

This is The Rogue Raven 33 and comes to you from Frank Denton, 14654 - 8th Ave. S.W., Seattle, WA 98166. A Hedgerow Press Publication, # 20. November, 1984

What can I say? Yes, I'm still hanging around fanzine fandom, but I have not been very productive, have I? Still, I like to stay in touch with a lot of fine people, and particularly an inordinate number of fanzine editors who have been kind enough to keep me on their mailing lists. I'll say something later about the turn this zine may take in the future. But I'm not going away, so you'll see more of me in the future.

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Why not start out with a letter to the "Fanzine that lowers blood pressure - take in case of an attack of anxiety."

A TRUE LIFE STORY FROM JEANNE GOMOLL

Dear Frank,

Thank you very much for the latest Rogue Raven. It arrived in the mail on a Saturday, the day I had scheduled to begin transferring some very rough drawings from newsprint to bristol paper. I'd spent most of the morning and early afternoon planning the drawings and intended to use the rest of the afternoon and evening transferring them to the heavier, better quality paper. There was only one sheet left and I needed at least a dozen. It was 4:25 and the art supplies stores closed at 5. If I ran very fast I might make the 4:26 bus which stops two blocks from our house and if the bus was quite on time, I might make it to the store when the bus passed it (by schedule) at 4:55. So, skipping steps, I tore downstairs, grabbed my coat and bus pass and skidded through the front door.

Luckily, I also grabbed The Rogue Raven when I passed the kitchen table. I knew that I'd need something to read on the bus to ease an anxiety attack. It was, after all, my last chance of the weekend to get paper, and if I didn't make it, the whole next day would be "wasted."

Well, I made it to the bus stop in a time that might have qualified me for the Olympic dash, I thought, and once there I put on my coat, distributed keys and bus pass in my pocket, and put my mittens on. It was cold. The bus wasn't in sight, though someone was waiting for it down on the next block, so I was optimistic that I hadn't missed it. But as the seconds passed, I worried that the less-than-prompt weekend service would get me to Art Mart too late to purchase my paper. I paced a square of sidewalk, nervously trying to cause the bus to appear by sheer mental force (and to keep warm), when I suddenly remembered the fanzine I had rolled in one hand.

I uncurled The Rogue Raven and started reading it. Your leisurely discussion of why you haven't published lately and why you have begun again now, calmed me down considerably, so that by the time the bus crunched to my stop - (there was an ice storm the night before and vehicles tend to "crunch" to a stop; if they attempt to "screech" to a stop it ends up more like a "slide and crash" to a stop) - my behavior was quite normal and I merely took a seat and quietly read as the bus made its way downtown. I couldn't have checked my watch more than a dozen times. If that.

By the time I got to your story about the wood stove, your voice - indeed, something I've come to think of as "the Frank Denton patient tone of writing" - had so calmed me down that I was consciously reassuring myself that either I'd get to the store on time or I wouldn't, and that it wasn't the end of the world or even the weekend if I didn't get paper that afternoon. The bus reached the block of State Street where Art Mart is located at one minute to 5. With long, incautious strides (dangerous on days after an ice storm, let me tell you), I ran down the street to the store and pulled the door handle. It didn't open. They had closed. But there were still customers inside being checked out and my suicide-prone expression must have inspired sympathy in one of the clerks who opened the door a crack and let me in after I assured him that I only wanted a pad of bristol paper.

The thick, satisfying, new pad of bristol under my arm, I caught the Burr Oaks bus almost immediately after leaving the store and enjoyed the rest of your fanzine on the ride home. This time, my own calm echoed yours rather than being artificially created by yours.

In any case, I feel as though I owe you a larger thanks than I do to most enjoyable fanzines. Who knows, for your part in tamping my blood pressure for a half hour or so, you may have added some time on to my life expectancy.

DOUG BARBOUR REPORTS ON CANADIAN WRITING

A recent book comes to mind as not only very fine of its kind but as a truly entertaining and slightly weird example of the art. People have heard me talk about Robert Kroetsch before, so my praising his latest opus is to be expected, and here goes: People who enjoyed Robert Kroetsch's previous novels will find much to delight them in Alibi (Stoddart Publications, 239 pp., \$16.95; available from Beaufort Books in the U.S.), the latest offering from this trickster of contemporary fiction. The wild comedy, the manic energy of invention, the dark awareness of mortality and the savage questions it raises: Kroetsch handles them all with the wit and style his readers have come to expect. It's a humdinger of a book.

