

It's like falling off a bicycle!

We'll burn that bridge when we come to it

*Even a dead cat
is right
twice a day*

Half of one, six dozen of the other

*He couldn't find his ass with
both hands tied behind his back*

*You don't miss the water
until the horse is gone*

How 'bout them skrode riders, ain't they sumthin'?
Ridin' them wheelie skrodes sure keeps 'em hummin'!
How to be a skrode rider, ain't no way to hide it,
Get yourself a skrode, hop on, and ride it! —DDL



**From the hand of David Levine & Kate Yule
For Potlatch/Corflu, February/March 2000**

Welcome to the eleventh issue of *Bento*, in which we lay our cards on the table. We are:

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Art Credits: Brad Foster p. 5, Kurt Erichsen p. 15, all the rest by David or the inescapable Arthur Clipp. Kate and David collaborated on the cover this time.

Shagging Claimer: Oh yeah, you betcha! (With a nod and a nudge-nudge-wink-wink to *Banana Wings*.) By the way, we'd like to recommend the *Guide to Getting it On* by Paul Joannides, ISBN 1-885535-10-4, from Goofy Foot Press. It's 698 pages of knee-slapping, clit-tickling, funny, useful, informative, illustrated, damn-nobody-told-me-*this!* stuff about sex.

"People say I'm weird. Why? I live in a house. I have a job. If you prick me, do I not bleek?"

Mission Statement

I'm getting awfully tired of people telling me that publicly-owned companies have some kind of moral obligation to screw everyone except their stockholders.

The dean of Yale's School of Management on the prospect of the New York Stock Exchange going public: "The NYSE will be very anxious to sign up as many companies as it can to list because the Stock Exchange will be trying to make as much money off the fees as it possibly can." Excuse me? The Exchange has owners now; mightn't they already want profit—consistent with prudence and ethical concerns? Why the rock-solid expectation that shareholder-owners are different?

Or take the article in my parents' hometown newspaper about Welch's. It was careful to point out that as the marketing arm of the (non-profit) National Grape Cooperative, they were free to have the grape-growers' interests at heart rather than optimize shareholder value.

I don't get it.

If Jane Doe decides to open a chain of dog-grooming shops, she as the business owner is certainly free to decide that she wants to shave her employees' benefits to the legal minimum and use cheap soap made by third-world prisoners in search of \$PROFIT\$ above all.

Surely she is also free to decide, if she prefers, that supporting her neighbor's organic dog-shampoo business is more important than an extra nickel per pooch on the bottom line.

And if her brother-in-law offers to invest in her business, can't we presume that he does so because he wants to invest in *that business*—as it stands—quirky policies and all?

So why does this all go out the window as soon as we join Jane in ownership of the company? Why is it not only OK, but *obligatory* that publicly-owned companies disregard all standards in search of dividends and capital growth for their stockholders? “Because that’s what the investors want,” my friends insist. Oh? I’m one of those investors; I don’t remember asking Intel or Diebold or Modine to act like bastards on my behalf.

I’ve turned down buying shares in a company because its stated Corporate Purpose is “to earn money for its shareholders and to increase the value of their investment.” That was it, that was their goal. They could do *that* with strip-mining. Show me goals that include making worthwhile products, to the benefit of the workforce, in a way that doesn’t harm the neighbors. No, really. I insist. —KY

Average Age

I have a theory—I think I got it from my dad, along with the hairline—that we perceive others as being the average of all the ages we’ve known them at. For example, if you first met someone when they were 20 and you’ve known them for 10 years, you think

age 30, he feels 15 and is still happy to be married to a woman he perceives as 25. But by age 50, he feels 25 and finds himself married to a woman who seems 35 and looks 50. So he seeks out a new woman who matches his perception of himself. No wonder “she’s half his age!” is such a cliché. (Why don’t women do the same? Well, some of them do; also, men have historically had more power, hence more freedom to act on their impulses.)

In a related theory, my friend Tristan says that the emotional age of a gay man is 16 plus the number of years since he came out. This makes sense, since a man who comes out later in life has to learn a whole new set of rules for proper social behavior, which can kick his emotions right back to high school. Why 16? Well, 16 is a reasonable approximation for the age of basic socialization. At that point, most people can be counted on not to piddle on the upholstery, but emotional maturity takes years more. (My estimate of how *many* years keeps going up—my god, they let me do *what* when I was 20? I was just a *kid!*)

Now, I’ve lived in Portland for 17 years—longer than I’ve ever lived in one place before. During that time I’ve been able to see children grow up, callow youths mature into responsible human beings, and wild and crazy guys mellow into graybeards (or crystallize into curmudgeons). I’ve learned enough about the aging process that I can look at people and imagine what they’ll be like 10 or 20 years in the future, which gives me a certain amount of perspective and patience when dealing with obnoxious young’uns.

of them as being about 25. (Intellectually, of course, you “know” they’re 30, but deep down inside, your actions and reactions to them are based on a mental model that’s 25.) Seems pretty simple and reasonable, but it has some interesting consequences.

For example, consider the relationship parents have with their children. The parents have known the children since they were born (age zero), so they think of them as being about half the age they are now. This explains why parents often treat 12-year-olds like 6-year-olds (“Aw, *mom!*”). But it gets worse. When the kids leave home, they *stop* aging—no new data is coming in to update the parent’s mental model—so a 40-year-old who left home at 20 is forever *10* in her parents’ minds.

Meanwhile, the children view their parents, whom (for example) they knew from ages 30 to 50, as being about 40—also frozen at the moment they left home. That’s why generation gaps mellow with time, and why we often find ourselves “becoming” our parents: we catch up with our mental model of them.

Our mental model of *ourselves* is subject to the same rule: we’ve known ourselves forever, so we think of ourselves as being about half our own age. That’s why baldness and flab come as such a *surprise*. That’s why so many men leave their wives for women half their age.

Suppose a man meets and marries a woman when they are both 20. He feels like a ten-year-old—who’s somehow fooled everyone into accepting him as a grown-up—but sees her as the 20-year-old she really is, having no memories of her to obscure current perceptions. Naturally he is thrilled by the situation. By

This also means that I can look at 39-year-old *me* and see the gray hairs coming as well as the wild hairs going. Do I like it? Heck, no—I *feel* like I’m only 18½! But, as I approach my twenties (mental model years) I find myself mellowing, maturing, accepting... less willing to fight the inevitable. You won’t see me getting hair plugs or buying a red Ferrari Testosterossa.

On the other hand, a 950-MHz Pentium III... —DDL

Brad Foster illo @ 100%
(3.2” x 3.0”)

Bento Puzzle Page

You're going out for dinner with a bunch of fans at a convention, and someone suggests a cuisine you've never heard of before: Dingbatian! When you get to the Golden Dingbat, after perusing the menu you have a few questions about the specials—but none of the waiters speaks English. To answer these questions, you will have to apply "Chinese Menu Algebra."

