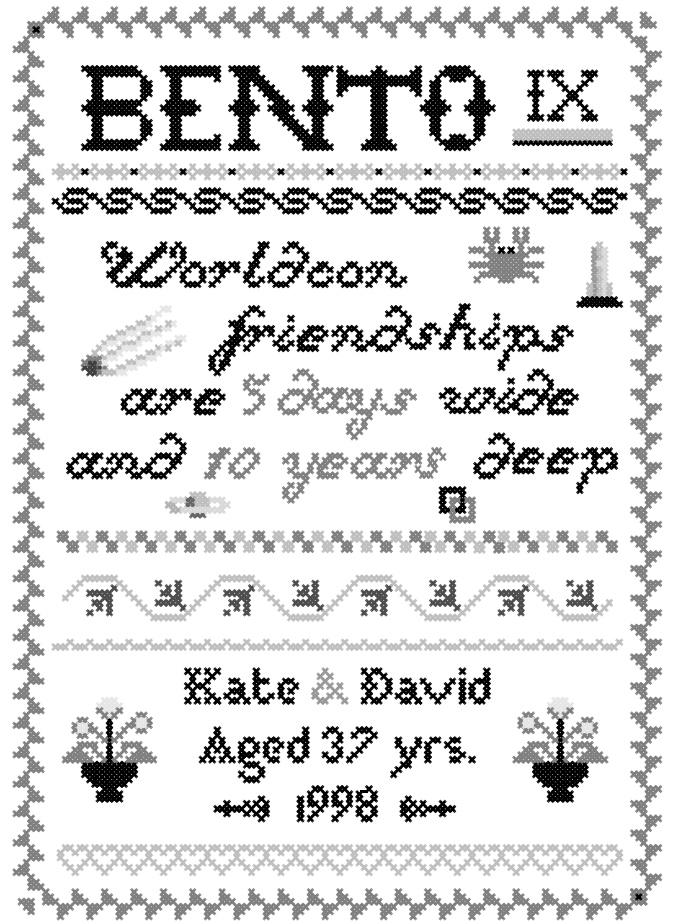




Announcing the **Bento Laptop!**
 (Actually a 2-way alphanumeric pager from RIM Inc. See www.rim.net for more info.)



Why We Do This Zine

- [x] We have things to say and the chutzpah to think you'll be interested
- [x] We love hearing people say "Oh cool! A new *Bento!*"
- [x] Hooper keeps saying nice things about it
- [x] We wanna play too
- [x] It brings keen stuff to our mailslot every week

So What Is It Exactly?

Bento is nominally of the genre "science fiction fanzine", the minimal references to science fiction or explicit fannishness notwithstanding. SF zines (that's 'zine as in magazine, by the way, not as in Auld Lang) have a long history, going back to the days when young Joe Blow was the only geek for blocks around interested in "that rocketship stuff" and eagerly took up correspondence with other such geeks, identifiable because their addresses were published along with Letters to the Editor in the pulp fiction mags. But why mail something to just one pal when you can make half a dozen carbons...dozens of hectograph copies...or hundreds of mimeoed copies on your trusty Gestetner?

Fans have been spewing out the printed word ever since.

But Why "Bento"?

Oh. Well, in Japan *bento* is a box lunch, a delightful compilation of strange and interesting tidbits, meticulously arranged. As I

said in issue #1, of the first time I encountered some: "Each box was a complete little lunch with a neatness, a self-sufficiency, a unity-in-variety that seems typically Japanese." Exactly what we aspired to in our own pocket-sized offering of words.

Besides, everything we wrote for issue #1 turned out to be about food! What else could we call it?

In short: it is what it is. We write it because we want to. We give it to you because we think you'll enjoy it. And if you do, please drop us a note or a postcard to say so! That's all it takes to keep the process rolling along. —KY

Contacting the Editors

Bento 9 is a Bento Press production from

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It is available for The Usual (Letters of Comment, tradezines, editorial whim, or \$2).

Art Credits

Kate did this issue's cover. David did the rest. Artists: You will sleep now, and when you awake you will send us a fillo.

Just another day on the Microsoft Barney Help Line

“Hello, and welcome to the Microsoft ActiMates Barney Help Line. My name is Alan. Would you please read me the serial number printed on the battery cover under Barney’s tail?”

“Thank you. Could you please describe your problem?”

“I see. Have you tried removing the batteries and reinstalling them?”

“Have you used the ActiMates Barney PC Pack to connect Barney to your computer?”

“OK, what version of the PC Pack are you using? It’s printed on the CD.”

“Kids do the darndest things. Well in that case, would you please cover Barney’s right eye with your hand, squeeze his left hand three times, and tell me what he says.”

“I’ll repeat that: ‘LOVE PLAY HAPPY.’ Is that correct?”

