



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Featured Articles

Affirm Life 3
Cook at Home and Risk Death 1
Susan and Dan's Rockin' New Year's Eve Crash 4
'What a Jerk!' 1
Where did I get my cold from? 5

Featured Fiction

Right Before I Got Kicked Off Kids Incorporated 2
The Tragic Tale of Madeleine Albright's Career
as a Fashion Model in 19th Century New York 6

Assorted Contributions

Letter from the Editor 2
T.O.B.'s "Before-and-After" Haiku Corner 2
Two Haikus for the New Year 2
Urban Vernacular 2

Images

Cover Picture: *The Mountain* by Balthus
The Final Poker Game 4
Waldo at Work 2
World's Largest Schnitzel 4

Newsletter Info 7



'What a Jerk!'

By Alan Fishman

Last Friday I did something stupid. Utterly bored on a Friday night, I struck out on my own two feet. It was pretty late too, perhaps 11pm, when I left the house. But that is not entirely out of the ordinary. I usually don't have big Friday plans and probably run at night more often than in the mornings or early evenings. What is absurd about this particular jaunt into the dark East Atlanta night is that I was hungry, hungry for beef jerky.

See, the plutopad had recently acquired a contact in the underground world of meat dehydration. And this individual, who shall remain nameless, had been able to provide us with high quality jerky in exchange for other hard to find edibles. Over time, having been allowed access to said dehydrated meat, I have developed much respect for the item as a tasty, portable snack. I now crave beef jerky, especially since it is in such plentiful supply.

...continued on page 3...

Cook at Home and Risk Death

By Matt Ellinwood

For years the terrifying risks associated with cooking at home have been largely limited to grease fires, gas leaks, bad meatloaf, and stacks of dirty dishes in a Berkeley apartment sans automatic dishwasher. On February 15, the EPA changed this.

The Associated Press reports that the group of scientific advisors to the Environmental Protection Agency's Scientific Advisory Board voted unanimously on Wednesday, February 15, 2006, that a chemical found in Teflon used in common consumer cookware products should be considered a carcinogen. The villainous compound is known as perfluorooctanoic acid, or PFOA, and is one of the chemical industry's most lucrative products. Predictably, Dupont and 3M, the world's leading producers and users of PFOA, are denying that any dangers to consumers exist. Also predictably, Dupont points to internal studies they have performed that conclusively prove PFOA's safety. What's a home cook to do?

As it turns out, the advisors' recommendation is based in large part on unpublished papers and laboratory findings in experiments on mice performed in the 1980s in which the mice developed tumors related to PFOA. Additionally, PFOA apparently is used not just for nonstick pans, but also in the manufacture of Gore-Tex, cell phones, and car engines. In fact, one AP report noted that scientists suspect that tiny amounts of PFOA have likely contaminated the blood of almost everyone worldwide. Seriously.

What can be done? How can you possibly cook eggs without a non-stick pan? The answer is butter. Or, more generally, fat. Add fat. Lots of it. Butter, which is milk fat, will work, but so will pork fat, like the kind left in the pan after cooking bacon. Olive oil will also work, and more healthily. Also, turn down the heat under the pan. Sticking is caused by overheating, so cook a little bit more slowly. In fact, when fats and heat are used correctly, Teflon is pretty irrelevant--useless, really. And it tends to wear out quickly and can flake off into food. And it causes cancer.

As for how to combat the fact that PFOA is in Gore-Tex, cell phones, cars, and, apparently, everyone in the world's blood? It's too bad the answer isn't butter. ☒

Where did I get
my cold from?

By James Schneider
See Page 5

Urban Vernacular

By Amanda Hall

To do dirty (V/Adv combination) – To behave in such a manner that betrays or portrays someone else falsely.

He did me dirty by telling the cops I was the one that stole the car.

Twisted (Adj) – To be inebriated. Always used in the form “twisted.” There is no other formation using “twist.”

I am TWISTED right now! And, I was twisted last night at Will’s crib. These Henney joints are slammin’.

Get Twisted (V/Adj combination) – To misunderstand. Usually used when making a point or correcting someone.

Don’t get it twisted. Will and I are just friends.

Co-signer (N) – Someone who agrees with/supports you.

Will is my co-signer to the fact that Marsha is a skank.

Them shits (N) – Those things.

Yo, are those Doritos? Let me get one of them shits. I love them shits.

☒

Letter from the Editor

Back by popular demand: the PDF file! It’s slick and hip, and the kids love it. Anyway, keep the submissions coming, because although I can usually fake substance...well, you get the idea. And now, I will tune into a Terry Gross interview on NPR.