1. Is S3 a soup? A salad? Or what?
2. Keith is a strict vegetarian. Which of the specials should he *not* order?
3. Marci has no tolerance whatsoever for spices. Which of the specials should she avoid?
4. The guy at the next table says he tried the #37 and it was awful, but the #18 was good, and not spicy at all. Should Marci change her mind?
5. What would *you* order?
6. Come to think of it, doesn't Italian sound better after all?

(Answers on page 45).

—DDL

♣ Specials (Te) ♣

S1	♣♣♣	Ko Ji Mi	7.95
S2	♣♣♣↔	Za Xu Ne Ta	4.95
S3	↔☐♣♣	Ta Ke De Hi	3.95
S4	♣♣☐♣↔	Xa Gi Ke Mi Cu	6.95
S5	♣♣♣	Wi Xu De	5.95

17	♣♣♣♣	Li Vo Pa Qe	"Li" cod with noodles	9.95
18	↔☐♣♣	Cu Wu Wo Qe	Squid "Cu" (Dingbatian condiment) fried with noodle	6.95
19	♣♣♣♣	Le Ha Hi De	Trout salad "Ha" - very spicy!	6.95
20	♣♣♣♣	Ku Ta Vo	"Ku" style cod with broccooli	6.95
21	♣♣♣♣	Ri Du Li Qe	House specialty! Shellfish (your choice shrimp, crab, oyster) sun-dried on roof 3 days, with noodle	9.95
22	↔♣♣♣♣	Ta Mo Fa Xo	"Delicious Fish" (Fa Xo) w/ brocoli - your choice cod, hake, or bream	7.95
23	♣♣♣♣	Ki Nu Wi Ke	Shrimp sauté w/ carrot - spicy!	6.95
24	♣♣♣♣	Ko Qa We	Frog "Qa We" style	6.95
25	♣♣♣♣♣	Ko Qa Ma Mi Hi	"Qa" style batter-fried frog salad w/ orang	3.95
26	♣♣♣♣	Xa Gi Mi Ko	Frog with orange and cabbage, served w/ rice	5.95
27	♣♣♣♣	Ko De Ma	Batter-fried fog with specal spice - HOT!	5.95
28	♣♣♣♣	Si Fa Ga Su	"Ga Su" crab - delicious!	6.95
29	↔♣♣♣♣	Do Zo De Qa Xo	Baked spicy fish - please allow 1 hour	9.95
30	♣♣♣♣	Nu Li Lu Ve Gi	"Li" style shrimp, mix vegetables, rice	6.95
31	↔♣♣♣	Do Si Do	Twice-baked crab	8.95

* Soup (Za) *

1	♣♣♣♣	Bu Zo Ji Vu Za	Cold mixed seafood soup with "Ji" (powerful taste Dingbatian specialty)	3.95
2	♣♣♣♣	Pe Ru Za	Smoked oyster soup	3.95
3	♣♣♣♣	Le Gi Za Qe	Trout soup with rice and noodles	3.95
4	♣♣♣♣	Ja Za Lu	Pork sup "Lu"	3.95
5	♣♣♣♣	De Ta Za	Spicy broccooli soup - HOT!	3.95

* Meat (Na) *

6	♣♣♣♣	Re Bu Wi Hi	Chilled sauteed-duck salad	5.95
7	↔♣♣♣♣	Cu Ge Ce Ji	Goose with pepers, "Cu" and "Ji" - not for everyone!	7.95
8	♣♣♣♣	Po Xu Po	"Po Po" goat - try it!	7.95
9	♣♣♣♣	Fa Xu Bo Qa Qe	"Delicious goat" (Fa Xu) with "Bo" (Dingbatian condiment) & noodles	7.95
10	♣♣♣♣	Gi Xu Ve Ni	Steamed gaot with mixed vegetables, rice	6.95
11	♣♣♣♣	Do Re Mi	Baked duck with orange	5.95
12	♣♣♣♣	Xu De Do	Spicy baked goat	6.95
13	♣♣♣♣	Ga Ju Na	"Ga" style boiled dinner - your choice goat, beef, pork	6.95

× Seafood (Vu) ×

14	♣♣♣♣	Bu Ju Pe Su	"Su" style cold oyster pot	5.95
15	♣♣♣♣	Xa Da Wu Wi	Sauteed squid with cabbage	6.95
16	♣♣♣♣	Mo He Pe	Oysters "Mo" style (alive!)	7.95

♣ Vegetarian (Ve) ♣

32	↔♣♣♣	Ta Hi Cu	Broccoli salad with Dingbatian condiment	5.95
33	↔♣♣♣	Cu De Ta	Broccoli with spicy "Cu" sauce - HOT!	5.95
34	♣♣♣♣	Qa Ji Bu Cu	"Qa Ji Bu Cu" - specalty of Qa region	7.95
35	↔♣♣♣	Ta Ke Wo	Fried broccoli w/ carrot	6.95
36	♣♣♣♣	Te Pa Hi Mo Ze	Special salad	7.95
37	♣♣♣♣	Su Ji Xa	Cabbage "Ji"	6.95

♣ Dessert (Vi) ♣

38	♣	Vi	Flan	3.95
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Just Like Mom Used to Make—Revisited

I went home to Mother last month.

I wanted to get away from some very stressful %\$#(^ going on in Portland; hang out with my folks; have some conversations that weren't going to happen in larger family gatherings; and get Mom's butterscotch brownie recipe. No, Not Those, the Chewy Ones With the Shiny Cracked Top. I thought I'd found it last time, during the Quest for the Peach Kuchen Recipe (*Bento #7*). But they baked up all cakey and matte and wrong—and hey, this recipe calls for an 8x8-inch pan! The Brownie Recipe uses the 9x13-inch (brownie) pan! What was I thinking?

Back to the source. Back to the kitchen in Kennewick, Washington, where the curtains are always drawn against the desert sun. Where the oven door handle came off years ago and the “I’m hot enough now” light is burnt out but hey, it bakes, right? Where I can find the can opener/bread knife/flour canister just fine as long as I reach out, without thinking. Dad likes to play with new telephones and new microwaves but there’s no reason to move the brown glass container of teaspoons from the back of the stove.

At one point I stand in front of the cookbooks, reach up with one hand to see what’s in the cupboard above, and grasp, right there, a booklet on—“Caring for Your Hamster”. We haven’t had hamsters in twenty years, but their cage used to be on that counter by the breakfast table. I think of Boris, our black Lab mix, who would gaze up avidly at reflections in the toaster, apparently thinking there were still rodents moving about up there. I reach up and replace the booklet where I found it.

The cookbooks, these days (i.e. since 1979) share the shelf with reference books. Almanac, thesaurus, atlases, *Cambridge Biographical Dictionary*, *Baseball Encyclopedia*. These (or their earlier editions) have been there since we pulled together all available resources one autumn to work on a particularly devious trivia puzzle in *Games* magazine. They never left; at some point Dad added a brick-and-board second layer for the inevitable accretions. The current issue of *Games* is still reliably found on the southeast corner of the table.