“Thank you. That error code indicates that there may be an incompatibility between the Barney’s firmware and the PC Pack. Normally, I’d tell you to upgrade the PC Pack, but without the serial number on the CD I’m afraid you’d have to buy a whole new copy. Can you possibly send in your Barney for a firmware upgrade?”

“Eight to twelve weeks.”

“He’s not supposed to have *that* in his vocabulary! One moment, please....”

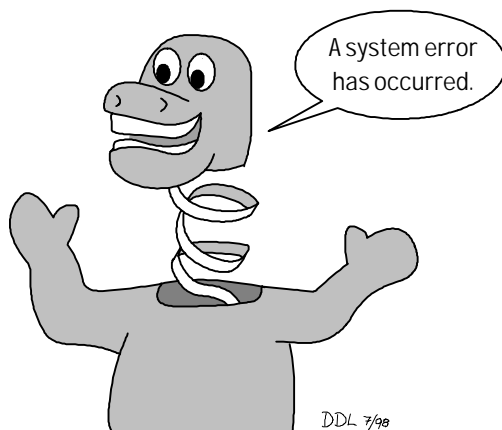
[music]

“Thank you for holding, ma’am. I’m sorry, but apparently your Barney has the VERMIN virus. Do you have a copy of *Norton Playmate for Barney*, or *McAfee’s Barney Gets His Shots*?”

“I’d recommend you purchase one of those products at your local toy or computer store and use it to remove the virus. If that doesn’t help, please call back, and reference case number 022161-DDL.”

“Thank you, and have a good day.”

—DDL



“Please don’t yell, ma’am. Under the circumstances, the best I can suggest is that you try a firmware reset. Do you know how to place Barney in Maintenance Mode?”

“Yes I can, ma’am, but I have to read you this warning first: ‘Using Maintenance Mode incorrectly can cause serious problems that may render Barney completely unusable. Microsoft cannot guarantee that any problems resulting from the use of Maintenance Mode can be solved. You use this mode at your own risk.’ Do you agree to these terms?”

“Please state your full name slowly and clearly for the tape.”

“Thank you. Is the child in the room?”

“That’s good, this could be rather traumatic. I’d like you to reach way back into Barney’s mouth with your finger. You should feel a small round button under the fabric. Press the uvula—excuse me, ma’am, I meant the button—and hold it for at least three seconds, then tell me what Barney says.”

“‘LOVE LOVE HAPPY LOVE FRIEND,’ is that correct?”

“That means your Barney was made in Singapore, so you should twist Barney’s head to the right about 120 degrees, until you hear a click.”

“Now press both of Barney’s feet with one hand while you squeeze his right hand three times. He should say ‘LOVE LOVE LOVE LOVE LOVE.’”

“What was that, ma’am?”

Better Living Through Brain Chemistry

So there I was, sitting in the volunteer fire hall at Rehoboth Beach, Maryland, watching the square dancing and having my second breakfast of the day while Drew and the Californians gave each other grief. That much of it was typical, at any rate.

One trenchant remark from Tim drew mock-solicitousness: “You’ll all have to forgive him;—dear, you *know* how you get when you haven’t taken your meds!” I opened my mouth—closed it—Tim cried “What? What!”

“Well,” slowly, “I *had* been going to say there’s no such thing as anti-catty meds. Then I remembered—there is—I’m on it....”

There are those who make Happy Pill jokes about Prozac, and there are those who know the truth of it. Reality, as is so often the case, is far more intricate than easy wisecracks. Prozac is not an instant Happy Pill. It’s not instant anything—they told me to expect 4–6 weeks before I noticed any difference, and were delighted when I started perking up after just three. If I stop, the effect would drain off just as gradually. One does not go postal upon missing a dose or two, thank you.

So what is Prozac if it’s not powdered euphoria? Well, how about detergent? For me, depression is a veil of grey-brown gunge that distorts and obscures my view of the world. I *know* it’s illusion; I know that the world is fundamentally OK and good things

exist out there somewhere; but recognizing the illusion does not mean I can remove it. Self-help books and therapists give me coping skills, to get through the day despite depression. "Coping" implies that the problem remains. Coping is a *bitch*. Prozac cuts through the grime, washes it away and lets the sun shine through! Hallelujah!

Marion Winik, in an essay on National Public Radio, mused that she might indeed be a better person without her anger; but would that person still be Marian? In my case, although the Prozac affected me in many unexpected ways—depression is so very much more than just severe sadness—I think they all let me be *more* myself. If anything, I am out from under a curse. All the essentials are there. When a friend died, I cried. When another friend couldn't make it for coffee, I *didn't* cry. "Life," I told David, "is no longer just one big reason to over-react."

I have language back, too. That was getting scary. I would flail for a noun, the thought clear in my mind's eye but unable to get any further; or else I'd lose the train of thought entirely. Poof, over a cliff, gone. Bye-bye. *No trace*.

