

The real fannish food groups



When Google is Outlawed...

At 11:49 PM 8/25/2002 -0400, ***@aol.com wrote:

I WAS TRYING TO FIND OUT ABOUT THE WORD BENTO FOR HOME WORK A HAWAIIAN FOOD I RAN OVER YOUR SIGHT I GESS THAT BENTO HAS MANY MEANINGS CAN YOU HELP ME SINCE YULL SEAM TO KNOW MORE ABOUT BENTO THEN ANY ONE ON THE NET HELP SORT THINGS OUT THANKS A LOT IN LA.

David replied:

Bento is the name of a magazine my wife and I produce. Just like *Time*, which is the name of a magazine as well as the name of... well, that thing clocks measure. Unfortunately, just like the editors of *Time* (the magazine) don't necessarily know more about time (the concept) than anyone else, I don't know much more about bento than anyone else. We called our magazine *Bento* because, like the Japanese box lunch of the same name, it contains a lot of different things.

Paperclip sez: "You look like you're writing a science fiction novel. Would you like help writing a science fiction novel?"

"Conversations are the gifts we give each other"

KATHRYN LYNN YULE

and

DAVID DANIEL LEVINE

request the honor of your presence

at their fanzine

BENTO 14

published

February twenty-first,

two thousand and three

for Potlatch

San Francisco, California

Not Existing

Lately I've been having a problem with nonexistence. Mind you, there are kinds and degrees of nonexistence. There's the kind where a sales clerk or motorist or the one you are secretly madly in love with looks right through you as though you weren't there—this is annoying at best, deadly at worst. There's the kind where you undeniably exist at the moment, but there's no evidence (such as a hotel reservation, theatre ticket, or rental car) that you ever existed before. And there's the kind where someone knows darn well that you exist, but seeks to impose nonexistence on you through force of will—so they can grab that parking space, last doughnut, or spot in the checkout line without acknowledging that you had it first.

My kind of nonexistence is a little more subtle than that. I am simply too small to be noticed.

I mean this literally. There are lots of people out there who go through life being pushed around because they, themselves, feel that they are beneath notice. (A lot of these people are fans.) Any of you who have met me know that this is not the case with me. My problem is that I am a man 5' 5" tall, 130 pounds, with size 6½ feet. It would appear that I am the only such person in existence.

Once upon a time, I seem to recall, clothing came in sizes Small, Medium, and Large. This seems like a reasonable system, having the classic components of any process or system: a Beginning, a Middle, and an End. Naturally, in any such system of

classification there will be those who fall outside the boundaries, but this system can be naturally extended to Extra Small and Extra Large (adding Extra Extra variants as needed). However, although I am a small person, I am not exceptionally so, and I generally take a size Small.

But lately it seems that Small has vanished from our lives, and Medium is on its way out. Just one example: J.C.Penney, a major national department store chain, carries no men's clothing in size Small, and very little in Medium. (Not that there are signs stating this policy. I have come to this conclusion myself, over a period of years, but I defy anyone to prove otherwise.) Smalls of some styles are available for special order from the catalog—if you don't mind waiting several weeks for something that may or may not fit. Other clothing stores seem never to have any Smalls on the rack either—the sales clerks usually theorize that they must have sold out quickly, but occasionally you find one who was there when the shipment arrived and knows that none were ordered in the first place.

There are always plenty of Larges and Extra Larges, and often XXLs as well. The standard story seems to be that “they're wearing them big these days.” I suppose it's something like grade inflation. Could it be the result of the well-documented increase in corpulence among Americans, or continued growth with the passing generations? (People are getting bigger as time goes on; King Henry VIII was just about my height.) There are also numerous Big & Tall Shops around, but the two “Short & Small” stores I

situation at every vendor we tried and we finally talked to a Festival volunteer who confirmed that only one size was ever available. I really liked the design, and I might have bought one to use as a nightshirt, except that I sleep in the nude.

Perhaps nudism is the solution to my problem. Or, a bit less extreme, I could move to Maui or some other tropic isle where grass skirts are the norm—a simple set of hedge clippers would be sufficient to resize all my clothing to fit. Perhaps I will blaze a new fashion trail with the Doctor Dentons Look (“you may have a Power Tie, but that's nothing by comparison with my Power Ranger Jammies!”). I hope I come up with something, or else I may end like the Incredible Shrinking Man (as portrayed by Grant Williams, in a script by Richard Matheson), becoming ever smaller and harder to see in a world grown too large for me, crying out as I vanish from sight “I still exist!” —DDL

Which of these actual English road signs are place names?

