

Wave to the Nice Mountain, Dear

Wave to the Nice Mountain, Dear is the sixty-fifth SFPA-zine (volume two, number 42) from Jeffrey Copeland. It is intended for mailing number 235 of the Southern Fandom Press Alliance and selected others. The text of *Wave to the Nice Mountain, Dear* was composed using the T_EX typesetting system, and is set in 11-point Hiroshige Book. It was published by Bywater Press, 3243 165th Ave, SE, Bellevue, Washington 98008, on 27 September 2003.



After an eventful and hectic summer we got the girl child off to Canada and college. Having sold our ten-year-old minivan, we had to rent a van to schlep her up to UVic. (I remember shipping a box of textbooks ahead of me, and taking two suitcases to college. I guess times have changed.)

We missed the original ferry we were planning to take up to Victoria. Because we got off the ferry with the wrong bit of documentation, we couldn't get her student visa directly. When it was all said and done, by the time we'd gotten to the hotel we'd blown through all our buffer time.

I had been looking forward to the trip since it was going to be the closest thing I was going to get to a vacation this summer. with the extra chasing around it wasn't quite as relaxing as I'd hoped. Overall, we spent too much time getting student visa paperwork, setting up bank accounts, and running to the Canadian equivalent of Target for the "last thing, really" for her dorm room.

However we managed to get a very nice whale watching cruise in: an hour out in a 12-passenger Zodiac, back into US territorial waters, to sit in the midst of the travelling, playing, and feeding J-pod of resident Orcas. Allie managed to snap a picture of one of them leaping into the air.

(By way of explanation: Orcas are pretty social so they travel in packs or pods. Three of them, J, K, and L, live in and around Puget Sound and the San Juan Island all year 'round.)



Liz and I also abandoned the children to room service one evening, and walked around the block to Hugos, my favorite restaurant in Victoria. We'd finally managed to remember our wedding anniversary — an event we perennially forget — and thought we deserved a dinner alone.

Meanwhile, our daughter's first week of college was punctuated by bouts of homesickness. I guess I haven't been enough of a bastard as a father if she actually missed home. Even the flock of bunnies on campus — photos supplied — couldn't make her happy.



Her boyfriend Ted (who'd come with us for the trip to drop her off) and her buddy Elliot drove up to Victoria a couple of days later to try to mitigate her distress. It didn't help much.




I don't think it helped that she blew off most of the get-acquainted events which seemed to be the bulk of freshman ("first-year" in Canadian) orientation. But, she helped sign kids into the dorm, which meant she met a lot of people anyway. And by the end of the first week, when she called up to complain about being homesick, she had to cut the calls short because Mike or Jan or somebody was coming


to her door to go see a movie or grab a cup of coffee or go to dinner.


By now things are more-or-less normal: she's settled down into the usual bouts of complaining about how much of an idiot her sociology professor is, she's worried about mid-terms, and she's looking forward to a long weekend for Canadian Thanksgiving.


And so, the child who eighteen years ago terrorized a noted childphobe (sorry for (sorry for causing him distress Bernadette) causing him distress Bernadette) by trapping him in our dining room and climbing up his leg is now on her own adventure, and seems to actually be doing alright.

Reviews

 *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider: The Cradle of Life* confirms one critic's suggestion that this isn't the summer of the sequel, it's the summer of the colon. Nonetheless, this is actually as good as the original. Great stunts, only one scene where my reaction to the computer animation was "give me a break," actual plot, some real characterization. Nicely done.

 *Frida* is Selma Hayek's rendition of the life of Frida Kahlo, Mexican painter of the fantastic. Very nicely rendered biography, with its own fantastic elements added. It's visually stunning and nicely acted.

 If the writing in *The Da Vinci Code* was any more wooden, it could have been written by Tom Clancy rather than by Dan Brown. He makes the same kind of stupid math mistakes he did in his first novel, *Digital Fortress*, and again compounds it with the plot point of having the linguist explain a fine point of mathematics to the cryptographer — after all, the cryptographer is just a girl, right? Then he makes it all worse by dedicating the book to his father, *the math teacher*. However, that said, the story is somewhat more compelling than *Digital Fortress*, concerning the holy grail, an internecine plot within the Vatican involving the Catholic fundamentalist group Opus Dei, and some history surrounding the Council of Nicea in the fourth century. (Brown trades on a reputation of being historically and geographically accurate. However, I caught at least one geographic point which I'm pretty sure is wrong, so I now need to go off and read some of the real details of the Council of Nicea.) Anyway, worth a read if you're in the mood for a thriller, even if he does nearly rent a billboard to broadcast the identity of the bad guy.

 There is little to say about *Bad Boys II* but things blow up. Real good. Very nice car chase. Nice bit with Puerto Rico standing in for Cuba.* Will Smith and Martin Lawrence playing the partners, Gabrielle Union playing Lawrence's sister the DEA agent and babe, Joe Pantoliano playing the beleaguered police captain. Best line: Tough guy DEA agent to our heroes, "You look like you're about to do something foolish, dangerous, and illegal. You want some help?"

* Let see: in last year's James Bond movie, we had the Spanish province of Andalucia standing in for Cuba. Perhaps some day American movie companies will be able to film in Cuba. Perhaps some day, human rights violations in Cuba will carry as little weight as human rights violations in China. Or perhaps the Cuban *fascisti* in Miami and the loons like Dan Burton and the US sugar company executives who egg them on will all die.



☛ *Tears of the Sun* is a Bruce Willis movie that doesn't force him to stretch his acting ability even as far as it was taxed in *Die Hard*. On the other hand, Monica Bellucci is still one of the most beautiful women in the world, even dressed in khakis and covered in mud in a jungle. The movie itself makes some points about post-colonial Africa, but it's frighteningly manipulative in getting there.

☛ After JJ and I went to our annual baseball game (Mariners beat the Orioles three-zip on Labor Day Sunday, though we had given it up for won and left before the really nice double-play that closed out the ninth), we felt the need to see a baseball movie. They were out of *Field of Dreams* and he's too young for *Bull Durham*, so we got *The Rookie*. It has Dennis Quaid playing a west Texas high school science teacher and baseball coach who ripped up his arm nearly twenty years earlier before he could get called up from the minors. It turns out that pitching batting practice all those years gave him the exercise he needed to build his arm back up, and his team challenges him to try out for the minors again. He succeeds and ends up getting called up as a relief pitcher for the Devil Rays. Appropriately presented in Disney-style sweetness, it really is the story of a small-town kid growing up and finally getting his deferred dream. That the teacher, a guy named Jim Morris, actually exists only makes this a nicer story.

☛ Last year's version of *The Quiet American* is quite a bit different in emphasis from the 1958 version, for which I've only seen trailers. Of course, the Michael Caine / Brendan Fraser version, directed by Phillip Noyce, could be informed by what happened in Vietnam in the intervening forty-five years. And from that we can see the prescience of Graham Greene's novel set around actual events during the French war in Indochina. Noyce takes the trouble to recreate a terrorist bombing in Siagon in the square where it actually occurred, using some of the original survivors as extras, and it's amazing to watch — check out the

deconstruction of the scene among the extras on the DVD. Certainly disquieting, certainly intriguing, certainly fascinating work by both leads. Certainly worth the time to see.

👂 I picked up *Rip It Off* at the video store because of the cast — Allyson Hannigan and Alexis Denisoff from *Buffy*, with Natassja Kinski — and because it's a caper movie. The plot is botched worse than the robbery. The writing is horrible. The only good thing to say about it is that Kinski doesn't have to fake an American accent because she's playing an indeterminate Eastern European. Even making the implied sex scenes explicit — which would make the movie 120 minutes instead of 91 — wouldn't have improved it.

👂 I've managed to get through the last of John LeCarré's "Karla Trilogy", *Smiley's People*. We get to the end of Smiley's interaction with his arch-nemesis, the head of the KGB. Karla opens himself to blackmail by trying to care for his daughter. (Smiley, of course, has shed his wife Ann, the only leverage *his* enemies could use.) Using that leverage, George induces Karla to defect to the west and enters history.

Mailing Comments on SFPA 233

Richard Dengrove • *Twygdrasil and Treehouse Gazette* ♦ (continued)

ct Brown: "As for what will go on beyond 9-1-1, I haven't heard of many al Qaeda hijackings recently so I presume that they will try other tactics." Well, depends who you believe, but they appear to have been monumentally active in Indonesia. If you believe the Bush administration, al Qaeda are trying to take over Iraq. If you believe the reports in the newspapers on Monday 22 September, the guy who planned the September 11th attacks is now in US custody, and has claimed that the original plan was to make them more spectacular, hijacking ten planes on both coasts. Of course, those reports come from the same people who told me there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and who used forged documents to tell me that Saddam Hussein was buying enriched uranium.

ct Strickland: "Under my Honest Preamble Act, we would have to call the USA Patriot Act, the Act to Wrap Ourselves in the Flag." Back when *Saturday Night Live* was funny† Al Franken did a sketch at the beginning of the Reagan presidency in which the United States had fallen into the Bizarro planet from Superman comics: we appoint a soldier to be our chief diplomat, and clear-cutting rancher to be the secretary of

† That I must start any comment about SNL with those words, I suspect, not only dates me, but says something unfortunate about Lorne Michaels.

