

N° 21

**BOULEVARD
DE
BENTEAU**

**DAVID LEVINE & KATE YULE
4 AOÛT 2009**

Bonjour Hi!

This issue is dedicated to Mrs. Judith Harvey, my sixth-grade teacher, who firmly told me to take French the following fall. She could not have been more right—that was five or six languages ago.

French was on my class schedule into sophomore year of college, and it was a wrench when conflicts pushed it out. How could I not be taking French? (Math lasted another year. Losing that felt even more odd.) I have, if not fluency, a great deal of *comfortableness* with French.



Worldcon attendees will have noticed by now that “Bonjour hi” is the default greeting in Montréal. It even substitutes for “Next, please!” in shop queues.

Jo Walton has explained that the way to get *les Québécois* to converse with you in English is to begin in French, however rudimentary. This demonstrates that the ghost is willing though the meat is weak, and they will switch to English out of mercy.

Whereas if you wade in assuming English, they are likely to stick doggedly to *français* from sheer bloody-mindedness.

You have been warned.



As I prepare for this trip, I keep being struck by the English place names among the French: Kingsley Falls and Wickham, Saint-Remi-de-Tingwick and Notre-Dame-de-Stanbridge. I marvel at the prospect of driving on “rue McFarland” and “chemin Stacks Corner” with trilled French r’s. It feels weird. It feels wrong.

And then I think about Los Angeles County, and the Santa Monica Freeway, and even Colorado Springs or New Mexico. Americans unthinkingly use place names originating in other languages every day. They’re “just words”, to the point where Anglo-Americans can be in denial that Spanish-speakers were here first and are here *still*, not uppity interlopers. But I digress.

I’m reading Gillmor’s *Canada: a People’s History*, and I look forward to learning more on our travels. After the Worldcon we’re staying in in the countryside near Vermont for two nights, then Quebec City and Trois-Rivières. If you have favorite places, do tell us about them at-con! — KY

“Somewhere in the universe, there is a place where restaurant-goers eat rusty farm implements, and pancakes and eggs are nailed to the wall.”

Yog's Law

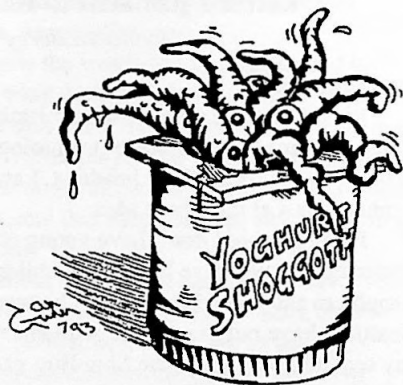
It started with a register tape.

No, wait a minute, maybe it started when I was in college. That's where I first began eating Dannon coffee yogurt and Grape-Nuts for breakfast. It's still my favorite breakfast, and I eat it just about every day. Which means we buy yogurt every week. And on the grocery store's register tape, for many years, it appeared as "DANNON YOG." This is what the *Devil's DP Dictionary* calls *curtation*, and we found it amusing.

Our shopping list doesn't have the same constraints as to string length, but we're ~~lazy-buggers~~ efficient, and began to note "need yog." Pretty soon we were calling it "yog" in speech as well. (This cropped up in a glossary in Bento #10.) "The True Yog" is Dannon coffee yogurt in the six-oz. cup, but we also get "white yog" (plain), and "van yog" (vanilla) from time to time.

As good little eco-crunchy Pacific Northwest consumers, we reduce, reuse, and recycle whenever we can. One of the ways we reduce our footprint on the Earth is that we very rarely buy commercial leftover containers—instead re-using plastic quart yogurt containers, marking their current contents on the lid with a wax pencil. Sometimes it's kind of comical how many yogurt containers are stacked up in the fridge, and it can be a bit of a challenge to sort through them to find, you know, *yogurt*.

Well, it's been getting sporadically hard to find The True Yog in stores, and it's kind of expensive, and it's also high in sugar, and the trail of little individual plastic cups we've been leaving behind us is rather oppressive. I love the flavor of coffee



yogurt, though... too bad it isn't available in bulk. Kate mentioned this in her LiveJournal, and Karen Schaffer suggested trying instant espresso.

Bingo. Quart of plain yogurt + 2 Tbs instant espresso + 3-4 Tbs sugar = something very similar to The True Yog but cheaper, lower in sugar, and with less packaging. Win!

There's just one small problem. The container of yogurt that's been espressified looks just like all the other containers in the fridge. So I marked it on the lid with a wax pencil.

And this, O Best Beloved, is why we have a yogurt container in the refrigerator hand-labeled YOG. — DDL

Letter I just sent to KINK radio

by Karen Berry

Dear Sheila,

I just heard the dulcet and unmistakable tones of your voice advising a new piece of technology for the car, an LCD display on the back of my headrest. I am unaccountably cantankerous at the whole idea.

