

The Sphere

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As of this issue, I have been hitting every SFPA mailing steadily, without fail, for exactly one third of a century. I don't know whether to ask if you're impressed, or tell everybody but Ned to bow down and kiss my feet, short-term swine!

Don Markstein's Toonopedia™

I've passed the one-year mark now, but don't know exactly how well I did because my tracker is on the fritz and for some reason I can't seem to get it reactivated. Based on trends it was showing when the card I was paying for it with expired (that's what cut it off, but getting it going again seems to take more than just punching in a new card number), I'm guessing I had 1.2 million unique page views in the first year.

Right now, according to my ad rotation counter, I'm running about 5,000 per day (i.e., one every 15-20 seconds), but that counts more than just the uniques — it clicks again if a person re-visits the same page.

I've had a fairly major showdown with a thief, and I'm not all that happy about the outcome. I discovered an outfit hanging around at archive.org which engages in wholesale Internet thievery, or as they call it, "archiving". I discovered eight dated versions of my entire site, displayed for public access, that I had no control over, nor any hope of revenue from.

Naturally, I fired off an outraged note. I now wish I'd held off on that, because the only result was that they removed my copyrighted material from public view, rendering my charge of unauthorized re-publishing of it moot. It'll be so hard to get them on a

charge of archiving unauthorized copies they undoubtedly still make available to their "qualified" academic colleagues, that I couldn't possibly afford to pursue it. How clever they are!

Of course, they **did** take it out of public view the moment I protested, and that's supposed to mollify me. But the very fact that I **had** to protest is what galls me about it. When something belongs to someone else, and you want to use it, the proper procedure is to ask permission — not simply take it, see if the owner catches you, and toss it back with a shrug and a smirk if he does.

After simmering a while, I hit upon an idea that might give me a little more clout in future cases of this sort. You'll find it at <http://www.toonopedia.com/terms.htm> (and there are no less than three links to it on the front page, so it's not like I'm trying to sneak it in unnoticed). Next time somebody "archives" my work, instead of protesting, I'll send him an astronomical bill. If nothing else, any legal squirming they have to go through to get out of paying might make them think twice about doing it again, since others could be doing something similar (and needless to say, I'd be delighted if they got the idea from me).

I'm particularly pleased with the third paragraph (the one in bold), which is inspired by "shrinkwrap" agreements. If software publishers can enforce those, why not me? In fact, the condition that triggers my agreement is even better, because it's something they're not supposed to be doing in the first place.

Meanwhile, the process of expansion continues. Since last mailing, I've added articles on Augie Doggie & Doggie Daddy; Henry Boltinoff; Calvin & the Colonel; Cap'n Crunch; The Crimson Avenger; Gordo; Walt



Kelly; Madam Satan; Nick Fury, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.; Our Boarding House; Sam & Silo; Sam's Strip; Sgt. Fury & His Howling Commandos; Spike & Tyke; Supergirl and Yakky Doodle, for a new total of 440.

Last mailing I was talking about some of the obscuros I've done lately. They aren't completely absent from this issue's list, but the only ones I see as *really* obscure are Sam's Strip, Spike & Tyke and Madam Satan. Maybe The Crimson Avenger, but that's borderline, and he is DC's first masked hero, so he had to be in it sooner or later. And you might add Sam & Silo, as GiGi did, but that one is currently in syndication from King Features and has been for 25 years, which makes it *ipso facto* non-obscure — anyway, I only did it because it needed to go along with *Sam's Strip*.

Of the three, Sam's Strip is one that I absolutely had to get in before too much longer (it's in all the "right" reference works), and Spike & Tyke had to go in because it's paired with Augie Doggie. There wasn't any real reason to do Madam Satan, tho, other than a desire to do my small part to keep Archie Comics (which aside from its better-known outrages, once sued a 4-year-old named Veronica for the Web site Mommy and Daddy bought her) from living down the fact that they once published the likes of her. She's a fairly bizarre character, tho, so at least I wasn't bored writing about her, and she does have kind of an odd claim to fame — when they dropped her, it was Archie himself who took her slot.

