



Letter from the Editor

The longest day of the year just passed, and mid-summer is fading into history as the days get hotter and heavier, sunny July and August still awaiting us with a promise of blue skies and clear nights.

After you get home from a weekend road trip or a particularly good bar-b-que, write a little article and share your experience. When you are pondering the nature of existence while combing a beach, make a mental note to type it into your laptop and send it to Babble-ONline. Writing it down will solidify it in your mind. Sharing it in this newsletter will solidify *you* in our minds.

Thanks for all of this month's submissions. Enjoy the summer!

dan@fritzcomics.com ☒

Guero You Going This Summer?

By Brett

The band Oasis recently released a new album, and every time this has occurred over the past six years, I feel like a kid again. But back when our ears soaked in the brilliance of a champagne supernova, Beck provided us with real HELP and informed us precisely where it's at. *Odelay* trumped *Independence Day* for the throne in the summer of 1996 and stamped a number of unforgettable hits onto those hazy days—forming a pocket of both time and sound eternal: bottles and cans and just clap your hands! For whatever reason, Summer has the propensity to marry specific albums and immortalize them. Perhaps it's the extra free time or the excessive drive time en route to vacationland that helps her etch certain albums in history. Summer, by the way, is polygamous. *Odelay's* universality made it an instant classic. It transcended age groups.

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Wine Country

By Steven Fritz

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Dictator of the Month: Myanaung Phauk

By Fritz and Hall

Past Dictators

| Name | Country |
|------------|------------|
| Aideed | Somalia |
| Papa Smurf | Smurfland |
| Superbus | Rome |
| Musharraf | Pakistan |
| Qaddafi | Libya |
| Karimov | Uzbekistan |
| Taylor | Liberia |
| Milosevic | Yugoslavia |
| Saddam | Iraq |
| Mugabe | Zimbabwe |
| Pinochet | Chile |
| Ceausescu | Romania |
| Pol Pot | Cambodia |

Probably one of the cutest little genocidal military leaders to grace the pages of *Babble-ON*, Myanaung has but one message to send to you: "Give me a Phauking break!" (He's also a part-time comedian at the Improv.)

Yeah, some people have accused the little Yoda of systematically murdering about a million Shan people in Myanmar (f.k.a. Burma), but how could a guy with glasses be that mean? Look at him. If you were Asian, he could be your loving grandfather.

So, let that be a lesson to us all: while traversing the streets of little Myanmar villages, be sure to avoid nice looking guys in green uniforms. They are evil.

THE END ☒



The Criminally Comical Trials of Mattlock

By Calderwood and Fritz



Texas Limo

Contributed by Aaron MacPhie



Unpredictable Nicknames of the Month

By SMF

Richard ... Dick

William ... Bill

James ... Clem



Problem Hole

By Srida Joisa

"8th Grade"

Here's something I found on the Internet.

What's the 1's digit of twelve to the 100th power?

See next issue for the answer! Also, see page 8 for last month's answer! ☒

Tower of Babble-ON's "Before-and-After" Corner

By Susan Fritz

"Condoleezza Rice Cake" ☒

Wine Country

By Steven Fritz

Last weekend I visited Sonoma to see places I've not visited before. One such place is the B.R. Cohn winery. Just a mile or so up the road from downtown Sonoma, you'll be very happy with the place and the wine. This month's pick is their 2002 Silver Label Cabernet Sauvignon. This premium wine has a superb dry cherry flavor and a deep red color. Bottled from grapes grown exclusively on their own property adds an extra element of value. This one won't let you down. At a \$45 price tag you can afford to treat yourself once in a while.

As the long time manager of the band The Doobie Brothers, Bruce's winery is more than just another place. While there I saw one of the band members hanging out in the tasting room. This must have something to do with their new release. Check out B.R. Cohn. You never know who you'll run into.



Storage tips:

It's no accident that wine bottles are laying on their sides when you see them in a proper wine rack. Why? Most wine is stopped up with a cork. Cork is nothing more than the bark of a tree. Like any wood, it does get dry over time. Placing the bottle on its side, or better yet with a slight tilt down toward the neck, keeps the cork wet. This ensures that the cork gets and stays swelled up. You guessed it – a swollen cork fills up the opening better than a dried up one. If you buy by the case, place it upside down or on its side. No major worries here because it takes a few years to dry to the point of leaking air.

Squeeze the cork or smell it?

At a restaurant, and at home for that matter, you should squeeze the cork as a better gauge of its readiness to drink rather than smelling it. Why? The old school centered on the idea that a bad smelling cork was a clue to its drinkability. I've never opened a bottle and had it smell bad. The whole squeezing thing is simple. If the wine has been stored properly the cork should be soft. It should be wet. Not the whole cork but rather ¼ of the cork. Dry is bad. Wet is good. Wet ensures a well sealed wine. Here's toasting you. ☒

Submission Suggestions

Your contribution can be anything that fits onto a sheet of paper.

Here are a few ideas:

| | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Editorials | Reports | Philosophy |
| Reviews | Ramblings | Rants |
| Comics | Puzzles | Jokes |
| Quotes | Polls | Trivia |
| Drawings | Poetry | Recipes |
| Photographs | Short stories | News |
| Predictions | Advice | Graphs |

Please send all of your submissions by the deadline to dan@fritzcomics.com.☒

What Life is All About

(Part Four)

By Srida Joisa

In the last episode of the series, I think I failed pretty miserably. No one wrote me any flame mail. Oh well. I guess I'm just a really lovable guy and no one wanted to ruin that.

Seriously, I think that the previous installment was probably the hardest one to write. It's tough to be real without being cheesy or graphic. Simmer down, simmer down. This one's not going to get graphic either. You can always check out Amsterdam for that.

PART 4: SATISFACTION / PROGRESS / WORKING AND CONTRIBUTING / DOING GOOD IN THE WORLD

This installment has a pretty long title. I think that's because I'm more sure about the first couple of sub-titles actually being synonymous and less sure about the latter sub-titles. Life is definitely about satisfaction. I think that generally means it's about progress as well. Oftentimes I have a hard time thinking about progress without thinking about work or contribution to society generally. I suppose you can think about making progress at a game or at singing or some art that you just do for yourself. And that's not really work. Maybe you're contributing or maybe not. It's just not that clear.

