see. If any one of the seven dwarves would get a consistent message and stick with it, he might have a chance. I find the attempts to undermine Kerry's campaign, though, fascinating. It means that he's actually got a chance of beating Bush.

☞ "I had hoped the American general that Bush put in charge of Iraq came from Brooklyn. Then his son could say, 'Yonder lies the palace of my fadder da Caliph.'" Which week's Caliph is that? Or stealing a page from "Doonesbury," which Proconsul? I hear rumors that James Baker is soon to be appointed. Actually, that may not be a bad idea: it was Baker who put together the coalition for the first Gulf War.



That's all I have time for this issue. I'm within a mailing of being caught up — hooray! — even though I'm stopping in the middle of Twygdrasil and Treehouse Gazette.

Meanwhile, I've got two extra pages. Fortunately, I tripped over the article on the next two pages the other day while looking for something else, and thought it bore reprinting.

Les Earnest, longtime luminary at the Stanford Research Institute, published a couple of pieces in the on-line RISKS digest (<http://catless.ncl.ac.uk/Risks>) about some early experiences. This one seems appropriate to reprint given the current paranoia in the country about security.

Date: 01 Apr 88 1620 PST

From: Les Earnest <LES@SAIL.Stanford.EDU>

e-t-a-o-n-r-i Spy and the F.B.I.

Reading a book got me into early trouble – I had an F.B.I. record by age twelve. This bizarre incident caused a problem much later when I needed a security clearance. I learned that I could obtain one only by concealing my sordid past.

A friend named Bob and I read the book “Secret and Urgent,” by Fletcher Pratt [Blue Ribbon Books; Garden City, NY; 1942] which was an early popular account of codes and ciphers. Pratt showed how to use letter frequencies to break ciphers and reported that the most frequently occurring letters in typical English text are e-t-a-o-n-r-i, in that order. (The letter frequency order of the story you are now reading is e-t-a-i-o-n-r. The higher frequency of “i” probably reflects the fact that I use the first person singular a lot.) Pratt’s book also treated more advanced cryptographic schemes.

Bob and I decided that we needed to have a secure way to communicate with each other, so we put together a rather elaborate jargon code based on the principles described in the book. I don’t remember exactly why we thought we needed it – we spent much of our time outside of school together, so there was ample time to talk privately. Still, you never could tell when you might need to send a secret message!

We made two copies of the code key (a description of how to encrypt and decrypt our messages) in the form of a single typewritten sheet. We each took a copy and carried it on our persons at all times when we were wearing clothes.

I actually didn’t wear clothes much. I spent nearly all my time outside school wearing just a baggy pair of maroon swimming trunks. That wasn’t considered too weird in San Diego.

I had recently been given glasses to wear but generally kept them in a hard case in the pocket of the trousers that I wore to school. I figured that this was a good place to hide my copy of the code key, so I carefully folded it to one-eighth of its original size and stuck it at the bottom of the case, under my glasses.

Every chance I got, I went body surfing at Old Mission Beach. I usually went by streetcar and, since I had to transfer Downtown, I wore clothes. Unfortunately, while I was riding the trolley home from the beach one Saturday, the case carrying my glasses slipped out of my pocket unnoticed. I reported the loss to my mother that night. She chastised me and later called the streetcar company. They said that the glasses hadn’t been turned in.

After a few weeks of waiting in vain for the glasses to turn up, we began to lose hope. My mother didn’t rush getting replacement glasses in view of the fact that I hadn’t worn them much and they cost about \$8, a large sum at that time. (To me, \$8 represented 40 round trips to the beach by streetcar, or 80 admission fees to the movies.)

Unknown to us, the case had been found by a patriotic citizen who opened it, discovered the code key, recognized that it must belong to a Japanese spy and turned it over to the F.B.I. This was in 1943, just after citizens of Japanese descent had been forced off their property and taken away to concentration camps. I remember hearing that a local grocer was secretly a Colonel in the Japanese Army and had hidden his uniform in the back of his store. A lot of people actually believed these things.

About six weeks later, when I happened to be off on another escapade, my mother was visited by a man who identified himself as an investigator from the F.B.I. (She was a school administrator, but happened to be at home working on her Ph.D. dissertation.) She noticed that there were two more men waiting in a car outside. The agent asked a number of questions about me, including my occupation. He reportedly was quite disappointed when he learned that I was only 12 years old.

He eventually revealed why I was being investigated, showed my mother the glasses and the code key and asked her if she knew where it came from. She didn't, of course. She asked if we could get the glasses back and he agreed.

My mother told the investigator how glad she was to get them back, considering that they cost \$8. He did a slow burn, then said "Lady, this case has cost the government thousands of dollars. It has been the top priority in our office for the last six weeks. We traced the glasses to your son from the prescription by examining the files of nearly every optometrist in San Diego." It apparently didn't occur to them that if I were a REAL Japanese spy, I might have brought the glasses with me from headquarters.

The F.B.I. agent gave back the glasses but kept the code key "for our records." They apparently were not fully convinced that they were dealing just with kids.

Since our communication scheme had been compromised, Bob and I devised a new key. I started carrying it in my wallet, which I thought was more secure. I don't remember ever exchanging any cryptographic messages. I was always ready, though.

A few years later when I was in college, I got a summer job at the Naval Electronics Lab, which required a security clearance. One of the questions on the application form was "Have you ever been investigated by the F.B.I." Naturally, I checked "Yes." The next question was, "If so, describe the circumstances." There was very little space on the form, so I answered simply and honestly, "I was suspected of being a Japanese spy."

When I handed the form in to the security officer, he scanned it quickly, looked me over slowly, then said, "Explain this" – pointing at the F.B.I. question. I described what had happened. He got very agitated, picked up my form, tore it in pieces, and threw it in the waste basket.

He then got out a blank form and handed it to me, saying "Here, fill it out again and don't mention that. If you do, I'll make sure that you NEVER get a security clearance."

I did as he directed and was shortly granted the clearance. I never again disclosed that incident on security clearance forms.

On another occasion much later, I learned by chance that putting certain provocative information on a security clearance form can greatly speed up the clearance process. But that is another story.

Art Credits

The front cover: 9 *Chickweed Lane* from 19 April — second month in a row with a Brooke McEldowney cartoon on the cover. Page 3: *Heart cf the City* from 2 Jan. Page 5: *Arlo & Janis* from 10 Sep 2002. Page 10: *Red & Rover* from 5 Apr. Page 13: Don Wright from 20 Jun. Page 15: *Foxtrot* from 11 Oct 2002. Page 17: *Foxtrot* from 7 Apr. Page 18: *Calvin & Hobbes* from 24 May 1991. Page 21: *Strange Brew* from 26 Apr. Page 22: *Doonesbury* from 17 Mar. Back cover: *Bizarro* from 14 July — souvenir of a foreign trip.

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