Augie Doggie was kind of a special case. I was eventually going to get around to it, of course, (just as I'll eventually get around to Pixie & Dixie, Snagglepuss and other early Hanna-Barbera back segments), but hadn't really planned on doing so very soon. But someone I know slightly (one of GiGi's long-time message board pals) made a special request of it. She has a 2-year-old niece named Audrey, who calls herself "Augie", so they respond by calling her "Augie Doggie". Now, they can take her to my site and show her who Augie Doggie was.

And Spike & Tyke was paired with it — that is, adding one to the mix was the cue to add the other

(like Sam's Strip and Sam & Silo). In this case, it's because Augie was a revamp of the earlier one. Another inevitable pair was Sgt. Fury with Nick Fury, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D., which I'd planned all along to do together.

Naturally, Yakky Doodle had to come soon after Augie Doggie — he's the only duck in the category of early Hanna-Barbera back segments, so of course I'd planned to do him before the others. It took a few weeks, but I managed to get him in not *too* long after opening the category.

And as always, if anybody doesn't know where to find it, it's at <http://www.toonopedia.com>

Universe

No, not the story by Heinlein, if anybody is old enough to remember Heinlein. (What am I saying? This is SFPA.) I'm talking about the word itself, in its current use as a milieu in which related sets of characters operate, e.g., "Marvel Universe" or "Star Trek Universe".

I may have coined it. Last year, Larry Epke (co-founder of Shadow-SFPA and now a three-time grandfather), who has been seen occasionally in the Oddball Comics Forum lately, asked me if I had, citing an article I wrote for CAPA-alpha in 1970. And I have to say — I don't know.

I seem to recall, vaguely at least, not having heard it used in that precise way before using it so myself. And in the actual article (which I managed to dig up from the Archives), I took the trouble to explain what it meant, which I'm sure I wouldn't have done if I'd expected the readers (high-power comics fans, who surely would know it if anybody would) to be familiar with it.

Another plausibility argument is that I was rooming with Rick Norwood, a math professor, shortly before writing it, and was much closer to my own math education (it was my college major) back then. So I would be (and in fact recall being) accustomed to thinking in terms of "universes" of related entities, whereas most people before it came into its present common usage would not.



And to deal with one implausibility argument, yes, it's quite possible for an article that appears only in a single apa to put a word into general use, if the apa happens to be CAPA-alpha. It was seen there by Mark Evanier, Tony Isabella, Don and Maggie Thompson, Wendy and Richard Pini and quite a few others, any one of whom would be fully capable of getting a word into use within the comics community, which heavily overlaps other media "fringefan" communities.

But I don't **know**. The surest way to find out would be to see an earlier use of it in that context, which would disprove it once and for all. But I've been asking around, and nobody yet has been able to cite one — which, however, does **not** prove there isn't any.

The article (a silly little thing I wrote when I was 23) is now posted at <http://www.toonopedia.com/universe.htm> — go by and read it for yourselves.

What do you think? Is this the first use of the word "universe" in this particular way? Or am I merely blinded by colossal egomania?

Or — do you know of a verifiable earlier use?

Nathan

My grandson's milestones roll by like fenceposts. He holds his own bottle. He holds his head up. He has the strength to stand up, tho not the balance (does fine when we guide but don't support him). Rachel started him on solid food on March 12, when he was just over four months old. He locomotes by rolling and squirming, and might start crawling any minute.

And he gazes at things so curiously, I can practically see the wheels going around and around in his head. He's working hard at putting it all together.

He had his first experience with Dr. Seuss a couple of weeks before the SFPA deadline. Still haven't managed to locate the old Seuss books, which I know are around here somewhere, but while babysitting one afternoon I happened to discover that Turner Classic Movies was in the middle of *The 5,000 Fingers of Dr. T*. He didn't pay much attention to the dialog — not a

Hans Conried fan, I guess. But he found the song and dance numbers fairly interesting, and made a sound during "Dress Me" that might very well have been a laugh. (He definitely does laugh.) Kid has good taste.