I am told that I don't have young children, so I wouldn't understand. But I have had young children, I have raised three daughters and taken many drives between Portland and Seattle. I have put in my time with knees nudging the back of my seat, the wriggling, the Slug Bug games that degenerate into slugfests, the whining over the cassette, will it be Raffi or the Spice Girls. I've done this.

But my kids have had it easy. I've always driven a minivan, so each has had her own domain; the front seat for the oldest, the short seat for the youngest, and the "way back" for the fussiest middle child. My kids have never had to try to sleep three in a backseat while their parents drive all night to avoid the cost of a motel room.

Now, on the rare occasion when I cart my young women somewhere, they put in their earbuds and open books and magazines. They ride in the car like they fly on planes, confident of naps, snacks, opportunities to stretch their legs and pillows. And air conditioning. "Mom, can you turn up the

AIR?" one of them will say in a huffy little squawk that smacks of entitlement. Air conditioning.

My kids don't know the words to Coming Around the Mountain, or Froggy Went A-Courtin', or Jacob's Ladder. They don't care when they see a New Hampshire license plate, because they've never played the license plate game. They've never counted down the miles to Wall Drug. I've failed my kids, Sheila, and this whole idea of an LCD screen is an even bigger failure.

Let's put the boredom and torture back in car travel for children. It makes them resourceful. They can stare out the window, watching the powerlines, trying not to puke, dreaming of a breeze and a Coke while their midwestern mother leads them in a rousing spiritual.

Ah, memories.

Yours,

Karen

Good Thing We're Not Cats

David and I are curious people. (You there in the purple—stop snickering.) When is Canadian Labour Day? How old was Groucho when the Marx Bros. made Duck Soup? Why do Brits say *whilst* where Yanks say *while*, and is that some kind of vestigial superlative or what? (Dunno that one yet.) This stuff crops up all day long.

The primary use I make of my iPhone is as a web portal, no question. I'm spending about \$2 a day to feed my information habit. What the hell, it's cheaper than a daily latte.

At home, the "magic rock"—this lump of silicon that knows things—gives me non-vital information gratifyingly fast; on the road it substitutes for local expertise, leading us to ATMs and the nearest knitting shop.

It can tell us when and how to abandon the freeway for surface streets. It augments placards at the Milwaukee Arboretum, substitutes for a glossary as I read Ian McDonald's *Cyberabad Days*, provides maps and photos to accompany Witold Rybczynski's book on city planning.

Some few web sites Just Don't Get It. Chowhound, which I constantly want in strange cities, won't let iPhones access the real web site, redirecting *everything* to a generic "mobile" home page. From which it is impossible to re-create the Google search I was trying to follow, thank-yew-very-much. They'll get a clue someday. I'm far from the only person pointedly prodding them about this.

I'm an information junkie with a short attention span, and I adore having the Internet in my shirt pocket. — KY

"This explains why we got so little reaction from you when we mailed you that ferret."

Male Kluge Syndrome

I have an aftermarket iPod adapter in my car. It works great most of the time, but about one time in four, when I start the car the adapter doesn't power up properly—it doesn't work at all until I turn the ignition off and on again. So I have a little tic when I get in the car: start the engine, turn on the radio, if the iPod isn't working turn the key off and on again. Even if I'm not going to listen to the iPod right away, I might want it later.

This reminded me of an incident at McAfee. I needed a feature which already existed in another product. So I just copied over the source code, including the dialog box that controlled the feature. As I was integrating the new code into my product, I noticed that the dialog box (it was a big, complex one) would sometimes just throw away any values you'd entered.

A bit of investigation revealed that one particular control was... special; if you didn't change the value of that control in some way before clicking OK, nothing at all would be saved. I was surprised at such a blatant and obvious bug in a shipping product which, according to the change log, hadn't changed in years. I figured I'd managed to garp things up during integration, so I just fixed it and moved on.

A couple of years later I was working with the guy who'd originally coded that dialog box. We were working on an

unrelated problem and I saw him call up that dialog, make the changes he needed, and then—it happened so fast I almost missed it—he tweaked the value of the one special control up and then down again before clicking OK. So the bug existed in his product and had been there for years. God knows how many customers had lost data because of it. This guy—an engineer through and through—had found a simple workaround, and turned that workaround into a habitual little tic. Problem solved.

This, I realized, is a Guy Thing *extraordinaire*. Examples abound. In the second *Back to the Future* movie, Old Biff establishes his bona fides by being able to start his junky old car. There's a photoblog called "There, I Fixed It" (www.thereifixedit.com) that documents "epic kluges and jury-rigs." Some of them are both hilarious and terrifying. Kate has a family story about an uncle who came home from college with a bag of laundry including underwear that had been stapled together when the elastic gave out. You can add more, I'm sure.