Dan, dan@fritzcomics.com ☒

Right Before I Got Kicked Off Kids

Incorporated

by Nathan Beach

It was spring of '84. Episode 15. School's For Fools. They say our show launched David Hasselhoff's singing career. His sweet, sweet voice serenaded us with a rousing rendition of The Contours' "Do You Love Me?". Right as final exams were heating up that year, I performed my own serenade. Though I think the other Kids remember it more as a serenude. ☒

Waldo at Work

By Nathan Beach



Two Haikus for the New Year

By Susan Fritz

Jamming with Oysters

Alternative Rock

Kurt Cobain just sounds insane

Eddie Vedder rules!

Winter is Coming

This old wicker chair

It belonged to Dan’s mother

Wicker burns the best

☒

Tower of Babble-ON's

'Before-and-After' Haiku Corner

By Susan Fritz

Take my picture frame

Jack Black and White Snakeskin

Album cover up

☒

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 a Jerk,' from p. 1...

So there I was, about to strike off into the East Atlanta night, when my craving for beef jerky kicked in. My eyes could not help but be drawn towards the brown paper packet laying atop the fridge. My heart beat. My hands shook. And my belly rumbled. I thought to myself, there's nothing wrong with taking a snack. Shoot, runners are SUPPOSED to bring along sustenance! And why should I deny myself the joys of good beef jerky on an otherwise boring night? This "reasoning" decided the issue. I grabbed a couple sticks of jerky, instructed our dog, Trub, in the defense of the homepad ("Don't eat any human food!"), and ran out into the sweet, black night.

Mmm... Beef jerky tastes good... The thought of running with dehydrated snacks made me laugh out loud. It was a very George Castanza moment for me. I laughed and chewed, laughed and chewed, breathed and laughed and chewed, enjoying the first (of many?) run with snacks. This must be what long-distance running is all about. In a minute, I ran into Gresham Ave and took a right that would take me towards the village. This was all part of my standard loop around East Atlanta. I run down Gresham and around Brownwood park, then cut across Ormewood and up Garrick and Nancy's street to Cloverdale. Cloverdale takes me back to Flat Shoals and presents me with a few options depending on how far I want to run. Tonight's run, however, would be anything but normal.

Once I hit Gresham, I saw a pack of dogs roaming around. And they heard me, too. Or at least smelled my beef jerky. Two of them immediately swung their heads around, sniffed, and took a couple steps my way. Crap! I hate all the random dogs roaming around the neighborhood at night or in the early morning. People in East Atlanta let their dogs out. And these dogs are the bane of my running existence. Why didn't I realize that when I cooked up the hare-brained scheme to go running late at night with a fistful of aromatic dehydrated meat I'd run into dogs? What an IDIOT! Gosh... I was really in for it. Seeing visions of dog attack, I abruptly turned around and took a few steps away, then looked behind me. Yep, they were following. Damn, Damn, DAMN! You cannot just run away from dogs. They will chase you. one must stomp at them once or twice to get them to back off, and then slowly ease away. I'm used to this tete a tete but had never tried it while holding succulent strips of jerky. I made my get away though, and struck off to Ormewood, south on Moreland and around to Cloverdale. I got away this time, but who knows what may happen if I encounter more of the dreaded hounds?

Keeping a watchful eye, I ran 5 or 6 miles, and made my way back to Clifton to cut back to the plutopad. I was one block down Clifton when I saw another pack of dogs. Oh crap, not again! So I turned around, and ran to Paisley. Oh no, more dogs! So I hightailed it back to Flat Shoals, my yellow brick road. Damn, dogs. I was tired and wanted to go home. But I took the long way, down Flat Shoals to Van Epps without further canine harassment. Whew... that was a silly way to run around the neighborhood. Maybe I should be more thoughtful when deciding on appropriate exercise nourishment. Anyway, tonight's run was over. The plutopad beckoned. Upon opening the door, a bashful Trub greeted me. Trub... What did you do? Did you eat som--AWW TRUB!? YOU ATE ALL THE SHRIMP FRIES?! Uhh... bad girl. Go outside. Get. (And the whole time I'm thinking, Whoa! I hate shrimp fries. Good work, girl. And then...AWW, TRUB! YOU CRAPPED SHRIMP FRIES ON THE CARPET!)

One thing about living in East Atlanta I never could stomach, all the damn dawgs. ☒

Affirm Life

By Dan Fritz

Originally published in May 2001

in *The Stouffersphere* at the University of Pennsylvania

When Nurse Ratched leads her discussion groups in *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*, you cannot help but to despise her manipulation and become frustrated with her devious plans. When McMurphy enters any scene in the hospital, you cannot help but eventually feel glad that he brings a certain energy and joy that spreads to those around him. He just wants to have fun. He wants to enjoy his life. But Nurse Ratched's conniving, control-hungry machinations do not allow for this. She is diametrically opposed to everyone who wants to enjoy life beyond her control.