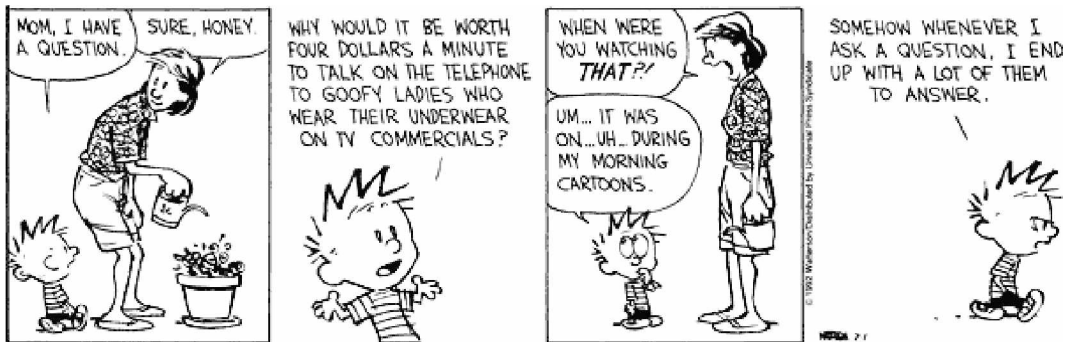
the interior, and so on. And reflecting on it now, I notice how we just accepted the same cabinet appointments — or their protegés and deputies — this time without comment. So maybe we should have Honest Labelling all around.

ct Cleary: "It's true that academic bureaucracy is fairly close to Communism in its idiocy. But it seems like industry is trying to compete." My father — who actually once chaired a four hour faculty meeting to discuss the departments allocation of parking places — used to say that part of why academic bureaucracy is so annoying is that the egoboo from points scored in faculty meetings substituted for stock options and other gratifications of corporate life.

☞ *"You're favorite Mexican dish, black mole? Is it made out of moles? Is there any meat on a mole?"* I believe that's black molé, a spicy chocolate sauce. (The dictionary says "via Mexican Spanish from Nahuatl *molli* for 'sauce, stew.'" Nahuatl is the Central American Indian group that includes the Aztecs.)

ct me: "Actually, I have heard a lot of reasons for the Iraqi war, but none of them are casus bellum is far as I'm concerned. That Saddam is in cahoots with bin Laden, ..." Which, I note, is still being claimed. Though they're now admitting that *maybe* they implied the thing about Saddam and September 11th.

(And if they keep trying to label September 11th "Patriots Day", I think JJ's head is going to explode before mine — they keep calling it that at his school. Look: Mao Tse Tung was a patriot, Boris Yeltsin was a patriot, Nathan Hale was a patriot, but the people who died on September 11th weren't necessarily patriots — I'm willing to bet the six Swiss nationals or the seven Malaysians killed at the World Trade Center weren't American patriots — but they were certainly *victims*. Just like the dozen people killed last week in suicide bombings in Israel were victims.)



☞ *"The only thing I disagree with here is that amateur porn is necessarily better than 'professionals' porn. They both are likely to be baaadddd. In fact, the pros may be worse."* I've read some pretty bad "professional" porn, and some really abyssmal "amateur" porn. But the really

“baaaadddd” stuff is about the guys getting caught at animal husbandry. . . . “One fellow found his material rejected by editors: there weren’t enough blowjobs on the first page.” Let me guess: the editor who rejected him was Ken Starr?

☞ “Monicagate kept Bill Clinton from being a power broker within the Democratic Party? My understanding is he is — maybe not THE power broker.” Well, now that you mention it, he seems to have come back into the role. I wouldn’t have guessed it from the experience with Nixon’s history. It was certainly the case that nobody wanted Clinton to campaign for them in 2000. I notice that Clinton was out campaigning with Gray Davis last week.

☞ “On the other hand, Google has gotten the message. It may get money shortrun by [not] shunting searchers to advertisers, but will lose its audience over the long run.” That’s not Google’s business model: their search technology is a seriously profit-making business by itself — they sell it to other companies for internal use — so they don’t need to sell advertising space.

☞ “Was Copeland’s Restaurant the idea of Al Copeland, who also founded Popeye’s? I say that because there is a Copeland’s Restaurant next door to my office in suburban Virginia.” Yup, that would be the same restaurant I was talking about earlier, I think: I gather it was renamed to Copeland’s in a bankruptcy case.

☞ “The ex-wife of the sniper Muhammad believes he was out to get her. I doubt that. If he had been, he and Malvo would have aimed more at her.” The ex-wife had a restraining order, one of the people they killed on their cross-country spree was living at the former address of the ex-wife’s lawyer. I think that once they couldn’t find the ex-wife, they just started killing at random.

ct Ackerman: “Raphi sending his girl friend a dozen red tulips, a valentine and tact? Young men must be more romantic than they were in my time.” Hmph. I used to send Liz flowers all the time. Still send her the occasional mash note.

☞ “Take Alexander Hamilton off \$10 and put Ronald Reagan on it. It is in line with the Republican policy of naming as much as possible after Ronald Reagan. They made a big brouhaha about renaming National Airport Reagan National Airport several years ago.” I think that one of the architects of the Federal system and the first Secretary of the Treasury deserves to be on some denomination of American currency. That said: I was lost to gales of laughter a couple of months ago after reading a piece in the *Wall Street Journal*. It went on and on about how John F Kennedy’s health problems were so pronounced that he and his advisers were committing fraud on the American public by not being up front about all the medical difficulties he faced. Okay, I might buy that argument, but not from the person who wrote the article, Peggy Noonan, the woman who spent the last years of the Reagan presidency carefully scripting off-hand remarks for him to hide the reality of senility.

ct Wells: “About Frederick Faust (AKA Max Brand), they say that a monkey who typed long

enough would write *Shakespeare's plays*." I'm not sure who Max Brand is, but there was recent British study where they put a computer keyboard in a monkey cage at the zoo. The monkeys were really fascinated by the keyboard, and pounded on it, and (as the report gently put it) defecated and urinated on it, and pressed the "S" key a whole lot. They came nowhere near making words, let alone Shakespeare.

•The article you reprinted about your dad from the *Asbury Park Press* is quite nice. Though I think it says some interesting things about the dynamics of your family without meaning to.

And one day [Mom] handed me a magic talisman. A small card with my name on it. "Take this down to the library next to the candy store," she said, "and tell them to give you a book." I walked to the library (this was back when it was safe for six-year-olds to walk the streets unsupervised on Long Island) and there was taken in hand by a librarian. I do not remember her face or name, and have since been unsuccessful in trying to trace her, but I owe her a large debt of gratitude.

— Spider Robinson, "Robert" in *Requiem: New collected works by Robert A Heinlein and tributes to the grand master*

Sheila Strickland • Revenant ♦

"The only 'fun' part of the semester was the library service project 10 hours working in a library of our choice. I choose to work in the Technical Services Division at the Main Branch of our library system. This is the part that 'processes' the books and other materials the libraries own. I got to help look up OCLC numbers and enter information into the MARC record. (As a short explanation, the OCLC is a nation-wide system for libraries to enter information about materials they own that are available for interlibrary loan; and the MARC record is used in the local systems to give bibliographic information about the book. And that's not completely right, but it gives you an idea." It thought that OCLC also was a source of catalog records. I discovered the other day, from a piece on NPR, that OCLC also owns the Dewey Decimal System — and they're suing the Library Hotel in New York (around the corner from the main branch library) because they've numbered their rooms based on Dewey classifications.

☞ *"And now my cat population is down by one. Silky, my sweet black kitty, died in early April. He had been droopy for a day or so, then suddenly got much worse one evening. He started yowling in the middle of the night, and I held him for the rest of the night." I'm so sorry. When I took up with Liz, I perforce took up with cats, and a lot of them have died on us over the years. I miss and mourn them all.*

ct Dengrove: "SFFA Slash Fiction? No, no, a thousand times no! Remember, there are some things fan was not meant to know." Hey, if it squicks my children to overhear giggles from our bedroom, I'm sure there are things SFFA was meant not to know. Oh,

wait: is it really slash fiction if the people are naturally involved? Probably not. Then, *I'm squicked*, and there are things I was meant not to know.

ct me: "One thing that annoys me about the 'war' with Iraq is how Bush will no doubt use it for his re-election bid. We'll see those images of Saddam's statue being pulled down over and over." And there'll be a Shrub action figure, and the Republican convention is going to be in New York, as the week before Labor Day next year — which is as close as they can possibly make it to September 11th, and still finish before Labor Day — and I'd be a sucker if I bet that Bush's acceptance speech wasn't going to start with a mention of the brave soldiers who've fought against the war on terror that started here, in New York, on that awful day nearly three years ago, September 11th. Karl Rove's probably working on the first draft now.

[She] is one of the secret masters of the world: a librarian. They control information. Don't ever piss one off.