Finally, I dropped in that crazy "doing good" idea. I'm pretty sure that is not synonymous with satisfaction. But I think it is true for me. And this is my article. So screw you if you disagree. Address all hate mail to: dan@fritzcomics.com

Satisfaction is not happiness. We'll talk about that some other time. Satisfaction is about contentment. It's about feeling secure in your place within the world. One way to think about it is when you actually meet your inner most expectations. I doubt you're really happy at that point. It's pretty tough to be really happy. But you can be satisfied. For instance, you're graduating from college. You know you don't have the greatest grades in the world, but you didn't do that bad either. You're looking to get a job so you can pay the bills (or at least avoid living with your parents because that sucks). So you interview for jobs during on-campus recruiting. You submit your resume for hundreds of jobs, and you get a few interviews, and most of them don't go so well. It's pretty normal. But there's one job out there which isn't perfect, and doesn't pay as much as you'd like it to, and it's not in the greatest location, and the gal interviewing you isn't the smartest person you've ever met. But you are offered the job (eventually after interviewing with 10 different people none of whom you'll actually work with when you really work there). So, with no better options, no wonderfully sexy job in Hawaii working with super models or TV celebrities, you decide to finally just take this mediocre job. You're probably not happy. But I would say most people (unless they're crazily driven people from Wharton and have expectations so high they'll never satisfy them) would be satisfied.

You might celebrate in some small way. Maybe it's just a simple personal way of congratulating yourself on accomplishing something positive in this whole mess we call the real world. You're not ecstatic though. You're not cheering everyone on, and giving everyone high fives, and taking people out because "now I'll be rolling in the dough!" You're just satisfied. You're satisfied because you had an expectation you'd land a job, and you did. It's not a great job. It's not a job above your expectations. In fact, it might be a little bit below your expectations, but you never really thought your degree in basket weaving was that vocational anyway.

I have another, much simpler example. You're hungry. You eat a meal. Something normal. Something typical. Not life-altering like San Marzano. Or heart-attack inducing like McDonald's. Something simple like a decent Italian pasta dinner. And then you're full. You're not stuffed. Just full. And satisfied.

Let's talk about progress. In general, I think about satisfaction in the context of progress. Maybe it's just idiosyncratic to me. I expect progress in my own life and therefore I experience satisfaction when I achieve it. Then again, having talked to a bunch of people about this, I think I'm not alone.

At jobs around the country and around the world, people complain. They complain about not being appreciated, about not getting promotions, about not being recognized and always about not being paid enough money. I think that's because those people aren't

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On the Cool Grass under the Witches' Moon

By Chad Fritz

You fill me with the passion of 10,000 years.
The struggles and wars, convictions, ancient dreams--
never forgotten!
--brought to my heaving chest like a sledgehammer.
All this for you.
In the midst of the chaotic worlds,
after reddened suns, shapeless clouds,
the Nor'easter's bone-chilling thunderstorms,
you stand below the sheltered tree,
ever vivid, stone warm,
a haven of illumination with each momentary flash and drenching burst.
The shutters will never wake the sleeping souls inside.
They are gone.
A touch of your hand,
A rush of leaves,
A flash of light,
disappeared!

☒

"The Do Not Read This Book" Book Review

By Susan Myhr Fritz

Every once in a while—in truth, all too often—I get an inkling to watch or read something I know little about. Often it's one of those with a comment attached such as, "Yes, of course! That's the film (pronounced 'film') that got the raves at Cannes. My best childhood friend from boarding school, Chloe, saw the premier and said it changed her life. It's a must view." Says friend to my left, "Cheers, yeah."

This is one scenario, but to be honest, more often than not a person like me catches a glimpse of that golden symbol attached to the book, or in the case of a movie, the golden lettering above the nine-word title. "Booker Prize Winner" it boasts. "Official selection: Berlin Film Festival." Oooooo...impressive. This book won something; this film was selected. Out of all the books and films I could waste my precious time on, such works were singled out as the chosen ones. That means something...doesn't it?

So, I fall for it. Again and again I "Ooo" and "Ahhh" at the golden promises these covers boast. Again and again I pick them up in my hand at the bookstore, the library, my local Blockbuster. This time it's going to be different, I tell myself. This time I know they got it right—I mean, just look at how retro this cover is.

This chapter in the story of my life most recently corresponded with a book; a "novel" as they say whilst trying to trick the vulnerable reader into believing that an actual story line exists. The book in question was (since the monstrosity is now out of my life) called *Disgrace* by the non-*New York Times*-best-selling author J.M. Coetzee. I'd heard good things about the book from a friend of a friend, and although the cover was a totally boring white with the title and the Booker Prize seal on it, I thought I'd give it a shot. I found myself wishing I knew what the two

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satisfied with their jobs. They don't make enough progress to be satisfied. When people get promoted quickly and get raises often, they tend to complain less.

When you're out playing basketball or football or tennis or golf of any other sport, it feels really good to do something better than before. Some sports are more amenable to providing for easy measurable progress. Some aren't as much. But it still feels good to do well. You're rarely super excited when you do well. You're super excited when you do great. You probably remember when you did something incredible in a sport and that's when you felt really happy. That's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about a small amount of progress and how you felt after that. You probably don't remember. Don't worry, I forgive you (as if that matters). I think you were satisfied at that time.

Check it out. Let's talk about exams. Most of the people reading *Babble-ON* when to college and probably to Penn. At Penn we had lots of exams. Or at least a lot of papers if we didn't have lots of exams. When you did reasonably well on those exams, I'd say you were satisfied. When you got a 100%, you were ecstatic. But you didn't really expect to get 100%. You expected something less than that. Maybe a lot less than that. But if you generally did as you thought you did, you weren't miserable nor happy. You were just satisfied. Unless of course, you were resigned to the fact that you didn't study enough and you didn't get a good enough score. But that just meant you had higher overall expectations for yourself. You expected yourself to do better and make better (or at least different) choices. So that kind of an example, which you might wave in my face and say, "Hey! I wasn't satisfied with a 68!" My response is just, "You had higher expectations and you missed them. That's why you weren't satisfied."