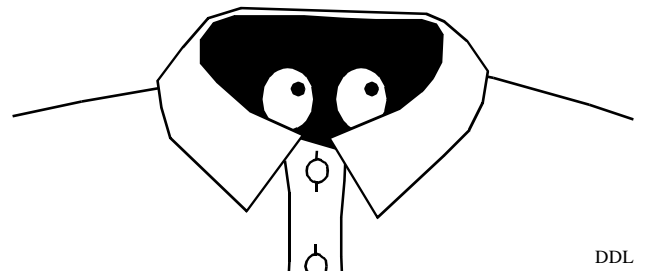
- RISING BOLLARDS
- LEIGHTON BUZZARD
- GOODS INWARDS
- WEAK BRIDGE
- FAIRFORD LEYS
- KILL YOUR SPEED
- Δ BADGERS
- URBAN CLEARWAY
- CHILTERN MEWS
- TRING

Answer: Damned if I know. Ask a Brit. —DDL

know of in this country carry only expensive tailored clothes. I just want a shirt that doesn't make me look like I've swapped with an orangutan. Is that so much to ask?

I can accept that manufacturers, especially those with limited stock such as science fiction convention T-shirt makers, might stint on the smaller sizes thinking that it's possible to wear (and thus to sell) clothing that's a bit too large, but basically impossible to wear clothing that's too small. Although this seems logical, it has its limits, and if I wear a Large or (heaven forfend) an Extra Large, it looks like a tent on me. And of course this logic does not apply at all to shoes or gloves. It's been over five years since I found a pair of gloves that really fit, and I even tried Donges (“Gloves to burn, and some that don't burn”).

Now there are signs that even Large is on the Endangered Sizes list. At the Edinburgh Fringe Festival I found that the official festival T-shirt was available only in size Extra Large. We thought at first that the other sizes were sold out, but we found the same



DDL

The Decline of the Ha'penny

or, Nothing Really Costs .99¢

Oh, I don't have the energy for a rant today. You guys are all in the choir anyway. You know what a decimal point is. You know that \$50 is a hundred times 50¢, which is a hundred times .50¢. Right? But you're not the people writing price signs at the local hardware store, or Walgreens, or even the expensive yuppie deli. They know that when writing a number representing cents, one puts a “.” first. So simple!

Some seem to apply this rule consciously, others unconsciously. This determines whether you get an argument or a blank stare upon pointing out that .25¢ is a heckuva good price for anything these days, and can they make change for a penny?

(I've been on good terms with the cute redhead at the supermarket ever since my hysterical laughter over the matzohs in their Hanukkah display, but he's rare.)

What I'm wondering is... Maybe the apostrophe really is on its way out. Maybe we will become so used to divining the meaning of written statements without relying on whatever apostrophes happen to be scattered around, that that punctuation mark will wither up entirely and blow away.

But could that *happen* with the decimal point? If one accepts that language changes, and real-world usage is the final arbiter of what is and is not “the language”, where is this no-longer-a-decimal-point use of “.” taking us? —KY

What's for Dinner?

Despite our typically fannish wall decor, David and I don't often hear the classic "Wow, did you read all these?"—our friends all have homes like that too. What we do hear, surprisingly often, is "Oh that's right, you *cook*"—enviously; dismissively; with rollings of eyes; or even in tones of accusation.

My first reaction, I'm afraid, is to murmur "Well yes; you see we *eat*."

Let me throw an example at you. Last weekend my family was here: parents, two siblings, and three nibblings, ages 4–11, plus David and I. Groundhog Day was the first time we could get together to exchange Yuletide presents. (Martin Luther King weekend is more traditional, but this year one of the kids was having an adrenal gland removed.) (Not that you could tell.) So I felt a certain pull towards a family meal, everyone around the same table at the same time, just once.

However, I am not insane. We have never had good luck getting haunch-o'-dead-animal to come out of the oven fully cooked in anything resembling the predicted time frame. And I wanted to spend my afternoon with the kids—or napping—not juggling food prep. I chose BBQ chicken, inspired by a recipe in Jane Brody; gnocchi with pesto; and fresh spinach.