Whence this male tendency to accept a hack or almost-fix? I have a theory. ~~It could be bunnies~~ It goes back to the old hunter/gatherer dichotomy. Anything that makes the mastodon fall over is good enough, whereas for a gatherer, if this berry is not just the right color it might make you sick.

The flip side of this coin, the exaggerated and damaging female stereotype to go with the exaggerated and damaging male stereotype, is the classic “put the couch over there, no here, no maybe there again, no, it’s not quite the right shade of beige” routine—the need to get everything, including unimportant detail, Just Right.

This isn't quite the article I had in mind, but it'll do.

— DDL

Flight School

by *Darin Furry*

Many pilots have had a burning desire to fly. The thought of escaping the grasp of gravity and soaring into the heavens has an almost spiritual appeal. For most of their lives, they dream, read magazines, and spend countless hours watching planes take off at local airports waiting until that magical day they enter flight school. Their feelings are captured by the famous poem, “High Flight,” the opening and closing lines saying it all:

Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of earth...

...Put out my hand and touched the face of God.

I never hung out at airports and that poem makes me gag. But I had a mild curiosity about flying so I signed up for classes.

In ground school, I learned all the different ways planes can crash. You learn about engines, instruments, navigation, aerodynamics (planes fly using magic and lots of money), radio procedures, meteorology, traffic rules, and physiology. At the end, there's a FAA written test, just like the DMV, except the questions aren't as brainless. At this point you are wondering if you can remember all this stuff *and* fly the plane!

I did learn that it's legal to drop anvils from airplanes. OK, the actual law states that it's legal to drop stuff from a plane (such as skydivers) as long as it doesn't pose a hazard to people below. Technically, that includes anvils and I have heard of people bowling from planes.

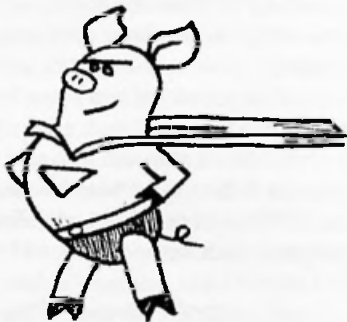
The next step is flying lessons at the local airport. On my first day, they made me taxi, take off, and fly the plane. I wasn't expecting to do all that on my first flight. And no, it's not a thrill, it's terrifying. My ritual after takeoff was to wipe the cold sweat off my hands. I drove the plane down the taxiway zig-zagging like a drunk driver. At least the instructor landed the plane.

Around the fifth flight, I got used to flying (and driving down the taxiway in a straight line). I practiced climbs, descents, turns, and stalls. In a stall, you tip nose up till the wings stop working. So you do agree that this is a stupid idea?

You also practice engine failures. The instructor pulls the throttle to idle and says, "now what?" As the plane slowly

glides to the ground, you have to look for a good farmer's field, preferably one with no irrigation lines and a low cow density. I always thought pilots were told to land on roads, but those aren't the best choice due to power lines and overpasses.

Halfway through training, the pivotal moment comes — your first solo. According to FAA rules a student must take off and land the plane three times, alone. It's a *huge* psychological hurdle and many students give up at this point. After all, what happens if you screw up or lose your nerve?

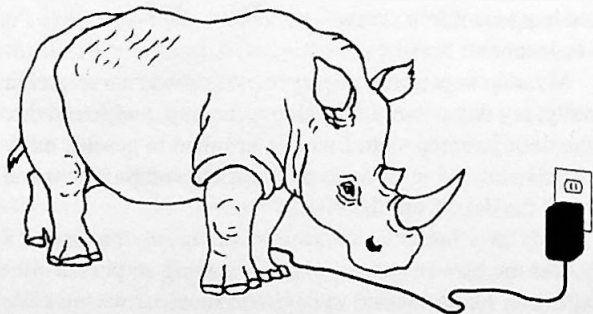


My solo kept getting delayed, which was nerve-racking. Finally, my day came, I was all psyched up, and found the plane door jammed shut. I was determined to get this over with so I crawled in through the baggage compartment and opened the door from the inside.

Only two thoughts occurred to me during this flight. The first was the bizarre sensation of not having an person sitting next to me. I was so used to having a shoulder wedged into mine that the extra space was unnerving. The second was the

realization that as soon as the wheels left the ground, I was committed to flying and landing. Before I could ponder this thought further, the tower cleared me for takeoff and I had to go. Once the wheels left the ground, I suddenly relaxed and realized I've done this dozens of times. My three flights went smoothly and the tower even congratulated me after my last landing.

After your solo, you move from flying basics to work on more advanced stuff such as navigation. How do you navigate a plane? Use a map and look out the window. For long flights, you can follow radio beacons. Surprisingly, knowing how to use GPS is not required by the FAA. While convenient, it isn't essential for navigation.