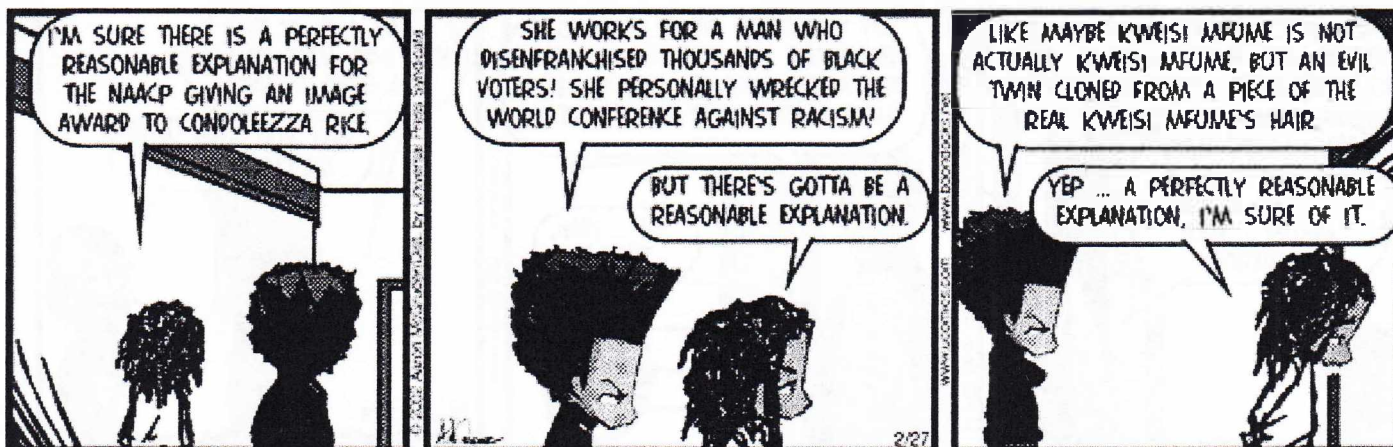
Sometimes, looking at his face reminds me of my own baby pictures. Maybe that's partly because his cheeks look just like his mother's, his grandfather's, his great grandmother's, and his great-great grandmother's. Really neat how these things echo down the generations — I see people in Nathan who have been dead for years.

Ned Brooks:

I did not date the Shmoo to the 1950s and '60s. I said several volumes of *Li'l Abner* reprints came out during those years, and one had the word "Shmoo" in the title. I know very well the things themselves first appeared on August 31, 1948. It's probably going to be in "Today in Toons" this summer. (I passed it up last year in favor of Foghorn Leghorn's first appearance.) (Maybe the Shmoos need their own article. They had their own comic book in the '50s and a cartoon show in the '60s or '70s, and were heavily merchandised. If I do one, I'll be sure to mention that date.)

Speaking of which — yes, I know every day is the anniversary of **something**, a fact I constantly exploit for "Today in Toons". But I truly do not believe the attack on the World Trade Center was timed to occur on the anniversary of the first coast-to-coast bus, the birthday of O. Henry, or the anniversary of the patenting of the collapsible tube, whatever that is. Nor am I surprised this book of anniversaries, *Let's Drink to That*, doesn't list the fall of the Ottoman Empire.

I would be very surprised, however, if the date of this carefully planned and meticulously executed attack was chosen by throwing darts at a calendar. Given the attack had a purpose (even if you and I don't happen to think it's a sane one), and given that it did occur on a date which, for reasons I outlined two mailings ago, is extremely relevant to that purpose (even



discounting the fact that Sept. 11 is my friend Bennie Aguirre's birthday and the day "Crimestopper's Text-book" first appeared in *Dick Tracy*, what other date would be more relevant?), why, I suspect there might be a connection!

To deny the date was chosen for a reason may serve jingoism — it helps put across the idea that the whole attack was the purposeless act of idiots. But it is neither realistic, nor a likely way to prevent such acts in the future.

Frankly, Ned, I'm amazed to see you devote a third of a page to denying it.

I have a simple solution to mailing lists overwhelming my regular e-mail. I get all my lists at lists@too nopedia.com. What fun, to have my own domain! (But you can do it with a Hotmail or Yahoo account.)

By the way, have I regaled SFPA with the Carbonist Theory yet? It provides the most elegant solution to Global Warming that I've seen yet.

