

# TENNESSEE TRASH # 53

Life as an Adventure



Tennessee Trash #52 was produced in between adventures by Gary R. Robe. Occasional visits are made to P. O. Box 3221 Kingsport, TN 37664 to pick up the mail and the phone is sometimes answered at (423) 239-3106. E-mail is received and frequently read at [grrobe@chartertn.net](mailto:grrobe@chartertn.net) although getting an answer is another matter entirely. The captions for the photos on the front are 1) The Robe Boys displaying their medals from the Tennessee State Taekwando Tournament; 2) me posing in front of Setrock Creek Falls in the Black Mountain Campsite in Pigsah National Forest at the foot of Mt. Mitchell in North Carolina; 3) a triumphal view of the completed laminate floor in our dining room; and 4) the intrepid adventurers of BSA Troop 48 on the watchtower of Mt. Mitchell at 6,648 ft. ASL.



# TENNESSEE TRASH # 53

A ZINE BY GARY R. ROBE FOR MAILING NUMBER 233 OF THE  
SOUTHERN AMATEUR PRESS ALLIANCE

APRIL-MAY 2003

## **KICKS IN THE HEAD, WALKS IN THE WOODS, HOME IMPROVEMENT AND OTHER THINGS WE TALK OURSELVES INTO...**

Last time I described my Black Stripe test in Taekwando. I did not have long to wait before putting my new rank to the test. The next weekend was the Tennessee State TKD Tournament, and the Robe Boys all decided to compete. This was a somewhat harder decision for me to make than the boys, not because I was hesitant, but because I didn't know if there would be anyone there for me to compete with.

The last time I participated in the state tournament there wasn't anyone else of my age and rank to spar with, so I ended up having an exhibition match with a guy 20 years my junior who proceeded to whomp me up the side of my head. I got a gold medal for my efforts, but I really wanted a serious competition.

This year there were more adults in the competition, and I got my wish. I improved my showing in forms and got the silver medal and got to fight a guy close to my age and skill in the sparring. I was not happy with my performance-I fought much better a week earlier for my stripe test-but at least I did get to fight for my medal. I got in one really good side kick that nearly knocked my opponent over. If I had managed that I would have probably won the match. As it was, I lost, mainly because of my habit to bend over when I start getting tired and collected a kick to the head. In the end I achieved more in getting second place this year than I did getting first two years ago.

## **A FLOOR BENEATH MY FEET AND A BLISTER ON MY KNEE**

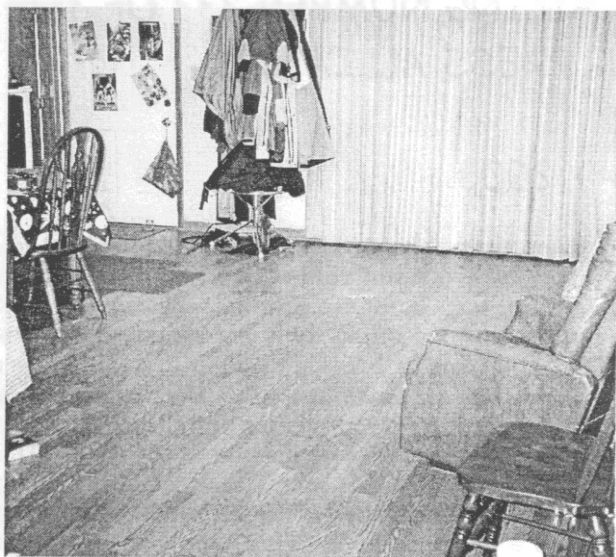
Last year I began the project to replace the horrible worn-out carpet in the top floor of our house with laminate flooring. When the boys were shuffled off to their grandmother's house for their spring break, I decided this would be a good time to finish the job. Earlier rounds of the project involved piecing the flooring around complex areas like stairwells and doors. This part of the job was much simpler since it was mostly open space. The trick was that there was a lot more of it. This time the area to be covered was more than the previous rounds combined.