In 1998, I lived in Germany. I have nothing but the best things to say about the German people, except for a certain group that I deem the Nobodies With Power people. Typically, train conductors and librarians make up this group, in that both of them hold no real standing in society, but they have the power to kick you off of trains and charge you late fees on books. They hide behind bureaucracy and push people around because they can. Of course, not all train conductors and librarians are Nobodies With Power in the sense that I'm speaking of, and there are Nobodies With Power who are not train conductors and librarians. Many a bus driver got his giggles from seeing me run across the street just in time to make his bus, but instead of letting me on, he (with a wry grin) slammed the door in my face and drove off, leaving me to wait fifteen minutes for the next bus.

My purpose in describing these kinds of people is simple. You will encounter many Nurse Ratched's in your life--you might even be able to think of a couple off the top of your head. You've met these Nobodies With Power, and all they have attempted to do was stifle those around them. Maybe you have been a McMurphy to a Nurse Ratched. But whereas McMurphy was held against his will, you have the freedom to choose where you live and what you do. Whereas McMurphy was suffering from a mental illness, you are intelligent and capable people.

I will soon graduate from this university, and within a few years, the next generation of college students will scarcely know that I existed, if they will know at all. But if the memory of me is gone, hopefully this spirit will remain: affirm life. Avoid those Nurse Ratched's who will detract from your life rather than add to it. Overcome the Nobodies With Power who will attempt to destroy your joy and thwart your happiness. The only reason they have power is because you allow them to have it. Take the opportunity to live your life and to enjoy it and to spend time with some of the most incredible people you will ever know. You have an obligation to yourself to dwell in happiness all the days of your life, because your life is too valuable to be manipulated by Nurse Ratched's. Rise above the dubious forces around you. Affirm life. ☒

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>

The Final Poker Game

By Nathan Beach



World's Largest Schnitzel

Contributed by Larry Simpson



Susan and Dan's

Rockin' New Year's Eve Crash

By Susan Fritz

WooHoo! Yes! Party time, excellent, etc. New Year's Eve is a time to rock with your raucous self...to booze it up...to drink one too many an apple martini followed by uncounted Jell-O shots—yes, even to use those remaining illegal drugs you've been curious about before the stroke of midnight forces you to face that New Year's Resolution. (#1: Stop smoking the dope (during the workday)). Hey, it's a start, but before you take out that list of positive changes, the night is young.

So, what happens when your mom comes to visit and has to leave early on a flight from LaGuardia at 9 in the morning on January 1st? Well, first you hide the crack (from her, since she's in recovery, too). Then you make plans to get wild with Sir Dick Clark himself. Throw in a freshly made pizza from the only open joint in town, and you've got yourself a New Year's Eve to remember 4EvR! But before you start to buy into my dry sarcastic tone and believe that I was not looking forward to a New Year's with my two favorite people, Dan and Linda, think again. Since the incident last year with the Jell-O shots, I didn't plan on missing another "stroke of midnight" moment again. This night was made for fun. Heck, since we were dog sitting in a large home with cable, all was right with the world.

This is the part where it gets really fun, though. For those of you who have ever driven on Connecticut's windy roads and "highways," you know they are narrow enough to make the horse and buggy combo seem implausible, let alone your average Joe's Porsche Cayenne. So, replace the luxury SUV with a '95 Ford Contour and you have a situation where a small car and precipitation do not mix. So, we were out to get a pizza—half sausage for the carnivores, half sundried tomato for the vegetarian. As it had not been a white Christmas, ma was ecstatic when the flakes began to fall. It was a very "Little Women" moment in the house built in the 1740s. As we drove away from Pinocchio's Pizza in this increasingly building, slippery mess, it became increasingly clear that we were in for a slippery ride. We were getting closer, going slowly as a snail the whole way, when our dear Ford decided to spin out, causing much panic. The car did a couple of turns, playing bumper cars with the trees, when we finally came to a complete stop. Incredibly, the airbags did not deploy, and we were totally fine. I didn't even tip the pizza box. We got out and discovered our front tire was leaking air big time, but we could still drive away. After a few friendly New York/Connecticuters passed us by and were nice enough not to spit on us on their way, we made it to an open gas station where the only polite person within a 50 mile radius helped us put the spare on. In fact, there was a rich old man wearing those Brooks Brothers pants with the lobsters on them who all but made sure the gas station attendant was fired because he had to wait for two minutes to complete the essential transaction of...buying a lottery ticket. But I digress....

The night was still very young, and the pizza was still warm by the time we arrived back at the old house. We watched to our disappointment, though, as Ryan Seacrest filled in for Dick Clark before the legend finally made an appearance. Having been in recovery from last year's stroke, it was bitter-sweet to see this icon have trouble speaking but still have nothing but positive things to say about the world. It was inspiring, really. And on a night where for a split second I wondered if I'd make it out of that Ford with my arms, I was grateful to not only be alive, but to be with my two favorite people.