— Spider Robinson, *Callahan's Touch*

Tom Feller • Frequent Flyer ♦

"Anita and I closed on our pretty new house and moved in since the last mailing." Congratulations. It must be deeper than it looks, since it doesn't look like 2400 square feet in the street view.

ct The War: "I am still skeptical of links between Iraq and the Al Qaida, simply because I think that Hussein's and Osama bin Laden's egos would not allow them to cooperate on any operation." Even more than their egos, bin Laden is a Muslim religious extremist, and Hussein built and ran a Stalinist secular state. Their only common point is that they hate the United States. If there was contact between them, there should have been more evidence than the possibility that perhaps an injured al Queda member might have travelled to Baghdad for medical attention, and that perhaps one of the September 11th hijackers might have met with some member of the Iraqi secret police. The Bush administration has been at great pains to minimize the mounting evidence of collusion between the Saudis and al Queda and the material aid al Queda has received (and apparently continues to receive) from the Pakistani Interservices Intelligence Agency. With all the evidence they're suppressing about who al Queda's in contact with, I can't imagine they wouldn't trumpet real evidence of Iraqi cooperation if it existed.

ct Gelb: "In one of the Austin Powers movies, Powers comments that [In Like Flint] is his favorite spy film. It would be interesting to compare them. The sound of the phone ringing in the Powers movies is a direct steal from the Flint films." That sound is just wonderful: if I had a cell phone that I could load sounds into, I'd want that sound for the ring tone.

ct Weisskopf: "Actually the photo in the January mailing was of our empty lot." I think I've mentioned the series of photos I took of our house in Austin being constructed,

from empty lot to moving truck in the driveway. I wanted to scan and assemble them into a movie, but I hadn't gotten to it by the time we left Boulder, so I think all the photos got tossed.

ct Lynch: "I think that Internet e-groups are also a threat to apas." Which is yet another example of the decline of civilization. (Bear with me while I put on my curmudgeon hat.) News groups, web logs, on-line chat are all the electronic equivalent of post-cards. They're quick snippets, very rarely thought out, very rarely researched. "Hi, how are you?" "Hillary Clinton's a bitch." "Linux rules." And worst, the self-referential: "Check out this web log." I think of apas as a thoughtful letter. Care is (often) taken in composition of mailing comments. Intervals between deadlines give me the opportunity to consider what I'm going to say, and leaven it with a little reflection, a little research, and a little humor. In this, the new technology resembles the spoken word — often bandied about without reflection or consideration, and, of course, *vox audita perit*.

ct me: "I don't think you can blame the French military collapse in 1940 on their casualties in World War I. Germany had at least as many." As I pointed out, that was originally Molly Ivin's argument, not mine. However, the Germans had rearmed faster than the French during the '30s. The French were outgunned, out-mechanized, out-maneuvered. Yet even though their Generals had screwed up royally by planning for the last war, they still put up a fight the whole way to Paris and the whole way from Paris to Dunkirk.

But, as I also pointed out in the same paragraph six months ago: "Even though the French and Germans have been no better at clearly outlining their objections to this war than the United States has been at outlining their reasons for it, the way in which we blew them off will cost us when it comes time to rebuild." And now we know how much it *will* cost us: \$87 billion.

David Schlosser • Peter, Pan & Merry ❖

ct The Southerner: "Rule 4 strikes me as something out of John leCarré." Hold that thought. The egoboo poll asks that very question.

☞ "The masthead is from a Soviet map of 'Badhdad'? Seems almost prophetic." I guess a typo serves to confirm Weisskopf's Rule ("no issue of *The Southerner* is produced without error").

ct Hughes: "So let me get this straight. While all of us wage earners have taxes withheld from each check (which gives the government free use of our money) it's unfair for you to have to pay a quarterly estimate and lose the use and interest from the money?" My sense is that he's also frustrated by the computational difficulty. He doesn't know on January 1st how much money he's going to make over the course of the year, and even if he pays the marginal rate each quarter, he can still miss his guess on the net 110% of last

All communities divide themselves into the few and the many. The first are the rich and wellborn, the other the mass of the people. . . The people are turbulent and changing; they seldom judge or determine right. Give therefore to the first class a distinct, permanent share in the government. They will check the unsteadiness of the second, and as they cannot receive any advantage by a change, they therefore will ever maintain good government.

— Alexander Hamilton, debates of the federal convention, June 18, 1787

year's taxes that he has to pay by the end of the year.

But, that raises (at least in my mind) the question of how I'd structure a better tax system. I'd start by making the standard deduction equal to the actual base cost of living, returning the income tax to a tax on "excess" income.‡ That base cost would have to be the real cost of living — rent, heat, food, transportation — and would have to include real considerations like the necessity of having a car in most of the country. It would have to be based on the ninetieth percentile costs for the country, not the median, lest the tax burden on folks living in major metropolitan areas become ridiculous. (Yes, people choose to live in New York and Atlanta and Denver. Because they have *jobs* in New York and Atlanta and Denver. The cost of living in Parkersburg, West Virginia is lower because it's a lot harder to move from a job at Citibank to a job at J P Morgan. Your choice is to move from a job at the Treasury Department Service Center^o to a job at Walmart.[•]

Doing this — really exempting the amount of income you need to live from tax — means that the marginal rates above that base are, of necessity, going to be higher, probably much higher. So whoever pushed that through would be hearing about having raised taxes — even if many tax payers actually saw their tax liability lowered — forever.

Note please, that a national sales tax or VAT to completely replace the income tax is just a non-starter. For a VAT to be non-regressive — to actually not fall unfairly on the lower income ranges — it has to exempt the same basic living costs,

‡ I point out yet again that in the original incarnation, it was only capital gains and not earned income that was taxed. The push to remove taxes on capital gains and dividends serve to turn that on its head.

^o In Parkersburg because Senators Robert Byrd and Jay Rockefeller have some pull due to their seniority.

[•] I exaggerate greatly for effect. My brother-in-law lives in Parkersburg, and there are actually more jobs than that there, even for a town in relatively rural West Virginia.

like food and shelter, so the transactions liable for taxation would be smaller in number. Also, considering that folks in higher tax brackets are not spending all their money, the amount of money in the transactions to be taxed is smaller still than the putative income you can tax. This means that a VAT rate has to be not only higher than the income tax rates in my real exemption scheme, but much higher than the current marginal income tax rates. I rule out *a priori* having both income tax and VAT as politically unpalatable.

And note also that any replacement income tax scheme has to deal in a real way with the social security and medicare trust funds. I can't envision a scheme in which people who would otherwise be exempt from income tax would also be exempt from paying FICA. We've played fast and loose with the trust funds for too long. Daniel Patrick Moynihan kept sounding the warning gong, to no avail. Twenty years ago I'd concluded that there was going to be no social security by the time I retired. I've seen nothing in the intervening years to convince me otherwise. Indeed, Bush's desire to privatize (read "remove") social security only convinces me more.



ct Guy: "There's clearly no way to know for sure how the last couple of years would have turned out if Gore had won although my gut feeling is that we'd still be concentrating on securing the situation in Afghanistan and would have been in a much stronger diplomatic position internationally to be able to exert pressure on governments giving active or passive support to terrorists and with fewer distractions to deal with in that arena." I'll tell you what I think would have happened: Gore would have been in Washington on September 11th, 2001. He would have been rushed up to Camp David or out into some emergency command post in West Virginia. By night-fall, talking heads on Fox would have been criticizing him for running away in the face of danger. By Wednesday of

that week, Rush Limbaugh would have been putting up pictures of Gore's daughters wearing burkas on his TV show, and would be screaming about how the Gore administration was too much in bed with the Saudis. Gore wouldn't have taken ten days to address Congress; he would have been up to the Hill before the end of the week, but rather than jumping up-and-down and applauding wildly, the

Republicans would have spent the short speech sitting on their hands, like they did during Clinton's peace-and-prosperity state of the union address. Worse, his speech would have gotten bad reviews, because he would have delivered it in calm, measured tones rather than in hellfire-and-brimstone mode.

Gore would have taken a month or six weeks to get American troops headed to Afghanistan — about the same amount of time Shrub took — but he would have been bombarded by attacks on the floor of the Senate for taking so long, even though his foreign policy wonks would have made sure he had UN and NATO backing for attacking the Taliban, and material assistance from NATO. Dan Burton would have filed a bill to strip Bill Clinton of his pension and secret service protection because he'd failed to kill bin Laden after the embassy bombings in 1998. For damned sure we would have finished the job in Afghanistan before we would have taken off after anyone else. And it's possible we'd been leaning on the Saudis pretty hard about now to reform their corrupt family business, even though that strategy would result in a bunch of studies from the American Enterprise Institute (Wolfowitz, Perle) and the Hoover Institution (Condaleeza Rice) explaining how putting pressure on the Saudis would only destroy America's national security.

So, on balance, it's probably a good thing Gore isn't president: he couldn't win even if he'd done exactly the same things as Shrub.

Am I being overly cynical? I don't know. I do know in answer to the question pollsters always ask "Do you think the country's heading in the right direction?" my answer for three years has been "no," but for the last two it's been "hell, no."

☞ *"While the Democratic field isn't that appaently impressive yet, I seem to recall that it was similarly lackluster back in 1991."* Cast your mind back to 1972, when Nixon was scared about running against Muskie, and how that Cannuck letter magically appeared and suddenly Nixon was running against McGovern. By the same token, Karl Rove would love to run against Howard Dean, rather than John Kerry or John Edwards. I notice, in particular, a couple of stories in the last few months about Kerry's wife — a woman who kept her name, has her own opinions and her own money, and who doesn't like to be stage managed by her husband's handlers. This might get interesting.

(Late breaking addenda: *Slate* reports that there's a draft Hillary Clinton movement suddenly appearing. While there are some folks sincerely suggesting her for president, most of the people encouraging such speculation are hard core Republican party apparatchiks. Dean-Clinton has to be Bush's dream ticket.)

☞ *"Even scarier is that — with all the things you cite about Bush — people actually think he's doing a good job."* Last time I looked, his approval rating for his handling of Iraq was 70% — but that was before he asked for \$87 billion to rebuild it, and

announced that reservists were going to be doing a year or eighteen months in-country. However, again, in a late-breaking addenda, *USA Today* reported 23 September that his approval rating was down to 50%, and on the 25th, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that it was down to 49%.

ct Markstein: *“Every time I hear how this or that ‘suspect site’ in Iraq turns out not to have any WMDs, I cross my fingers and hope that that whole pretext continues to blow up in the administration’s face.”* The outright deception and falsification of evidence around WMDs has been pretty amazing. I think it’s going to cost Tony Blair the next election in the UK, if he doesn’t get kicked out of office by his own party first.

ct Brown: [On Scalia’s comments:] *“The constitution just sets minimums’? In some sense he’s right although it seems a badly worded statement.”* For a man whose very job is to write carefully reasoned, carefully worded statements, to give a speech that was so badly thought out is pretty scary.