Have more questions or differing points of view? Send all email to dan@fritzcomics.com.

So, life is about satisfaction. Satisfaction often stems from progress. Progress that you expected. So why not just end there?

I think life is about working and contributing because there's an inherent satisfaction in doing things for yourself and for others. Having graduated from school and run around a little bit in the real world, I think there are many people who work and many people who contribute but probably don't find satisfaction. I think that's because they aren't progressing. It's a linked chain and they're missing the middle link. By the way, that woman that used to say, "Stephanie! You ARE the weakest link!" was really annoying.

When you are working and contributing and demonstrating progress, I think it's inevitable that you feel satisfaction. I feel good when I complete a particular unit or module at work. I expected to finish it, I did, there's clear progress because I haven't done it before or maybe I haven't done it as well before, and I feel satisfied. I can go home and eat dinner and feel like I actually accomplished something for the day. Or when you volunteer and teach an elementary class about what you do for a living. Or maybe when you volunteer to build some low cost housing. Some people tutor one student for weeks and weeks and weeks. I think you feel good, you feel satisfied at the end of a school year when your tutee, if that's a word, actually does better on final exams and feels good about herself.

I took a leap in the previous paragraph I should have explained. Why demonstrating progress? Why not just experiencing progress? Show me how you can know you are making progress if you can't demonstrate it. If you can't explain it or articulate it. I'd say, you probably aren't making real progress. You might think you are, but you're not.

Other examples of working and contributing? How about counseling students. Or just helping an old man cross the street so he doesn't get hit by a car. Where's the progress there? Where's the demonstratability? I'd say it's in the action itself. You're more empathetic to other people and show it by caring. How's that for a sappy sermon.

So life is about satisfaction, it's about progress, it's about working and contributing. Now I make a fantastic leap to doing good in the world. That's a somewhat scary topic. Really, I mean, we could just stop at working and contributing and leave it. Why this big moral statement?

There's a fine line between what I consider to be a good citizen and an annoying evangelist. The guys who knock on your door and tell about the great sacrifice Jesus Christ made for my soul definitely fall into the annoying evangelist category. Brother Stephen, the psychotic guy who preached about "GOD, FIRES OF HELL, and FORNICATORS" among other things on Penn's campus and was later arrested for some reason (maybe for kidnapping an elementary school girl?). He's definitely on the annoying evangelist side. Although he was much more entertaining than the boring Jesus guys at my door.

The current Republican administration (uh oh, now Srida's starting on politics) is walking a fine line between citizenship and evangelism. America is a much more religious society than Europe. But we still find a way to avoid at least some of the most blatant Christian only shows during State affairs. I don't much like the current administration. But I think it's doing a reasonably good job of walking that fine line. A lot of people think that faith has no place in politics. I

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first name letters were, but it was actually more fun to make them up. “Jerk Man” grew to be my favorite, followed closely by “Jerk Monster.” You can create your own full name for this author, but remember: Do not read this book.

It is significant that the author of *Disgrace* is South African only insofar as I did not know how to convert South African currency when money was mentioned in the book. And although currency conversion was somewhat of a minor subplot, I did find myself wondering how much the main character paid for his time spent whoring. This could have been a useful tidbit to pass along to the readers of *Babble-ON*.

The most disappointing aspect of this particular book selection is that I have actually been curious about this author for some time. I have seen his books around quite a bit, although my own ears have never heard his name spoken (which also makes me curious about the pronunciation of Jerk Man’s last name.) While I am tempted to delve into the plot, thereby ruining any experience of the novel should you decide to disobey my clear command (see last sentence of 4th paragraph), I would not know where to begin. The main character is despicable and perverted, and while he attempts to change at tiny moments throughout the book, he never does. It’s downright depressing, and I kept wondering why I felt compelled to make it to the end. I guess I just wanted to believe that either *something* would happen, or that this character would be eaten by the wild dingoes...wait, that’s Australia, isn’t it?

Call me ignorant, call me a spoiled sport non-advocate for Booker Prize award-winning literature, but the only pieces that left an impression (after I skimmed the last half of the book) were a scary picture of the wiry, white male author and a lingering curiosity: “J.M....hmmm, what else could that be...?” ☒

Urban Vernacular

by Amanda “I want to be a Myhr” Hall

Got Jokes (v. paired with n.) – To make fun of. Usually used to indicate that one is not amused, and usually more effective when repeated and shaking one’s head.

James: Andre pops his nut in about three seconds.

Andre: Oh, you got jokes. You got jokes, son.

O.D. (v.) – Often used in the infinitive form.

- (1) To go overboard. “My teacher ODs with homework.”
- (2) To go crazy. “I’m going to OD on that Nigga.”
- (3) To do something unacceptable. “We are going to have lunch one hour later today.” “Nah, nah. Why you got to OD like that?”

Guap (n.) – Money. “50 got mad guap after his last joint.”

Lock Down (n.) – To be punished, usually by one’s parent. “Nah, son. I can’t this weekend. I’m on Lock Down until next week.”

Moms (n.) – Singular of mom.

“My moms said that I had to be back in da crib by 10pm.”

“Damn, son. Why your moms OD like that? No guap for the family gets her amped and puts you on lock down?”

“You got jokes?” ☒

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tend to agree. But it’s hard to have faith and just “do good” for the sake of it. Or do good just because you’re an ethical person. Gilman: feel free to actually respond to one of my emails by bashing me on this point. I still check it all the time.

It’s definitely not impossible. There’s nothing that says you can only be good if you’re religious. But I think most Americans and probably most people in the world have a definite sense for what’s good. What’s right and wrong. But that sense, that intuition is built almost exclusively upon what’s been taught by society. Our parents teach us, our teachers teach us, our law enforcement teaches us, TSA teaches us (don’t f*** with them or they’ll search you until you miss your flight) and so do many other people. I think you get to a point where it’s very difficult to tell whether good and bad is ingrained by society in its individuals or whether it’s something innate in a human being.

I suppose you’ll have to take a look at the outside cases to prove it either way, but I don’t get very far. It’s hard to find a person that hasn’t learnt much from the people around him.