Alibi's narrator "had two grandfathers by the first name of William, both with the same first name, and my parents, farming people northeast of Calgary in the Battle River country, in the futile hope that I might receive at least one inheritance, named me after both of them. Billy Billy Dorfen. And all I got from my ancestors, it turned out, was the conviction that I needed two of everything: two cars, two university degrees, two bank accounts, two addresses, two mailboxes. For sure, two kicks at the cat. Two lives, possibly." There speaks the voice of this novel, and it's two lives,

absolutely, in fact, not to mention two lovers and, from his broken marriage, two daughters: Billy Billy Dorfen, "Dorf" to his friends (and readers), is indeed a doubled and duplicitous man.

Dorf is "hurting, I knew that much. We cannot have what we want, and we are hurt. But the trouble was I was working for a man who could buy anything he wanted. That's what people said about Jack Deemer." If Dorf is the archetypal Kroetschean questor, a man of chaos unbound, Deemer, the millionaire, recluse, oilman who has managed "to collect a trace of the discarded world into his warehouses" by sending Dorf out to purchase collections of everything under the sun, is the archetypal Kroetschean man of order, now grown into immense and dangerous power. When Deemer telegraphs Dorf to "Find me a spa," he precipitates a search which takes Dorf to the healing places of the Rockies and then of Britain and Europe. But Dorf is also seeking something for himself, some way to heal the "hurting," and in his search he loves two very different women: Karen, the dedicated documentary film maker, who is also collecting spas for a film, and Julie, Deemer's long time friend, who threatens to kill Dorf should he ever find Deemer the perfect spa.

Sex and death - the great preoccupations of religion and art - are the great preoccupations of Alibi. Kroetsch partly suggests their interrelation by making his story something like a thriller. But the mystery is deeper and less conventional than a conventional thriller could provide. As Dorf says at one point, "It is only the ironies that make sense." The world will not be solved. Love and desire are conundrums; as is the world; as is Alibi. If "love lays a trap" wherever it finds us, still we desire to find love.

Dorf seeks love mostly through sex, of which there is a lot in this novel. Often it is outrageous, especially in its association with spas and the art of healing; but then Dorf, as he makes clear, needs to be healed. Kroetsch's handling of sex in Alibi is interesting in that he is trying, I think, to present it as a kind of Ritual, yet he is doing so in an era when Realism still holds great power. Pure ritual writing seems out of place today, so it can only be rendered in parody (which contains the original and its possible denial, and the affirmation of both). Kroetsch's craft is to parody both ritual and romance, and realism in his presentation of what are almost holy mysteries. Only by profaning them can he hint at their mystery: thalassotherapy - to be healed by the sea, great mother of ocean, the goddess herself. Who can both love and kill.

What Kroetsch is trying to evoke, in his tour of healing places across the earth, is something very old and basic to human experience. Alibi is full of moments of intense insight, high comedy, extraordinary observation, epigrammatic wit, and genuine feeling. It is also deliberately opaque and occasionally frustrating in its refusal to play out the conventions of the plot it appears to have chosen. At the moment I don't quite know what to make of the ending.

Because Kroetsch has taken chances in Alibi that many writers never acknowledge are even there to be taken, he has possibly failed to create a fully realized work. I am not sure. If Alibi does not quite cohere in the

end, however, it offers so much truly entertaining intellectual and emotional stimulation along the way that it is worth many more finished texts. Alibi offers us a "walking conundrum of a world" in richly textured detail: it is an exciting, if rough-edged novel.

THE ROGUE GOES TO RENO

Every spring break for the past few years, Anna Jo and I have been going down to Reno, Nevada to do a little playing. Anna Jo continues to work while I stay home. When one retires, it is assumed that you stay home and play. Well, that's not quite true. From January 1 until the middle of March I actually took only three days off. I worked very hard to get things out of the way so that we could go off to England with a clear conscience this summer.

I suppose that there are a couple of ways of looking a spring vacation. We could stay home, but forget about setting the alarm, forget about little chores that need doing around the house, and just enjoy ourselves relaxing and doing whatever we wanted to do. Or. We can go down to Reno, see the bright lights, the high rollers, take in a show, play a few slots or Keno games, and live for a few days in a strange sort of fantasyland. We chose the latter.