So while Mom went off to choir practice, Dad and I settled in at the kitchen table, looking variously for The Real Brownie Rec-

the same time tatters them and adds odd stains. This was in a booklet from Pillsbury, cover missing, title perhaps Jewel Box Cookies, dated sometime before the inception of zip codes. Well loved. Real.

I baked up a batch. All agreed. They were Good.

I came back home (to Portland, and David) with my recipe, and renewed calm, and some conversations that should have happened a long time ago. I was hoping for all of those. I hadn’t expected the affirmations I found ’round every corner of how much I am my parents’ daughter. The half-begun projects, the “pile for everything and everything in its pile,” the living room full of evidence of *living*—I come by these honestly. David and I joke that every room in our house has 1) a pencil cup, 2) a kleenex box and 3) a trash can—including, mind you, the bathroom and the car. Well, the lazy susan on my folks’ kitchen table has two cups, one for pencils and one for pens. Dad’s desk has a mug dedicated solely to red pens: “Church?” I asked. “Treasurer,” Mom said, nodding. Of course.

Not only can you sometimes go home again, when you leave it will follow you, will-ye nill-ye, like a puppy to bowl school.

Now if you’ll excuse me, Spot and I have to go to the store for some butterscotch bits.

P.S. Dad’s answers were the O.K. Corral, and “Old Hickory.”

ipe, the location of a famous 1881 gun battle, and the “seventh president’s sobriquet”.

I dove into the non-books: all those publications from the Egg Council, or St. Somebody’s Altar Guild, or “Fun with Your Osterizer”. What a treasure trove for the connoisseur of the historic and the ironic. Here’s the Rochester Natural Gas Company’s “Tips for the New Housewife”, circa 1957... would you believe Surprise Salad, calling for canned beets, horseradish and lemon Jell-O? Of course you would; you just wouldn’t be fool enough to eat it.

My jaw dropped at the photos in “How to Recognize a Cut of Meat” (US Dept. of Agriculture, 1955). The amount of *fat* on those cuts! My god! White space like a Dr. Seuss book! Things truly have changed, on my and my parents’ plates if not in their cupboards.

(Pause here while Dad logs onto the Web to see if our mimeographed early edition of Carla Emery’s *Encyclopedia of Country Living* is worth anything as a collectible. See above re irony. See Carla if you need to transport goats in your car.)

brownie pan

I knew I’d hit pay dirt when I found the recipe for “Scotchies” that was smudged, torn, and annotated in three different inks. Recipes are like the Velveteen Rabbit—love makes them real, while at

Scotchies

Melt 6 oz. butterscotch morsels (1 cup)
1/4 cup butter

Add 1 cup brown sugar (packed)
and let cool while you—

Mix 1 cup flour
1 tsp. baking powder
3/4 tsp. salt

Add to wet: 2 eggs
1/2 tsp. vanilla extract

Then add in: the dry ingredients
1/2 cup pecans or walnuts, chopped

Spread in a greased 9x13x2" pan.

Bake at 350°, 25 minutes. Don’t overbake. —KY

Demon with a Glass Jaw

As you may recall, last issue Kate and I visited the Bradbury Building in Los Angeles. The Bradbury is a terribly stfnal edifice. Designed using principles from the Utopian novel *Looking Backward*, it featured in the movie *Blade Runner* and the *Outer Limits* episode “Demon with a Glass Hand” (written by Harlan Ellison).

I remember “Demon” fondly. It’s one of those works that, even if you don’t remember all the details, really sticks with you. I saw it when I was a kid (possibly even on its first broadcast way back in 1964) and the basic concept of a man with a blinking, talking glass hand, battling aliens in a weird office building, just lodged in my hindbrain and wouldn’t let go. It’s a classic.

After we got back from L.A., we sat and single-framed through *Blade Runner* and had a lot of fun with the way they used the Bradbury Building. But none of our local video stores had a copy of “Demon,” so I couldn’t write about it for *Bento 10*. Finally John Lorentz loaned us a copy from his massive video collection.

The episode begins in an anonymous alley (obviously a set), but immediately moves to the Bradbury and never leaves again. The main character, Trent [played by Robert Culp] enters the building through the basement, and the initial scenes feature lingering shots of the striking tin ceiling, pierced by pipes, that I mentioned last issue. Trent climbs the same stairs we did, walks on the same glass tiles we did, rides the same elevator we did. The spectacular free-standing mail chute plays a significant role. That part was cool.

But the *plot!* The dialogue! The acting! My God, did it clunk!

The episode starts off with five solid minutes of exposition (a voice-over by Trent, a humongous info-dump by a captured alien, then *another* huge steaming info-dump by the glass hand), establishing the extremely improbable premise. A thousand years in the future, the alien Kyben have conquered the Earth, only to find it empty: all 70 billion Earthmen (sic) have vanished overnight,

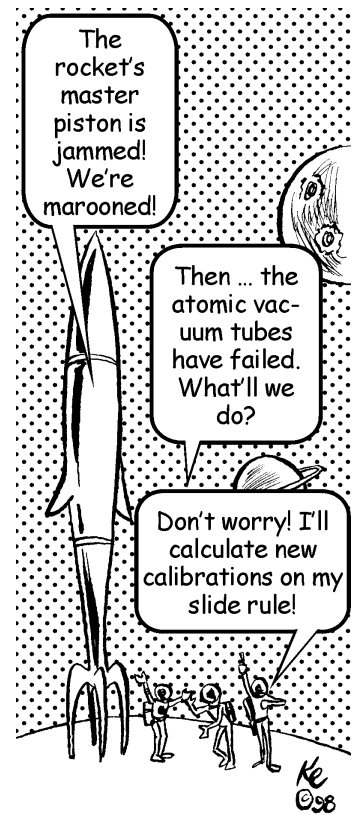
downstream end of the Time Mirror is hidden, and lock him in with a force field around the whole building. Then it’s a long cat-and-mouse chase up and down the Bradbury’s amazing stairways, through its offices, and around its basement and attic. (Definitely the real basement, probably the real attic. However, as in *Blade Runner*, the building was filmed at night, making it look terribly gloomy; in reality the Bradbury is filled with light.) Along the way Trent karate-chops a lot of aliens, meets the lovely Consuela Bezos, recovers the missing fingers, dies, comes back to life, destroys the Time Mirror, and learns that he is actually a robot and the 70 billion missing Earthlings have been recorded on a wire (!), which is stored somewhere in his innards. Now all he has to do is bum around for 1200 years until the Earth is invaded by the Kyben, they all die of the plague, and the plague recedes, leaving the world fresh and clean and the population ready to be restored from backups.

But you knew that—the episode’s a classic, after all.