I managed to get the old carpet up, the underflooring laid and most of the Pergo installed over one weekend. The kitchen took another day to do since that involved lots of fitting again. It then took me one more day to put in the molding along the walls where the furniture needed to be returned and then one more day to put everything back in place. I still have to install molding in the kitchen and down the hallway. There are several places where the edge of the flooring needs to be covered with quarter-round, but the biggest portion of the job is done!

In order to protect my increasingly fragile knees from the ravages of construction work I bought myself a pair of kneepads to protect myself. The pads did an admirable job of cushioning my kneecaps, but I wore them so much that the straps wore blisters on the backs of my knees! I had not even realized this had happened until I took a shower one morning and the soapy water hit raw skin. It's a very strange feeling to have scabs on the backs of your knees. It is also a part of the body that doesn't heal very quickly either.

Just as the house was getting settled from this job Corlis got a call from the Kingsport Mets

asking if we could house some baseball players again this summer. We agreed to that immediately, but that meant another round of remodeling to get the guest rooms in shape.



**THE FINISHED PRODUCT**

Last summer Nick moved out of Isaac's room into what was their playroom. That meant that many of their toys had to be moved into the guest rooms downstairs. With ball players moving in there the toys would have to go into my library/office room. This entailed a Chinese fire drill to make space in the garage for old SFPA mailings in the garage so the toys could move so the bedrooms could be made livable. In all we hauled three van loads of stuff to the dump. Some of the boxes of kipple that had set in the house for 12 years since we moved in had been untouched. We ruthlessly culled junk until not only do we have two nice guest rooms and a better organized office, the garage is actually  $\frac{3}{4}$  clean and you can see the floor in there for the first time in many years. With a bit more work I could actually have the garage in shape to park a car in there! That has to be one of the Seven Signs of the Apocalypse.

### **FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES**

In late April I fulfilled a long-held wish to camp and hike a Mt Mitchell in North Carolina. The is the highest peak in the Eastern US at 6,684 ft. I like high places and vistas and have wanted to explore the mountain more ever since we first visited in 1991. I got my chance when Nick's

scout troop planned an excursion there and needed more adult help to make the trip work. Not that I would not have invited myself alone anyhow.

In typical Scout-like ingenuity the logistical plan for the outing was quite clever. About half of the group wanted to hike up the mountain and spend the night on the trail. The saner part of the group wanted to camp at the base, drive to the top the next morning and then hike down. That way we were able to leave the vehicles at the summit, meet the upward climbers on the trail, hand over the car keys and let them dismantle the campsite at the base while we completed the downhill hike.

We camped at the Black Mountain campsite on the banks of the South Toe River in the Pisgah National Forest. This huge national reserve straddles the Blue Ridge Parkway in western North Carolina many miles away from much of anything. When we arrived at the camp the ranger warned us that the bears had just recently become active, were very hungry, and extremely aggressive. He showed us where a bear had taken the top off a supposedly bear-proof dumpster two days earlier. This meant that we had to take extreme bear avoidance precautions.

We were careful to leave all of our food locked in the vehicles and not to bring anything like shaving lotion or toothpaste that might smell interesting to a bear into out tents. When cooking or eating we were careful that no food scraps or packaging was left on the ground. We were also diligent that no grease or wash water was spilled during cooking and cleaning. We even saved and disposed of all the wash water in the dumpster instead of establishing a grease pit. All of these precautions seemed to be effective because we had no ursine visitors during the night.

The next morning, we dressed warmly and made the 3,000 ft drive up to the top of Mt. Mitchell and the trailhead at the summit. Once on the trail the only way off the mountain was six miles horizontal and a 3,800 ft vertical drop. We met up with the uphill group a little before noon. They had a more adventurous night than we had. They had no bear encounters either, but since they were camping at over 5,000 ft they had a bit different weather than we had experienced. They



estimated that the wind gusted to 50 mph at times and they were in the clouds for most of the night. By dawn, however, the sky had cleared and the wind had calmed so the downhill group had a much more pleasant conditions for their hike.