We left on a Saturday morning, determined to get a reasonably early start, but not to drive straight through. For the first time in a long time, we had a rain-free trip between Seattle and Portland. Actually, it got a bit cloudy in southern Oregon, but didn't rain at all. Nor the rest of the way to Reno. The drive is lovely, if one is willing to sit back and enjoy. Long, yes. But very scenic. It's interesting to watch the physical geography change as you roll along, the strange moundy hills in the midst of flat farm land in northern Oregon, the mountains looming ahead and coming closer as you approach the Siskiyous, Black Butte and Mount Shasta in northern California, and one of my favorite sections, the pine forests and high meadows between Mount Shasta and Susanville.

We took along a supply of tapes to listen to, but didn't play many of them except for episodes of "Moon Over Morocco," an adventure series that played recently over one of our PBS stations. I managed to tape the last 12 episodes, after missing the first 7 or 8. But the story is zany and camp and adventurous and wonderfully produced, with Jack Flanders searching in Morocco for pre-Islamic magic and biting off more than he can chew. Anyway, we listened to quite a few episodes of the show. We switch driving about every hour, so I read a few pages of Megan Lindholm's Windsinger when I wasn't driving. Anna Jo worked on an afghan that she is knitting for our daughter.

When we arrived in Reno we had reservations at the Circus Circus, not my favorite casino. I can say, however, that the rooms were not only reasonable, but spacious, and with all of the amenities one could ask for. \$24 a night suggests that they think you will leave your money downstairs on the casino floor.

A word about gambling but I'll keep it brief for those who don't care. We aren't card players nor dice players, so we pretty much stick to the slots,

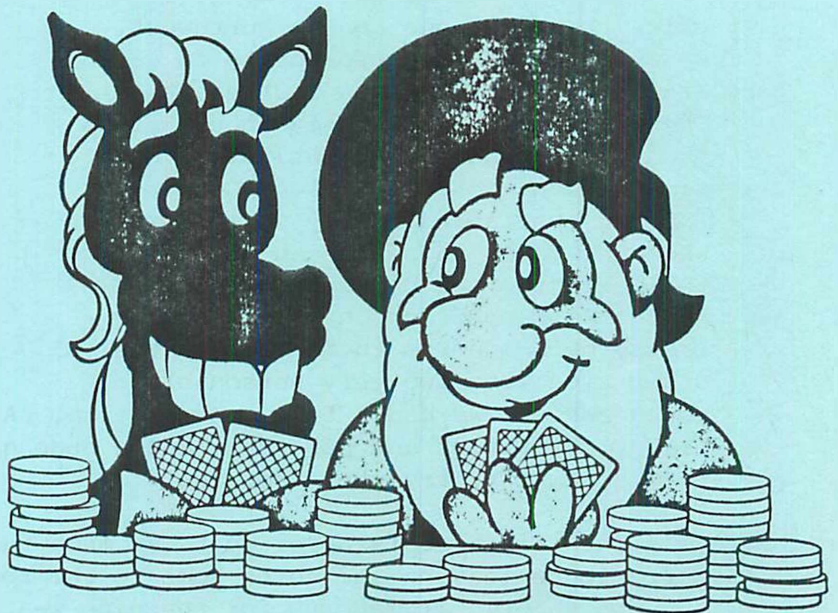
Keno and occasionally roulette. We take a fixed amount of money per day and stick to it. Whatever each of us wins is ours to keep. We can put it back into the machine or into our pocket. Anna Jo loves Keno and the saddest story of the trip was when we stopped for lunch at the Onslow after a long walk along the river, and she found the six numbers which she consistently plays all lit up on the Keno board. If we'd only been ten minutes earlier, she would have played those numbers and won \$1500. Such is luck.

I consistently lose my money to the slots at every casino but Fitzgerald's. Having learned the lesson well, I pretty much refuse to play anywhere else, except for the casual coin dropped somewhere else as we're walking through. So the Fitz is \$180 shorter than they were when I arrived. This makes up for the times I've left my money there. Most of it was won on the quarter slots, although I did take a few nickel jackpots.