It seems somebody did computer studies of long-term trends in the Carbon Cycle, along with rates of formation of coal, petroleum, etc. — i.e., the tying up of carbon into rock form — and came up with the notion that in a few hundred million years, in fact maybe just a few dozen million, Gaia — oh yes, I forgot, this theory assumes the Gaia Hypothesis, that the entire planet constitutes a single self-regulating, i.e., living, organism...

Anyway, according to these studies, at some point down the road (and not all that long, by Gaia's reckoning), Gaia will no longer be able to come up with enough CO₂ to fend off the Ice Ages that have been plaguing her lately, and will turn into this huge, lifeless snowball. So she fielded us, to burn up the rocks and get all that carbon back into the biosphere where she can work with it. Of course, we're going to wind up costing her about 90% of her multicellular species, but what the heck, that's happened before and it only takes her a few million years to recover.

Global warming, then, is our **purpose**. It's what we're for. Gaia needs to run a little fever for a few

millennia while the hydrocarbons get sifted back where they belong, so here we are. And the elegant part is — this plan of hers contains its own clean-up, because eventually, global warming is going to make us extinct.

Every gallon of gas you burn — or spill, for that matter — brings us closer to our glorious destiny!

Gary Brown:

That cartoon of the passenger jet bearing down on the guy, and him demanding to be connected to a civil libertarian, works just as well if you replace "civil libertarian" with "politician", "lawyer", "military spend-thrift" or anything else. If there's a point about civil libertarians in it, I'm afraid it's going right by me.

There's a very good reason the plane that hit the Pentagon doesn't get as much press as the destruction of the World Trade Center. The victims in the World Trade Center were all innocent, whereas everybody knows the Pentagon is a legitimate military target. I'm sorry about the people who were hurt or killed in it, especially the ones in the plane that was used as a weapon, and I'm way sorry about the amount of tax money they're going to use to fix it up, but hey — sauce for the goose, y'know. When a building exists for the purpose of running wars in every corner of the Globe, its occupants can't very well cry "foul!" when somebody inflicts war-like conditions on the building.

And apparently, whether they admit it or not, most people feel the same deep down. Otherwise, there would be just as much outrage over both aspects of the attack.

There certainly is a great contrast between Dell's treatment of Walt Kelly, who took *Pogo* into new venues and made a career of it, and DC's treatment of the people who created the characters they've exploited over the years. I think it's rooted in a kind of corporate mentality. DC was run by people who came out of the pulps, who simply assumed they owned everything and the creators owned nothing. (And by the way, they have no documents proving Siegel and Shuster actually



sold them Superman — they glommed the character by sheerchutzpah.) Dell, on the other hand, was accustomed to publishing characters licensed from others, and if there was any assumption on their part of ownership over *Pogo*, it was bound to be much weaker than DC's unquestioning certainty that it owned everything it had ever published.

David Schlosser:

* sigh *

Your comment to me is an excellent example of why I find conversation with you so unrewarding. Nothing ever means what it means. Nothing is ever about what it's about.

You say "there are various ways to view self defense" — a very odd statement, and one that must surely have the lawyers among us scratching their heads. Let's see how this ill-defined and fuzzily thought-out way of looking at things might be applied in a situation that shows some of its implications, using your own examples of "various ways" in which defense might be viewed.

"Yes, Your Honor, I killed my neighbor's enemy. But I only did it so my neighbor will take my side when my enemies come to kill me."

"Yes, Your Honor, I killed a man who seemed to pose no threat to me. But he was going to attack me in the future."

"Yes, Your Honor, I killed my enemy after I already had him on the ground, crippled and helpless. But he refused to say 'I give up.'"

If you want to claim these are among the alleged "various ways" in which defense might be viewed, go right ahead. But would you seriously expect a judge or jury to agree?

The word "defense", as it applies to acceptable excuses for committing violent acts, is clearly and unambiguously defined. It does not include "various ways" of viewing it. Ask any lawyer.

Of course, the situation I've applied your "various

ways" to is that of an individual in court, and you're talking about a government waging war. That makes it different, right?