Let me make a conjecture about doing good in the world. Well, most of this series is conjecture. Anyway, you won’t feel bad or miserable or disappointed if you do good in the world. When you screw up, you mess up, you miss your own expectations, you’re probably not thinking about doing a generally good deed in the world. You’re probably thinking about something stupid you did, or maybe just something selfish.

Let’s think about some examples of doing good in the world. Just about anything I think of that’s related to people outside of myself that involves working and contributing is doing something good in the world. And I definitely feel satisfied when I do that stuff. I figure you do too.

So now we’re trying to think about good deeds in the world that don’t have to do with working or contributing. It’s pretty hard to think of something. Maybe giving something up that you think you shouldn’t be doing anyway? That might qualify. It could be just another contribution to society though, in which case it falls in the first bucket of good deeds.

How about trying it the other way? Can you think of any work or contribution that’s not doing good in the world? How about running a casino. Not so clear to me that it’s a good contribution. I’m not saying it’s bad either. It’s just not obviously good.

But that’s not helping my cause any. It’s not hurting it either. I think that’s pretty close to enough. Doing good in the world is just another way of talking about a subset of working and contributing. Doing good may not need to be altruistic either. What about running a large corporation as CEO. Is that doing something good in the world? Well, maybe. I’d probably say yes. It’s not so clear when the Berkeley kids talk about the evils of the textile industry forcing women and children to work in unsanitary sweat shops somewhere in Asia and South America. But a somewhat reasonable economic response to that claim is that those people do not have the opportunity for anything better, and so the person who creates those jobs, even if they’re not very attractive jobs, still provides more for her employees than they would receive elsewhere. I do understand the counter point. These large corporations make more than enough profit to give some of it back to their employees in the form of a) fewer hours b) better pay c) sanitary work spaces d) child care e) educational opportunity. The funny thing is that companies in America do all of those very same things. Most companies make the decisions not to work people too hard and hire more employees because they need to. They find a way to get enough marketing mileage out of community service programs to make them a regular event in corporate America. I think it has more to do with the separation of the corporation from the actual life of its subjects that causes this disparity. It’s pretty tough to look at a genuinely suffering person right in the face and say, “I’m not sorry for you. You should have worked harder as a kid in order to find a way to run to a different country where the education system is better and then study during the day and work at night to feed yourself in order to make a better life.” I think most of us recognize that’s just stupid.

Well, I’m running out of ideas and my plane flight is soon to end. Plus, this article is too long already. I wonder if after writing a couple more of these rambling pieces I will forever lose my ability to write succinct English. Hopefully not. Maybe I should invest in an editor. Now, there’s a dumb idea! Send all “You are a moron!” mail to dan@frizcomics.com.

Life is about satisfaction. It’s about the contented feeling you get when you make progress in something meaningful in your life. Sometimes that’s progress in something about yourself. You usually need a way to measure that progress before you feel certain that you deserve to feel satisfied about it. And then life’s also about working and contributing in order to make that progress. It’s about the effort you take to make progress in the right direction.

I propose life is also about doing good in the world. Where you work and contribute to things, organizations and people outside of just yourself and make the world a better place. That work and contribution, through demonstrating progress in something for the greater good also gives you satisfaction.

And Satisfaction is What Life’s All About. ☒



Batu-Hanuman
By Garrett Calderwood

Chess-Whiz By Dan Fritz

We've discussed the importance of a good defensive pawn matrix, and we've outlined exploiting the weakness of the pawn in front of the king's bishop. Now let's outflank the enemy.

Rooks are terrible at defending themselves against early game attacks by the bishop, and since they're such a troubling threat in the end game, it's good to take them out when you still have the advantage.

Draw out the pawns in front of the opponent's knights while freeing up your bishops' mobility. Set up a clear line to diagonally attack either rook. Smashing him using your queen is even better. When the enemy rook is gone, the entire flank can be easily devastated. ☒

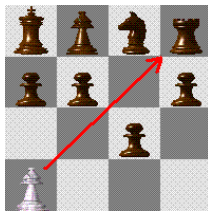


FIGURE: Bishop attacks

There is no counter-attack when you capture the rook. The opponent's only hope is to trap you in the corner, so try to anticipate an escape route.

Should I keep a blog?

By James "Fiend" Schneider

I drink and drink and drink and drink and drink and drink and fight,
I drink and drink and drink and drink and drink and drink and fight.

I've been doing quite a lot of writing lately. Writing turns into thinking, thinking turns into thoughts. Thoughts lead to drinking. Drinking leads to drunkenness, thoughts of sex, hangovers. Hungover, flungover. I don't know where I'm going with this.

I get up at 4:45 am, shake off the previous night's six hours of rest, shower, shave and dress for success. By 5:35 I've boarded a train, headed into NYC. I look around me and everyone is profoundly old. I'm the youngest guy on the train by years... cause no kids live on Long Island. Kids my age...23.

I'm still a kid, if an oversized one. I get excited playing video games where you can have sex with hookers, then kill them, and steal your money back. I like practicing my headshot skills cause I know in time of war, I'd be alright. And I like how I'm better at it than most normal people. I do consider myself normal.

Normalcy is boring. So maybe I consider myself an exceptional, yet grounded individual. I don't really know. I don't know very much these days. These are interesting times.

I can't get over how attractive girls in the city are, especially at 6 am. Yes, the city of proximity is NYC. I'm well aware that it is not the city when you are near another city, and I don't use it that way. When you are so tired, the beer goggles never come off. But seriously, FOX News has some talent. That is no joke. And women in general are attractive, for the most part. At least some of them clean up nice.

The drink is Johnny Walker Red. I know that Glenlivet is probably a little better and I know that my parent's drink of choice, Duwar's, is a little worse. But Red is for me. I'm Red til I turn 50, then it's Black or Blue or Green or whatever my Russian slave girl, Natasha, serves me on my private yacht.

The issue of school is still quite perplexing to me. I never liked school for it's academic merit. It was always about the activities and the people. For high school it was running and the track kids. For college, it was Street and drinking with the Stouffer kids. But school gets you from point a, where you press right trigger to aim at the hooker and b button about 6 times for a kill, to point b, where you are on the yacht being served obscenely expensive single malt scotch by a blonde Ruski servant.