CHARGING RHINO

I was intimidated by night flying but it's not that hard. I had to learn to navigate in the dark and land without headlights. The coolest part is controlling the runway lights. To save energy, the lights go out after fifteen minutes. As you approach the airport, all you see is a black void. By clicking your microphone button seven times, hundreds of lights, strobes, and beacons illuminate and the desert blossoms with light. You feel like a god. And yes, I do say, "let there be light" as I click.

A fun part of training is soloing cross-country because you can apply all the stuff you've learned. I flew to Klamath Falls, and was surprised to find it had a military base! As I flew into the city, there were fifteen fighter jets above me, the tower and air traffic control couldn't see me, and I couldn't see the runways. The tower had to stall the jets until I found the airport and landed. On my other solo to John Day and Burns, I had to navigate by radio beacons since the landscape was monotonous, with no landmarks. It was unnerving not seeing any recognizable feature, but I made it home. My only in-flight emergency was realizing I had to pee 25 minutes out from Klamath Falls. Needless to say, I made sure my landing was gentle.

My summer of flight training culminated with my FAA flight test in October, the equivalent of the DMV driving test. An FAA examiner gives you a two-hour oral test, followed by

two hours of flight testing. Yes, it's a stressful test but very straightforward. An interesting part is while you are flying, the examiner tries to distract you once in a while to test your ability to concentrate.

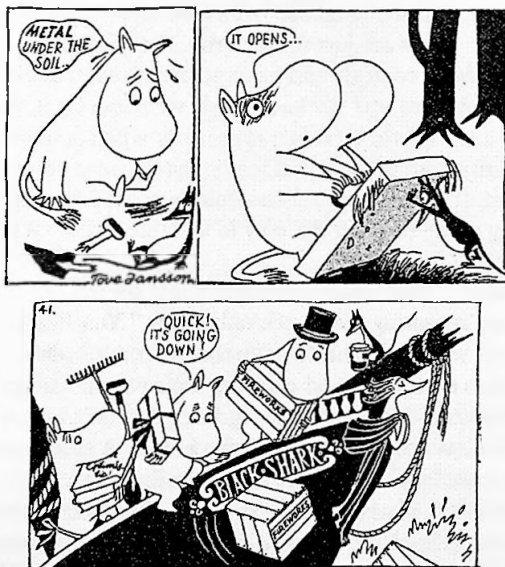
Overall it was a fascinating experience. Learning to fly was one of the most mentally and psychologically challenging things I've done. It's amazing to fly slow and low over the landscape, something you don't experience in a passenger jet. You aren't limited to looking out a small oval window and it's cool to see the runway as you land. The best part is you can fly over and circle anything you find interesting. Like learning to drive a car, things that were once difficult I now do automatically. Yes, flying requires more effort than driving but it doesn't require intense concentration or a death grip on the yoke.

Many of my friends say, "I can't imagine YOU as a pilot." So I have new friends now (kidding). I am surprised and disappointed by the number of people afraid of small planes. The people that do fly with me are enthralled and are glued to the window taking photos. Overall, flying is interesting and fun, so if you get the chance to go up in a small plane, do it. Just remember to pee before getting into the plane...

"Where's the fantastic elephant?"

The Lost Origins of *Lost*?

I recently read *Moomin: The Complete Tove Jansson Comic Strip, Book One*, and was astonished by the *Lost* parallels in the story “Moomin’s Desert Island” (1955). It’s all there!



Not shown: Moominmamma kills a wild boar with her bare hands. Seriously.

— DDL

Kate Witters On

We've been bemusing people with our use of language again. I told the mental health nurse practitioner I wasn't sure "what flavor of medical professional" was needed for something, and she laughed. Well, how would you put it?

Some words are just funny. Frob. Frob frob frob. Stop frobbing those controls and listen to me. Sudden doubt—did I make that word up? We know what we mean by it, does anyone else? (Verb. To fiddle repeatedly with something, supposedly with purpose but really just because you can. Or can't not. (Or can't knit.)) Research says: MIT hacker slang, possibly going back all the way to the Tech Model Railroad Club. Well OK then.

I wish I could remember the context for my saying "I think you're setting that shark rather low." You'll have to trust me that it was just right, two unrelated turns-of-phrase slotting neatly into each other and carrying their two meanings and more (some of the extra meaning being "Aren't I clever" and "You're clever too so you'll get the joke"). A sort of pun, on the sentence level. Or a mash-up, very in just now!

Speaking of which, have you seen the "trailer" for the forthcoming book *Sense and Sensibility with Sea Monsters*? I wonder what on earth Jane would have made of it. I hope she, too, would be bemused.

— KY



Flounder Mail From Some Fan

Lise Eisenberg

Brooklyn, New York

August 20, 2008

Today's adventures included getting a six hundred dollar ice cream maker for twenty dollars; getting some replacement electronics for me and a friend for free; chatting with a woman from Emess Lighting about how to replace a lightbulb. There should be a joke in there, but it eludes me.