☞ *“I think the time has come for the Democrats to go back to being the (shhh) ‘liberal’ party and stop trying to be something like Republicans.”* I was asked at lunch what I thought of Lieberman as a presidential candidate. I replied that if I wanted to vote for a Republican, Bush was running. Meanwhile, though, the presidential primary system has caused the loss of the consensus candidate. Rather than the party choosing a candidate they can all live with, who has a chance to win the election, the primaries force both parties to play to the worst tendencies of their rank-and-file, and thus we get candidates who are polarized one way or the other. This applies even more in local elections, I think.

☞ *“What I find interesting is that apparently Newt Gingrich said very much the same stuff that Daschle said about the failed diplomacy with regard to Iraq and has gotten no flack or coverage.”* Sigh. See my comments above about being cynical.

ct Gelb: *“I don’t know if Bush will get the blame, but with just about every state and local government running deficits and cutting services Bush’s plan to run up more federal debt could be what tanks his reelection.”* But the governors of two-thirds of the states are beholden to Karl Rove — if Gray Davis takes the fall for Pete Wilson lowering taxes and Enron stealing billions from the state of California... Sigh. See my comments above about being cynical.

ct me: *“I’m also bugged by the ‘with us or against us’ mentality that extends beyond just having the same goals to having to agree on the methods of reaching those goals.”* See the campaign run against disabled veteran, war hero, and congressman Max Cleland last year. Sigh. See my comments above about being cynical.

☞ ☞ Boy, you got the whole range of political comments and bile this time.

☞ [Apropos my question to Guy] *“‘QFA’ Quit F...ing Around”* I don’t do three letter acronyms. Never have. Made working for IBM really hard, since every on-going process (OGP) at IBM has it’s own three-letter acronym (TLA) to describe the

steps-to-achieve (STA), and of course, none of this can be verbally transmitted because one must avoid-verbal-orders (AVO).

☞ *“Well, Kay has bought us a bagel-slicer, but I still prefer the old-fashioned way of doing things.”* I still like using the knife, too, even after my accident with the French Freedom bread.

ct Reinhardt: “All accidents are preventable (at least in hindsight). A better way, in my opinion, to turn the question is whether this particular cause was readily foreseeable and what would have had to have happened to prevent it.” The foreseeable cause, which Richard Phillips Feynman foresaw in his minority *Challenger* report in 1986, was the corporate mindset of “hey, it worked last time.” For a hundred and some flights, the approach was “we got away with it when insulation bounced off the wing / the o-rings started leaking / the guidance system packed it in — so it should work again next time.” *“From what I’ve seen so far it’s clear that there was a breach in the heat shield but it’s not yet 100% that it was related to the foam insulation.”* It’s pretty clear now that that’s exactly what happened. When NASA did the test of firing a piece of insulation at a mockup of the wing, it left a rather large hole.

All of the analysis and investigating and theorizing in the world just goes right down the tubes as soon as you have experimental information. The hardware doesn’t lie.

— unnamed NASA engineer investigating the *Columbia* accident, on the results of the first experiments striking a mockup of a space shuttle wing with foam insulation, *The New York Times*, 30 May 2003

☞ *“What Baen is including with books it sells is a controlled situation that isn’t really comparable to being able to download what one wants.”* Baen also does uncontrolled downloads from their web site. I’m sure I’m not atypical in actually taking the first one for free, and then going out and buying others. If anyone has an in at Baen, they might mention that it’s working.

☛ *“I’d also been talking a bit with my sister about how to get my parents up here [for Random’s Bar Mitzvah] (she’s doubtful it will happen).”* Can someone fetch them and bring them up? Or are they just not traveling at all? (I certainly understand the latter: my parents are choosing their trips with care and getting them in while they can.)

Randy Cleary • Avatar Press ♦

ct Brooks: “Regarding setting off our nuclear arsenal on the moon, don’t you know that’s the plot of Space 1991 TV show?” See also Heinlein’s “Blowups Happen” and perhaps also “The Long Watch.”

Toni Reinhardt • Yngvi is a Louse ♦

“[finally got around to mstalling the speakers that came with the computer for the first time. And for the first time I got to hear all those annoying sounds that Microsoft blesses you with-which is, of course, why the speakers weren't on. But getting to hear WFUV again is worth it.” Click on “Start”, “Control panel”, “Sounds and Audio Devices”, click on the “Sounds” tab, and then from the “Sound scheme” pulldown choose “No sounds.” Sometimes Microsoft's blessings can be ignored.

“If our excuse to invade [Iraq] was weapons of mass destruction, and we could track them so convincingly in Powell's presentation to the UN, where are they now?” They're still sticking to the same line: Colin Powell recently claimed that weapons inspector David Kay's report would show “that there was no question that such weapons exist, existed, and so did the programs to develop one.” (Of course in addition to “Where are the WMDs?”, one would also like to ask “Where are Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein?”)

[from your essay “Toni Reads the Koran”] *“It is the prescription about inheritance, by the way, that I think would alone undermine any attempt at true capitalism in a Muslim state. There is a strict formula that a man must follow when dividing up his property — so much to his eldest son, so much to his wife, so much to his parents, etc. There is no provision for choice. This means that it is impossible to both follow the laws of Mohammad and accumulate capital by means of family inheritance.”* Yeah, but inheritance isn't the only way to accumulate capital. Off the cuff, this might promote true capitalism — you have to actually work for it (or invest it, though under Mohammedan law, you can't collect interest) — rather than putting the capital in a small number of hands.

☞ *“I haven't run across the promise of 74 Virgins yet, by the way, but I'm still reading. Several references to chaste spouses, though. I think Hank may want to convert back.”* “Chaste” also can also mean faithful or pure in thought and deed. In case of the latter, Hank may still want to convert back. (It can also mean “plain and simple”, but we've all known you long enough to know that one doesn't apply.)

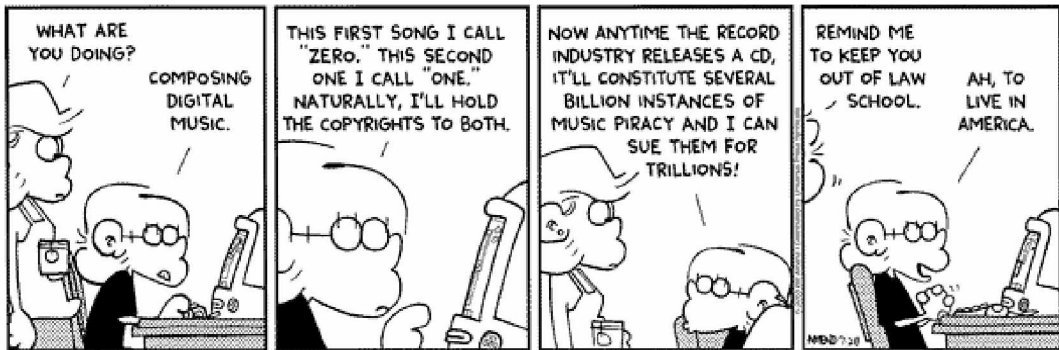
☞ *“Heaven is free-flowing water. Whoo-hoo.”* Consider that thought from two angles: First, if you're a desert-dweller, it would sure be heavenly to get water whenever you wanted. More subversively, I note that in Jungian imagery water is usually a symbol of the sensual.

☞ *“I'll report more as I read on, and certainly encourage everyone else to read it, too.”* As long as you don't encourage anyone at the University of North Carolina to read it, lest you rekindle the foofarah that happened last year when it was required reading for freshman lit. (One of my freshman lit courses in college was “The Bible as Literature,” which was actually fairly interesting. It was taught by an elderly Quaker, whose intellectual insight was keen, and who managed to keep religion out of much of the discussion.)

ct *The Southerner*: “Ignore what Guy is saying: the color colophons are lovely.” The only reason Guy got any kind of traction for his arguments was on the basis of consistency. But by the time he’d made them, I’d already printed two mastheads and had them ready to go.

ct *Liz*: “Even with all your interesting medical adventures, it sounds like you have more energy to garden than I do! Those heathers sound really neat.” Don’t tell Liz, but I hope that the heather isn’t susceptible to the stuff the Allie’s boyfriend Ted and I put on the roof to kill the moss, and if they are that the runoff was the other direction. (Yes, the runoff was certainly the other direction: the heathers are above the all the downspouts, but still. . .)

☞ *RE: Books*: I’ve read one Jennifer Crusie, but sounds like I should read *Welcome to Temptation*, too.” And once you’ve done that you have to read *Faking It*: they’re both pretty damned funny.



ct *Guy*: “France and Russia’s motives behind their anti-war war stance on Iraq? Purely mercenary. Russia was selling them weapons and controlling their oil industry. It was in their interest to keep the status quo.” If we look at the results, then, that means the point of the war was to strip France of their oil contracts with Iraq and give them to Halliburton, who’s now the sole administrator of Iraq’s oil industry.

And again, late breaking news: Josh Marshall in *Talking Points Memo*⁶ is kind enough to point out that Joe Allbaugh, who with Karl Rove and Karen Hughes was part of Shrub’s “Iron Triangle”, has set up New Bridge Strategies, “a unique company that was created specifically with the aim of assisting clients to evaluate and take advantage of business opportunities in the Middle East following the conclusion of the U.S.-led war in Iraq. Its activities will seek to expedite the creation of free and fair markets and new economic growth in Iraq, consistent with the policies of the Bush Administration.” The French may be displaying

⁶ <http://talkingpointsmemo.com/sept0304.html#0925031058pm> is the exact reference.

self-interest, but the Bushies are just shameless.