**UPHILL MEETS DOWNHILL NEAR THE MT. MITCHELL SUMMIT**

It soon became evident that our party had some troubles. The only adults in the group were the Scoutmaster Charlie Hasbrouk and me to keep eight scouts on the trail. I took up the rear to keep the stragglers from falling behind. One of the boys had just graduated from Webelos the month before and this was his first real outdoor experience. Add to this the fact the kid had dropped his glasses in the Toe River within minutes of arriving at camp, had soaked both pairs of shoes within an hour and was fat and out of shape to boot and we had a problem. This kid just couldn't keep up with the natural pace of the group. He also couldn't see very well and the trail was very rugged so he kept falling and skinning his knees. I finally had to consult with Charlie to send the boy to the front of the pack. This almost caused a mutiny because it dropped our progress to a snail's pace and it soon became obvious that we were not going to finish the trail until early evening.

The slow going was exacerbated by the condition of the trail. The park had only opened for the season one week earlier and so the trail still carried all the winter damage. It was especially tough going in the rhododendron thickets, known to hikers as rhododendron hells. There had been an ice storm recently that had splintered the normally resilient trees

and produced an nearly impenetrable tangle that made progress and keeping on the trail difficult.



**HIKING ALONG A POWER LINE CUT SHOWS HOW FAR UP WE WERE!**

Even with the slow pace I loved the hike. The weather was perfect, the trail was challenging, the scenery was interesting and the flora and fauna were fascinating. It was fun for me to observe how the composition of the forest changed as we descended. Near the top there were only hardy spruce pines. These gave way to juniper, Frazier Fir, maples and the dreaded rhododendrons at lower altitudes. Also at the summit the deciduous trees had not yet leafed out for the year so we got to see spring arrive in an afternoon as we climbed down. All of this grandeur was set to the music of a gaggle of increasingly discomfited teenage boys as the hike dragged on past five hours. We did not end up having to carry the one kid off the mountain but it was a close thing.

### **WE'RE OUT OF THE SINGLE DIGIT CHILD BUSINESS**

In the midst of all this excitement Isaac celebrated his 10<sup>th</sup> birthday on April 22 although we didn't get around to having the party until May 3. Isaac chose to have his party at a gymnastics center. It worked very well just to turn the kids loose in the gym for them to swing, climb, jump and bounce away their energy for 90 minutes. The most Corlis and I had to do was light candles, cut the cake and some pushing on the swings.

We now have no children in single digits. The funny thing is that Isaac is showing a teenage

temperament much earlier than Nick. I am beginning to understand a parent's hostile reaction to a sulky pout a hostile stare or an impatient groan emanating from a child. I know that I was never that way when I was young!

## **CHANGES AT WORK**

Halfway through May I learned that my job was changing again. It seems that 5-6 years is about all I can stay in one place. This time I am being moved back to the adhesive materials lab. I will still have responsibility for the Latin American tech service for the coatings lab, I just won't be doing much bench work on coatings any more. I'm telling my colleagues in the coatings lab that I'll be handing off to them everything I bring back from Latin America that is not contagious or adhesives related.

I was a bit anxious about returning to the adhesive lab since my departure five years ago was not on the best terms. One of the chemists I had to work with is, to put it bluntly, insane and I had to bear the brunt of his crazy attacks. I still have a sample of some material I was working on that turned up mysteriously contaminated. I was not thrilled to be going back to work in the same lab with this guy. I was relieved to discover that he is now on his third medical disability leave since I came to work here. It has been decided that when and if he comes back to work after the medical leave that he will not be coming to work in the same lab again.