I've engaged a guy I found through a mailing list to help me get things done. The current task is emptying my rented

storage, then going through everything to make it either organized or gone.... When I'm done, I may finally have all my Bentos in one place.

You'll know that's happened when the stars start going out one by one.

[But at least you'll have lightbulbs.]

Mog Decarnin

Kalamazoo, Michigan

August 26, 2008

I'll be forwarding my copy on to my friend Mark, who loves Japan and is a scholar of *yaoi*, though in English only. He's written some fascinating travel notes of his own, from his trip to the big manga convention last winter. I *know* he'll love your food notes! Interesting about the lack of spices, I hadn't thought about that. On his return, Mark headed in a beeline to his favorite taqueria.

I was born in Japan, but since we left when I was about a year old, I have no actual memories—but living there affected my parents lifelong, so we grew up with numerous Japanese & Japlish terms as part of our normal everyday family speech—e.g., tak(u)san atsui and hubba-hubba hayaku, with imarin plates over the fireplace and on the hearth wherever we lived, one movable finger raised, a big bronze Hotei-san, merry of face & belly, presided. We also knew the names of the maid & houseboy, who featured in full many a family tale—looking

back, as many as most of our relatives!

Anyway, I feel a strange affinity to things Japanese despite never having "been" there.

Pamela Boal <pamelaboal@westfieldway.fsnet.co.uk>

August 29, 2008

Fascinating food travels. I suspect I would not have been quite so adventurous as yourselves. My first experience of food on foreign soil was in Istanbul. The plane we were on was involved in a bird strike. Tedious rather than frightening as we had to circle for two hours dumping fuel as a precaution against fire on a bumpy landing. Perhaps we would have been more frightened had we known we were down to just one of the four engines when we landed safely. We had to stay at an hotel over night while a plane was flown from the UK to enable us to continue our journey.

By the time an hotel was found we were almost too tired to be hungry (no easy matter keeping three children under five amused in an airport lounge) but the hotel had done their best to rustle up a meal for us so we felt almost obliged to eat. The only item on the menu was Gold Fish. It arrived complete with head and tail in a muddy looking batter. Once I had braved the staring eye and lifted the batter to get at the flesh I found the fish delicious. The main course was followed by the largest, sweetest, most succulent oranges I have ever tasted, before or since.

Brad Foster <bwfoster@juno.com>

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September 3, 2008

Got in the annual Bento today, and was surprised not to find the "Sushi on the March" illo I sent. I was crushed. *Crushed*, I tells ya! Then I went and reread the emails we had exchanged on that, and realized you were talking about the "next" issue in the sense of the "next one after the present one, which we are currently working on, which would be twenty."

Cool to see a new Harvia cover, though I was confused by the credit line inside of "David, in the style of Teddy Harvia." I mean, David Thayer has always been doing his fan art in the style of Teddy Harvia, but never saw the need to point that out before. Oh, wait, another look at the cover reveals a third player involved here, David of the L, not David of the T. Barely into this little zine, and already twice confused. I may have to go into training to read fanzines from now on.

With regards to the trip to Mexico, it was the phrase, regarding one of your neighbors, that they were "a forthright recovering alcoholic from Texas money" had me thinking "Wow, she met George W. Bush and refrained from whacking him upside the head?" Oh, but then read a bit further, and found I was just confused. Again! Then a few pages later the phrase "strawberry jelly that tasted like congealed summer" had me wondering how a fruit-based product could taste hot

and full of bugs.

Maintain depth in relationships with friends? Heck, I'm doing good to even remember the names of some of these people! I leave it up to them to work on the depth, I'm busy on the width, something that most people usually pay little attention to.

Regarding the York Castle Museum exhibit with a 1950's English sitting room, I have developed my own way of "seeing through others' eyes" when it comes to the different time sense we all have, depending on when we were born. I know that, when I was a lad of only 5 to 15 years in the 1960's, anything that was mentioned as having been from the 1940's seemed like something very old to me, much before my time. And the 1930's was ancient history. So, when I talk to a young lad these days, I try to do that kind of "go back about 15 years from your birth", and realize WHY, to them, the 1980's are THEIR ancient history. It helps me deal with the young whippersnappers. *[Yes, absolutely! I often do that same arithmetic.]*

Are you guys both total omnivores, or are there actual foods you don't care for? I've always found that, if you chop whatever it is up into small enough pieces, then dip in batter and deep fry, I can get down about anything. *[David dislikes most recognizable organs or things that stare back, and Kate abhors celery. Even deep-fried.]*

The State Fair of Texas has a competition each year for a new festival food winner. Here are the finalists for this year: Fernie's All-American Fried Grilled Cheese Sandwich, Chicken Fried Bacon, Fried Banana Split, Texas Fried Jelly Bellys, Deep Fried S'mores, Fried Chocolate Truffles, Chocolate-Covered Strawberry Waffle Balls [*onna stick!*], and Fire & Ice (pineapple ring, battered and deep-fried, topped with banana-flavored whipped cream that's been frozen in liquid nitrogen so it smokes).