☞ *“Later, you ask the interesting question, why not accomplish regime change via assassination, instead of via expensive invasion? I’d like to see some more discussion of this question. I suspect that after the slew of assassinations in the early part of the 20th century, that method fell out of fashion, but I’m sure there’s more to it than that.”* Guy, of all people, should know the practical answer to this one: It’s been US policy to not commit political assassinations since the Church Commission in the early ’70s uncovered the extent to which the CIA had been plotting just that. The number of attempts the CIA made to change the government in Cuba by killing Castro only served to add to the notion that Castro had been complicit in killing JFK. Iran, Chile, Nicaragua, all had governments changed by assassinations or coups in which the US was involved. It’s led to the notion for the last three decades that civilized countries don’t do this, and that heads of state are out of bounds for assassination — once a war is being prosecuted, the rules are different, though, hence cruise missiles at Saddam.

ct Lynch: “I agree, of course, that gerrymandering is an equal opportunity corruption of our government. ... The smallest boundary legislation you mention would work to help minimize the problem.” Minimum boundary is a good metric for reasonable election districts. (I think the normal description of congressional district is “contiguous and compact”.) But the other thing you need to do, as population shifts, is make the minimum change in district boundaries at each redistricting. Otherwise you allow gerrymandering by re-writing the whole map, like they’re trying to do in Texas. (Splitting Austin into four congressional districts is bad enough, but having one of them extend to the Mexican border is *not* compact.)

ct Strickland: “I’ve heard other librarians complain bitterly about the ‘Patriot’ Act, too. I assume it will be challenged in court fairly soon.” I notice that John Ashcroft has been out complaining about the librarians objecting to the warrantless search provisions. He’s claimed that they’ve never actually been used. Which, if anyone were thinking or paying attention, or actually interviewing him, would lead to the obvious question, “um, if you’ve never used those provisions why do you need them?” But this is also part of Ashcroft’s rear-guard action to get the Patriot act from extended past its sunset clause.

“There isn’t a constitutional protection for privacy, but surely some of these provisions come under unreasonable search and seizure.” If you listen to Scalia, there’s no right to privacy at all. The situation is not helped by him continually chipping away at restrictions on search and seizure. However, I prefer to believe that the right to privacy isn’t explicit because it was assumed to be unnecessary to do so. As cryptographer Whitfield Diffie put it, “No right of private conversation was enumerated in the Constitution. I don’t suppose it occurred to anyone at the time that it could be prevented.”

•There’s a marginal note here that says “who objected to the name Shrub?” I remember someone (and it might have been you, Toni) objecting to people calling our only president “Shrub.” Not only is it a helpful shorthand to distinguish him from his father (much as the sixth president was called “Quincy” to distinguish him from the second), but Bush himself named his first failed oil company Arbusto — which is Spanish for shrub.

The downsizing trend that swept newspapers in the early nineties was aimed at sustaining the bloated profit margins in which the industry had wallowed for most of the century. A new soulless breed of corporate managers, unburdened by a passion for serious journalism, found an easy way to reduce the cost of publishing a daily newspaper. The first casualty was depth.

Cutting the amount of space devoted to news instantly justified cutting the staff. At many papers, downsizing was the favored excuse for eliminating such luxuries as police desks, suburban editions, foreign bureaus, medical writers, environmental specialists and, of course, investigative teams (which were always antagonizing civic titans and important advertisers). As newspapers grew thinner and shallower, the men who published them worked harder to assure Wall Street that readers neither noticed nor cared.

— Carl Hiaasen, *Lucky You*

Gary Brown • Oblio ♦

[Apropos your essay “A Black Eye for *The New York Times*”:] “To make matters worse, Blair is an African American who made huge leaps in his career because of his aggressive attitude. . . . I think there is one more piece to this puzzle that hasn’t come out yet, but I’m dumbfounded as to what it might be.” Now that we’ve had a little more distance, it’s apparent that part of the problem was that Blair had chief editor Howard Raines as a mentor. And Raines ignored lots of warning flags and lots of explicit questions from other people at the *Times*. ☞ “So, how in the hell did this guy get away with so much deception?” Michael Kinsley wrote a piece for *Slate* about getting taken in by a couple of articles when he was editor. One is inclined to take the printed word at face value. ☞ “But like any profession, when a sense of arrogance it cast about, the fall is all the more difficult to recover from. / Much like the ‘fair and balanced’ Fox News morning team, who went on for 10 minutes about how *The Times* deceived everyone and how that doesn’t happen at Fox News because it has many layers of people to check and triple check every fact — and got Blair’s last name wrong in the report — twice.” “Fair and balanced” doesn’t say anything about “accurate.” ☞ “Like any other business, the news media has to earn your trust — or whatever level you are comfortable with. Some people sit on every comma and quote mark. Others are happy to get outraged when it affects them only.” I certainly trust the new media in a broad sense, but I’m careful to read reporting from folks who’ve proven to be accurate in the

past. Many reporters and commentators at *The New York Times* are still in that class. (Both Safire and Friedman come to mind in the commentator class.) I use *Slate's* "Today's Papers" column and Google's news page to triangulate on news stories I want to read in depth, and then I read *The Times*, and at least one other source. I take everything in *Time* and *Newsweek* with a grain of salt, but put more weight behind the words in *US News*. I don't think my experience is unique in this. However, I think I also understand the limits of reporting: It's not possible to always give the whole picture — the demonstrator throwing a bottle gets on TV, but not the ten thousand other marchers who were peaceful; it's not possible to give full background — it's rare that I see an article about physics or computers that doesn't have some simplification to make the article even possible;⁴ because different people see events differently, it's rare that the reporting about even a school board meeting I've been to matched what I saw.

ct Brooks: *"It probably shows just how bad TV news (especially cable news) can be. There is no investigation of the source before putting them on and proclaiming them as the 'Big Story.'"* Back when national network television news was a big deal and was half-an-hour, Walter Cronkite declared that his deadline was the end of the broadcast, not the beginning. This allowed them to handle late-breaking news — Lyndon Johnson died while Cronkite was on the air, and he ran the story at about twenty minutes into the broadcast, after confirming it by phone during a commercial break. However, Cronkite understood he was running a headline service: he never intended to be providing anyone's sole new source. I think CNN and MSNBC and Fox are acting like they're the whole picture, and wrapped up in getting it fast rather than getting it clear or right.

☞ *"I believe the jagged hat Jughead wore was semi-popular in the 1930s. At least, I know it wasn't a figment of the artist's imagination. Bill Momssey, an artist on the Bongo line of Simpsons comic books, tells the story about how much he liked Jughead and even made his own Jughead hat out of some felt his mother gave to him. It apparently didn't last long."* My father's fedora had been blocked and reblocked and had finally worn out for use. It was retired, and we re-cut it into that exact jagged style, and it became part of our dress-up basket when I was about seven.

ct Dengrove: *"I don't remember when I stopped believing there wasn't a Santa Claus, but I clearly remember realizing the old guy wasn't for real."* When I lost my first tooth, my parents told me about the Tooth Fairy, but made the mistake of explaining that the Tooth Fairy was made up so they'd just give me a quarter for the tooth straight off. I thought about it for a couple of minutes and said "wait! does that mean Santa

⁴ "If I could explain it to the average person, it wouldn't have been worth the Nobel Prize." — Richard Feynman

Claus is fake, too?"

ct Schlosser: "I've always wonder about the sexual connotations related to Guy's Rear-Ender fanzine, but I've been too embarrassed to ask him." I had just read this when Liz read something out of the women's section of the Sunday paper: "People, especially women, feel they can identify with her. . ." OK, asked I, who are we talking about? Jennifer Lopez, says Liz, and look at this picture! I've reprinted the photo here. Check out the look on the face of the black guy in the bow tie on the right: "is her ass *really* that fat?" So, yes, *some* women can identify with her: the ones with flabby backsides.

Entirely different *Rear-Ender* than you started talking about, but the juxtaposition was amusing.

☞ *"I see no depth to the [Bush II] at all, other than he likes to give people nicknames — a game the rich like to play on the not-so-rich."* For someone who comes from a long line of New England money, Shrub acts pretty damned *nouveau riche*. Bush I, who I disagreed with politically, actually struck me as being a fairly decent fellow. His son still seems to me to be the quintessential smarmy fraternity boy. The only time I've gotten any sense of depth from him was his September 11th speech, which he spent days rehearsing for.

ct Strickland: "I guess some librarians want to move away from the perception that they are dainty old women who wander around libraries 'shushing' everyone. But, I agree that 'information specialists' is sort of an eye-rolling description." After my time at MCNC, where all of the supernumerary positions had titles including the word "specialist" I'm inclined to not trust the word.

ct Gelb: "I just thought that Dixie Chicks boycott was so ridiculous. And there is Tom Delay talking about how they put our troops 'in harms way.'" Does that mean that Delay criticizing Clinton's efforts in Bosnia put our troops in harms way? After all, he was actually criticizing the action itself, not generically calling the president saying he was embarrassed to be from the same state as he was. More seriously, as long as the military is under civilian control, criticizing the political leadership is completely different than criticizing the military. And criticizing the military is different from criticizing the troops. None of which endangers the troops on the ground. That Delay doesn't understand that — or, more likely, lied to take the cheap political shot — is pretty scary.



ct Cleary: “No, I don’t read *Powers That Be*. I’m not a Brian Bendis fan at all. Ever since he took over *Spider-Man*...” But you might be a David Halberstam fan, in which case I can recommend his *The Powers That Be*, which is about the press and politics and Nixon and Watergate, with particular emphasis on *The New York Times* and *The Los Angeles Times*.

ct me: “The more I hear Wolfowitz talk, the more I realize what a mean, soulless bastard he is and how that reflects the entire Bush II Administration.” I think he may not be the reflection, but what it is that’s reflected: so much of the Bush policy has been informed by Wolfowitz and Cheney’s new American Century stuff.