For now, I'm writing. I wonder if I'm an interesting enough person to join the Blogosphere. As I spend all workday—when I do work—looking at news, becoming a know-it-all, I might have a more global perspective on... shit. But, I'm not going to spend all the time writing, if it's in vain.

First we get the jobs, then we get the khakis, then we get the women. Where's my drink? ☒

Catch Her in the Eye: Coming in the Face of Traditional Thought By Arthur Miller

I know that I am supposed to believe that J.D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* is some literary masterpiece that is to elicit a number of reactions: rage, depression, humor, angst, and loss of self. The only reaction I had, however, was to wipe my ass with the 200+ pages. I know, I know. How can an iconic slice of America insult another "supposed" slice of that same America? Simple. He's a dill hole, and I'm not.

I find *Catcher in the Rye* to be an affront to anyone half literate with decent sensibilities. This seems more than shocking to others, those who sleep with this sludge under their pillow. And, maybe somebody can explain to me why I should care so much about this shell of a story. Honestly, I have given it more thought than it deserves. But, let's tease

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...*Guero You Going This Summer?*, p.1...

I understand that fifteen year old girls drive the pop music industry, but older hipsters can catch a break when pop music comes along that is both popular and actually good.

In tow with the Dust Brothers, the same dudes who masterminded the production of *Odelay*, Beck released his new album, *Guero*, a few months ago. It will alter the face of your 2005 Summer. Though not quite as good as *Odelay*, it has enough moxie to punch the clock back nine years and deserves a spot on your album roster. Whether you're 15, 25, or 35, you can shamelessly pump this album through your windows and suffuse the sticky Summer nights with fresh beats. Think about it. The opportunity to crank up a hit album and not be construed a poseur gets trickier as one ages. Thanks to Beck's new album, we don't have to worry about that and can stow away, at least until January, all those old Live and INXS albums that aren't quite in tune with contemporary pop's fickle taste. Listen to "E-Pro" on your way to those Summer night soirees and get energized (unless you have kids in the car)! Bop your head like a dashboard canine to "Qué Onda Guero" as you suffocate in traffic on your way to that vacation destination. "Black Tambourine" and "Rental Car" will revive social gatherings without startling them through its numbing vibe, regardless of your party's demographic. As July's white heat transforms into August sunburn, cool off with "Missing" or chill out to "Scarecrow." Finally, grace your stretch drive with "Farewell Ride," and as August's ruddy sundown melts into September gold keep your ears in tune with the "Emergency Exit." ☒

University of Gaming: Real Stuff I've Learned from Games

By Dan Fritz

I owe a lot to games. Perhaps a little too much if you include the induced celibacy. Computer, video, and board games have positively shaped who I am as a person, not only from a social standpoint, but also from a knowledge standpoint. Parental units stereotypically oppose games, since games are regarded as mere entertainment, frivolous wastes of time. After all, don't you have some homework you should be doing? Well, maybe not. While game playing becomes obsessive when it detracts from fulfilling responsibilities or living real life, a decent amount can teach you more interesting tidbits and skills than from any class or humdrum job you'll ever have. At least, that's how it's worked for me.

In ninth grade, I attended possibly the best history class I've ever taken, one based heavily on simulations, such as one simulation that involved researching and role-playing a famous American businessperson from the late 19th/early 20th century. I was Charles Goodyear, the tire guy, a.k.a. inventor of vulcanized rubber. After I tried to use my rubber tire monopoly to become extremely wealthy, some of my agitated classmates (mostly girls) researched anti-trust laws and tried to bust me. In response, I learned of the concept of "ex post facto." I avoided legal fines and other corporate penalties, because they attempted to try me for laws that were created after the fact. I couldn't tell you much about the life of Goodyear, but I know what anti-trust laws are and what "ex post facto" means because of playing a game. This is just one tidbit of many from that class.

Incidentally, I was forced to take an Economics course two years later in high school. I discovered that that same teacher was teaching the summer school version of Economics across town, so I signed up and got to play more games under his tutelage. We played two different simulations in that class: one that involved a small city with every class member adopting a role (I bought some land and grew orchards) and one that simulated international law and politics. I learned what a multi-national corporation was, that a sizable amount of wheat is grown in the Ukraine, and that "SDI" stands for Strategic Defense Initiative—also referred to as

...continued next page...

...*Catch Her in the Eye*, previous page...

apart these arguments in the hopes that I can come to some higher enlightenment. Besides, I have nothing better to do in Heaven than ponder shit.

Catcher in the Rye recounts the story of Holden Caulfield, a hapless teenager who finds his life constraining and banal. He loathes 99% of the people around him, though he does have a sweet spot for nuns and children. Holden, after getting himself kicked out of school for utter lack of impetus, travels to New York City to have a few "adventures" before doing the walk of shame home. Shit flop.

Not only is the "jeepers" dialogue scathing to the eye, the content leaves little to explore. I have heard it dissected mercilessly in literary circles, yet I feel as though I am standing in front of a painting of a solitary red line with my escort (usually Filipino) saying, "Arthur, don't you just feel the angst in the artist's brush stroke? Clearly, this represents repression and sex in the 21st century." No, it doesn't. It's lazy excrement and belongs with *Catcher in the Rye* in some Texas bonfire. I mean, just because someone takes a shit on a mirror and offers it to the Guggenheim, doesn't a complex man make.

The problem I had with Holden was that he expressed frustration and annoyance with most people, labeling them "phonies" (choose at least one other word, JD; it's called thesaurus, doofus). Yet, he has the great desire to engage with these phonies at all times. Ackley, his next door neighbor, is labeled a pimply faced annoyance, yet he is sought out by Holden on numerous occasions. Sally is some sort of jerk-off wannabe, yet he asks her to run away with him. Holden is reaching out for anyone and shocked when nobody reciprocates. Maybe they can smell your cocky indifference, pal.

Some may say that this novel represents a psychological battle of self-destruction or a candid look at youth. BOOORRRING. If you want to see a better work on self-destruction and inner conflict, try a little play called *Death of a Salesman*. Now, there's real literature. Clever, bold, and well-written. Not one "crumby" or "goddamn." Willy Loman would kick Holden Caulfield's ass in a cage match or in a game of bocce ball. But I digress.