Enough of that. We just don't gamble a whole lot; only for a little while every evening. We did see Bill Cosby one evening at Harrah's, along with Suzette Charles, who was runner-up for Miss America a year ago, and might have been the first black Miss America. She's quite a singer and does a good act. Cosby was interesting. I had thought that the audience would be respectful of this man who is one of our best comedians. He had to put down several people in the audience, and finally had to stop and wait for an usher to come and confront a lady who wouldn't quit. "Now, see. You have all these people looking at you and more attention than you ever expected. The nice man in the tuxedo has come over and will take you out if you can't keep your mouth shut."

He did routines which I had never heard before and the laughs came thick and fast. Anna Jo had tears rolling down her face and the mascara was all gone. As did the other three ladies at whose table we sat. I enjoyed seeing Cosby very much. I think he's a national treasure and should be treated with more respect. He takes such commonplace things which touch all of our lives and memories of our youth or early marriage or parenthood and turns them into laugh a minute routines.

We have old friends, Bill and Mary Marsh, who live in Carson City. Bill



managed to get away from work for an afternoon and we rendezvoused in Sparks. The restaurant Bill had been recommending had gone out of business, just since St. Patrick's Day, but we found that a remodeled Karl's Casino had a lovely dining room, excellent food and service, and very reasonable prices. And Mary hit for \$93 on the Keno. After lunch we sauntered to the Nugget, across the street, and Anna Jo and Mary played Keno and the sots. (Hey, that's a terrific typo; I'll leave it, even if I did mean slots.) Bill and I, soon bored, decided to walk to a paperback shop a few blocks away, which Bill had spotted as he drove into town. It was more than a few blocks, but a beautiful day and the walk was good for us. Bill bought a small sackful of books, while I controlled myself. Back at the Nugget we had a couple of beers, then made our goodbyes. They may come up and use our house for a base during the summer. Bill's been wanting to see the Northwest for some time now. His brief taste of Seattle when he was here at Christmas time has whetted his appetite. [Update: Other things conspired against Bill and Mary coming up during the summer. So they'll have to wait for another year.]

The walk along the Truckee River is beautiful. The weather was perfect, about 60 degrees. From the downtown heart of Reno, one can walk along the river to a beautiful park, and along the jogging/walking path for another mile. I suppose it's 3 miles altogether. An artificial lake in the park is the home of Canada geese and other waterfowl, as well as gulls. Just a nice walk to get the stale air of the casinos out of your lungs.

One day we spent doing a couple of malls, and stopping at the paperback store on Vesta Street. You have to know how to find it, because Vesta doesn't cut through, but it's the best paperback shop I've ever found, well arranged, good prices, and I found some Simon Harvester spy stories published in the 60s. At the Old Town Mall I found a Basque cookbook and The Pooh Sketchbook, just published.

Speaking of Basque cooking, of which there is none in the Northwest, we always take the opportunity to eat at one of Reno's Basque restaurants. There's nothing very fancy about Basque food, but it sure is plentiful. This time we ate at Louis' Basque Corner. Sharing the table, family style, with whomever comes in next, can be one of the delights. We had some of 'the beautiful people' on one side, and pretty much ignored them. But on the other side were two very personable young men and we had a fine conversation. And stuffed away the food, soup and bread, roast beef and potatoes, and a huge green salad. If you ever get near Basque country, try their cooking.



The trip home is never quite as much fun. Tired from so much play. Sorry to be leaving and going home to the routine again. And did it rain? I hope to shout. It made up for the nice weather on the trip down. It poured buckets off and on nearly all the way home, over three days.

We stopped in Stayton to visit with Mike and Sue Horvat and Dale and Ginny Goble. We stayed at Horvat's house this time. We like to think that we have to keep everybody happy. They probably don't give a darn. Mike and Sue were just finishing off printing a book of 128 pp. and it was fun to watch the process at work. I could talk to Mike while he ran the press. One thing led to another and we found ourselves coming home with boxes of rubber stamp bits and pieces and negatives and catalogs and some sort of spurious partnership in The World's Greatest Rubber Stamp Company. We'll see if we can keep the company going and produce some new things for it. Mike and Sue have so much printing to do that they were unable to keep up with the rubber stamp business. Mike's Mom and Dad had taken over, but his Dad is very ill and they were unable to continue.

So ended another great trip, at least in our eyes. A change of scenery, a visit with friends in Nevada and Oregon, a few bucks in my pocket (squirreled away toward the purchase of a mountain bike, maybe. See article in April '84 issue of Outside: "Fat-tire Tech; the Return of the American Bike"). Now it's back to work but good. But I grin with pleasure at the memory of a nice spring break.