☞ “Wonder what the Vegas odds are on the next target: Iran, Syria or North Korea after they drop a fucking atomic bomb on the south? Sigh.” And then later you point out: “I asked our Far East correspondent if he thought North Korea would drop a bomb and he quickly said: ‘Oh sure, what have they to lose?’” If we end up in a shooting war with North Korea, hundreds of thousands — perhaps millions of people — on the Korean peninsula, in China, and in Japan will die. We had a plan to get Kim to give up nuclear weapons, to give up nuclear research. Clinton’s “agreed framework” gave them an alternative to nuclear power and food. But Jesse Helms prevented it from being implemented by holding up the treaty in the Senate. Bush’s saber-rattling and actions in Iraq have only convinced the North Koreans that they have *no choice* but to be prepared to defend themselves. And that may well involve lobbing an atomic bomb at Seoul or at Osaka.

☞ “I’ve become a big fan of the Red and Rover comic strip. Even wrote Brian Bassett a fan letter of sorts, via e-mail. He answered and seemed genuinely flattered. His space cartoons were good.” I love his space cartoons: I’ve run a number of them in these pages. (Which may have been what inspired this comment.)

ct Reinhardt: “I’m playing the Dixie Chicks’ Home CD right now...” As I said recently, I rather like it. It’s not the sort of thing I like for a steady diet — I’m listening to SES, a Korean girl duo who are popular in Japan, as I’m typing this — but it’s not bad.

Guy Lillian • Spiritus Mundi ♦

“As ever, I was careful to disassociate myself as bluntly as possible from W and his ego-stroking war. His new and arrogant America is no America of mine.” Careful: you’ll already be from Dixie, and next you’ll be classed as a Chick.

“Again I wished I had brought tape recorder, because the gentle evocations of the gent behind us echoed the sweet tink of the bell bird. ‘Come on Sammy!’ he’d bellow...” JJ had a tiny — smaller than my business card — digital recorder that he used to carry to take notes on homework assignments. He’s started writing them down instead, and I’m now carrying the recorder to make little memos to myself. But I also use it for

recording interesting passing sounds to share.

"The new Parliament House is one of the most remarkable buildings in a country of remarkable edifices. Most of it is literally underground; grass grows on the roof." Did you ever see the massive extension of the legislative office buildings in Austin in the mid-nineties? They did it at the same time they were refurbishing the capitol, but didn't want to overshadow the capitol itself. They built all the new office space underground, with wonderful skylights and open passages.

ct Reinhardt: "There was never any appeasement in the Dixie Chick's opinion about W and his war. . . Agreed, she should have known that her core audience were the kind of cretins who equate the ability to kill a creep like Saddam — assuming we have — with the moral authority to do so." Her audience at the time was at a concert in London, in a country where even members of the ruling party were objecting to the Iraqi war. But see my comments above about the difference between military and political spheres.



ct me: "I wish we could have seen the uncensored coverage I heard about in Australia, which shooting up civilian autos because they wouldn't obey incoherent shouted English commands. And has anyone found a genuine unadulterated weapon of mass destruction yet?" The BBC is under fire for that unfettered coverage. Well, actually, they're under fire for revealing that the government's white paper on WMDs was a work of fiction. As Oscar Wilde put it, "If one tells the truth, one is sure, sooner or later, to be found out."

☞ *"I got the impression that Harry Warner wasn't so much of a hermit as a non-traveler. You should've called him and said hello when you went through Hagerstown; he would've enjoyed your visit."* I'm sure Harry would have welcomed us, but there were a couple of reasons we didn't stop. It was fairly early in the morning and I didn't want to wake him. We hadn't called ahead to tell him we were coming, and it seemed frighteningly impolite to just drop by. And we were eager to get to Washington. If we had thought about it a little harder, we would have called him from Washington, and made arrangements to take him to dinner on the way back.

☞ *"I only regret that I didn't take the time to type up a one-page zine while downunder and ask*

you to print it for me — establishing a personal record in the all-important Zine Done Furthest From Home category. Next time.” The farthest you can get from home is actually in the middle of the Indian Ocean. I think Perth is the farthest you can get on land.

ct Cleary: “Puppies are the key to world peace.’ Truer words...” Puppies and babies are the key to getting attention from young women at the park or ice cream store.

ct Strickland: “What gets me about North Korea is that it really does seem to think it can take on America.” No, they don’t have to actually take America on, they only have to maintain uncertainty that they will. They only have to keep Rumsfeld guessing about how many nukes they have.



Janet Larson • Passages ❖

“I’ve been fatigued since the pregnancy with the twins,... A kind of apathy had come over me, and my sense of self was just lacking; it’s hard to describe, but I just didn’t feel like I was an interesting person, capable and competent. I was having trouble focusing and my short term memory just wasn’t what it should be... I went to see Dr. Natrajan 2 weeks ago. He looked at my lab results, listened to my story, and told me I was typical of Androgen Deficiency Syndrome, just like I had suspected... I guess we hear so much about Viagra and the decline in male sexuality with age, that it’s strange we don’t hear as much about the female decline.” You’re making all of us in middle age wonder about our hormone levels now! Short-term memory loss is a symptom, eh? You’re making all of us in middle age wonder about our hormone levels now! Not to mention lack of foc... Hey! look at the hummingbird!

More seriously, I’m glad you were able to figure out what was going on, and get working on a fix.

“Sorry about the lack of mailing comments. See you next time!” Hey, considering what you’ve been going through, and are finally coming out of, that’s enough.

Janice Gelb • Trivial Pursuits ❖

ct Brooks: “Unfortunately when you’re doing web sites you really do have to check the site on different browsers because although HTML is standard, not all browsers handle things the same

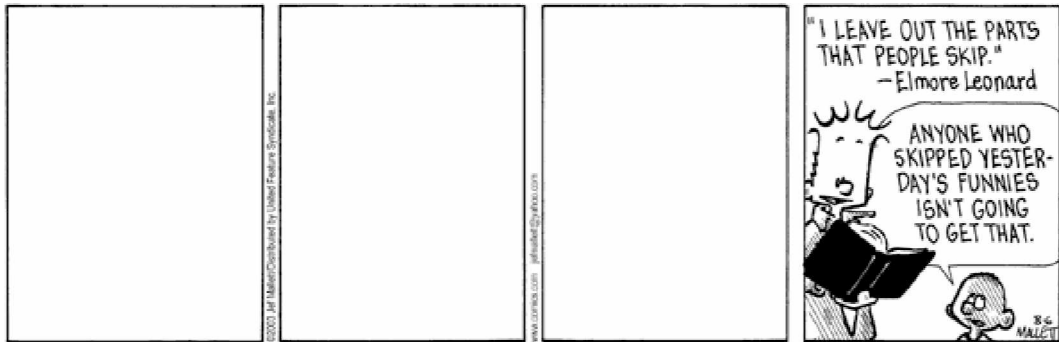
way *although they should.*" I've been using Mozilla Firebird at home lately. (At the office, of course, I have to use Internet Explorer.) Even though it's a little unstable because it's not completely baked, it's got some nice features. For example, if you control-click on a link, it opens the file in background in a tab, not in a new window. You can just click across the tabs at the top of the browser window to run through the links you've followed.

ct Lynch: "*ct Guy: Nice explanation of the Australian ballot.*" I hadn't read that explanation the first time, so I went back to it. Not only is a good explanation in general, but it's nicely targetted to Guy in particular.

ct Lillian: "*I had those electrostim treatments when my RSI was first diagnosed. I felt like a frog in a biology class being zapped.*" I had occasion to have a test for carpal tunnel syndrome a couple of years ago, and I had the same reaction: I was wired up to this machine, and my fingers were moving without any participation from me.

ct me: "*Surprised you only recently saw Say Anything, which regularly shows up on one Turner station or another. I really like it, and it started my appreciation of John Cusack.*" Actually, I saw it years ago when it first came out. We watched it again because Alan Winston quoted a line out of it to me in e-mail just before I left to go to the video store. (For what it's worth, the line was, "Dude, you *must* chill.") I've yet to be disappointed by a movie John Cusack is in.

•That editorial cartoon by (if I'm reading the signature right) Gary Varvel — Shrub standing over a vanquished dragon labelled "Saddam's regime", with "Media", "Iraqi people," and "Congress" standing in the background asking respectively "How do you plan on cleaning up this mess?," "How do you plan on feeding us?," and "How do you plan on paying for it?" — has all turned out to be too true. Except for the media who only asked their question once. And Congress, who are now rolling over and playing dead.



There were honest people long before there were Christians and there are, God be praised, still honest people where there are no Christians. It could therefore easily be possible that people are Christians because true Christianity corresponds to what they would have been even if Christianity did not exist.

— Georg Christof Lichtenberg, German physicist and philosopher (1742–1799)

Gary Robe • Tennessee Trash ♦

“This brings me to the paradoxical conclusion that President Bush is a very good man but a potentially dangerous leader.” His father is a good man, but I don’t think Shrub is. His business practices have been slicker’n a greased armadillo. He’s lied about his alcohol and drug use and his military service.