As it turns out the adhesive lab is in desperate need of more help and I am the only one in the company with the skills to do the job. There had to be some high level negotiation to re-allocate my time to focus more on adhesives. I don't even get the egoboo of having a farewell lunch in my honor from the coatings lab and an announcement going out to the business team that I am moving. Since I am just having 60% of my time allocation redistributed instead of being formally transferred the change is being made without much commotion.

I still have to pack up my office and move across the plant to another build in my new assignment so at least for me it is a big deal. I have been working in this building for nearly 12 years so it will take some acclimatization to

get used to working in a new place. Also I will be in the main R&D building for the company instead of the "lowly" tech service center. Even though the work is the same I get the impression that the rest of the company pays more attention to work coming from Building 150 over Building 230. At least I moved my office only 4 months ago so I tossed out a lot of the deadwood. That will make moving a lot simpler.

## **SO WE'VE CONQUERED IRAQ. NOW WHAT?**

Well I must admit that I was pretty much wrong in my assessment of the prosecution of the Iraqi war in the last mailing. I never expected the Iraqi army to fold that quickly or for the irregulars to stop firing so completely. This will certainly be a campaign for the military textbooks from now on. It really was the Short Victorious War! From the standpoint of the matchup of forces it really was more like the rugby match in *Monty Python's Meaning of Life* where the faculty pound the hapless students into the ground. Still, a military engagement should not be thought of in terms of a sporting event. In the case of war, a "fair" fight is a bloody and brutal fight. I would much rather have this war where neither side really suffered devastating loss of life compared to some of the "fair" fights of WWI. OK, the kill ratio was on the order of 50:1 against the Iraqis and there was plenty of blood shed but how much worse would it have been if the war drug out for months instead of weeks?

Now it seems that the quick collapse of Iraq is playing against the US and British occupation force since there was little time for the Bush Team to form an endgame strategy before they needed it. Every day that passes without power, water and civil authority in Iraq will mean increasing criticism of the US. All the countries that resisted Bush's push to war will now see their chance to regain some of their clout by muddying the occupation process.

Bush & Co. have not helped themselves by their pre-invasion insistence that Iraqi WMDs (Ghu I hate that acronym! Can anyone think of a better one?) posed a grave threat to world security. The insistence that intelligence confirmed there were vast caches of biochemical weapons in Iraq is extremely

detrimental to US credibility. At best Bush was woefully misled by the intelligence he was getting. At worst they manipulated the data to show what they wanted to find and then lied to the world to make their case. The really sick thing is that the majority of Americans seem to be so thrilled by the big military win that they giving Dubya a free pass on the fact that the whole pretense for the war was made up. We had Reagan the Teflon President, then Slick Willy and now do we have Greased George?

At least domestically the rationalization seems to be that Saddam's regime was so horrible that it needed to be taken out anyhow. If that was a sufficient justification for the war why then was that argument not used? The answer is that the UN would not buy that because too many other regimes (including some of our good friends in the Middle East and Asia) aren't much better than Saddam's Iraq. Bush had to use the WMD pitch if he had any hope of swaying world opinion. In the end he failed at that and went ahead with his plans without much backing. In the short term America looks strong and Americans feel good about their military prowess. I'm not convinced that bodes well for the long term though.

I fear that the US is close to putting itself in the same economic position as the USSR. We may look strong and have an invincible military, but how supportable is that if there is no money to maintain it? Right now the US has to borrow billions of dollars a month to finance the gap current account deficit. That only happens when foreign investors are willing to invest those billions in the US. With interest rates practically negative not many foreign investors are anxious to send their money over here. The only thing saving us is the fact that none of the European or Asian economies are really much better investments right now. We may be invulnerable militarily as a nation but we are very vulnerable economically and that is where I expect our allies to punish the US.