We bought a couple packages of "best of fryer", i.e. everything but the back and gizzards, already jointed; took most of the skin off; thwacked the breast pieces in two so everything was about the same size (a variation on the Wombat Principle); poured on some bottled Maple Chipotle Grill Sauce and off the bird goes into the oven. Bring water to boil, dump in frozen gnocchi, drain, scrummage it around in bowl with spoonful of pesto from Italian deli.

I'd already washed and picked through the spinach leaves while discussing the surprisingly involved family life of rubber ducks with niece Isobel. Cooking them—no, not the ducks—just meant melting a lump of butter in a skillet. The wet leaves saute/steam in about the same time that it takes to find the pasta strainer. Oh, and there was a chopped-up clove of garlic in the butter.

Dinner for nine, on the table.

Okay: what's your reaction?

A. I think we have an oven....

B. Sounds basic.

C. You used *frozen* gnocchi?

If it's A, tell me, please—what do you eat for dinner? I honestly want to know what self-proclaimed "non-cooks" are subsisting on day after day. It can't be pizza or Chinese takeout *every* night... can it? —KY

"Coconuts are mammals! They're hairy, and they give milk." —Arthur Shattan, age 9



In Bento #6 David wrote about the Cellphone People. They aren't the only strange tribe inhabiting our airports...

Vampires at the Airport

by Andrei Codrescu

They are there. I've seen them. I can spot them. There is one right now, at Dallas-Ft. Worth airport, a little middle-aged man with a goatee. His eyes roam greedily over the crowd, scanning phone banks, airline gates, and walls. It's the walls he cares about. The little man spots it. His eyes light up. He takes a few determined steps forward, then a leap, and then he's there. He crouches, he grins, he opens his shoulder bag, and out comes his vampire cord. He plugs it in. He plops down on his knees before his bag and takes out: 1) his laptop, 2) his cell phone. He turns them on. They begin to glow. He closes his eyes. Silence! The vampire is feeding.

He is not alone long. A chestnut-haired brisk young woman approaches swiftly. She nods curtly, drops down next to her goateed colleague, and pulls her own vampire cord out of her case. She plugs it in below the other's cord. Then she sits down in a perfect lotus and pulls out her cell phone, her laptop, her ear phones, and her Palm.

This is it for this particular feeding station. There are only two outlets. A number of roaming vampires pass, disappointed. They have gotten here too late. There are other feeding stations at DWF, but they are rare and far between. Vampires sometimes travel the

breadth and length of a huge airport before they find a place to feed. I know. I'm one of them.

At Portland International, an inconsiderate vampire is using two outlets for a number of devices. He is watching a DVD on his screen, eyes closed, juice flowing through him, oblivious to the world. I curse him, I move on. Finally, I spot an outlet under a dangerous looking sculpture of something vaguely aeronautic. I leap to it, my cord is out in a flash, I'm in. I check the glow light on my laptop. It's not on. Eegads! It's a dead station! I look around, momentarily disoriented by the sudden drop in my blood sugar levels. I see a grinning vampire watch me. He knew! He had tried it and failed and he is now delighting in my pain. I pull my cord out roughly. I resume roaming, but not before giving my mean co-creature an evil look. You'd think that being in the same boat would make us compassionate. Not at all. We are fierce hunters, individualistic, hungry beasts of the computer age. We don't share the juice.

It is not until Seattle, the third leg of my trip, that I am able to feed. The moment I plug in I can feel it. The sweet juice flowing into my chips. The hum of the communicator coming to life. I dial a far-away place and the juice lets me hear the sweet voice on the other end. The icons light up on my desktop. I rejoin the sphere of the global network. Vampires pass by, hungry, needy, jealous. Let them pass. I will not share.

First heard as an essay on National Public Radio. Reprinted by permission of the author.

"Mother-father deaf you? Deaf friend have?"

"No." (Thumb and two fingers brought together like a snapping beak is *no*. It's a rapid blend of the fingerspelled letters N and O.) "Kate-I learn ASL together. Fun." (What the language lacks in conjugations and declensions it makes up in flexibility and expressiveness. *Kate-I* is a two-fingered point that indicates her and me. There is never any ambiguity between *we*, meaning you and me, and *we*, meaning me and someone else. If Kate is not actually present, I establish a location in space that represents her, then point to that location to indicate her. That's how ASL does pronouns.)

Why *do* we want to learn ASL? It's not as though we wanted to be able to read the works of Deaf authors in the original. (ASL, in fact, *has* no standard written form; ASL signers must learn English, a separate language, in order to read and write.)