Which one do you think was the winner? Here's a hint: while none of these would qualify as a health food, which one has the greatest possibility of killing you the quickest? [*Holy Cthulhu, is there a meaningful difference on those grounds? We're going to need spinach for breakfast to counteract just reading this.*]

Karen Stephenson <stepheka@onid.orst.edu>
Corvallis, Oregon
September 3, 2008

When my youngest daughter was in kindergarten, she came home on the first day with her bus number pinned securely to her jacket. I bring this up because I wish someone was looking after me like that. I have temporarily misplaced my copy of Bento (and my car keys and my cell phone and the rent check...) Since I do not expect to become more organized in the near future, I will respond by memory.

I enjoyed your stories of Japan. I went there as a teenager and so much of my time was spent worrying about what I was wearing and whether people would stare at me. (I had blonde hair past my shoulders — what's your guess on the stares.) I enjoyed the food (although the raw egg at breakfast threw me for a loop) and was a master of the chopsticks. I loved the castles with the nightingale floors that squeaked when you walked on them (all the better to avoid assassinations).

The piece about friendships resonated with me also. I came through a hard time where a lot of my relationships were weakened or lost and I have been consciously been trying to rebuild my web of relationships. I stumbled onto the family newsletter trying to keep the ex-inlaws (outlaws) abreast with the kids' doings. Once I'd written it, I started sending it to people I actually liked as well. (I guess I need to find my tact along with my car keys...) Yesterday I opened my mailbox and found three real letters. It was wonderful.

On the local scene, my social life revolves around food (weekly tea dates with a friend) or watching my children kick or hit things (chatting with mom friends at soccer or karate practice). Both of these involve a commitment to continue the relationship over time. Ultimately relationships take time.

"You're all bringing me your best love casseroles, and I don't like the recipes."

Jerry Kaufman <JAKaufman@aol.com>

Seattle, Washington

September 7, 2008

Thanks for the Denvention issue of *Bento*—I enjoyed it, as always. David, your cover fooled me. I thought it was a genuine Teddy Harvia. You captured not only the look of a Harvia but the type of humor he uses. I also particularly liked the Piglet in slippers on page 3. It took me a little puzzling over the art credits to figure out this was “Moo-Shoe Pork” by Steve Hunnicutt. Can you point me to other examples of his cartooning? Is he a fan or a non-fan friend of yours? [*“Moo-Shoe Pork” is one of a series of “Mister Piggy” cartoons by our square dance friend Steve Hunnicutt, who is a gamer and a reader but not a fan. You can see lots more of Mister Piggy at www.misterpiggy.com. Jerry responded:*] If Rotsler drew piggies, they’d look like Steve’s, I suspect.

Joseph Nicholas <josephn@globalnet.co.uk>

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September 10, 2008

Reading your account of your quest to eat weird foreign food while in foreign parts, I’m tempted to say that we’ve done the same—except that the odd dishes we’ve consumed

over the years haven't been nearly as weird as the stuff you ate in Japan. Alligator and kangaroo (in New Orleans and London, respectively) as opposed to rats' testicles in curried noodles and chicken gizzards in miso soup. But perhaps the Japanese version of "weird food" stems from the high population density, which has historically required them to eat every part of an animal, because wasting any part of it would be protein foregone.

That certainly seems to be the animating principle in China, where they do eat absolutely everything, including hedgehogs and civets. A former work colleague, who spent time in northeast China teaching English as a foreign language, related how—shortly after she'd arrived—her Chinese managers took her to dinner at a restaurant which specialised in snakes. She was shown the live snakes slithering over one another in their waterless fishtank, felt slightly queasy but picked one—and then watched in mingled horror and fascination as it was lifted out and had its head cut off in front of her. With a pair of scissors.

Later still, she was travelling in South America, in the foothills of the Andes, and thought she'd try what the locals had—guinea pig. It wasn't killed and grilled in front of her, but she said that by the time you'd picked it apart and extracted all the bones there was so little meat on the plate that you wondered why you'd bothered.

R-Laurraine Tutihasi <laurraine@mac.com>

Oracle, Arizona

September 11, 2008

Spanish is one language I have not learned, though I've made an attempt. I haven't been to Mexico either. I'd like to learn Castilian, not Mexican Spanish. I'm a language snob.