This brings me to the paradoxical conclusion that President Bush is a very good man but a potentially dangerous leader. His moral compass guides every decision that The President makes. I am convinced that that compass points in a very "good" direction. I'm not convinced that it's a good direction for the long-term health of the country. Making

moralistic decisions based on Christian values may feel good and carry the conviction of correctness but I am afraid that they ultimately lead to Pyrrhic victories.

I'm sure that the leaders of The Taliban and Osama bin Laden made decisions based on what they felt was the high moral ground. Theocratic Iran must be one of the most moral societies on Earth. The problem is that morality is defined by culture and religious doctrine, not logic or human rights. Up to now American society has been guided by the secular humanist values of the Bill of Rights but President Bush and his regime are busily tearing that up in the name of security and Christian morality. My position is that Christian morality has no place in the US Government.

I hope that is a provocative statement because that is the intention. America is not a Christian nation—it is a secular nation. We have created the most tolerant and hopefully stable society the world has ever seen precisely because we have left God out of the government. Here the Christian majority can live side-by-side with Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Wiccans, African Shamanists, and even – God bless 'em – Atheists precisely because we have separated church and state. Where else on Earth is there such a peaceful mix of ethnicity? We endanger that stability by insisting on Christian values and that is precisely what President Bush is doing.

The first really hard decision that George W. faced as President was the stem cell research question. He attempted a Solomonic decision by declaring that only existing cell lines could be used. It now appears that Solomon's baby isn't split so easily. Most of the established cell lines that were used to base the decision on have turned out to be non-viable and the American stem cell research program is threatening to come crashing to a halt. I don't believe for a minute that President Bush will pause for a moment to reconsider his decision because the one he made before was the only "right" one. The silly thing is that every day embryonic tissue is being destroyed through failed or unneeded in-vitro fertilization processes. By insisting on Christian values in governmental policy we risk turning the US into another Taliban – isolated and despised by the rest of the world.

# MAILING COMMENTS

**THE SOUTHERNER #232: JEFF COPELAND**—I see I'm not the only one cruising the Internet looking for maps of Baghdad to come across the Russian ones.

Referring to Rule 8 it now looks like Saddam Hussein missed the those cruise missiles. According to the latest reports nobody is really sure what we dropped all that ordinance on.

**THE NEW PORT NEWS #208: NED BROOKS**—I actually don't worry much about my boys hitting porn web sites for the time being since I do keep watch on the navigation history for Explorer. I see that they visit Cartoon Network, Disney, and a free games site called Neopets and not much else. They generally don't touch e-mail since that might require writing something. I also get tons of the usual spam but that has decreased recently after I installed a new program called MailWasher.

This is a simple program that allows me to read e-mail addresses and subject lines from the server without actually downloading them. I can then mark the ones to be deleted and bounces the message back to the sender without me ever having opened it. The program also recognizes virus attachments and automatically rejects those. It also allows me to build a Friends and Blacklist file that further filters messages without me having to touch them. This process is much better than deleting these messages when they are downloaded because lots of spam messages send info back to the sender that a warm body looked at them. Since this program bounces the messages instead of receiving them it appears to the sender that they are sending to a dead e-mail address. My volume of spam has decreased by about 40% since installing MailWasher and the program is getting smarter as I use it more. The download is free, but I sent \$20 to the author because I like his product.

**VARIATIONS ON A THEME #19: RICH LYNCH**—The cost of pro sporting events is one reason I like living in the boondocks. Our K-Mets tickets are \$5 for reserved seats. Since we

will be keeping ball players in the house this summer we will not only get paid to house them we get free admission to as many home games as we want!

I agree with you that an armed hijacker will have a hard time of it from now on. I think that now anyone armed with a knife has no chance against a plane full of passengers armed with projectiles. Laptops, John Grisham novels, PDAs, cell phones and Game Boys hurled at an attacker would almost certainly distract him enough to be disarmed. A knife can be a deadly weapon but it is useless over a distance and can only threaten one person at a time.