Classic, yes. Good, no! Plot holes abound. Why are the Kyben bothering to look for the 70 billion missing Earthmen? (It is quickly established that the Kyben are bloodthirsty bastards who would gleefully kill them all. Can’t they just be grateful that those pesky humans have chosen to remove themselves instead, and get on with Kybaforming the planet?) If the Kyben have disguised themselves as humans to move more easily in the past, why do they all look like basset hounds with black eyes and stocking masks? (Oh what a giveaway.) Why do captured Kyben happily burble out the details of their troop movements, gun emplace-

leaving behind an incurable “radioactive plague” (!) with a half-life of 99 years. They also left behind Trent, who immediately escapes a thousand years into the past [played by 1964] through the “Time Mirror.” (It would be the Time-Warner-AOL Mirror today.) The aliens take on human form ~~because it’s cheaper~~ so they can move undetected among us and follow him into the past, but only two at a time ~~because it’s cheaper~~ due to a necessary defect in the Time Mirror’s manufacture. Oh, and they’ve got the missing three fingers of Trent’s computer hand—fingers that contain the information needed to find the stray Earthmen, return to the future safely, and put the bop back in the bop-she-bop-she-bop.

The aliens lure Trent to the Dixon Building [played by the Bradbury Building], where the



ments, and supply lines—for no apparent reason—until Trent chooses to cut off the info-dump—also for no apparent reason—by removing each alien’s time-locket in mid-burble? Why do the Kyben, so advanced they conquered the Earth in 19 days, shout their plans across the atrium (where they can be, and are, easily overheard by Trent) rather than using some sort of radios? And why don’t they bother to look in the attic, despite Trent and Consuela clomping about up there like a pair of elephants?

Here’s the biggie: if Trent had to escape into the past to avoid the Kyben, how is he going to avoid them the *second* time, after 1000 years without authorized factory service? Wouldn’t it be easier for him to just stay in the future and hide for 200 years, rather than going back 1000 years and hiding for 1200?

Dad always says “you shouldn’t kick Grandma.” By this he means, not only that you shouldn’t kick your grandmother, but that it’s not fair to judge past works of fiction by modern standards. But still, can’t we expect a little coherence in the plots of our classics? *I mean.*

Harlan, I’m disappointed.

—DDL

“Actors are happy, crew are happy, everybody happy but Zathras... but Zathras never happy... Zathras happy once, had friend once, but wheels fell off, very sad...”

The Henson Theater Company

presents

JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR

Jesus Christ Kermit the Frog
“Um, could someone take this cup, please?”

Mary Magdalene Miss Piggy
*“He’s a frog...he’s just a frog...
and I’ve had so many frogs before”*

Judas Iscariot Gonzo
“I seem to be a strange thing, mystifying”

Simon Peter Fozzie Bear

John (the dearest disciple) Rowlf

Caiaphas (High Priest) Bunsen Honeydew

Annas Beaker

Pontius Pilate The Swedish Chef

King Herod & his court Dr. Teeth & the Electric Mayhem
“Hey, man—walk across my swimming pool!”

Salome Janice

Crowd before Pilate Animal, the Count, etc.
“CRU-SEE-FI! CRU-SEE-FI!”

Thieves on Golgotha Statler, Waldorf
*“Hey, Peter! We can see your house
from here! Heh, heh, heh”*

A few changes inevitably happened on the way to opening night—Sam the American Eagle was an early choice for Pilate, but he was locked into that Stan Freberg history film and couldn’t make rehearsals work around the shooting schedule. Now, of course, the hand-washing scene is unimaginable without Gustaf. Thank you to everyone involved in this!

Next project? All I can say is—“I taut I taw a To’m Twoopa!”
—KY

Settlers

I was out mending my firewall when my neighbor Randal drove up in his battered pickup. “Dave,” he said, “there’s trouble brewing in town. A bunch of AOLers are fixin’ to set up a big billboard in the middle of the commons—right on top of the old hitchin’ post.”

“Damn it, why can’t they leave well enough alone?”

“You know they don’t know any better. Hop in.” I hopped.

We rode in silence for a while, passing one shoddy pastel McMansion after another. They were huge, with all the modern conveniences—fast processors, fat data pipes, hot and cold running multimedia—but cheaply made, and crammed together tighter than files on a single-sided floppy. “Shit,” I said, “I remember when there was nothing out here but you and me and the boys from ARPA. Now look at it.”

“I seem to recall that you were one of the folks thought it’d be a good idea to encourage development.”

MUSIC BY

Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber

BOOK BY

Tim Rice

CONDUCTOR

Big Bird

VOCAL COACH

Frank Oz

STAGE MANAGER

Scooter

There will be no intermission,
as we hope to get this over with before the Inquisition arrives.

Presented on express condition that
no one tell Samuel French, Inc.

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Allan, Grant, Will, and “Wheels” for casting assistance
Cannon Fieldcrest for costumes and body parts
Amy Ray and Emily Saliers, just because

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR:

It started on a trip to Seattle. We had *JC Superstar* in the casette deck and were singing along at the top of our lungs. When it came to the passage where the apostles are asleep over their wine and muzzily singing “what’s happening? hang on, Lord, we’re gonna fight for you,” for some reason I heard them as the chicken chorus from the Muppet Show. From there, Kermit and Piggy were obvious, and suddenly we realized: this was our dream cast! The ideas couldn’t come fast enough. Sir Andrew and Tim Rice agreed to write a new song for Salome’s dance, and that won over the few skeptics.

“Let’s not start that again. I did say I wished everyone could have what we had out here—free and open communication, pure meritocracy, all the data you can drink. But I didn’t want them all to come out here and get it!”

“C’mon, Dave, don’t give me that shit. Your company helped build the roads that brought those assholes out here. And you’ve made a pretty penny off of them.”

“Guilty as charged, but I just work here. And if it hadn’t been us it would’ve been someone else.”

Randal made a disgusted noise at that. I was pretty disgusted myself.

When we pulled into the commons, it was a madhouse. As usual. Over across from the courthouse there was a huge crowd of screaming AOLers—half of ’em plastering up dirty pictures on the hoardings, the other half trying to tear ’em down, and fifteen burly guys putting up more hoardings as fast as they could. On the other side, near the feedlot, some Yahoo was standing on top of a brightly-painted wagon shouting at the top of his lungs about Doctor Alta Vista’s Miracle Elixir. I used to use the Elixir all the time—it really worked—until they started mixing in all those animated banner ads. Now there were five hundred different Professors, Doctors, and Wizards, each with his Miracle Elixir, Guaranteed Potion, or Patent Nostrum, and each blathering on at top volume about the fine quality of his product and its upstanding sponsors.

And everywhere there were billboards. Not just plain painted placards, these, but wild, screaming, vibrating monstrosities

equipped with sirens, searchlights, bullhorns, and fireworks. Anything to grab the attention of the jaded, dazed, jostling multitude that surged blindly back and forth between the advertisements, the preachers, and the smut.

God, I miss the Net the way it used to be.

Once upon a time there were just a few of us out here on the data frontier, each working our land and building our little cabins (I thought mine was so grand when I added on a whole extra mega-byte), and at the end of a hard dusty day we would gather in the commons and swap tips, tricks, and tall tales. Oh, sure, there have always been folks out to make a buck, and every once in a while someone would start walking around with a sandwich board or passing out leaflets. But we'd run them right out of town on a rail, and things would be quiet again.