Many "ivory tower" punks could argue the merits of this pulp novel, and I welcome the opportunity to entertain arguments. I also welcome the opportunity to be reincarnated as a man who can suck his own penis. But, I digress again.

I know that JD is refreshing the Newsletter page, waiting with bated finger for the moment this article is posted. He knows this article is coming, because I came to him in a dream last night where I threw Vidalia onions at him chanting, "FRAUD!" He knows.

Suck it, JD.

With love,
Artie Miller

☒

Do you want to be a published, international celebrity? Send in a submission to *Babble-ON!* All submissions are due the Friday before publication. See the website for details.

<http://www.babbleonline.com>

...*University of Gaming, previous page...*

the “Star Wars” program during the Reagan era—an acronym that was later cemented in my mind when I played a popular turn-based computer game called *Sid Meier’s Civilization II*. Mom was proud when I showed her my three-ring binder of world domination notes.

Computer games have always been a powerful learning tool, especially during the mid-80’s to mid-90’s when puzzle games created by Sierra dominated the market. For that brief decade prior to *Doom* and the shoot-’em-up craze, the most popular games available involved activities like finding a peacock feather on an island, using that feather to tickle a whale’s throat, and finding a golden bridle behind a boat after the whale sneezes you out onto the shore. Of course, you need the golden bridle in order to ride the unicorn up the mountain. Aside from the fact that only a nerd (or slightly effeminate geek) would recount this to you, what does all of that mean? It means that those games dealt with solving problems. It took some brain power. There was *Oregon Trail*, too, where you got to figure out how to give the character named after your arch enemy dysentery while successfully fording the river in your wagon. And even when the relatively mindless *Wolfenstein* came out, I owe that Nazi-killing game the debt of teaching me my first useful German word...*Spion!*

The grandfather of the older Sierra puzzle games was one called *King’s Quest*, a game that exhibited high-quality, four-color CGA graphics, a huge step up from the old monochrome graphics. Since it was a command-based game—before icons became standard—you had to type in what you wanted the character to do. I learned how to spell “climb” because of that game. How was I going to search the hole under the rock if I couldn’t spell “search hole”? It was a harsh sink-or-swim world in that land of make believe, because the program wasn’t smart enough to understand misspellings. I learned all kinds of words—while simultaneously learning how to type—like “witch,” “carrot,” “fiddle,” and “mirror.” And I played other games from which I learned what the following were: brigand, Andromeda, leather jerkin, passer-by, mandrake, obsidian scarab, Pandora’s Box, and more things than I can now remember.

It wasn’t just words that I learned. Poring over the maps of numerous board games, I’ve learned more geography than in any class I’ve ever taken, to the local taxpayer’s chagrin. Do you know where Kamchatka is? I do, thanks to Hasbro, because I played *Risk*. Have you ever heard of Palatinate? Thank you *Empires in Arms*, which, by the way, also sparked an interest in the Napoleonic wars, which led me to take a course in college about the history of the Prussian military. Did you know that there was an area in the Middle East once called Parthia? I learned that one from a Sega Genesis game called *Centurion*, which notably taught me the phrase “pyrrhic victory” among other things.

Which leads me to video games. How many of us played Nintendo as kids and learned what a labyrinth was by playing the *Legend of Zelda*? (Everybody else learned it by watching a very scary David Bowie and a young Jennifer Connelly in the movie *Labyrinth*.) How many people learned how to strategize by crushing their opponents in *Mario Kart* for Super Nintendo? People learned social etiquette by playing games in the arcade. When you were standing in line for *Golden Axe* or *Street Fighter II*, people knew what to do when their time was up. Whether they beat you up in the parking lot afterwards was an entirely different matter.

Multiplayer Internet games have really opened up the possibilities for personal interactions (that don’t involve being beaten up in the parking lot), with both direct and indirect benefits. In college, I acquired unquantifiable strategy skills and hand-eye coordination from playing one of the best multiplayer computer games ever made—Blizzard’s *Starcraft*. Some of us who played the game created mathematical models to determine the best build order for the units. I got to know a solid group of friends partially because of hours of playing *Quake: Team Fortress* over the dormitory’s T1 network. Even at that stage of my life, I was still learning little tidbits from games, like what “EMP” stood for (i.e. Electromagnetic Pulse), but far more important were the indirect benefits (like friends) and the life skills (like team coordination and strategizing).

Additionally, fun games have not only nurtured skills, they’ve activated my imagination. After playing *Contra* and *Blaster Master* for Nintendo, I designed my own *Contra* and *Blaster Master* games, all drawn in a notebook. After playing a couple *King’s Quests*, I started writing a story and digitally drawing a bunch of the screenshots for the game, including several forest screens, a hunter’s cabin, etc. *Betrayal at Krondor* and *Lords of the Realm* (both computer games) inspired me to read three different books, two from the series that *Krondor* was based on and one about the historical significance of the civilian/military network of castles in England. I also had to learn how to create boot disks since many of these games used so much base memory.

In some ways, games are the ultimate teaching tool. The things I’ve learned from games could fill volumes. They’ve been a source of creativity and of interest, influencing my analytical abilities and even the direction of my studies. They’ve honed my mind to think strategically and tactically. And even though Mrs. Fritz hates all games with a passion and visibly cringed at the length of this article, I still manage to remain married to her. Thank you, games! ☒

Mt. Kinabalu

By Garrett Calderwood

Every year on Mt. Kinabalu there is what is called a climbathon. Runners from an extreme running club run up to the mountain summit and back down. The summit on Kinabalu is over 10,000 ft and the trail is 21 km long. The top three times in the categories are listed on the picture (below). ☒

| CATEGORY | NAME | COUNTRY | PLACING | TIME RECORDED (21 KM) |
|-------------|------------------------|---------|---------|-----------------------|
| MEN | BRUNO BRUNOD | ITA | 1ST | 02HR 40MIN 04SEC |
| | RICARDO MEJIA HEMANDEZ | MEX | 2ND | 02HR 42MIN 22SEC |
| | ROBERT KRUPICHE | CZE | 3RD | 02HR 42MIN 57SEC |
| WOMEN | ANNA PICHTROVA | CZE | 1ST | 03HR 06MIN 54SEC |
| | FAVRE CORINNE | FRA | 2ND | 03HR 28MIN 10SEC |
| | ZATORSKA YZABELA | POL | 3RD | 03HR 29MIN 25SEC |
| MEN VETERAN | RODIMIN SODUNDU | MAS | 1ST | 03HR 07MIN 22SEC |
| | TAISING BUKOLONG | MAS | 2ND | 03HR 10MIN 52SEC |
| | AHING SERINEN | MAS | 3RD | 03HR 18MIN 22SEC |

Problem Hole:

Answers to Last Month’s Problem

By Srida Joisa

“Running away from Tanks”

You’re a lucky guy. You’re in Iraq.