There is something for the airlines to offer to passengers that would actually improve airplane security! Provide a target range space in the concourses to practice frizbeeing mock Dells at terrorist mannequins. That would give Al Queda pause and provide entertainment for bored travelers on long layovers. I'd even pay for that!

## **TWIGDRASIL AND TREEHOUSE GAZETTE #81:**

**RICHARD DENGROVE**—Your analysis of the history of *The Secrets of the Psalms* is quite interesting. I was not aware of the fact that religious authorities once considered magic to be divine or at least that a divine magic was possible. It is hard to imagine a sentiment like that in these days were even something as silly as the nonsense spells in the Harry Potter books are denounced as devil worship.

Of course The Fifi is the mascot of SFPA. I believe that was codified in Rule #4 at some point and if not it should have been. A SFPA flag might not be too hard to design. I would suggest starting with Meade Frierson's SFC patch design except that these days the stars and bars theme might be judged to be politically incorrect.

## **PETER, PAN & MERRY #48: DAVID SCHLOSSER**

—Your comment about repressed memories vs. "just forgotten" events makes me realize why I am uneasy about the whole repressed memory theory. Forgetting something



is not a conscious process. I know that at some time I had a working understanding of multivariable calculus. I also know that the class would certainly qualify as a traumatic experience. I still have fragments of memories about that class and I remember working very hard to learn the material. The actual learning, however, has evaporated like yesterday's dewfall.

My point is that you can't deliberately forget something. The more traumatic a memory is the bigger of an impression it makes on your mind and the harder it is to forget. Unless actual brain damage is involved I feel that it is impossible to repress a memory. It's like not thinking about a blue monkey. As soon as you see or hear the words the image pops into your mind.

A repressed memory would be a lot like my forgotten calculus. One might not remember the details of the repressed incident itself but you would remember things that touched on the memory. I feel that you might not remember the thing itself but you would know that there was something memorable missing. The whole concept just does not jive with my experience of how memory works.

**FREQUENT FLYER: TOM FELLER**—I agree with your analysis that the failure of *Nemesis* falls with the studio and not with the *Star Trek* franchise. I think that having strong competition actually boosts the attendance of a good film rather than hurt it. There are a lot of negative aspects to seeing a film: the expense, distracting crowds, poor projection and sound equipment, uncomfortable seating, etc. If you go and see a really good film it tends to suspend your disbelief in the cinema. Dare I say after the rant above you have a selective memory of the filmgoing experience? You were entertained by one film so you are in a state of mind to see another.

The loss of The Bookstore in Horse Cave was more than just losing a fun place—it reduced the number of places to eat in the area. Concave puts a lot of pressure on all the guest services in the area and food service is one of the things that keeps me awake at night. Last weekend we found a hotel in North Carolina that would be a great location for a Concave type convention. It is located in Spruce Pine NC which is the middle of nowhere but it is a very interesting nowhere. There is gem mining, tall mountains, scenic

waterfalls, wildlife. The hotel is converted from an abandoned county school. It has spacious rooms, more than enough function space, is adjacent to a recreation center with a pool and indoor tennis courts and has the kind of funky rustic atmosphere that was so appealing at the Park Mammoth Inn. The only problem is that the only restaurant in the downtown area is a half-mile away and it is not open on Sunday. There are a couple of fast food joints near the Blue Ridge Parkway but they are over five miles away. It is an neat place but just not practical.

**SPIRITUS MUNDI #194: GUY H. LILLIAN III—**

I hope the DUFF trip went well. It looks like you and Rosie had a very ambitious itinerary. I hope the hypnotism worked and you were in a state of mind to enjoy it. I'm sure we'll hear all about it.

That is a great photo of Naomi. The windswept hair and lighting makes her look quite mysterious and the grin gives her a Mona Lisa feel.

That does not quite offset the photos of the aftermath of your *petit contretemps*. I hope that it's all better now.