A DAY AT THE RACES

The summer didn't exactly slip away. I know exactly where it went. For the most part it was spent in England, but that's another story, and one that I haven't completely sorted out in my mind yet. So I'll leave it for the next issue. I'm told that it was a beautiful summer in the Pacific Northwest. That seems to happen every time that we go to England; it almost guarantees a gorgeous summer up here in the land where the natives don't tan, they rust.

All this aside, when the middle of September rolls around, one begins to believe that fall is here. And that also means that the thoroughbred racing season is beginning to wind down. Anna Jo and I were driving home from a dinner last night and out of the blue I said, "If the weather looks fine tomorrow, let's go to the races before the season ends." "Good idea," she said.

Longacres is a short five minute drive from our house and I have no idea why we don't seem to get to the track more than once or twice during the racing season. In recent years they have made it increasingly difficult to come up with any excuses by extending the season. It now opens in early April and runs until mid-October. There are 136 racing days. When I told some of the people at the National Racing Museum in Newmarket, England about that, they just sighed. Racing is very important in England, but they race only two or three days at a time at different race tracks scattered around the country, and I think even the biggest meets are no longer than a week.

The day was a bit cloudy, but clearing when we left the house. By the first post the clouds were gone and it was sunny and bright with a fast track. There are a number of reasons that race tracks appeal to me. Certainly a real cross section of America can be seen there, every race and color, every economic level. If it's people watching you want, what better place to do it. The smooth and fluid action of the animals, with their slender jockeys in

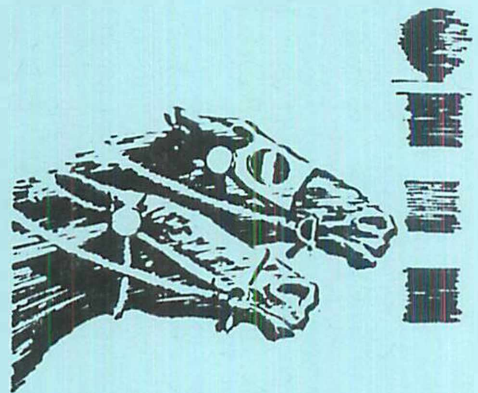
colorful silks make a beautiful picture. The grounds themselves, with manicured lawns, lovely flower beds, and on the infield (at least today) probably a hundred Canada geese, along with seagulls and crows, make a beautiful setting.

And the action! I can't imagine blowing a bundle at the races, but neither can I imagine going to the track without \$20 to bet on the ten races. I had recently read Maurice Zolotow's Confessions of a Race Track Fiend, a well-written and colorful account of how one gets hooked into betting on horses. It contains some very basic information told in a highly entertaining

way. When Zolotow was first getting started he was introduced to a betting system called 'the morning line' system. I decided to try it out. It's a system which calls for none of the long and involved mathematical equations that other systems require. Its simplicity depends upon the track handicapper having done most of your work for you. The morning line are the odds determined by the track handicapper before any betting has started. The number representing these odds are added to the last two digits of the jockey's weight. The horse with the lowest number is the choice. I determined to bet this religiously except for maiden races, races in which none of the horses had ever won a race. I determined also to bet only to show. This is the coward's way out. If your horse comes in first, second, or third, you get paid.

How did I do? Of the ten races, I bet nine. One maiden race I let go by. So I wagered \$18. I won back \$19.20. Hooray! Of course, somewhere on the card there is a name which leaps out at you. Good race players are not swayed by such, but when you only go a couple of times a year, you can afford to be frivolous. Now, there were a lot of hunches on names I could have played, but I kept a tight rein (so to speak) on myself. But in the fifth race a horse named Savage Family was entered. I thought of Doc Savage and his five henchmen, plus the niece that features in some of the stories. And coughed up another \$2 for a bet. Savage Family came in second and payed \$7.10. So we had a wonderful day in the sunshine, saw a lot of fine action, and didn't lose our shirts. Anna Jo played her own hunches and came out \$7.30 ahead.