I would talk, and be looked at as if I were speaking Urdu; I would listen, and while recognizing all the words as English, I could not assign meaning to the whole. Worse, I'd find a *dozen* meanings and be unable to choose among them! Was the person sarcastic? sincere? offering a suggestion, laying down a dictate,

requesting info, requesting action? Lost in a maze of twisty little sentences, all alike!! Aiieeee!

Anti-catty medication, I said. Yep, that too. Do you know the fairy tale about two sisters, one of whom was nice to the anonymous old hag in the woods and thus brings forth roses and rubies with every utterance, while for the second sister, it's toads and vipers every time? Guess which one I was! I didn't *want* to be spewing venomous sarcasm at my sweetie, but sometimes those were the only words that would surface. Not to mention the never-ending internal rehearsals of what I "shoulda said to that jerk on the bus", etc. etc. mutter humph. I don't know why the Prozac helps this, but it does. Again, Hallelujah, brethren!

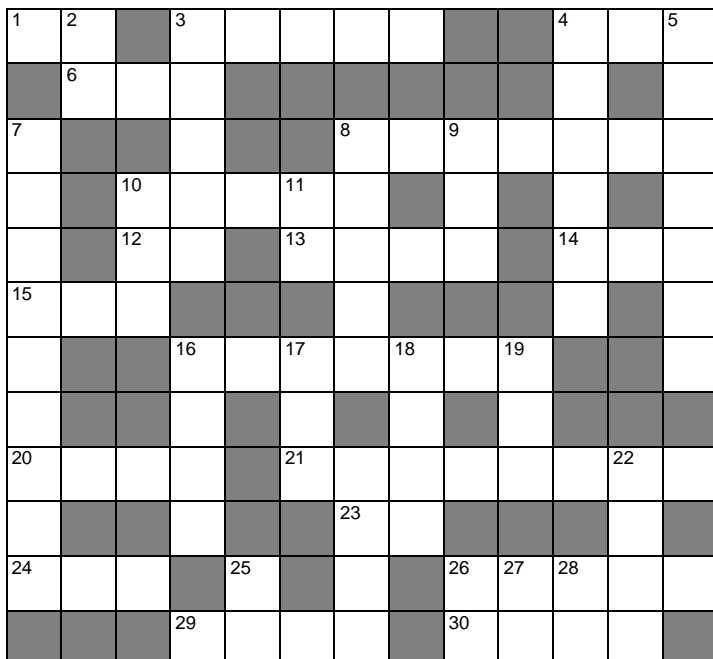
I have never considered suicide. The one time things got really, really, really bad became the time I sought the right kind of help, and things got better than I hoped they could be. If I ever lost that hope—if I were faced with the prospect of continuing on indefinitely the way I was that hellish weekend, manic & cranky & unable to sleep, crying at everything and nothing, unable to communicate—then I would understand the impulse to Make It Stop.

Moral of the story? Brains are weird. Your inner bitch *can* be made to shut the hell up. Get help if you need it. And remember: if some stress queen is in your face *right now*, suggesting Prozac to them is pointless. For that, you want aerosol Valium! Ffff! Ahhh....

—KY

Bento Puzzle Page

Easy as ?



ACROSS

- 1 Not flat
- 3 Perfect vision
- 4 Capt. Scarlet's "OK;" also IEEE interest group
- 6 Object-oriented programming language
- 8 Common URL prefix
- 10 Einstein said so
- 12 Obscure macro language
- 13 IBM operating system
- 14 Laughing gas
- 15 Ψ
- 16 π
- 20 Fussbudget robot
- 21 Enterprising ID number
- 23 That goddam box
- 24 British intelligence agency
- 26 Popular computer terminal, c. 1980
- 29 Standard film format
- 30 Year of *Start the Revolution Without Me*. Yes, still.

DOWN

- 2 Location of U.S. capital
- 3 Elementary equation
- 4 Boldly went where Shatner went before
- 5 Decision to proceed or not, at NASA
- 7 Chip maker's domain
- 8 Sulfuric acid
- 9 A boy 4U, a girl 4 me?
- 10 An effect of atomic explosion
- 11 Colorless, odorless, deadly
- 16 Networking vendor and ballpark namesake
- 17 Reciprocal of N
- 18 1970s Manchester pop group
- 19 Emergency number (U.S.)
- 22 Earth's albedo, according to Vangelis
- 25 JMS's claim to fame
- 26 Top-notch
- 27 Title character of Sturgeon story "Killdozer," a.k.a. "Daisy Etta"
- 28 Nebula in Sagittarius

David and Kate and the Coffee People

a true story

Once upon a time there was a happy little man who loved coffee. He spent his nights roasting coffee beans and his days grinding them, and he sold beans and coffeepots and filters to the people of the town. Everyone called him the Coffee Man, and he and his happy little wife were called the Coffee People. David and Kate lived just around the corner from the Coffee People, and often went to visit them in their little shop in the basement.