It's said that ASL is the second most popular "foreign" language in the US, after Spanish, and once you know a few signs you will start seeing it everywhere. (Though it's rude to eavesdrop. Deaf culture is very big on introductions.) Many of the signers you meet are hearing people, but there's a whole Deaf community in most cities of any size. (Small, yes. Lost in the cracks, yes, far too often. But increasingly vocal—well, *active*. Thanks to Deaf



An _____ - _____ little survey

Please don't discuss with anyone until you're each quite sure of your answers. Send them to us by the end of July. Thanks!

- ~~~~~
1. *What kind* of spider went up the waterspout? 🎵🎵
 2. *Where* did you live until you were about eight?
- ~~~~~



Tourists in Deafland

Why is the question they always ask. (Hold your right hand up by the side of your head, palm in, and waggle the middle finger toward your forehead. That's the sign for *why*. Facial expression—furrowed brow and a slight tilt to the head—turns it into a question.) "ASL you learn *why*?" (There is no verb conjugation, no grammatical gender, few prepositions or plurals. The grammar is... well, it's *different* from English. Kate's better at it than I am.)

"I like learn languages," I reply. (I know my signs are sloppy, slow. I often stumble and have to back up. I know my word order tends toward English rather than true American Sign Language. I feel stupid when I try to converse in ASL. They still seem to appreciate it.)

activists we have closed captioning on our TVs, which is a godsend even for the hearing when the program's in Strine or Liverpudlian.)

ASL is terribly practical. You can use it across distances, in noisy situations, and at times when speech is not available (e.g. while talking on the phone, or while your mouth is full). Last year at Wiscon, Kate got laryngitis but could still participate in conversations (when I remembered to interpret for her). And it has the "secret code language" aspect of any shared foreign language, with the added benefit of "freaking the mundanes" (and even fans) who get all goggle-eyed when they see Kate and I wagging our hands meaningfully at each other.

Learning ASL has given us a chance to visit a foreign (one might even say alien) culture within our own borders. A culture with its own language, politics, and ethics. We've learned (a little) about the cochlear implant controversy, the paradoxes of the hard-of-hearing, and the differences between being deaf (unable to hear) and being Deaf (a member of the community). I didn't expect this, but it's been a fascinating side effect.

So if you see us wandering about in Deafland, guidebooks in hand, come over and say hi.

We promise to sign slowly.

—DDL



Condition Orange

On Saturday, January 18, 2003, Kate and I went downtown for an anti-war rally. It was a gorgeous crisp blue-sky day and twenty thousand people crammed into the South Park Blocks for an afternoon of chanting, drumming, and speechifying. We arrived a bit on the late side and, though we tried several different streets, every one dead-ended in a mass of humanity too far from the speakers to make out a word. So we stood in the companionable crowd and hung out, listening to the thrum of news helicopters, the mumble of the public address system, and the chatter of cell phones (“I’m by the big tree at Madison and Park. Where are you?”).

The crowd was a fine mix of ages, colors, and sizes; many parents had brought their children (one little girl, about four, had glued bits of candy to her tiny protest sign) and there were many gray heads who had likely protested the war in Vietnam. A group of twentysomethings pushed through the throng bearing a dragon puppet—a series of hoops strung with shreds of cloth in shades of red and brown—on poles in the air. Organic cotton rubbed elbows with scuffed black leather.

After about an hour of vague mumbles over the PA, a few folks in our part of the crowd started chanting “March! March! March!” but the well-organized and properly-permitted demonstration would not be hurried. Finally, only half an hour behind schedule, we all moved out for a march through the streets from

It’s marathon-hopscotch-diagram time in our neighborhood! The current model runs past seven houses. Some will make it around the corner and halfway up the block, direction evident from the ever-shrinking cell size, though STRT and END are emphatically marked this time.

I’ve never seen anyone *playing* hopscotch out there... I think it’s become a cultural relic: just as Houses have pointy roofs, Apples are solid red, and Trees come in two kinds (Christmas and lollipop), Sidewalks have groups of squares chalked on them. That’s all. —KY

the Park Blocks to the Federal Building about half a mile away. The crowd filled the street from curb to curb in spots; traffic was halted by unexcited policemen to let us amble by. All along the way, parked SUVs had rude and clever slogans chalked on the pavement around them, but were otherwise unmolested.