You happen to be walking in the middle of a tunnel when you see a tank in the distance behind you racing at 40 miles per hour towards the tunnel. This tunnel is pretty narrow, so if the tank enters the tunnel and hits you, there’s nowhere for you to go. You’re dead. Splat. No dodging to the left or the right. There’s no space. This is a very narrow tunnel.

But there’s hope! You know you’re standing exactly one quarter of the way in the tunnel. And you with your Problem Hole Magical Brain magically know instantly that if you run at top speed, you can run in either direction and just evade getting squashed by the tank. You can run towards the tank or away from the tank, but you’ll get out safely just barely.

What’s your top running speed?

Here’s a hint: You don’t need to know how far away the tank is and you don’t need to know how long the tunnel is. But you can figure out your top speed.

Answer:

The trick is to figure out what happens when you run towards the tank and replay it as if you’re running away from the tank. So, you and the tank meet at the beginning of the tunnel (i.e., you just get away). You’ve traveled the distance of ¼ of the tunnel. So, if you were going the other direction at the same top speed, you’d be ½ through the tunnel, and the tank would just be entering the tunnel. You just make it out the other side at the same time as the tank. You both travel for the same amount of time, but you’ve traveled for ½ the tunnel, and the tank has traveled through the whole tunnel.

So, you’re going ½ the speed of the tank, or 20 miles per hour. ☒

THE TRAGIC TALE OF
MADELEINE ALBRIGHT'S CAREER AS A FASHION MODEL
IN 19TH CENTURY NEW YORK
(PART 2)

By Several Bored Office Pukes

In our last installment, Madeleine went to New York City to become a fashion model. There she had a run in with an Irishman. A constable came by, attempting to save the day, but his horse slipped, and the Irishman, constable, and horse crashed into a stagecoach, which then started burning. Strom Thurmond jumped out of the wreckage and helped "Maddy" out of the street.

The crowded streets continued to bustle and there was a hum in the air. Summer was just around the corner. One could almost feel it. That is until the green smoke started to eclipse the sun. Darkness fell over the street, and terror filled everyone's eyes. For everyone knew that you never, never burn an Irishman alive, because the smell is absolutely horrendous. The putrid cloud of noxious Irish fumes poured from the wreckage of Strom's stagecoach. Everyone in the street began to cough, then run and seek refuge from this most heinous of olfactory sieges. Strom, knowing full well the dangers, having burned many Irishmen himself, grabbed Madeleine and pulled her along with him, seeking safe-haven in a large building across the street.

They crashed into a dark saloon and were confronted with a hundred, cold, mean, and sometimes drunk eyes. All sound stopped, save for a lone card sharp nervously shuffling a worn deck adorned with naked women who appeared to dance luridly as the cards flashed through his hands. A grizzled man who had been leaning against the bar stood up straight, spurs jingling. He spat black tar through his handlebar mustache.

"Well, I'll be damned...." The sound of shuffling cards continued in the background. "I don't know how you found me, but as long as you're here—," he motioned toward the dealer.

"You'll have to excuse me," Strom whispered to Madeleine. "I have business to attend to."

Strom mosied on up to the table, where all of the card players, save the man shuffling, had darted away. "Whiskey, straight!" Strom barked at the bartender. "And anything my friend here would like."

"You always were one for hospitality," the grizzled stranger replied.

"You always were one for hospitalization."

You see, what no one else in the bar knew was that the stranger was actually the infamous Wild Bill Hickok. It was widely thought that Wild Bill had died from a gunshot wound while playing poker in 1876. Little did they know that he was hiding out in this very saloon at the very moment that his one-time arch rival darted through the swinging doors.

You could almost feel the tension in the room as cards whispered through the dealer's hands.

"Texas Hold'em," spat Wild Bill.

"You're gonna regret your mistakes," Strom said in a low voice. "Deal'em out!"

By now the eyes had gathered around the outside of the room, dirty strangers all craning to see the cards of the two rivals. Maddy made her way to the bar and ordered a mint julep. She propped herself up on a stool to see the action. A low hum ran around the

...continued in right column...

...Madeleine Albright, from left column...

room as the first cards slid across the table. Maddy sipped on her cold drink and was thinking about chocolate.

"Is that your lady?" Wild Bill said in a barely audible voice.

Strom looked up from his cards and said, "she ain't yet, but if you remember right, I never miss an opportunity to show a lady my manners. I'm planning on asking that young girl to ride side saddle on. . . I mean with me."

Bill let out a chuckle, "That supermodel doesn't want anything but your chocolate plantation. Once you've had Strom's chocolate....," and Bill trailed off. Both of the card players looked over to see a stranger tipping his hat to young Maddy. She smiled coyly, and Bill and Strom knew at once who the stranger had to be. The young Bob Dole was the only man this side of the Mississippi that could make a woman smile like that.

"I'm Bob Dole," said Bob Dole, smiling widely, extending one hand to shake little Maddy's, and holding a small bottle of blue pills in the other.

"Why you Devil!" shouted Strom, flinging back his chair and lunging to his feet. "You get the hell away from my woman!"

"I'm Bob Dole!" shouted Bob Dole, angrily, and he flung back his coat, putting his colt revolver on display. "I'm Bob Dole!" he said, menacingly this time. Strom set his hand above his own revolver, and the two began to circle each other, wide-eyed Maddy watching warily as she asked for something stiffer than a mint julep. The dueling future conservative politicians were so engrossed in their engagement that they did not notice Wild Bill sidle up to Miss Maddy and strike up an amiable conversation. She giggled and cooed, and Wild Bill gave her some chocolate. Maddy was smitten, but she knew it could not last, for she was an ambitious career woman, and she was in New York for one reason: to become a fashion model.