Now in those days coffee was a pretty straightforward thing; most people were content to percolate it and drink it with a little cream and sugar. But the Coffee Man knew that little brown bean was capable of much more, and slowly he began to educate the people of the town about lattes and espressos and cappucinos. The little shop in the basement began to fill up with exotic equipment and beans from far across the seas, and as people learned about the joys of gourmet coffee they came from all around. Soon the little shop was so full of people buying beans and machines that there was no room for people who just wanted a cup of coffee, so the Coffee People put a little cart outside the store just for that. David and Kate would often stop by the cart for a cappucino and a cookie, because the Coffee People also made some of the finest snickerdoodles in the known universe.

though the tie-died outfits were starting to look a little bit like a uniform, and they often walked down to the new corner to buy beans and lattes and ice cream.

By now David and Kate hardly ever saw the Coffee People themselves at all, but they kept hearing news about them. They were always in the news because they kept opening more and more stores all over the town, and even in other towns. Pretty soon David and Kate heard a very interesting piece of news: the Coffee People were Going Public.

Now, Going Public is something that businesses do when they have been very successful and want to be even more so.

When a business Goes Public, it means that all of its friends and customers can buy a little piece of the business, to help make it grow and share in its happiness. David and Kate were very interested in sharing in the Coffee People's happiness; they knew that the Coffee People were very happy and hoped that there would be lots and lots of happiness for everyone to share. And so, when the big day came, David and Kate took some of their savings and bought a little piece of the Coffee People's business.



The shop and the cart were a wild success. Pretty soon the Coffee People had to open a second store across the street, just to serve people coffee and cookies—and ice cream. You see, the Coffee Man was very busy and very clever (and didn't sleep very much), so he was always coming up with new ideas, like ice cream with ground-up coffee beans in it. David and Kate liked that a lot. The Coffee Man also invented a new kind of coffee with twice the caffeine and an awesome flavor, which made him very popular, and he always came up with funny and clever names for all his coffee products. By now the Coffee People had many employees, who wore funky tie-died outfits to work and had a cheery and very alert attitude. David and Kate enjoyed chatting with the employees, but they were sad that they didn't see the Coffee Man and his happy little wife as often as they used to.

The Coffee People were very busy, and they opened more stores all across the town. The clever and industrious Coffee Man kept coming up with new and interesting coffee things, like coffee granola and coffee soda pop, and even opened a new kind of store that would serve you coffee right in your car. Around this time David and Kate moved away from the old neighborhood, but just a little while later a Coffee People store opened right near their new house. It was very clean and bright and efficient, and it had tasty coffee drinks with clever names and wide-awake employees with tie-died outfits. David and Kate were very glad to see it, even

The Coffee People took David and Kate's money, and the money from a lot of other people, and used it to grow like never before. They opened many new stores in other towns and other states. They grew so fast they couldn't wait for new stores to be built, so they started buying other people's stores and putting the Coffee People name on them. They were so busy growing there wasn't a lot of happiness to share. The line that showed the happiness went down like a frown, instead of up like a smile the way it was supposed to, but David and Kate held on to their little piece of the business because they liked the Coffee People and wanted them to be happy too.

It was around this time that David and Kate started noticing that the happy little Coffee People stores were looking less like a funky basement shop and more like a McDonald's with tie-dye. That the clever slogans on the reader board outside each store weren't as clever as they had been, and that all the stores had the same slogans and all changed their slogans at the same time. That the coffee drinks had been re-sized, with new clever names so you couldn't tell you weren't getting quite as much for your money as you used to. And the happiness line went down and down. The Coffee People were getting bigger, all right, but they weren't getting any happier.

Finally the Coffee People got so unhappy that they had to stop growing. They sold off a lot of the stores they had bought from

other people. They closed down some of the original stores that weren't making enough money. Finally they had to sell the whole company. Some nice businessmen came down from Canada and bought enough of the pieces of Coffee People that they could tell the company what to do, and the Coffee Man quit his job and went off to seminary instead.

David and Kate got a long letter that talked about Financial Instruments and Contribution Margins and Successor Corporations, and after they had read it they found that they now owned a little piece of a different company. It was still called Coffee People, but it was now a U.S. Subsidiary instead of a happy little shop in the basement around the corner, and there was no sign of the Coffee Man anywhere.

David and Kate still walk down to the corner for a latte every now and again, although they usually order it with non-fat milk these days and they haven't had the ice cream in a while. The employees are still bright and alert and dressed all in tie-dye, and the coffee is still hot and still smells wonderful. But they miss the happy little Coffee Man. And the saddest part of all is that they know that they helped turn the happy little shop into a U.S. Subsidiary, just by wanting to help it grow and share in the happiness.