We thought those guys were obnoxious. We had no idea.

Now there was just one little quiet space in the middle of the commons, by the old hitchin' post, where a few old-timers would gather to chew their cud together and get in out of the noise. Me, I didn't actually come there much myself any more. There was so much damn foofaraw to plow through just to get there, and I was plenty busy with my own homestead—no time for swappin' yarns any more. But I was glad to know it was still there, and every once in a while Randal or Devin would forward me some news from the old hitchin' post—postnews, we called it—so I wouldn't forget.

But now there was a whole team of Irish laborers setting up a tent over the old hitchin' post. It was big and shiny and clean, and plastered with colorful advertisements. "PEPSI," said one, and

"I recognize you now. You've paid your nickel and gone through that gate a few times yourself. Where do you get off all high and mighty?"

"Back then it was 'Deja News,' not 'Deja Dot Com,' and it was just a gate, not a damn billboard!"

"Listen, old timer, you've been away too long. You may have carved a few words on that old hitchin' post in your day, but nobody cares about that any more. I've worked and sweated, same as you, and now that tent is filled with people, all sharing information. People that I brought together, in my tent! Why shouldn't I make a nickel off of them? It's not even a real nickel anyway—just a little of their time and attention."

"Once upon a time people could get together and share information without having to pay anyone *anything*, and without having to stare at all these goddamn *ads!*" I swatted away a banner for EX-LAX that was flapping in my face. "Why can't you AOLers just clear out and leave us alone?"

"I'm no AOLer, I've been here just about as long as you. I'm just not afraid to promote myself, to work hard, make a better world for myself and help others too." His eyes blazed then. "What's so bad about AOLers, anyway? It's like the Irish, or the Poles, or the Californians—any time a bunch of new folks come to

"SHELL" another, and everywhere there wasn't an ad for some conglomerate there were ads for the tent itself. "Deja Dot Com," they said, "where users help users. Admission five cents."

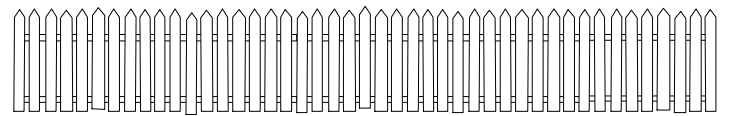
There was one guy with a straw hat and a cheap suit who seemed to be in charge—alternating between ordering the laborers around and yelling through a bullhorn at the thronging crowd. I grabbed his elbow and said "Scuse me, son, but what the *hell* do you think you're doing?"

"I think the hell I'm making a living, and I'd appreciate it if you'd move aside and let these people through."

"Why should I let them through, just so *you* can make five cents a head off these sheep using *my* words?"

"*Your* words?" He really looked at me then. "I don't seem to recall having heard your name, stranger."

"My name isn't important. I'm just one of the old-timers—the people who built this place, who blazed the trails and built the roads, who carved their words on the old hitchin' post for each other's benefit. Not yours. OK, maybe I didn't write the Code of Hammurabi or the Ten Commandments up there, but still—a few of those words are mine, and you're using them to entice people into your tent here and not giving me one red cent for my trouble."



the promised land, the folks who were there before them start demonizing 'em. They're just *people*, dammit! They've heard about all the good things you have here, naturally they want their share! Can you blame 'em?"

"No," I admitted, "I can't. But can't you see that when everybody takes his share and nobody gives back, pretty soon there's nothing left? Look at this dirt!" I scuffed some onto his patent leather shoes. "This used to be grass, back before all these *people* came swarming onto it. We used to educate folks when they showed up, about taking care of the commons and being polite to each other. Now they're coming too fast, we old-timers couldn't teach them all even if there were a hundred times as many of us. And they don't want to learn! They just want their porn and their money, and devil take the hindmost!"

"Well, believe it or not, I'm trying to help. This tent is full of information that these people can use to learn how to take care of the commons and all those other things. And you're standing in their way!"

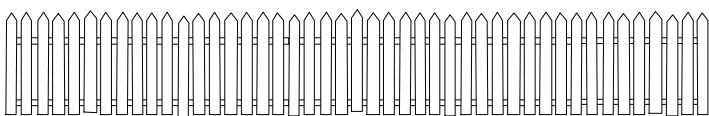
I stared hard at him for a while, then stepped aside. "Have it your way."

Just then Randal showed up. "Jesus, it's hard to find a parking place anymore," he said.

"Maybe Mr. Deja Dot Com here will show you how to park more efficiently," I replied. "I'm going home."

"What? On foot?"

"Sure. We used to go everywhere on foot. Hell, we thought 1200 baud was fast. The walk'll do me good."



“What are you going to do when you get there?” shrilled the guy in the cheap suit. “Crawl into your hole and pull the hole in after you?”

“I’m going to do what I’ve always done,” I said to Randal. “Work on my cabin, mend my firewall, share tips and tricks and tall tales with my neighbors. I just won’t be donating any more of my words to Mr. Deja Dot Com or Mr. OneList or Mr. E-Groups. There are other hitchin’ posts, on side roads, where a man can still talk with his friends for free.”

“You’ll come crawling back here soon! Mark my words!”

“You mark ’em. I’ll mark my own. Good day.”

And I strolled off into the sunset. —DDL

Short Takes

You know you’re married to a geek when...
...he checks the secret message on the Dennison’s Chili Sweepstakes Ad by booting up Powerpoint and reading it in the light of an all-red slide.

I went to a little girls’ tea party hosted by Patty Wells. One of the girls wore a floor-length skirt in blue-on-blue camouflage-patterned rayon. A lacy army-print skirt on an eight-year-old?? Three insights landed like planes at Tempelhof:

- To that kid, her outfit probably had no military connotations at all... just a keen/trendy pattern.

won’t be free enough to realize your condition and reflect on its self-inflicted nature until after you’ve left the gym.

Consider the myth of Sisyphus, and its obvious correlation to your Purgatory. Sisyphus pushes and pushes, straining and stretching, until the rock reaches the top. Once there it rolls back down, and Sisyphus must walk down and take up his burden anew. However, it is not while Sisyphus is pushing the rock that he may consider his condition; he’s much too busy pushing the rock, as he doesn’t want to lose control and allow it to roll to the bottom without first reaching the top. Rather, it is during that stroll down the hill that he may pause and reflect, taking as much or as little time as he likes before he resumes his burden anew. Sisyphus, like all of us, must always take up his burden again, but, unlike Sisyphus, we don’t always take the time during the stroll down the hill to reflect. Those that do might consider themselves happy.

Then again, some people are never happy regardless of how small or large a rock they get to push...

David Bratman

San Jose, California

26 Aug 1999 [*instant LoC at the NASFiC*]

Bratman family additions to your vocabulary list:

“Jerry”

Eponym for someone being stupid, silly, or dense. Source: Rich Little album featuring Jerry Ford. Note: try not to use in the presence of anyone actually named Jerry. It would only confuse them.