Thanks for your remembrance of Harry Warner Jr. Like so many of us I corresponded with Harry through SFPA, letter columns and my own fanzines but I never got to meet him in person. When we were traveling through Hagerstown once Rickey Sheppard and I stopped within a few blocks of his house and mailed him a postcard. We just didn't feel that we knew him well enough to impose. Even though he has no genetic family as you point out Harry will live on through his countless contributions to fandom over his long career.

The James Norwood case is proceeding slowly but steadily. The two suspects have been charged with carjacking leading to the death of a person, which is a death penalty offense. The case is in Federal District Court in Greeneville under US Magistrate Judge Dennis Inman. The prosecutor is US Attorney Sarah Shultz and the defense attorneys are Mark Slagle and Charles Currier. The first trial was scheduled to begin on April 1 but has been continued. The prosecutor has asked for a 60-day window before the trial to determine if the government would be seeking the death penalty.

The WKUSFS was not expected to have a flag. We just decided that we should have one just in case we ever decided to march in the Christmas parade, I guess. I've forgotten the actual reason for making a flag. I suspect that it was one of Rickey Sheppard's wacky ideas that snowballed.

## **WE INTERRUPT THIS ZINE FOR THE FOLLOWING IMPORTANT NEWS FLASH!**

Speaking of Rickey Sheppard he and Betsy Hirst will be getting married on June 14<sup>th</sup> in Bowling Green. Yours truly will be the best man and Tony Cannon will perform the ceremony. Tony has a *bona fide* clergy ordination in some church I've never heard of. It is solid enough to be recognized by the Commonwealth of Kentucky. This is Rickey's first marriage and Betsy's second. Betsy has a teenaged daughter Jackie from her first marriage.

If you think this is short notice, I'm in the wedding party and I only found out about the wedding date a week ago! If any of you are near Bowling Green on Saturday June 14<sup>th</sup> I exhort you to come and witness this historic event!

## **WE NOW RETURN YOU TO YOUR REGULARLY SCHEDULED ZINE.**

**THE SPHERE #203: DON MARKSTEIN**—I have to take exception to your claim that it is Duck Tape" not "Duct Tape". I do know a bit about the subject since I used to work for one of the major companies that makes the stuff and formulate adhesives for it for 12 years.

What we would recognize as duct tape cannot go back to WWII. The reason is that the plastics used to make the backing did not exist until after the war. There were cloth tapes used as surgical dressings that came into use in that period that used cellulose-based airplane canvas dope for waterproofing. This was a very expensive special stuff so I'm sure that the part about it getting into the hands of GIs is probably right on.

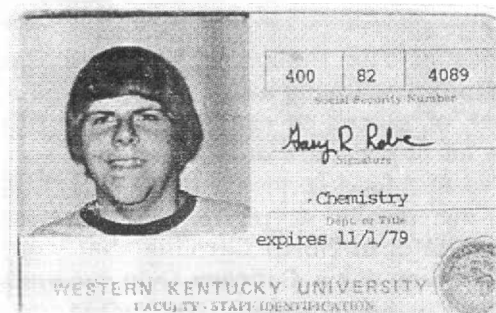
The main perpetrator of the Duck Tape name is the company you allude to, Manco, that uses Duck Tape as its brand name. This is a schlocky

company that buys seconds, repackages them and then sells cheap to Wal-Mart. Before I left the tape company 12 years ago I used to go to Wal-Mart and buy a dozen rolls of Manco tape, unroll it to the point where the defects were hidden and then hand them out to people at SF conventions. I told people that they could go make a couple of bucks by taking the defective product back to their home store for a refund.

Kendall, the company I used to work for (now a proud part of the Tyco Corp. family) used to collect wild stories about duct tape. The best ones were where the tape saved lives by either serving as a makeshift tourniquet or radiator hose repair in the African bush. The vast majority of duct tape actually does go for installing HVAC ductwork. While the Wal-Mart contract is a significant chunk of business I noticed once that they carry Kendall tape at the Sam's Warehouse stores.