—DDL

"I need a get-well card for an Eskimo punk leatherdyke."

Duck Dodgers in the Generation X^{1/2} Century

I have seen my birth year, 1961, identified both as being part of Generation X and as being part of the Baby Boom, but I've never really felt as though I belong to either. I've been using the term "Generation X-and-a-half" to refer to myself, but that sounds clunky; another term I've heard used is "Cusper."

Whatever the name, there are definite advantages to being of this hemi-demi-semi-generation. Virtually every aspect of my life has been thrashed out by the Boomers ahead of me; I can make good use of their discards, and watch and learn from their mistakes. It's like having an older brother.

Following in the Boomers' footsteps, I went to newly-built, uncrowded schools. I was too young for the draft. I applied to colleges that, seeing the pool of potential enrollees shrinking, offered scholarships and other goodies to potential students. Upon graduation I found a job market where Boomers were just moving up out of the entry-level positions, leaving a vacuum at the bottom that sucked me right in. The same vacuum continues to suck me up the corporate ladder in the wake of rising Boomers (clawing and scratching at each other all the way, leaving an oasis of calm behind). My house was purchased from a Boomer couple whose family outgrew it (after remodeling the bathroom and upgrading the electrical system). Encountering the beginnings of middle-age spread, I find a smorgasbord of classy, recently-built health clubs

You Can Tell a Native

- They give directions relative to landmarks that aren't there any more: "Turn left where Verscharen's used to be, and go down by Dr. Good's old office."
- The local place name has only two syllables. Thus Chkago; N'orluns; Buff'lo, New York; Bawlm'r, Maryland; Tronna, Ontario; Mwaukie, Wisconsin. My parents manage this with "Rochester."
- They never go to the local tourist attractions (e.g. the Statue of Liberty), unless about to leave town forever.
- They remember "when it were all fields 'round 'ere." This comes up in conversation. Frequently.

—KY



and low-fat foods from major manufacturers, all clamoring for my business. It's all there just waiting for me.

We Cuspers are often ignored by the media. This is a good thing. I feel it gives me the freedom to build my own lifestyle. I listen to the Beatles as well as Barenaked Ladies; I shop at the Gap and at Goodwill.

Lest this seem overly smug, let me point out that having an older brother is not always a bed of roses. I make most of my friends feel old (this sounds good, but it gets tired fast). More importantly, the Boomers have used more than their share of natural resources and have produced an economy that, while appearing robust at the moment, may not have the staying power to sustain me in my old age. Their politics, following the old adage of "anyone who is still a socialist at 40 has no head," are taking a rather extreme conservative turn that makes me worry about the future of individual civil rights.

The Boomers are my semi-generation's bellwether, our pilot fish, our advance guard...and our curse. There are so many of them! And where they go, I find that I generally find myself tagging along—whether I thought I wanted to or not!

It can be scary to see your own future in the headlines. —DDL

Mice are not as much alike as electrons, and much more expensive.

Things I remember that seem utterly weird now

- Turning the TV on early to warm up
- Carefully stacking LP's onto that special phonograph spindle that dropped them down in turn
- If you missed a TV show, or it was on after your bedtime, you could never ever see it
- Throwing cans in the trash
- Piling 5 kids and a dog into the back of the station wagon, without seatbelts
- People smoking in movie theaters
- When it were all fields 'round 'ere

Things I fully expect to see in my lifetime

(Note: not necessarily a good thing)

- Asymmetrical body-building
- Functional wrist phones
- Obsolescence of the CD
- Potato-chip flavored Pixie Stix

—KY

*"I tried to get Lex Nakashima to mail me a ferret."
"Why?" "'Cause I wasn't going to go pick it up!"*

I have spoken to a few folks about the voices, they seem to want to step back a bit when I talk about hearing voices. In my case, since I cannot remember names, the voices do much less for me. I have to translate from voicetalk to human names, and that is quite a bump.

We just got out of the shower—that's why we look awake!

Morlocs

Joseph Nicholas

London, England
8 October 1997

Many thanks for *Bento 8*. I remembered that you went square-dancing; I even remembered that you went square-dancing with gays and lesbians. But—*nude* gay and lesbian square-dancing? Boggle, gasp, fall over backwards. I mean, isn't it a bit, er, *uncomfortable*? All that prancing about without any, well, *restraint*? And the more vigorous the prancing, then surely the more vigorous the, *coff coff, flapping and bouncing*?

On the other hand, I don't think I actually want to know any more about this.

Voices of our Fathers

William D. Yule

Kennewick, Washington

Saturday 10/4/97

From the Columbia Encyclopedia, 4th Edition, 1975 (Wow—maybe that's why we got it so cheap from the Book of the Month Club!), re the dingo: "In the wild state it howls rather than barks." Maybe I missed something. Everybody is a critic.