- Someday they won’t know what “camo” is short for, any more than we know why “polka dots”.
- She *wasn’t* wearing it to mess with the moms’ minds.

Whoa. It did anyway.

We figured out what shuttle*hens* would be. Ping-pong balls.

I’m planning a road trip for late June through July, cutting a rough swath up the East Coast from Florida to upstate New York. (Gonna stay a weekend at the Vanderbilts’ old place in the Adirondacks! Wheee-ha!) Any suggestions of your favorite places to stay, see, avoid, get a good piece of pie—I’d love to hear them.

—KY

Insert Clever “LoC” Pun Here

Anne Marie Merritt

Portland, Oregon

August 24, 1999

Soooo, you consider the gym purgatory?

I actually enjoy it there. It gives me time to clear my mind, to focus on one thing at a time, and to play with my toy, a heart rate monitor. Maybe you need a toy in purgatory—maybe one with a little bell on it, like the timer on my heart rate monitor, or the one that rings when I’m out of my target zone. Then, maybe your mind

“We’re occupied by Israel.”

Meaning: It’s raining. Source: newspaper error, reproduced in one of those Columbia Journalism Review books, in which a U.S. weather map was captioned, “Shaded areas have been occupied by Israel since 1967.”

Steve Jeffery

Kidlington, Oxon, UK

October 02, 1999

What a wonderful little fanzine (does this count as fawning gratitude?). It’s probably the cutest fanzine I’ve seen (though not the smallest—that honour must still go to Steve Sneyd’s “Are We not Men” at a minuscule 2" x 1½", and a similarly ensmalled fanzine of street poems, “Redheads Eat Their Young,” from Moebius handed to me at DragonCon in Atlanta).

I must ask resident opera buff Tanya (Brown) just where hockey pucks feature in *The Marriage of Figaro*. But do they say anything about sticks? [*Those are less airborne.*]

Bagels. In the UK, where you can find them, we have two sorts of bagels. Plain or cinnamon. They are both made of rubber, and will pull your fillings out if you attempt to eat them. I suspect they are not really proper bagels at all, but some form of industrial gaskets passed by on unsuspecting Brits. At least, they bear little—in fact almost no—resemblance to those moist chewy items I discovered in Philadelphia (where they have, of all things, a bagel museum).

The Bradbury sounds an amazing place. I forget what it was we were watching the other night (oh, I remember, it was *Man-hunt*, apparent the first film to feature Hannibal Lecter). Anyway, it was set in Atlanta, and at one point in the interior of the Marriott, which we've been in, and is a most amazing place. And looks equally sfnal. It has a huge (40 floor) open interior which looks like it has been designed by H.R. Giger—not a straight line or right angle in sight, as you gaze up, dizzily, past ranks of curving, twisting balconies. And it has a glass lift to the top. Not my idea of Fun, but Vikki was enthusiastic, nay, insistent, at the prospect. Oh well. *[That was the site of the 1986 Worldcon and its fondly-remembered wide-open consuite. Reportedly overheard from housekeeping: "I like these people. They throw SOFT things."]*

Locks. Locs. Ahh, that's **awful**.

1994 biryani paste? That's merely decently matured (unless it's started to go green and furry, and on its way to evolving a complex political system). There are jars of chutney on the top cupboard shelf that I swear go back to the 80s. I daren't pick them up to check; they might explode.

After chuckling at your Glossary (and thinking "Yes!!" on a couple of occasions) I suspect you would feel absolutely at home in Croydon. One of ours is "firkle"—to hunt with little effect through boxes and piles of old paper on the basis that you don't know what you are looking for, but you'll know when you find it. The only place I can think this comes from is Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In (oh god, I bet that dates me) and a character called Freddy Firkle.

Arthur D. Hlavaty

Yonkers, New York
October 04, 1999

Funny-sized zine received & enjoyed. I guess my favorite part was the Glossary. Thanks for reminding me of "But Miles! It's full of garbage!"

"There's a huge alien thing we humans cannot hope to understand. Let's dive into it and let it destroy us."

"You mean...?"

"Yes, let's Lem."

Leonard Levine

Milwaukee, Wisconsin
October 06, 1999

Kate's writeup on the VW reminds me of our 1961 bug and how you also neatly fit into the well at the back. *[It seems just about everyone has fond memories of the Beetle's "back-back."]*

Mother Dear would like to tell you that she planted a tomato plant in a pot on the porch and just a few days ago harvested the green pepper that seemed to grow on it. Mislabeled? Miscegenation? Magic? Mishandling? Mother's brown thumb? Who knows. We saved the single fruit from the frost and plowed the plant under to serve as fertilizer for next year's plantings. Exciting. *[Do you get subsidies from the government if you don't plant a tomato there next year?]*

"Damn! I got goat cheese on my pine cone!"

Donna Barr

Bremerton, Washington
October 04, 1999

Thanks for the Poky Little Bento; really enjoyed it, especially the dialect peculiar to your house.

Here are a few of mine (which can be used out-of-house, and people still understand them, at least viscerally):

"Let's party 'til Fred gets hurt!"

Whenever my family was involved in any particularly entertaining and potentially painful situation (hide-and-go-seek played at midnight with the whole family and a large and enthusiastic German Shepherd/Lab cross, or same dog helping to root my brother-in-law out of bed, with the help of all the kids, including my nephew Fred), it was invariable that Fred would get knocked down, fall off the bed, roll down the cliff, or otherwise get banged up and waily. At this point the play stopped. Implies that we shall go all-out having fun until—well, until Fred gets hurt.

"Brains like her (his) hair!"

Used as an exclamation of frustration against an annoying driver. Originating in a particularly frizzed and over-bleached hair-style commonly worn by Bremerton women. Implies her brains are as tangled as her hair-style. Can also be applied very effectively against bald male drivers—"Brains like his hair (he hasn't got any!)"

"Every concert has its drum solo."

Kathryn Mae Ice

Seattle, Washington
October 07, 1999

Best of luck on acquisition of a nasty green beetle bug. I saw one the other day with DAISY flower wheel covers (i.e.—Hub caps!) They looked factory original and the colors were a dead match, so they may be a really expensive extra but they looked really great! You need to look into them for your dream car.

I am still driving the station wagon. I was in a near serious accident this summer, only the two who caused it with reckless driving were shaken up, but it occurred to me that I don't want any other car but my station wagon. I will probably end up a 85 year old spinster with a 65 year old station wagon and until they repeal all the permits for the internal combustion engine—going strong!

[Coming soon, the Association of Premature Oldfarts. Right after we finish organizational work on Adult Children of Engineers. You know who you are.]

Susan James

Carson, Washington
October 07, 1999

Thank you so much for Bento! A very fun and nutritious brain-food item of the pleasingly silly variety. I loved the part about "I can't be out of time, I still have room on my calendar!" I overbook all the time and the dishes pile up.