I can't say that the 'morning line' system is going to make you a lot of bucks, but it's easy to play when you know nothing about all of the esoteric information in the racing form. I can and often do use the racing form's information for an esoteric handicapping system of my own, but I just wanted to play Zolotow's and see what happened. When I got home this evening, I played a bit with some other simple ways of betting, based on the recommendations of the handicappers in the racing form. The best I could have done today was to bet the long shots to win. I would have won only two races all day, but a \$20 investment would have paid \$59.60. Someday I'll go to the track and try that just for kicks.



I wonder if there are any of you out there who occasionally go to the track. I know that Gil Gaier has an interest. Anybody else? What tracks? Any systems? Ones that work? Let me close this section, which most of you probably don't give a darn about, with a couple of book recommendations. A couple of years ago Bill Barich wrote a book called Laughing in the Hills. It's a marvelous piece of writing about his summer at Golden Gate Park in California and what he learned of the people and the track. And there's a new mystery with a racing and betting background (one of my favorite settings; the other is casinos) by William Murray entitled Tip on a Dead Crab. I recommend both of these books highly. They're both excellent reading.

BITS AND PIECES

I almost didn't do this issue. Some of this stuff is so old that it seems like it comes from a different age. I'm sorry that it doesn't have much continuity and I sometimes wonder if I have time to do this fanzine any more. Retirement is supposed to be a wonderful time, but it sure doesn't leave much time for fanzine writing.

The other writing goes well. I've written four books in the last sixteen months. Except for the occasional day off, and for the trip to Reno and the trip to England during the summer, I have been writing every day, seven days a week. As I tell everyone, when I was a library director I worked five days a week; now that I'm retired, I work seven days a week. After the 1st of January, I'll be starting two new books, one a fantasy-adventure and the other a private eye novel. Wish me luck on them.

I've managed to keep up with a couple of apas, filled with old friends, but not much more fannish writing than that. I've decided that this issue, as poorly constructed as it is, will go out. I owe lots of people something in trade for all of their patience in sending me their zines. And then I suspect that TRR will revert to a sort of open letter, as several earlier titles I've done have been. Less structured, perhaps even dated as I go along. We'll see, but I hope you'll stay with me while I sort it out and figure out how I can continue this thing.

The computer is supposed to help and I guess it does. But one is still supposed to give some semblance of order to what one writes. Is it not so? The computer has obviously been a great help in the writing. And I've managed to find the discipline to write every day, and a method that seems to work for me. That method mostly entails long chapter outlines and finishing the outline before moving on to the actual writing. I find that I have a lot more confidence in being able to finish something that I've thought through, and I recommend it highly to those of you out there who are also writing.

Today I met downtown with four ladies, all of whom have Eagle computers. It was an opportunity to swap some technical tips. It didn't work quite as well for me, since I have an Eagle II and the women all had Eagle pcs. Still, I learned quite a bit, some new wrinkles that will come in useful. And I saw a spelling checker program and a filing system that I will have to buy one of these days soon. The spelling checker is not so imperative, since I'm generally a good speller and between Anna Jo and myself, the manuscripts are

gone over three times. But it catches the typos so easily, and can be used for made up fantasy names that one sometimes forgets, especially for minor characters.

The filing program is exceptionally good for storing and accessing a number of disparate bits of information that will go into a big novel I hope to do in about three years. The ensuing time will be spent in a lot of reading of some crazy stuff that I hope will form the backbone of the book. Actually, there are three separate books in the back of my mind, all of which the filing program would be useful for.

Gee, here I am at the end and I haven't said a word about what I've been reading lately. Lots of mysteries, more than sf. I did read Robert Silverberg's latest, Gilgamesh the King, based on the Epic of same, and enjoyed it very much. I've read the first two of Sydney Van Scyoc's trilogy, Dark Child and Blue Song and hope to get to the final book, Song Silk very soon now. West of Eden is probably Harry Harrison's best book to date. It features early man against intelligent dinosaurs. And I've worked my way through The High Kings by Joy Chant, a re-telling of pre-Arthurian British legends, very beautifully done. Currently Jack Vance's Rhialto the Magnificent is lots of fun with Vance's word play. Reed Andrus recommended Moonheart by Charles de Lint and it's a very good read. Well, enough of that.

Let this be my Season's Greeting to all of you. I'll try to do a little better, but don't count on it. Writing seems to be taking up an inordinate amount of time, but I'll try to stay in touch. So have a Merry Christmas, a Happy Hannukah, and a Happy New Year.

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