Talk about timely! I was browsing the Bento pile Thursday night, noticed that #7 was dated Sept. '96 and wondered when/if another would be forthcoming. Friday in the mail—Bento 8. Which I read in the PO parking lot with much sniggering and not a few he-haws. WOW and you think you know people!

Buddhist monks and nuns have begun a week of prayers and meditation for the souls of the dead chickens.

Prof. L. P. Levine

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

6 Oct 1997

Personally I do *not* know how to half pound pastrami, but I do know how to half can kraut, but it starts to smell after a half a while.

"Immigrants" in *Bento 7* makes more sense to me now that I've finally abandoned my 12-year-old Amstrad and acquired a proper PC with all the usual bells and whistles. Having used Windows 3.1 at work for several years (although work being the civil service, it's a miracle that we have computers at all), I should have found the transition to the Windows 95 which came bundled with the machine fairly easy; but it's still slightly unsettling to turn on and be greeted with a handful of scattered icons rather than a full screen of program groups. I'm one of those people who likes to see what's going on, and find Windows 95's failure to show me everything a bit hostile.

Burbling about computers! Whatever next?

What is that thing on the cover? It looks like a decorated garden hose reel seen in profile, but I'm sure it can't be....

[It is a See & Say, a classic American toy dating from the Baby Boom years. You point the thing in the middle at one of the pictures on the outside ring, pull the string, and it makes a sound approximating the sound made by the thing in the picture. Kind of like one of those kindergarten point-and-click games, only all analog and implemented entirely in hardware.]

"How do you mail cannoli?"

"The same way you mail ferrets!"

Luke McGuff

Seattle, Washington

8 Oct 1997

I read and got a big kick out of *Bento 8*, and thought I would pass on to you that I mention you in tonight's journal entry. Hah! Here's the URL:

<http://oo.net/luko/journal/9710/971007.html>

Kind of a long address, but it'll get you there.

[I admire your bravery in posting your journal on the web. I wouldn't dream of such a thing, and I don't get nearly as personal as you do in my journal....]

Todor Stoyanov

Plovdiv, Bulgaria

10 Oct 1997 – 17 Nov 1997

Thank you very much for your booklet!

I started reading it with great interest. It gives me an idea, though very clear, about the SFun you had!!!

Quite unknown terms and events, though; may be they give a food to imagination.

The words I had some difficulties with are in your welcoming: shortstop (in the meaning of the sentence in concern), illo and hom bao. "Illo" seems to be some form of illustration, right?

Our fandom in Bulgaria was somewhat similar to yours about 10 years ago. Unfortunately it does not exist anymore ; - (.

possible. May be you know some overworked fanzine editors and publishers willing to get some rest forwarding some of the typesetting, formatting, spellchecking, proofreading, etc., to a person like me? I am ready to work for any of them cutting the ratings two, three times....

[Todor is an isolated Bulgarian fan and an enthusiastic e-mail correspondent. Please send him your zines, old or new, and any old SF paperbacks you'd be willing to spare. His paper address:

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Bob Kanefsky

somewhere in cyberspace

10 Oct 1997

I never would have guessed that the cover of *Bento 8* was "Sounds of Silence" if the credits hadn't told me. (Maybe if it had a string, like I remember those toys having). My instant interpretation was that it was an alternative to the Chinese calendar: you know, Year of the Llama, Year of the Avocado, Year of the Mime.

[I wanted to have a real See & Say—with a string to throttle yourself with, like we all remember—but I couldn't find a picture of

Ex-members of the former SF-club in Plovdiv have been longing of restoring its activities.

Have you read "Microworlds" by my favourite Stanislaw Lem? In its article "Science Fiction—A Hopeless Case: with Exceptions" he deals with very interesting and at the same time sad matters. Meanwhile he mentions in good words fanzine movement though he stresses the problems it faces. It is not the only interesting article in his book.

Something that strikes me as strange when reading Western fanzines (a rather great part of them) is that they do not touch upon sci-fi itself, but mostly things to some extent aside from the main field. I'll try to make myself clear describing the way we did our fanzines about 10–15 years ago. We dwelt upon SF-writers, their works, certain successes or failures, criticized, compiled bibliographies, did our best to discover mistakes in concern with sciences, analyzed. (Please, do not take it personally as offense; your fanzine is written professionally, you've got the talent.) May be it was due to the communist systems and the fandom was an outlet to us. Fandom is a certain phenomenon to be studied professionally by sociologists, psychologists....

By the way, I provide typesetting, spell-checking, light proof-reading of the type missed words or those that slip the spellchecking & editor's eye, black & white DTP in English, Russian and Bulgarian. In case you need a service I offer, email me as soon as

one anywhere, so I had to settle for drawing an ersatz modern See & Say instead. Progress, humph.]