There were so many of us that the first made it all the way to the Federal Building and back to the Park Blocks before the last had left. It was the biggest protest in Portland in twenty years.

And it didn’t make a damn bit of difference.

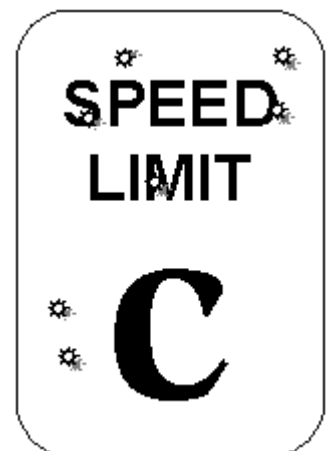
It’s now February 10, 2003. Colin Powell has just made his snazzy PowerPoint presentation to the UN, and the US has raised its Terrorism Threat Level to Condition Orange. I have two contradictory but equally cynical responses: *duh*, people who are bullied and threatened enough will eventually strike back in any way they can; and *riiiight*, it’s just a ploy to scare the US public into supporting the war.

Either way, it doesn’t much matter. Tens of thousands of US troops are already massed in the Middle East, with more on the way. This has to be costing billions of dollars, and the US would not commit that level of capital to a military build-up unless it intended to use it. Just reading between the lines of the closed captions of CNN and Fox on the TVs at the gym, it feels to me that the war is going to start some time in March.

The US won the Cold War by inducing the USSR to spend more money than it could afford on a military it was never in a position to use. It occurs to me that a recession-riddled US could

easily fall into the same trap; all Iraq has to do is to maintain the delicate balance between “too cooperative to attack right now” and “too recalcitrant to send the troops home right now” until the US’s money runs out. But the US knows this, and will throw away any shreds of international good will remaining from 9/11 by attacking as soon as it is ready, no matter how cooperative Iraq appears at the moment.

Note that I use the terms “US” and “Iraq” here rather than “Bush” and “Saddam” (and, of course, it’s never “George” and “Mr. Hussein”). Referring to the power structure of a country by the name of its leader is, curiously, a *dehumanizing* tactic; it puts the focus on Emmanuel Goldstein and Big Brother, pure symbols of good and evil, rather than the uncomfortable fact that your next-door neighbor will shortly be firing cruise missiles into someone else’s neighborhood. And when Goldstein has been on stage long enough, and the people begin to see him as perhaps not so threatening as all that, he is quietly replaced with a fresh villain. Remember Osama? Remember Moammar?



Letters of Comment

Italics of response are generally by Kate.

Note also that I refer to the US as “it” rather than “we.” The government of the United States is not representing my interests in this—well, in damn near anything at the moment—and I refuse to accept identification with it. The armored, clanking *thing* that used to be *my* government has been taken over by people whose motivations I simply cannot fathom. It’s said that they are doing this to gain control of Iraq’s oil, but that just doesn’t make sense—surely they don’t believe they can profitably extract anything from a post-war Iraq where any infrastructure that survives the war will be destroyed by the same people who set Kuwait’s oil fields afire? The only motivation I can really *understand* is Dubya wantin’ ta finish the job Daddy started, and that’s just too puerile to be believable.

So refusing to identify myself with the government feels like the most I can do, now. I voted against the bastards. I called my congressman. I protested in the streets. And none of it has mattered a fart in a sandstorm.

But, hell, we survived Nixon, we survived Reagan, and we survived McCarthy. We can survive this.

I wish I could say the same for the people of Baghdad.

— DDL

*The Nine Billion Domain Names of Dot-God:
“...without any fuss, the Suns were going down.”*

averted an accident by stopping the traffic on Sydney bridge with his mind. While I keep an open mind on the paranormal that is just a claim too far for me. What the heck though that’s no reason for knocking a good competition or workshop. Sensible you for not letting it deter you and again congratulations.

“Yes, but Beanie Babies don’t need safewords.”

Joseph Nicholas

20 October 2002

Congratulations to David on winning an award for one of his stories, although in this case my congratulations are tempered by a degree of unease about the Scientology connection. I appreciate that you’re not required to subject yourself to auditing, or swear out an oath of fealty to this fake “religion” or whatever, but...um. I mean, let’s face it, Hubbard was a charlatan and a fantasist, and this Writers/Illustrators of the Future malarkey does sound a little like an attempt to purchase respectability amongst those who might otherwise spurn him.