Wild Bill wasn't used to being rejected, and upon hearing Maddy's kind dismissal of his advances, he went on a wild opium binge and disappeared into the annals of really bad movie history. Maddy slipped out of the saloon without drawing any attention, for little could be heard over the loud cries of "WHY YOU DEVIL!" and "I'M BOB DOLE!"

When Strom and Bob noticed that Maddy was gone, some seven hours later, they became enraged and the epic grappling match that ensued resulted in a Bob Dole with a lame arm and a Strom who profoundly disliked black people. Maddy, meanwhile, had continued her intrepid journey through the horse crap and mud....

She was humming an old hymn as she strolled through the now peaceful surrounding neighborhood, when a feeling of anxiousness suddenly washed over her. She knew that she was about to die and her dreams of modeling would be over. Her journey would come to an abrupt end. There would be no more sweet, sweet chocolate. A cloud covered the sun and little Madeleine shivered.

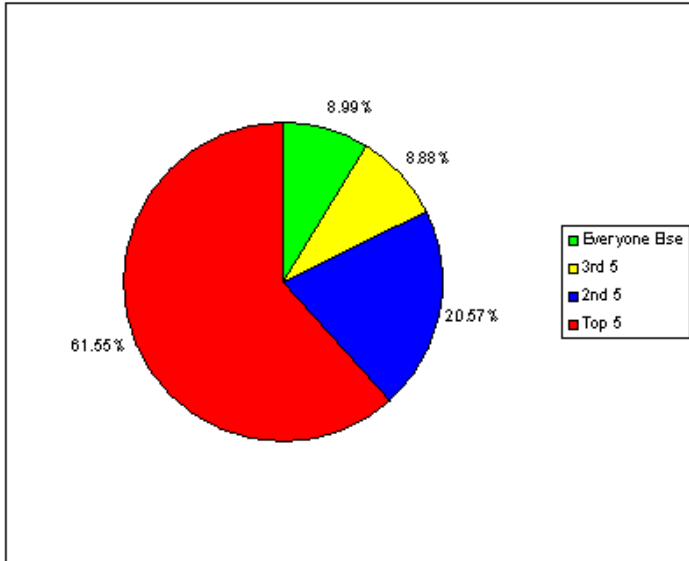
Suddenly, from a back alley, sprang a gang of Mexican Greeks from the Bronx. Why they had strayed from their hood, Madeleine would soon find out. As the gang approached their leader spoke up....

"Hey Chiquita, chimichanga tu madre."

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE

Note: These statistics are close approximations and do not include the current issue or the submissions provided by the Editor.

Words Contributed as a percentage of the total



As of last issue, the top five *Babble-ON* contributors (red) had contributed 61.6% of the written material, the next five (blue) had contributed 20.6%, and the next five (yellow) had contributed 8.9%. The remaining half (green) of the *Babble-ON* contributors had accounted for another 9.0%.

Top tier contributors include: 1) James Schneider, 2) Brett Martz, 3) Susan Fritz, 4) Srida Joisa, and 5) Alan Fishman.

Current Trends:

The share of text grew in the third tier and the bottom half as top contributors momentarily eased their pencils. Also, the addition of Lauren Shafenberg and the steady submissions of Bryan Murray have raised the bar on the middle tiers. This change in distribution shows a slight reversal in the previous trend of top tier domination. ☒

Contributors:
 Garrett Calderwood
 Grant Calderwood
 Matt Ellinwood
 Chad Fritz
 Dan Fritz
 Steven Fritz
 Susan Fritz
 Amanda Hall

Srida Joisa
 Aaron MacPhie
 Brett
 James Schneider

Compiled by:
 Dan Fritz, Editor-in-Chief
 Sara Olson, Assistant Editor
 in Norwalk, CT
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Awards

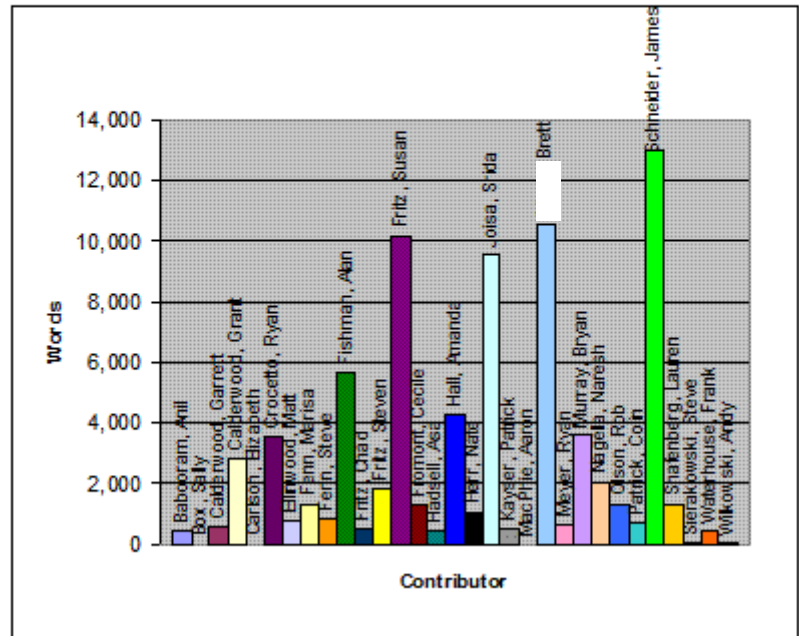
These awards could be yours!

For Total Words Contributed:
 1,000: **Little Scribbler**
 5,000: **Babble-ON-ian**
 10,000: **Grimmelshausen Award**
 Each additional 10,000:
Proust BabbleStar

For Exceptional Content:
Alfred, Lord Tennyson
Platinum Seal of Excellence:
 To date, no one has won this.

Good luck, and keep the submissions coming! ☒

Words Contributed per contributor



Global Watch Map

BabbleON has attracted contributors and readers from around the globe. In addition to the U.S. writers noted on the map, there have been submissions from:

Brussels, Belgium,
 Venice, Italy, and
 Sydney, Australia.

Key: Red squares mark the residence of each contributor. ☒