Shouldn't the opposite of "disclaimer" be "enclamer"?

[Dis claimer is your claimer, dis claimer is my claimer....]

George Flynn

Cambridge, Massachusetts

Oct. 15, 1997

Thanks for *Bento 8*, another delightful issue. (They may be propagating: at the Worldcon I restored another copy to its owner, who had left it on the Boston in 2001 table.)

Imploding landmarks (or Landmarks) seems to be catching on. In Rhode Island there's a bridge that needs demolition, so they've been making overtures to Hollywood to see if anyone would like to blow it up on camera. No takers yet, but who knows....

Gee, the last time I was naked in a crowd was for my draft physical in 1958. (I flunked. Weak eyes and flat feet. Plus, no doubt, the fact that we were between wars at the time.)

chuckle on the "pernicious dyscalculia."

I seem to recall that "Bovril" is derived from "vril," a nourishing food in a proto-skiffy novel by Bulwer-Lytton (of "It was a dark and stormy night" fame). Much fascinating information of this sort is suppressed by dictionaries' pernicious reluctance to include trademarks.

Karen Stephenson suggests “a whole computer museum just waiting for people to clean out their attics & garages.” Hey, Jerry Pournelle’s first computer is already in the Smithsonian.

In my loc, I wrote “till” but you printed it as the non-word “til” (one of my pet peeves; peeves are much easier to maintain than weasels or hamsters); for shame.

[*Sorry. Kate sincerely thought “till” was a non-word in that context; you are supported by the OED. Please do give us due credit for at least abbreviating “until” with an apostrophe and not a beginning-single-quote. (This is a peeve that only recently appeared on Kate’s doorstep, but has become quite dear to her heart.)*]

<Alpha-1> Net Control Broadcast: ALL OPERATORS, ALL NETS, Please StandBy, Silence Channel Traffic, JMS coming on-line in 30 seconds

Ulrika O’Brien

Los Angeles, California
Oct 30 1997

Bentos are a nice, small, handy size for losing, and I keep doing it. Most recently I nearly dropped #8 into a crack between the seats on a bus trip to Tijuana, but I’ve also rediscovered previous issues tucked in among the bills or misfiled among the old

back suggested that there may be value to modeling “mind” as somewhat analogous to the movements of a flock of birds or a school of fish, which often move as if directed by a single, monolithic and unified control, but which are really discrete bits moving under an effective mechanism of synchrony. It’s an idea I find strangely compelling.

[*I didn’t intend to claim any general lack-of-separateness for other people’s internal monologists. I only know that, for my father as well as myself, The Voice is recognizably a subprocess of our own minds. Whatever Joan of Arc heard was her problem.*]

Roger Waddington

North Yorkshire, England
17th November, 1997

Many thanks for *Bento* 8. They say all human life can be found within the pages of fanzines; what they don’t mention is the educational aspect, that even within this small compass there’s things I’ve never done, places I’ve never been. Mind you, I’m not sure about enjoying the experience thus gathered; but at least they can be sampled.

Such as the thought of square dancing, which is one pleasure I’ve never indulged in; though what prevents me is having two left feet, to match my left-handedness. Even something so simple as line dancing, the present countrywide craze, has steps that are

Christmas cards. They do keep reappearing to plague my conscience, though.

For your “One In A Million” list, add “13 people in Los Angeles County,” as in Angela Jones’ remark that “If you think the guy is one in a million, just remember there’s thirteen more just like him in Los Angeles county alone.”

My favorite piece of the issue was “How Brightly Shines the Moon.” I just love the concept, and my hat’s off to you for the courage to have gotten involved in the Moonshine Tip in the first place. The visuals alone are priceless. I am in awe, and jealous. I just can’t see myself racking up life experiences nearly this interesting to write about, especially now that the Nude Gay Transvestite Bondage Square Dancing desk is already taken.

In regards to the running internal commentary voice, I think mine must be slower and less creative than yours. I have one, but it doesn’t seem to pull up quite as great a profusion of associations as yours, and it isn’t that unusual for other people, at least some of them, to be able to follow my A-to-G associational leaps without explanation of the intermediate jumps.

I wonder a bit about your assertion that there isn’t any separateness to the various internal monologists we all have. Are they genuinely different in kind from the “hearing voices” of some schizophrenics, and the phenomenon of multiple personality disorder, or are they just different in degree? A talk I heard some years

beyond me; but then, right from the hula hoop and the yo-yo, I’ve never been coordinated enough to carry such fads off successfully.