In other news, I can get right behind Kate’s campaign for the correct use of the apostrophe. Over here, the term “grocer’s apostrophe” is the general term for apostrophe misuse, because shopkeepers seem most prone to error where it’s concerned. But what I’ve also noticed is that, as well as being incorrectly inserted into the plural forms of common nouns, the apostrophe is also being omitted from the contracted forms of words in which it should be

Brad Foster

5 Sept 2002

LOVED the “Annoying Escort” service! Heck, I could play boyfriend from hell pretty well myself, might run an ad in the local “alternative” weekly and see if I can pick up a few extra bucks with that idea....

“I help confused, hostile people get email.”

Pamela Boal

20 October 2002

T shirts hardly becoming to a woman of, hmm, mature years but I know just what you mean. My mood shirts are more personal than place names, the one exception to place being of a Lock on the river run by one of our favourite Lock Keepers. The rest are for example US wild birds and US wild flowers gifts from friends, photo of two of the grandsons done by themselves (with a bit of help from their Dad) via computer, even ones won through an advertising campaign. All suiting the need and the mood of the day.

The letter columns of some Australian Scientology magazines would have put me off if I had been at all interested in the first place. Amongst other claims one writer boasted that he had

used—for example, instead of “it’s” we’re offered “its”, and have to try to infer from the context which is meant. Nor is this confined solely to personal letters and e-mails; it seems to be spreading slowly through the mainstream media, even quality daily broadsheets. I suspect we may be witnessing a grammatical shift which will result in the elimination of apostrophe use altogether.

Microsoft Word’s attempt to correct everything you write is another matter altogether. Some features, though, you can disable, particularly “correct errors as you type”, which should leave apostrophes alone. One other way of getting Word to leave apostrophes alone, of course, is to use a typeface other than Times New Roman—I use Arial, in which apostrophes and single quotes look exactly the same and any attempts by the software to change one for the other have no effect (or, at least, are invisible).

“You do realise you’re defending the artistic integrity of Dexy’s Midnight Runners....” (Interlineation, page 27.) Ah, but Geno and Come On Eileen remain great songs to this day [*thank you!*]—even if Kevin Rowlands did rather go off the deep end shortly after writing them. But then what is great art if great artists can’t be allowed to go bonkers from time to time....

“Amazingly, her mother-in-law and my mother are the same person. That’s how we met!”



William D. Yule

Kennewick, Washington

2 January 2003

...what prompted me to write you is the business about Apostrophe Abuse and Decimal Dotage (my term). These are also Pet Peeves of your mother's and I marvel to think that you could have come up with them by some process of hereditary osmosis. So I am forced to think that you and she spent some time together where these concepts were passed one to the other. I think these rank right up with Cleo [*the border collie/Akita mix*] as your mother's favorite pets. I tend to ignore her periodic outbursts when she asks shop keepers (!) if the apples are really one tenth of a cent or some such.

[Well, we did spend a certain amount of time together, what with living in the same house for twenty years or so].

I was crushed to discover that I was not WaHFed, perhaps because I never respond even though I adore your small but perfectly formed fanzine. I may send a more substantive comment at some point, but my track record is abysmal. My enjoyment of *Bento* is, however, sincere. (I do not wish to consider how the addition of wax would change my enjoyment of *Bento*, and I doubt that I would be compelled to think of the true meaning of "sincere" when writing to anyone other than youse.)

See you at Potlatch.

[And perhaps you were not WaHFed because our tracking system is abysmal—as in "It fell into the abyss and nevermore returned to mortal ken." Please don't take it personally.]

Tiny cluttered con badges
are like closed stacks
at a library.

**Legible ones
let us browse.**

One of my pet peeves on the other hand is the word 'arguably', used to mean "it is decidedly NOT arguable that [x]." As in "Michael Jackson is arguably very weird," where inarguably is clearly the word of choice. For some reason, this is usually used (misused) by sportscaster types. I have no trouble with flammable vs. inflammable and there are probably more of the same ilk.

[Just don't lose track of "literally" vs. "virtually". Heard on National Public Radio the other day: "You have a situation where the President and CEO of an organization are literally dropping boulders on each other in public!" Literally! Wow! That's gotta hurt. And the head of our city Art Museum spoke of "literally hoovering paintings from the walls" of local collectors for the current French Impressionism exhibit. Yeah. Right.]

"What is this, the Neopros Standing Around panel?"