“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.” Go back and read Jefferson’s letter to the Danbury Baptists:

Believing with you that religion is a matter that lies solely between man and his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legislative powers of government reach actions only, and not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should “make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,” thus building a wall of separation between church and state. Adhering to this expression of the supreme will of the Nation in behalf of the rights of conscience, I shall see with sincere satisfaction the progress of those sentiments which tend to restore to man his natural rights, convinced that he has no natural right in opposition to his social duties.

Not only does this make clear the notion of the separation of church and state — the Supreme Court has quoted this as evidence of the intention of the First Amendment — but it makes clear that the reason for the separation is to make sure that government doesn’t usurp the purview of the church, and vice versa.

ct The Southerner: “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.” This entire adventure has been a victim of bad intelligence, complicated by the intel being cooked to support the loony goals of Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz.

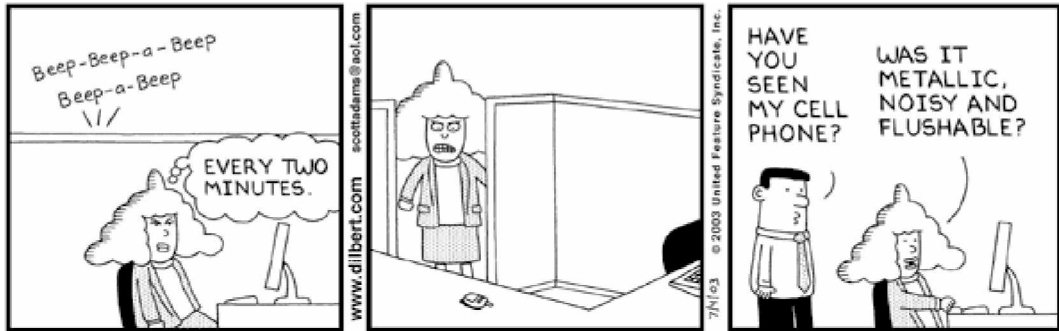
ct Lillian: “When we were traveling through Hagerstown once Rickey Sheppard and I stopped within a few blocks of his house and mailed him a postcard. We just didn’t feel that we knew him well enough to impose.” See my explanation to Guy, a couple of pages back.

ct Brown: “It’s funny that just after I shaved it there were no pictures in the house that showed me without it. . . Just after I shaved it my old college ID turned up from 1979, only a year or two before I grew the mustache.” As I may have mentioned, my mustache disappeared recently,

too. Since I grew it the summer before I went to college, the last picture of my naked upper lip was my City College of New York ID card, which is in one of the boxes in the corner of my den.

ct Gelb: "The Top 4 Reasons Why I Shaved Off My Mustache" I think my main reason was your first: it was more grey than brown.

ct me: "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." If atrocities are the litmus test, why aren't we doing anything about Saudi Arabia or Kuwait? Or about the resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan? Meanwhile, we may have conquered the country, but we can't get the water running, can't keep the lights on, can't get the police force up and running, can't protect the governing council, even though they haven't done anything yet.



Mailing Comments on SFPA 234

Steve Hughes • Last Minute Stuff ♦

"At one point I noticed a huge automobile transport unloading in Auckland and realized the cars coming off the boat all looked used. I couldn't imagine why anyone would be shipping used cars in such quantity. One of our guides explained it. / He said the Japanese have a law that requires cars over a certain age be taken off the road regardless of their condition. We ran into this in Singapore so it's believable. They do it to prevent traffic problems due to breakdowns and, I suspect, keep tax revenue up on new car sales. Since many of the cars taken off the road are in great shape, they ship them to other countries and sell them." Actually, I think it's not strictly required that cars of a certain age be taken off the road, but unlike in the US, the registration fee gets higher the older the car is — it's not a value-based tax. And if you're exporting cars less than ten years old from Japan, there's a limit to where you can send 'em since they've got right-hand drive. Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Hong Kong (I think), and a couple of countries in Africa.

Ned Brooks • The New Port News ♦

ct Feller: *“But I’ve never owned a gasoline mower — I settled on a battery-powered electric mower. I have two of them, a 25-year-old Sears that uses a common auto battery, and a 10-year-old Ryobi that uses a 24-volt sealed battery and mulches.”* We have a mulching Ryobi ourselves, which we like quite a bit, but does have problems on rough ground.

ct Reinhardt: *“[T]here are apparently several thousand Iraqi prisoners in badly run concentration camps that don’t come anywhere near meeting the standards of the Geneva Convention. The International Red Cross has not been allowed to see them.”* Ah, but they’re not prisoners of war, they’re enemy combatants, so they don’t get the protections of the Geneva Convention. I’m still unclear what the difference between prisoner of war and enemy combatants, and what appeal there is to get a kidnap victim under the protection of the Red Cross.

☞ *“When was the Koran written down? There must have been some lyricism in the oral original for it to be remembered.”* Was the Koran originally oral? Certainly the Bible was written pretty directly, though the differences in the gospels confirm that there not only wasn’t direct transcription, but suggest that there were political differences in interpretation of the words. (And let’s not even get into the differences in the Dead Sea Scrolls.)

ct me: *“My recollection of Bogart’s line in Casablanca (but it’s been a while) is ‘Play it, Sam — you played it for her, you can play it for me.’ ... The ‘againness’ is there, but not the word ‘again.’”* If my memory is correct, you nailed the line exactly. (Looking it up in the editing pass, IMDB says, *“You know what I want to hear... You played it for her, you can play it for me!... If she can stand it, I can! Play it!”*)

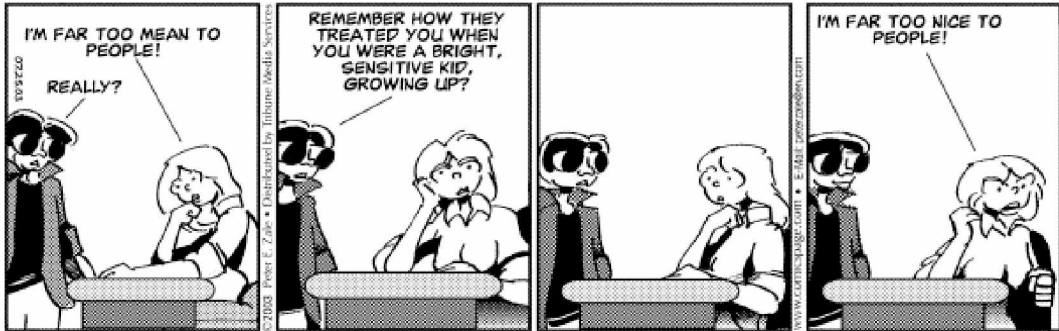
ct Liz: *“No doubt such overtime is sometimes inevitable, but it should be avoided if possible in such high-stress jobs. Would you want to be operated by a brain surgeon on overtime?”* Liz moved her hysterectomy by a day because she didn’t want to be the last surgery her obstetrician did that day, after the doc had already been in the operating room for ten hours.

ct Lillian: *“The theory about the early demise of Dolly the cloned sheep is that the cell she was cloned from ‘remembered’ how old the donor animal was at the time. At least this gives us some hope that the scenario of old richguys cloning themselves indefinitely will never be a problem. Michelle Pfeiffer ain’t no spring chicken either!”* Well, she ain’t badly preserved for forty-five years old. But her job is (in part) looking good, just like Goldie Hawn’s (at age fifty-seven) and Susan Sarandon’s (at age fifty-six), and they all three seem to be good at it.

ct Gelb: *“It has been a truism for some time that if you read a newspaper story about anything you have personal knowledge of, you will find that they got some of it wrong.”* See my comments above to Gary Brown.

ct Quotes: *“Good stuff! Now of course you need to create indices to the set by author and*

subject..." That's part of why part seven isn't done eight months after I printed part six. Indexing has been included all along, but I've been checking the index entries, and making sure they're accurate, complete, and consistent. It's about an evening's work from being ready.



Arthur Hlavaty • Nice Distinctions ❖

"Bernadette tutors high school students, and notices that they are expected to have all sorts of extracurricular activities so as to be 'well-rounded.'" The robo-student approach to college applications — one activity from column one, three advanced placement courses from column two, SAT review course from column three — is a direct result of the robo-admissions policies of the big state universities.

"You get justice in the next world; in this world you get the law." — William Gaddis" To which you respond: "You get truth in the next world; in this world you get science." Another quotable *bon mot* from the Hlavaty corner of the universe.

"Gerald Nachman's new book, *Seriously Funny*, deals with a subject that fascinates me: 50s and 60s comedians." I just picked a copy of this up from the library on your recommendation. I'll let you know what I think about it.

You've got a set of reviews of your five all-time favorite single records. They're all good — I am sure of that judgement because I'm of the same musical codger cohort you are — but your choice of Big Daddy's rendition of "The Rose" is just wonderful. I think you (or Bernadette) may have originally introduced us to Big Daddy when we were living in Durham. (You certainly introduced us to Julie Brown and her wonderful song, "The Homecoming Queen's Got a Gun.") I made an effort at one point to figure out the music that each song had been recorded to, since many of them are actually multi-level jokes, like "Money For Nothing" recorded to the tune of "Sixteen Tons."

Richard Dengrove • Twygrasil and Treehouse Gazette ❖

ct Strickland: “If Hitler had never been born, we might have been spared the horrors of Naziism.” I’ve recommended Stephen Fry’s *Making History*, which suggests in an interesting science-fictional way that if Hitler had never been born, it might have been worse.

ct me: “The problem for us Federal employees isn’t that the civil service rules will be eliminated. The problem is that we’re being made to ‘compete’ with private enterprise for our jobs... The party line is this will make the Federal government more efficient. There is a problem with that. You have to believe the pols who mn the Federal government would know efficiency if it bit them?” Let me see if I’ve got this right: if we privatize functions that are now performed by employees of the government, it will be cheaper, and the private enterprise now providing the functions will be able to make a profit. I probably don’t understand economics well enough, but it seems to me that cost plus profit is greater than cost alone, not less.