The Paperboys have a great song called Wasted Time: "'cause there'll always be dishes in the sink, too much to do and too much

to think about. There needs to be more time for you & me... come waste some time with me..." (There's also a line about "the cat in the closet we still haven't flown," but I think it's one of those "I led the pigeons to the flag" sort of lines.) [*You can lead pigeons to the flag, but you can't make them salute.*]

Speaking of cats, I saw a sweet, orange tiger kitten being cradled carefully by three little girls in front of the supermarket today. They were trying to find "Tigger" a home. "the calico went first" they said. I asked if they were going to get the mom fixed after this. "we think so" "this is her second litter, she had her first when she was too young and they all died"

I wanted to take the girls and the cat ALL with me, but where would I put them?

Sigh... you can get anything at the store these days.

Caroline Mullan

Ilford, UK

October 10, 1999

I particularly enjoyed the Bradbury Building, Kate's Diary, and getting 100% in the Quiz!

Re knitting: According to a review of Rose Tremain's new book, women in 17th Century Sweden were forbidden to knit, on the grounds that its gentle, repetitive action encouraged, er, *unsuitable* fantasies...

Which is madder—hopping or raving?

to name them something seems to make it a little easier to fall back asleep in spite of the squeaking wheel.

The thing about #10 that's pleased me most is an image that occurred to me after seeing the cover and reading the essay on Beetles. It's the new Bug, you see. All compact, efficient, and pleasingly shaped, with nicely rounded corners, in bright lacquer colors... It's a bento box. Which means those tasty raw morsels inside—

Oh, dear.

I do still like the new Bug, but I don't think I want to ride in one anymore.

[Reminds me of a "Far Side" cartoon: two polar bears are breaking into an igloo and one says to the other "I love these things! Crunchy on the outside, chewy on the inside!"]

[Emma also told us that The Poky Little Puppy was the best book ever because it has rice pudding in it. By golly, so it does.]

Lloyd and Yvonne Penney

Etobicoke, Ontario

October 30, 1999

Many thanks for that good thing in a small package, Bento 10. I know it will be a while before it sees print (should you wish to), but I thought I should get a letter done on it while the contents and the jokes within are still fresh...

Personal preferences only, but I find New York bagels to be too tough and chewy, while Montreal bagels are legendary, and wonderful and fresh and easy to eat with just about anything. I'm

Brad Foster

Irving, Texas

October 12, 1999

Loved the cover design! Visual parody doesn't show up as often these days as does the verbal. Very cool!

Loved the glossary! Cindy and I have a few such terms ("Cow!"), but I don't think our list would be anything as long as this... or possibly the terms are so embedded in our subconscious I'm not even aware of using "odd" words?

[And "Cow!" means—??]

—sigh—another year until the next Bento? Oh well, annual is better than never again!

[Let this issue be a lesson to you; we never claimed it was an exclusively Worldcon phenomenon, just fell into that over time. Early Bentoi were published on the occasion of Corflu, Potlatch, Janecon, and Just Because. We do intend a second issue in 2000; David gets a two-month sabbatical from Intel this year and we'll be just slopping over with things to talk about.]

Emma Bull

N. Hollywood, California

October 14, 1999

Bento #10 is the best yet, and that's saying a lot. The glossary was not only funny, but useful far south of the borders of beautiful Portland and the immediate proximity of you guys. I fastened on "hamsters" instantly, and have, unfortunately, had reason to use it several times since the NASFiC. My consolation is that being able

not sure what bagels you're calling scrawny, for Montreal bagels are big and thick and with barely a hole in the middle.

[The bagels we're calling scrawny are the "Montreal-style" bagels we've seen in Vancouver, which are large but flat. Perhaps they are not representative of true Montreal bagels, but they are pretty consistent all across Vancouver.]

When we were in that Montreal hotel, there was a sign in the bathtub enclosure that showed me that translations can sometimes go awry...

ATTENTION

**LE FOND DE CE BAIN EST TRAITÉ D'UN PRODUIT
ANTIDÉRAPANT POUR VOTRE SÉCURITÉ**

**THE BASE OF THIS BATHTUB IS THREATENED
WITH A NON-SLIP PRODUCT FOR YOUR SAFETY**

One episode of *Star Trek: TNG* featured an abandoned planet with a portal that would take you to exotic places in the galaxy... one place featured two curved towers surrounding that looked like a small flying saucer... that's Toronto City Hall.

David's time in purgatory... the only other person I know in science fiction who might spend some time pumping iron is Peter Morwood. This is something I'd considered for myself, but perhaps later... right now, I am on a diet which I hope will take about 30 pounds off me. If I want to pump iron, I'd rather have the results be more visible. It won't help to have those rippling abs hidden under a pot belly; I'll get rid of the pot belly first.

[Don't put off exercising until you lose weight!! From my personal experience as well as my reading, diet plus exercise will take off weight better and faster than either by itself. The muscle you gain from exercise consumes calories just sitting still. See Fit or Fat by Covert Bailey for more info.]

Karen Schaffer

San Jose, California
November 04, 1999

Just a quick note to thank you for the Poky Little Bento! Great cover, great contents, as usual. I especially like Kate's essay on time and things to do. When I was getting ready to leave Mpls to move out here, I was really struck by all the things I vaguely thought I would do some day ("Some day I'll get off the bus and stop in that interesting looking store," "Some day I'll drive down to <place> just for the heck of it") and the realization that "some day" now had a time limit which was rapidly approaching!

Faster, Puddytat! Till! Till!

Roger Waddington

Malton, N. Yorkshire, England
9th November, 1999

DANGER: CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AHEAD!

Well, I'm assuming, but... it seems as if 'poky' might be different across there. Over here, it means small and cramped; with the example of the Little Poky Puppy, I'd take your version to

Steve Green

Olton, Solihull, West Midlands
November 15, 1999

Many thanks for the latest Bento, which once again crams more enjoyable fanwriting within its teensy frame than many zines five times its size. E F Schumacher was right: small really is beautiful.

The arguable highlight of the issue was the dictionary. I suspect most couples develop their own secret languages—some spoken, some reliant upon gesture—but the glimpse offered into your personal dialect was simultaneously illuminating and highly amusing. Thanks for letting us in.

David: "If I can't get admiration, I'll take bafflement."

Kate: "I'll take bafflement for \$300, Alex."

E. B. Frohvet

somewhere, somewhen...

Interesting that you describe cleaning the refrigerator in anticipation of Maureen Speller's visit, but nothing about the visit itself. Or was that described elsewhere?

[Oh, no, not at all. But you see, during her visit I was too busy to write in my diary!]

'Boink', as you doubtless know, has a current verb meaning roughly equivalent to, umm, 'conjugate'. *[I thought that was 'bonk'.]*

mean curious and inquisitive, i.e. poking his nose in everything and everywhere. And you might call Bento small, but you'd never call it cramped!

[You're right that there's a different meaning, but from our reading of the text, the Poky Little Puppy was called that because of his dawdling—i.e. he was a slowpoke, always the last one to arrive home for rice pudding.]