Kate Schaefer

Seattle, Washington

2 January 2003

I received & read *Bento* today and was compelled to let you know that I have a recording of Ginger Rogers singing, "We're in the Money," including a verse in pig Latin. It amuses me and my grandchildren inordinately.

[Ohh-kay. We're guessing this was sparked by the mention of Hal Clement singing folk songs in Welsh, but if not, you don't need to disabuse us.]

Emma Bull

Bisbee, Arizona

8 January 2003

Dear dears,

Bento 13 came today, so precious that The Powers That Be deemed nothing else worthy to share the box with it. TPTB were darn near right, as usual. I opened the envelope at the table in mid-lobby of the fine old Bisbee, Arizona post office and read Kate's Worldcon story, about Singer. And laughed out loud. They let you do that in Bisbee.

You guys continue to be two of the funniest, most observant, most illuminating essayists I've read. Kate's discoveries in L. A. sent me straight back there (a good thing, honest!); so many of them are part of the real city, as opposed to the sparkly fantasy city that exists beside and within the real one. David's description of the Writers of the Future workshop, especially his experience of the writing process, gave me a wonderful zing of recognition. Thank you, thank you!

Specifics: The big donut is atop Randy's Donuts, and they're very, very good. So are Stan's. Our favorite at the latter is the chocolate peanut butter donut: a raised dough, like a jelly donut, filled with peanut butter and topped with chocolate frosting. You'd think it would be sweet and cloying, but noooooo... (And the peanut butter lets you pretend it's nutritious.)

Powers's "bank of plausibility" principle is so true. We convince readers that time travel is, for the duration, real, because

we've convinced them that the movie theater the heroine was in before she found herself at the edge of the Battle of Gettysburg is also real. Readers trust you when you do that. Ho ho, foolish readers! You are at our mercy.

Will and I have been proposing an apostrophe tax for public signage for years. Any incorrectly used apostrophe on your business's signs or notices—whammo! Fifty bucks into the town general fund! The other one I love is the idiosyncratic use of quotes:

Today's Special:
Apple Pie
with "FREE" Coffee

The diner signmakers really do mean that the coffee is free. They think that "" means "Look, look!" Of course, so do the caps. Well, being pedantic is its own reward, and comes with a tasty side dish of feeling incredibly superior.

[Far too many grocers out there think "fresh" fish is a good thing.]

Thanks again for another fine wee lacquer box of delights!

*"I've just thought of one of those jokes that I'm the only person in the universe who would find it funny."
"Try me. I'm sleep-deprived."*

watching the happy chaos taking place. He was dressed in a zipped-up jacket and satchel hanging off his shoulder, glasses and beard (there's half of fandom right there), and a big smile on his face. He was what British fans would call an anorak. That was Larry Niven. At heart, he's a fan, just doing what he's comfortable with.

You want a ride in a blimp? So do I. The Goodyear fleet comes up here for the odd Blue Jays game, and sometimes when the Molson Indy races around the lakeshore, but a blimp advertising Ricoh floats around Toronto from time to time in the summer, and I think they offer rides. *[Thanks, I'll check it out!]*

Those who have adopted the apostrophe as their own are probably aware of the language nonsense in Québec some years ago which demanded that the apostrophe be removed from English-language companies doing business in that province. Eaton's had to become Eaton or Eatons, and so on. This went on so much that some good friends, Gabrielle Morrissette and Marc Shainblum, created a family of superheroes based on Québec politicians, with their lead character being Angloman: keeping the world safe for apostrophes! Two books of Angloman comics were published in the late 90s, and I think the strip ended at the end of 1999.

"Boston has all those leftover flamingoes; we can paint them grey and call them emus."

Lloyd Penney

Etobicoke, Ontario, Canada

30 January 2003

I've been involved in fandom for 25 years as well, and I've met my share of SF writers, including Isaac Asimov and Ray Bradbury, and some Hollywood actors who have starred in some of my favorite shows. While it's been a pleasure to meet them, I haven't had the *homina-homina-homina* reaction. I'm impressed with their achievements, but I am not in awe of them. I think that's why I feel I can consider some of them personal friends.

[The causality may also run the other direction—you know them as people, so you aren't in awe of them.]

With that in mind, I hope I can run into Janis Ian at Torcon. I've loved her music for a long time, and it's marvelous that she has found SF prodom. I hope she'll also find something of interest in fandom. (Even if I'm not in awe of them, it doesn't mean I wouldn't want to spend an evening with the SF glitterati. It would be major cool.)