☞ “Being singleminded when a war is on and giving up politics is nice. However, I don’t believe any politician can resist the temptation to play politics. Not even Winston Churchill. The Bushites go without saying.” Ah, but Churchill really did. His government never included a tax cut in a war appropriations bill, or put a special provision for a drug company into a security measure. He was very clear on what was needed for the war and what was a political goal. “There is a counter quote: POLITICIAN: I am an American first and a politician second. CYNIC: Spoken like a true American politician.” Look up Lyndon Johnson in an early volume of my quotes: “I am a free man, an American, a United States Senator, and a Democrat, in that order.” It’s engraved on the wall at the LBJ Library at UT.

☞ “I thought the cut the dividend tax is just for stocks. To encourage that type of investment.” Let’s see: the company sells stock to raise capital, but doesn’t get any money from downstream sale of the stock — that is, Steve buys the stock from the company in the initial offering, and I buy it from Steve, but I still get the reduced tax on the dividend — that is, the shared profits — even though my money didn’t go to the company. If I loan the same company money, I don’t get a reduced tax rate on the interest they pay me for an investment that actually helps them. How does the tax cut encourage me to invest in a way that helps the economy?

☞ “It’s the first Star Trek. Lieutenant Poppin’ Fresh goes into the transporter and there’s an accident.” I think I quoted that joke back in mailing 217.

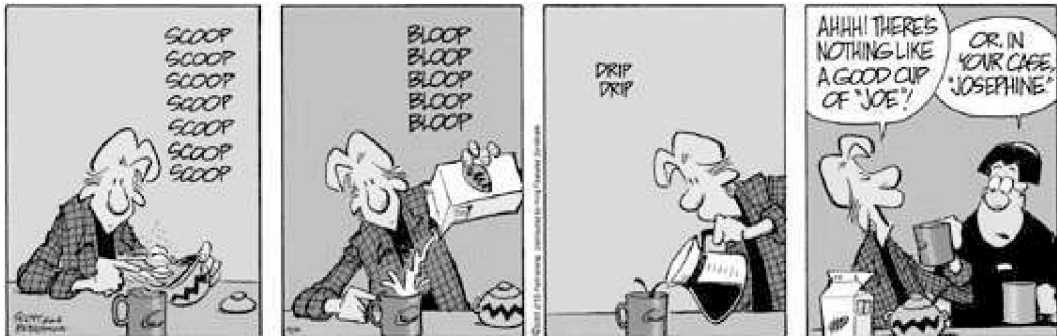
ct Lillian: “As far as I can tell, the fans didn’t seem to care what the Chicks’ view of George W was. But that Republican contributor, station owner did. And he was able to force a public apology.” They apologized, but had the temerity to also remind Diane Sawyer that dissent is necessary to democracy. ☞ “One thing about W’s Administration is that it has been able to give the illusion that the Iraqi war is wildly popular.” They’ve run around claiming that a

bunch. “The Iraqis love us.” “The American people still think this was a great idea.” And yet the evidence on the ground in both places is not so obvious to all.

✎ “Maybe a plane in Africa had its doors fly open, but Quantas apparently has an incredible safety record. Only exceeded by Japan Airlines, which, for many years, had no accidents. I think it eventually had ONE.” Japan Airlines had one accident, where a cross-country plane flew into one of the Japanese alps. The president of JAL personally visited the next of kin of every victim, and apologized. Then he resigned.

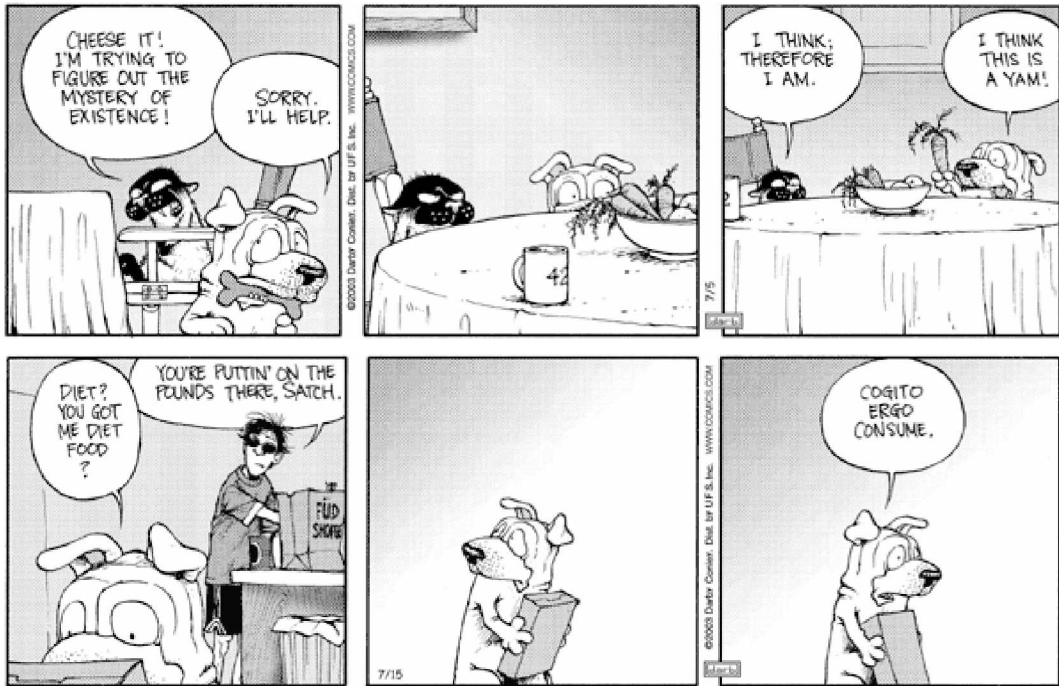
ct weber: “You seem to have more computer problems than I do. And you’re a tech. On the other hand, I gather you have to do the computing thing on the cheap. No alternative. Good luck.” I gather that Mike also tinkers with his machine. A tinkered-with computer is also, often, less reliable.

ct Robe: “About separation of Church and State, it protects Christianity. Forget about the effect of separation on other religions. Christianity isn’t as likely to be corrupted by government.” See my long Thomas Jefferson quote to Gary Robe above.



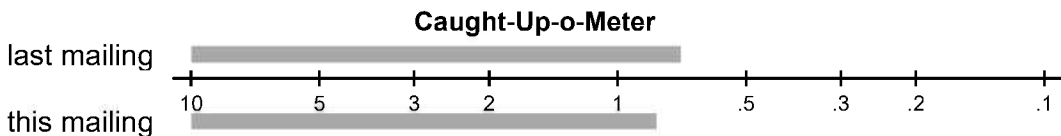
ct Cleary: “That reminds me of Irvin Koch’s convention, WeaponsCon. Everyone had to have a weapon. However, parents could register their kids as weapons.” Any of the parents in this APA will explain that a child can easily be a weapon. Particularly one with a loaded diaper.

ct Quotes: “There are several quotes here made under the angst of 9-11. Terrorism works at wreaking havoc. But was that bin Laden’s objective? His objective is to have the West overreact so that the Arabs will become militant and take over the world for Islam.” Part of the reason those quotes were included is that some of them — Michael Weholt, some of the Patrick Nielsen Hayden — represent some of the very good ad hoc reporting on the ground in New York in those first couple of days. Some of it was better than the “Talk of the Town” pieces in the 22 September 2001 *New Yorker* with the two-toned black cover by Art Spiegelman. But I think I’ve said this before.



That’s all I have space and time for now, folks — actually, I ended up with a blank half page, which I’ve filled with *Get Fuzzy* comics. I could have written about the difficulties of 3-D pictures for those of us who are partially colorblind, er, color-challenged, in response to Steve Hughes 3-D pictures and glasses. It’ll lead off next time.

I’m still behind, but in an effort to keep track of how far behind I am, I’ve invented the Caught-Up-o-MeterTM, which shows how many mailings I have yet to comment on, and how close I came to being caught up last time:



I really enjoy my little hand-held scanner, but it makes consistent errors on Times Roman. I need to write a little filter to catch “fhe” and convert it to “the”, among other things. This is a reminder to myself to do that.

Art Credits

The cover is a wrap-around of “The Great Wave of Kanagawa,” a woodcut by Katsushika Hokusai, and perhaps the most recognizable out of his series *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*. Page 1: Allie Copeland whale-watching photo. Page 2: rabbit pictures by Allie Copeland. Page 4: *Shoe* from 7 July 2002. Page 6: *Calvin & Hobbes* from 1 Jul 1992. Page 12: *Bizarro* from 2 May. Page 17: *Foxtrot* from 28 Jul — Apparently digital music is easier to copyright than digit text. Page 21: Photo of Jennifer Lopez from our local newspaper, credited to the AP. Page 23: *Shoe* from 27 Aug — this comic had Guy’s name on it. Page 24: *Frazz* from 5 Aug — Sometimes, less is more. Page 25: *Frazz* from 6 Aug — The other shoe drops. Page 27: *Dilbert* from 4 Jul — I feel that way whenever I hear a cell phone. Page 29: *Helen, Sweetheart of the Internet* from 25 Jul — Nobody I know was treated that badly as a child. Page 31: *Zits* from 9 Sep — Jeremy takes his coffee exactly like our son James. Page 32: *Get Fuzzy* from 5 & 15 Jul — Two nice philosophical observations.

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