[*A common misperception. Modern Western Square “Dancing” is, to be honest, actually a form of close-order drill. It doesn’t have “steps” in that sense—all you have to do is get your body and your hands in the right place at the right time. I (David) am considered a very good square dancer, but I have given up on line dancing, and many other dance forms, after repeated attempts.*]

Still, square dancing might at least be imaginable; but nude square dancing? Never in a million years! Perhaps it’s being the epitome of the buttoned-up Brit, never willing to let his feelings show (or anything else) but I could never display myself so openly, or (perhaps the more useful phrase) let it all hang out. (I’m gradually getting used to opening myself out in the form of LoCs, but that’s with a printed page and an ocean between us.) Oh, as a race we’re gradually getting there—as witness the never-before-seen display of public grief on the death of Princess Diana—but we’re not so comfortable with nudity yet, still confusing it with sexual desire.

[*It’s not just the Brits. Even one of the gay dancers in our club read David’s piece and said “This is a parody, right?” When assured that it was not, he declared vehemently that he’d never do that!*]

When I look at the present global market and the difficulty of finding brand names that will mean the same in every country, the Victorians had it much easier. At least for the three products you quote, which all had their basis in Latin, the universal language; and also guaranteed to give an air of scientific theory. “Bovril” is well enough known; that’s made up of *bos* (the Latin for ox) and *vril*, a word invented by Edward Bulwer Lytton, a Victorian best-seller, to describe the power that ran his future society in *The Coming Race* (1871), something like electricity. (Concocted in 1887 by John Lawson Johnston; which I had to look up.)

“Ovaltine,” another 19th-century discovery, took the same route. Originally, it was Ovo-Maltine; the *ovo* was the Latin for egg; the malt—well, and the “ine” denoted them mixed. Apparently that was a trade name too far, one difficult to register in Britain, so it was shortened to Ovaltine. Have to admit, it’s the first time I’ve heard of Altoids (peppermint lozenges, right?). However, it’s in the same book, also from the 19th century, invented at a time when *-oid* was a popular suffix for patent medicines; the *alt* part just meant the highest quality, the best available; from the Latin *altus*.

[Intel just paid a phenomenal amount of money to some creative agency for a name for their new chip. They came up with “Xeon” (pronounced “zeeon”), which I must admit is a pretty cool name. But then the lawyers and marketeers set upon it like a herd

This also sounds so negative, which is weird, since *Bento* is one of the most unrelentingly positive zines I’ve read. Very little complaining, and that’s more an amused befuddlement. Hurrah! Like *Weetzie Bat*, you’re a slim volume that simply makes me happy.

Karen Stephenson

Corvallis, Oregon

June 24, 1998

I enjoy receiving *Bento* at sporadic intervals and am showing my appreciation by sending my letter of comment at equally random and sporadic intervals. *Bento* 8 just resurfaced from the miscellaneous flotsam in the computer room.

As the parent of an almost-two-year-old, I have been interacting with those see-and-say things and think that a sounds-of-silence one would be a big improvement.

I have thought of the weasel help reference frequently. Just replace “weasel” with “child”....

WAHF-fles

We also heard from: Brad W. Foster (who said “The tale of Gelatinous Foods had me heading for a hamburger!”), Terry Garey, Kris Jensen, Eric Richards (who thinks David Lynch should look into this square dance culture), Pamela Boal, Alison

of jackals on a gazelle, and declared that the only officially acceptable usage for the name is to bury it in the phrase “Pentium® II Xeon™ processor.” Poor thing.]

Peter Larsen

Minneapolis, Minnesota

13 June 98

Hmph. Can’t say I think much of your Dim Sum style. Weirdly, Minneapolis has some of the best Dim Sum I’ve tasted—a very friendly place called the Mandarin Kitchen. Anyway, Dim Sum is not for the faint of heart or fussy eaters; leave ‘em at home. It’s more bao for the rest of us. Tripe, chicken feet, jellyfish—be prepared! Be intrepid! You will learn to love the stuff. I have to say that my exposure has been seriously broadened by a friend’s determined mother—she knows what she wants, and you’d best go along. This is the best dim sum experience. Life is short; try the stuff—geez.

[We do, we do! We have witnesses! Just ask Elise or Singer about the Jade Villa in Oakland. We had the spoo. It was fresh.]

Naked squaredancing? We are living in the last days. It beats naked Morris Dancing by a long shot, I suppose. But who am I to mock someone else’s fun? I guess the only thing you’d really miss in naked dancing is any skirt-twirling. Well, there might be chafing, too, I suppose. Really what I suppose is that I’m thinking about this too hard. Whatever makes you happy....

Scott (who insisted on Usenet that “the sum of the staples and columns shall be Five;” when I pointed out that this implied Bento, with one column per page, should have four staples in its tiny spine, she responded “Well, I didn’t say it was a sensible article of faith!”), Candi Strecker (Hey Mom! Candi Strecker liked our zine!), Mog Decarnin, and Steve Berry.

Solution to Puzzle on page 9

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“If that mailing tube is scrabbling, I ain’t opening it!”