On your discussion point, I've tried to maintain contact with friends by various means. One is letter writing—yes, sitting down to write a letter, albeit these days on a computer and sending it by snail mail. Another is e-mail. I have a few regular e-mail correspondents. Yet another is the phone. There are currently three people I try to call regularly. These days of phone plans with unlimited long distance, it's pretty easy. The biggest problem with the phone is juggling time zones; two of my phone pals are in the Eastern zone. The final way is by publishing a quarterly newsletter/fanzine. I use the zine as my FAPAZine and also send it to a number of friends and relations.

I think it's great that you made such an effort to learn Japanese. I was born there and later took Japanese in summer school between two years of college. I have a few children's books that I used to be able to read, and now they're all "Greek to me."

I'm very curious to know what the drawing on p. 45 is. My Japanese books are all packed up still, so I can't look up

the katakana. We moved out of our old house into a rental, where we're living until our retirement home is finished. Consequently most of our books are in boxes. The drawing sort of looks like a penguin.

[I found that drawing in a web search for random illos and just fell in love with it. I thought it was a penguin too, but apparently it is "Gonta." Here's all I know about him (source: www.cc.kyoto-su.ac.jp/information/famous/gontakun.html):

"Gonta-kun was a doll as big as a human being. A man played him, wearing clothes shaped like a strange animal, which looked like a half dog and half raccoon dog ("tanuki") to me. He appeared in the TV program "Dekiru-kana" for little children, which showed how to make toys from stuff we can collect easily—unused boxes, bottles or packages of milk and so on."

If you do a Google image search of Gonta you will see some color pictures of him.]

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September 13, 2008

Thank you for mailing me a copy of Bento 20. Congrats on twenty issues! It may be annual, but it has become a part of the Worldcon experience for many. We just couldn't afford to

go to Denver, but we are on the Anticipation committee in Montréal, and we are already planning our trip there. So, you'll be able to save postage there. In the meantime...

Have you sent a copy, or at least a copy of the cover, to David Thayer? I think he'd be amused and honoured. I think fanzine fandom as a whole misses David's cartoons. I hope he's getting that promised novel written.

What do I do to maintain depth of relationships with friends? Conventions help, and locally, we have two monthly fannish pubnights, which do help a lot. Both LiveJournal and FaceBook have done some to help that situation, but sometimes, It comes down to going through my phone book, see who I haven't seen or heard of in a while, and just send them an e-mail. That also helps to update records in case they've moved.

Rick Simkin <rick.simkin@acm.org>

Chicago, Illinois

September 14, 2008

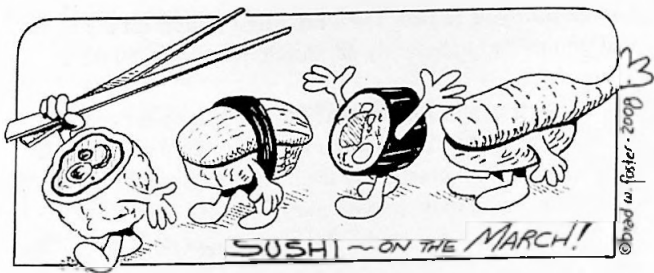
I thought I was familiar with the Japanese styles of food: sushi, tempura, noodle soups..., but my friends living there introduced me to okonomiyaki (as-you-like-it yaki), where you mix the raw ingredients and fry the resulting pancake yourself, and kushiage where you sit at a bar and the guy behind the bar grills little skewers of stuff, all different, until

you tell him you're full. *Then* I thought I knew all the styles. And you talk nonchalantly about oden, a style I've never heard of.

My first trip to Japan came after 2½ semesters of Japanese class. I found that the lesson we studied just before my trip came in fantastically useful, about permission: may I do this? Yes you may, no you may not. Like you, I found that my studies weren't enough but I was desperately glad to have what I did.

My friends in Japan: I'd known Mark a little bit during my first years in Boston, and chance made us co-workers during my last year in Boston. In between, he'd gone to Japan and worked for a company there, then came back to the US saying that living there was hard and he didn't much like it; he was planning to go back there soon. **WHAT?!** When I moved home to Chicago and started taking Japanese class, one classmate said she'd lived in Japan for a short while, didn't like it, came home, then went back to Japan. Again, **WHAT?!**

So when I went to visit Mark and Dana, I hoped to find out what it was about Japan that people found so compelling that they'd come back even though they didn't like it. I didn't find out what that was, but when I came home I wanted to go back to Japan (ha! it got me too). I did go back a couple of years later, with classmates, and enjoyed that trip as well. Now your reports make me want to make another visit...



Steve Green <ghostwords@yahoo.co.uk>

September 20, 2008

Fascinating insight into Japanese cuisine. When Ann and I visited Paris in 1986, we were struck by the proliferation of street vendors, many selling middle-eastern food. Even though the centre of Birmingham is now pedestrianised, you rarely see anything other than a hot chestnut stand at wintertime.