Mind you, who am I to talk? My dream car has always been the Nash Metropolitan, ever since childhood, and you can't get much more poky than that. An oddity in itself; it was first built over here by Austin in 1954 for Nash and destined as export-only for the American market. Later models (it was produced up to 1961) were sold over here as well, and I'd have been one of those eager drivers if our family could have afforded it; and if any one of us ever learnt to drive. *[David wanted an AMC Pacer...]*

Perhaps that might be a case of culture shock on both sides of the Pond that, living in a country village in the Fifties, a car wasn't a necessity. (Today, it's a different story.) And yet, my fascination with cars must have come from somewhere. Maybe it's that while boys in town could sit on the platform of their railway station eagerly collecting train numbers, living out in the country the only things I could collect were the registration numbers of cars and getting to know them that way.

[A classic American pass-time for kids on long car trips: see how many different states & provinces you can spot license plates from. This was easier on the East Coast, with far more states per acre than in the west.]

Janice Gelb

Los Altos, California
November 24, 1999

Regarding the Volkswagen essay, I really like the new Bugs. To me, they look like the cars in the Bugs Bunny or Looney Tunes cartoons!

Kate's Diary, Sunday, Sept 6: "Miniature pigs are about the size I think of pigs as being." Being an urban child who grew up in Miami Beach, I was not real familiar with livestock. We took a bus trip up to a week-long leadership camp in North Carolina when I was in high school. Somewhere in the middle of the trip, we saw these large, um, **things** that were kind of a dull greyish color from a distance. We knew they weren't cows or horses, but were really surprised when the bus driver informed us laconically "Them's hogs." They were **huge!**

I loved the Glossary and the family in-jokes it revealed. One danger with those, though, is that one tends to use them around people who aren't familiar with them. For example, a group of Bay Area friends uses the term "gah" for generalized "stuff" ("Let me move this gah out of the front seat so you can get in"), from "gew-gah." I have found myself using it in conversation, only to be stared at strangely....

Also dangerous is redefining words. For example, here you say "boink" is "anything that sticks out," whereas many people use this as a euphemism for, you know, doing it. The Usenet news-group ba.singles uses it for gatherings of the group ("There will be

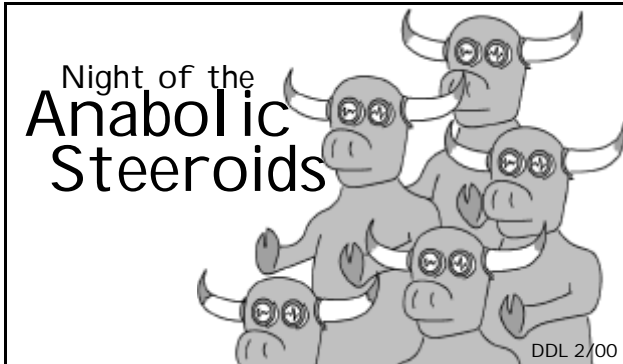
a boink at the Tied House brewpub tomorrow night”) which has also led to confusion and much amusement.

[But what a recruitment tool!]

Terry Jeeves

Scarborough, N. Yorkshire, UK

I enjoyed the piece on airlines and their idiosyncrasies and legal gobbledegook. That “in the case of death” bit reminds me of an incident here in the UK, many moons ago. A man bought a ticket, walked on the platform and died of a heart attack. His widow sued to get back the fare and the company refunded the money—less 1p for the use of the platform. In those days a platform ticket (to see someone off) cost a penny.



We Also Heard From

Hope Leibowitz (“adorable Bento... just as good as Mimosa and deserves a Hugo!!!”), **Donna McMahon**, **Bob Pownall** (“Amazing how such a stereotypically authoritarian people could come up with the ultimate anti-establishment car”), **Sarah Prince**, **Kurt Erichsen**, **Todor Stoyanov**, **Judith Hanna** (“One of these days I’ll manage a real loc, before Joseph files the latest copy away somewhere terribly tidy”), **Jeremy Wilkins**, **Douge Martin** (“I generally say something like wor-chest-i-she- shire, which I know is actually more syllables than should be there”), **Teddy Harvia**, **David A. Keldsen**, **Pamela Boal**, **Jon DeCles**, and **Pat Franz** (“The Poky Little... you guys are just too much!!!”). And we got lots of lovely **tradezines** and three ugly ones. Thank you thank you!

“If I’d found a blinking Ganesh, I would have bought it!”

“We’re in the same ballpark—but not on the same team.”

Weather is what you get.

Climate is what you’re supposed to get.

“Pancreas is a warrior’s pizza topping!”

Karen Stephenson

Corvallis, Oregon

12 Feb 2000 *[Wow! Just under the wire!]*

I can relate to Kate’s description of living beyond one’s temporal means. I have had a half-written letter of comment saved on the hard disk for many many months. I intended to tell you of every VW experience I have had in my life, from piling into the far back of my best friends’ family bus to go out to ice cream, to the green VW bus that I learned to drive on, to the 1970 Squareback that Bruce and I got as a wedding present (our first car). The squareback was called Steve (“we have the technology—we can rebuild him”)... Unfortunately, the stories are lengthy and my time bank is overdrawn.

I try to visit purgatory at least three times a week. I find it amazing that not only do I enter this circuit of suffering, but I pay for the privilege...

I enjoyed your Glossary. I have adopted some of the terms into my vocabulary. In the spirit of something, I wish to add, from my personal language, “They Grumph the Marshmallow”—(derivation obscure) means “I don’t think you heard what I think I said and I sure hope you didn’t say what I think I heard in reply.” I heartily recommend this phrase for any relationship. Especially when you’re both tired.

Children are waking.

“Daniel Striped Tiger is having a very bad day.”

Answers to Dingbatian Menu Puzzle on Page 6

- S1. Ko Ji Mi = Frog with “Ji” and orange
- S2. Za Xu Ne Ta = Some kind of soup with goat and broccoli (not enough information to determine what “Ne” means)
- S3. Ta Ke De Hi = Spicy broccoli-carrot salad
- S4. Xa Gi Ke Mi Cu = Cabbage, carrots, orange, and “Cu”, served with rice
- S5. Wi Xu De = Spicy sauteed goat

- 1. S3 was a salad, although when it arrived you found the Dingbatian idea of “salad” is even weirder than the British.
- 2. Keith skipped S1 (frog), S2 (goat), and S5 (also goat). He ordered S3 and said it was very nice.
- 3. Marci skipped S3 and S5, both of which were “De” (spicy), and wasn’t sure about S4 because of the “Cu”. However, she wasn’t afraid to try eating frog, so she decided on S1.
- 4. Since the #37 (“Ji” and cabbage) was awful, and the #18 (with “Cu”) was good and not spicy, Marci decided to switch to the S4. It was really good!
- 5. You ordered the S2. It was awful—maybe “Ne” means “greasy”—but Teresa shared her #26 so nobody went hungry.
- 6. Maybe, but we’re here, so we might as well order. (Later you found out that Jerry and Suzle went to the Italian place and got food poisoning, so maybe Dingbatian wasn’t so bad after all.)

—DDL