Let me give you an example of why I'm not in awe of these folks, because that's what they are, just folks: at our local convention one year, Larry Niven was a late-announced GoH, and while I knew he was there, few others did. The Saturday night of the convention, I was in the middle of a Doctor Who club party, and believe it or not, this party was hopping. At one point, I looked around the room to see who was there, and a relatively small figure was hanging around the doorway, not joining in, but enjoying just



Rule #2: Always bring a book.

Darin Furry
Henderson, Nevada
11 January 2003

I had to comment about what Kate said about gated communities in Bento 13—"la la la I can't hear you!". She was right on target with that one! I used to live in Sacramento, where everyone lives in them. Every night on the news, they have stories about murders, wife beatings, child molestations, etc. and the crime ALWAYS takes place in a gated community. They would ALWAYS interview a neighbor who would say something along the lines of, "...this isn't supposed to happen in a gated community. That's why I moved here." I guess they expect the gates have some sort of magical quality that keeps human nature out along with the riff-raff.

[Darin also mentioned David's story "Nucleon"]

I always mention the Nucleon to Greg, and he told me you wrote a story about it. So, I had to buy the book. I thought the story would be more about the car, but it was still one of the better stories in the anthology. It had warmth and charm, which made it a pleasure to read.

[Well, my original concept for the story was about the car, but the "magic junkyard" part kind of took over. Not that I noticed... I still thought it was a hard-SF alternate-universe story; even sent it to Analog. It was a surprise to me when Hartwell bought it for Year's Best Fantasy. —DDL]

Hail, Columbia

I want to forget the terror, the flames, the destruction; to remember instead that these seven were coming home after a successful mission, several of them having at last achieved a lifelong ambition. To go out at the peak of one's career! And to perish as a *shooting star!* Surely no Caesar ever had such a glorious death. —DDL

This has been a Bento Press publication, brought to you by **Kate Yule** and **David D. Levine**. We are *completely* chuffed at being able to include a special guest piece. Thank you, Mr. Codrescu, and may your employees never be disgruntled. Art in this issue is by David Levine (3), Sue Mason [via the <plokta.con> CD-ROM] (8), Kate Yule (14, 17, 24), Trinlay Khadro (22), Kurt Erichsen (29), and clip art (the rest). Thanks!! Kate designed the cover. Next issue: a Brad Foster wraparound!

Bento is available by Editorial Whim or by asking nicely. (Hey, that's how we got permission for the reprint.) You can send email to Kate@BentoPress.com or David likewise, but Bento is a paper object—you're much more likely to get copies if we **have your mailing address** [hint, hint]. Ours is 1905 SE 43rd Avenue, Portland, Oregon 97215.

We Also Heard From

Kim Huett, Marilyn Levine, Peter Motte, Jerry Kaufman ("while you're remembering the ha'penny, don't forget the mill. What's the matter with the mill? Done broke down."), **Teddy Harvia, Terry Jeeves, Eric Lindsay, David Bratman** ("I think there's actually several Big Donuts in LA. Either that, or it *moves around*"), **Sally Syrjala, Joseph Major, and Sonia Orin Lyris**, who correctly identified last issue's duck reference but not the source of the quote. She gets a copy of our home game. Wait, this *is* our home game.

Sonia also said "August. Has this been lying around since August? Gad." Er, yes, but lying around our house, not yours, so don't feel bad. After Worldcon, we didn't get copies of #13 in the mail until late December.

Thanks for all the zines you've mailed to us, late or otherwise, including **Janna Silverstein's** contribution of a copy of TEC News, the Official Newsletter of The Elongated Collectors! The Secretary's column begins "Greetings, Penny Smashers!" Truly, no one need ever be bored in this world.

David is eligible for the John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer this year. Please remember this when you send in your Hugo nominations (due March 31). Thank you.

Raisins Linos That Fell to the Bottom of the Box

"I wish I had one picoStoll of energy right now."

"Guys! Buffy! Snake! Basement! Now!"

"It's amazing how much Queen Elizabeth looks like a Klingon with just a few strokes of a pen."

"I don't suppose you've heard any more about the Mysterious Gizmo?"

"You don't get ideas, they get you."

"Let's see some squashy-squashy-I'm-bigger-than-you-and-I-have-hard-feet action!"

"Writers are the krill in the Hollywood ecosystem."

"That's it, in a nutcase."