**OBLIO #145: GARY BROWN**—Wow! a Jimmy Buffett concert and spring training baseball back-to-back. I do envy you seeing Jimmy Buffett live 15 times. It sounds like he puts on a really fun show. Not seeing live music is one of the things I miss about not living near Nashville.

My face felt naked for about two weeks after I shaved off the mustache. I was constantly wiping my nose because it felt like it was running. Corlis has now adjusted to my naked face to the point where she says that pictures of me with the mustache now look strange. It's funny that just after I shaved it there were no pictures in the house that showed me without it until I got those New Year's Eve pictures developed. Just after I shaved it my old college ID turned up from 1979, only a year or two before I grew the mustache.



### **TRIVIAL PURSUITS #106: JANICE GELB—**

There was a really funny piece in *The Onion*, *N. Korea Wondering What It Has To Do To Attract U.S. Military Attention*. The title pretty much captures the jist of the article.

Out here in the boonies we have to make do with DVD because we don't get any of them high-falutin *National Touring Companies* coming through here unless the tour bus breaks down in Bristol. I got the DVD of the original *Producers* for Christmas and I still love the interplay between Gene Wilder and Zero Mostel. I never thought any stage version could live up to the movie so I've never been particularly interested in seeing the stage redux.

Another of my favorite comedies just came out on DVD just before they butchered it in a remake: *The In-Laws*. That one is worth the price of admission just for "Serpentine, Shelley, Serpentine!" and "There's flames on my car!". I love sitting through classic comedies with the boys to see if their reactions to the material are like mine were when I first saw them. I felt vindicated when last weekend Nick and Isaac were running rings around each other at one point yelling Serpentine!

Nick has enjoyed the Garth Nix books. Thanks for mentioning that a new one is out. They are not something I remember to look for and the timing on this one is great since we'll be getting it right as school lets out.

## **The Top 4 Reasons Why I Shaved Off My Mustache:**

4. The mask of my CPAP machine twisted the hairs in the moustache and I couldn't get it to straighten out.
3. I had not changed my hairstyle or facial hair for 20 years.
2. My sons bet me that I wouldn't shave it off.
1. At 46 ½ years old the mustache was the only gray hair I had on my head.

*Boskone and the blizzard:* Janice Gelb—I'm glad that getting snowed in at Boskone wasn't a problem for you. I have gotten Snow-Kone reports from Pat and Naomi. Their getting delayed in Boston was part of the general

problems we had in getting Concave running this year.

### **HELLO KITTY 40,000 #62: JEFFREY COPELAND—**

It is interesting to track the SFPA membership's mood swings through the war. At the end of March the war was probably at its worst-looking point and it seemed as if our fears about getting locked into a messy war were coming through. Just a few days later the Iraqi resistance around Baghdad started to fall away and two weeks later the statues of Saddam were coming down.

I think you have identified the underlying paradox of this war quite well as doing the right thing for the wrong reasons. As more and more stories about Saddam's regime come to light and the mass graves are discovered it is getting harder and harder to remember the WMDs that were the given reason for toppling Saddam.

There are still two things about this war that will nag me for a long time. The first is that we fabricated the evidence on the weapons as a pretext for the war. The second is that the real mistake was made in 1992 when we backed off the first time.

reycmt: Ackerman--Nick and Isaac, being pre-teen boys, are not what you call aware of current events. They will, however, listen intently whenever the President is talking. They wait to see if he is talking about atomic weapons just so they can cut in with "It's nu-clee-ar, not nu-clur! Corlis is a pronunciation purist too and is waging what I expect is an ultimately losing battle against an East Tennessee accent in our children.

That'll have to do it for this time around. Next mailing should have scenes from Rickey and Betsy's wedding, a Midwestcon review, stories from Mexico and whatever else finds its way into my path before the end of July. Oh, yeah my birthday will be in there somewhere. How could I forget that?