Maybe — if you're one of those people who think governments, corporations and other collective institutions, which in some ways behave like sentient, free-willed individuals, exist on a separate moral plane, above that of human beings, and therefore are not subject to such stringent standards. I am not such a person, but perhaps you are. If that's the case, simply say so, and we will agree to disagree (while I privately categorize your point of view alongside those of Hitler, Stalin, Roosevelt, etc.).

But don't think you can wheedle me into bending **my** fair, reasonable and **universally accepted** standards because you don't like the outcome when they're applied evenly.

So — **after** you've tried to call World War II defense on the basis of moral relativism (i.e., "various ways"), you start in on other reasons you think the U.S. should have been in it, as if perhaps you think that's related in some way to whether or not it was defense.

Maybe there were good reasons for U.S. involvement in that war, and maybe there weren't — I suppose there could be other justifications than defense for killing people. But we weren't talking about that, and I'm not interested in starting because I'm just not up for another slanging match with you where the ground keeps shifting like this. What we were talking about is the fact that "defense", in the phrase "defense spending", is a **weasel word**, that in reality, the U.S. does **not** use its vast military spending for defense, and **has not** used its vast military spending for defense during the life of any living American, and probably not during the lives of any of the parents or grandparents of same.

Unless, of course, you can come up with a real example of such use.

By the way, if governments aren't subject to the same moral standards as human beings, then what's wrong with Hitler trying to exterminate the Jews? Isn't removing an element of society which you know, with



the certainty of a Republican railing against the Liberal Media, to be a threat to the established order, merely self-defense? And weren't the Japanese simply defending themselves when they took out a military installation that posed a direct threat to them?

For that matter, inasmuch as Al Qaeda knows the U.S. and its allies to be a direct threat to the Muslim world, wasn't attacking the World Trade Center a form of defense?

Once you start dreaming up "various ways to view self defense", where do you stop?

George Wells:

If Osama bin Laden and his ilk were to succeed in conquering the world, they might try to wipe out all traces of the work of Carl Barks. But actually **do** it? Puh-leeze! The 4th century Catholic Church, surely one of the most powerful yet bigoted organizations that ever existed, made an attempt to replace every copy of the New Testament in the world with a new one; yet, pre-4th century Bibles still exist (and are different from the "official" ones in small but significant ways, but that's another outrage). And that was back when information could only be stored in big, bulky objects that could easily be tracked down because there were only one or two of them in a village and everybody knew where they were.

Even if the Taliban were conducting house-to-house searches throughout the entire world, destroying every representational image they find — how could it ever get them all? By the time they got to my house, I'd have CD-ROMS hidden in walls, under carpets, in the plumbing... They'd have to burn the house down to get them all, and even then they might miss some of the ones buried in the back yard. While I'm sure they wouldn't mind burning my house down, I'm only one of hundreds of millions who would be squirreling the things away, and some of them, like me, would include the work of Barks among the items rescued.

Of course, that form of information storage

depends on technology, and maybe the Taliban would try to destroy all the computers, too. But even if they somehow succeeded in that (ha!), they can't destroy the human ingenuity capable of making devices that can read CD-ROMs, nor the drive to restore knowledge that will compel people, once the evil regime is over, to apply their ingenuity that way. Not without destroying the entire human species, and if they do that, then I'm just not worried about the work of Carl Barks.

I suppose it's possible that some set of circumstances might destroy all knowledge and bring on a new Dark Age. But I think we've progressed to a point where that can no longer be done by invincibly ignorant religious bigots, no matter how powerful they may temporarily get.

By the way, I know why it bothers you that they'd want to destroy art like that, in a way unlike your feelings about what they do to innocent people. Those innocent people, like all of us, will eventually shuffle off this mortal coil no matter what — but the creations of the mind don't necessarily have to. To force them into oblivion is in some ways a more jarring act than merely murdering a human being.

I had more than seven pages in default settings, but that wasn't enough to make it look good when formatted up. I'd dig through the Archives and get some comic strips nobody but me would ever run, but everybody in the house is sick right now, including me, and all I want to do is get the zine out so I can move on to the next phase of the current Mickey Mouse story. So I decided to use a week of *The Boondocks* as filler. This shows Huey at his best, thinking a political decision he doesn't like can only be the result of a bizarre plot. Fortunately, he has Granddad to hold him back. I do enjoy a good conspiracy theory.