[Portland has had an explosion of street food carts in the last year—small trailers, really, typically around the perimeter of a parking lot. Everything from crepes to Korean tacos, sometimes very good quality! A few are mobile, advising regulars of their current location via Twitter. It's a great incubator for small business. I'm glad the city & county find a way to allow these.]

Roger Waddington

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Not so sure about the planet being tickled by your frequent flights; according to the PC thinking that we all have to follow, they're fatal stab wounds. Mind you, I love the irony of politicians and celebrities jetting all round the world to tell us how evil we are to even think of flying. Although having four documentary series about airports turn up on tv at various times (*Airline, Airport, Airport USA, Holiday Airport*) about life behind the scenes and in front, I've got the impression that it's the most stressful way of travelling of all.

It's not only airports which find themselves the subject of real-life documentaries over here; there seems to be an endless fascination with all aspects of work and daily life. Particularly with the emergency services; we've had cameras following the ambulance workers, the fire-fighters, the daily life of a hospital; and I think every police force in the country must have had their daily routine recorded on camera. In fact, you might say we've been covered from the cradle with *Babies at Risk*, a series about the work of a neo-natal unit, to the grave with *Don't Drop The Coffin*, showing the behind-the-scenes activities of a funeral firm.

"It's just like Disneyland, but without the fun."

Michael Dobson <michael@dobsonbooks.com>

April 1, 2009

Bento 15: Blah blah Corflu Zed blah elevator blah
Random Jottings blah blah blah mosey blah laughter blah
Best. Colophon. Ever, Blah

Bento 20: I appreciated the discussion of “Is this real water?” In the early 70s, I was a very junior member of the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum’s aeronautics curatorial department, and the question of authenticity came up over and over again. Art museums and aircraft museums have this in common: they both center around artifacts. Science museums, children’s museums, and “living” museums aren’t about artifacts; they’re about experience. But even when a museum is about artifacts, issues still come up.

One of our curators once had an entire airplane repainted when he found that one of the tail markings was an inch off the schematic. On the other hand, we displayed the V-1 buzz bomb without the swastika on its tail because it was in the large glass bay facing onto the Mall, though swastikas appear on the Bf-109 in the World War II gallery. The final reasoning — and you won’t believe the number of meetings this took— was that a tourist walking on the national mall had a right not to be accosted by a surprise swastika, but people who chose to walk into a World War II gallery expected to see reality to the best of our ability.

We endured a huge letter writing campaign from the Air Mail Pilots Association when we refused to display the DH-4 mailplane they had lovingly restored—because they hadn't restored it authentically enough. On the other hand, the Wright 1903 Flyer, in the center position of the entrance gallery, isn't authentic in the slightest. The plane crashed on its third flight, and the Wrights, not thinking about history, threw the wreckage in the back of the truck, drove it back to Dayton, and stored it in a garage, where it rotted. When MIT asked for the plane many years later, Wilbur rebuilt it so that it looked good enough, using different wood and fabric in places. He welded the cracked engine block, but didn't fix it. By normal standards, it doesn't qualify, but it's as close to the real Flyer as anything else in existence. *[At least it was authentically built by Wilbur!]*

WAHF: Janna Silverstein, David Stewart, Tom Whitmore, Karen Babich ("Friends don't let friends send apostrophes"), KRin Pender-Gunn, Christopher D. Carson (lunarcc.org), John Hertz ("Japan adventures well told. I ate your share of natto").

"What does the rhino want to be near?"
"Another rhino."

Bento 21 — August 2009

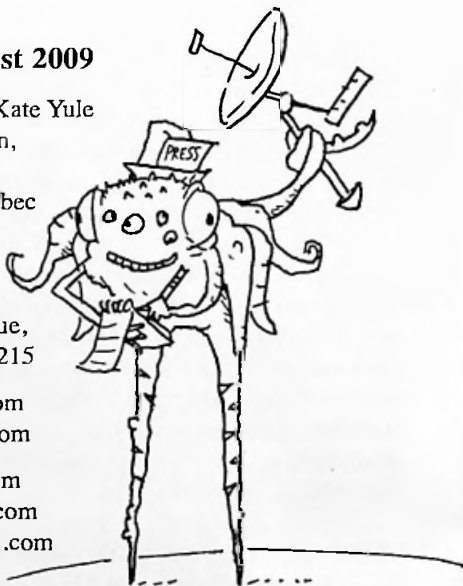
by David Levine and Kate Yule
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the Worldcon
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Art Credits

Cover and Charging Rhino by David
Yoghurt Shoggoth by Ian Gunn (from Bento #10)
Super Piggy by Steve Hunnicutt, www.MisterPiggy.com
Faanish Forever Stamp by Kurt Erichsen
Sushi on the March by Brad W. Foster
Cub Reporter by Mike Russell, www.CulturePulp.com