This year, I resolve to be a bit less cynical, and a bit more thankful for positive people, and a bit less concerned with the guys wearing the lobster pants. Happy New Year! ☒

Where did I get my cold from?

By James Schneider

To paraphrase and play off of the great Leon Phelps of *The Ladies Man* fame: I'm not a scientist, or a doctor, or anything like that, but I've sure gotten sick a few times, so that makes me like an expert, or something.

I recently came down with the common cold, as have many people in my vicinity. I've also heard of people getting sick in Philadelphia, where I was last weekend. My mom just got sick too. As I start to recover, thoughts bang through the rafters in my head like bats on acid.

It is January and therefore cold season, so this phenomenon should not be so confusing. But, I'm curious, a little tripped out on 'tussin, and intrigued: where did my cold come from?

It's probably a factor of working too many days in a row, with too little sleep. Probably didn't help that I ignored all the warning signs and waited a day more than I should have to start popping my old standby Zinc drops. And, I'd gather standing outside for a few hours without a hat, gloves or coat on, while moving Claudia's new bed down six flights and into a cold sub basement—all by myself—and then onto her coworker's van—well, no freakin' wonder I got the sniffles!

But, why everyone around me? Are they the sickies that infected me? Did I infect them? Was it the subway/LIRR/NJ Transit/SEPTA? Was it the city of NY or Philadelphia? What gives?

Watching the devastatingly quick spread of this pesky disease certainly creates far too many questions and far too few answers for anyone with an inquisitive mind. Meanwhile, I fear the spread of the common cold is merely a harbinger for the eventual bird flu pandemic, which is due to wipe out millions of people.

The H5N1 strain of bird flu has dropped about 70 odd people, mostly in Asia since 2003. Most of these people touch chickens—inappropriately, of course—while some eat infected fowl and others feed effed up turkey parts to their four-leggers.

That's all bad and, well, terrible. But how does this affect us? Let's go back to the cold scenario. Say the form of bird flu that's lethal to humans eventually gets airborne and stateside.

Think of your subway neighbors. There's the guy scratching his red eyes, squirting pus onto your cheek before gripping the strap that's somehow barely dirtier after he touches it. There's a woman wrenching like a banshee hopped up on meth, coke and Irish souls. And, who could forget, the he-she whose projectile yack just smacked into the window and splashed onto your shoe? If this were a video game or *Beavis and Butthead*, flies would buzz around them, or smell indicators would show you their filth. However, this is stunningly; yes, this is your life.

Cities are huge, filthy places, which are a hotbed for diseases of every kind. I can only imagine how quickly any virus would spread through the subway system. So, the bird flu pandemic is strikingly real. It might take a little while to get out to the middle of nowhere, but eventually some guy who never washes after leaving the men's room would touch a door knob. And, you get it.

Yet somehow there are always people who wipe the pus off their cheek with a smile, breathe deeply as they yawn-their-morning-yawn, inhaling the wretcher's germs, and kick the crud off their hightops. There are people who can more than just survive an onslaught of nearly Biblical sucktitude. No, seriously, there are.

We need to find these people. We need to, let's say, abduct them for probing, for they are surely alien. And we need to do it before bird flu hits.

Environmentalists always say that destroying the rain forest will eradicate countless cures to life-threatening diseases. Some are probably correct, however, it's probably a lot easier to find a cure if you can take it from any ol' subway alien. Don't you think? ☒

THE TRAGIC TALE OF
MADELEINE ALBRIGHT'S CAREER AS A FASHION MODEL
IN 19TH CENTURY NEW YORK
(PART 7)

By Several Bored Office Pukes

In our last installment, just as Teddy and Madeleine reached great fame, Madeleine's brother, Schenker, set out to "rescue" her from her evil life. Meanwhile, Madeleine fell victim to the darker side of NYC modeling....

One day over a dinner of venison and grits Teddy said, "I'm going to the Florida Everglades to wrestle an alligator, and then I'm going to sail down to the Amazon and find me a hot native woman to 'hunt anaconda' with me, if you know what I mean. And I'm leaving after dinner."

Madeline slurped her grits from her plate, "Have fun, I'll see you in a few weeks," she responded as if he had just mentioned how beautiful she was. But inside, she was torn apart. She ran to her powder room and drank an entire 24 pack of coke. She lay there quivering on her roman sofa, crying without shedding any tears. If her family knew what she had become, they would have pitch forked her in her sleep.

Meanwhile, Schenker was walking down a country road humming the Battle Hymn of the Republic to himself and trying to ignore a peculiar smell. He thought to himself that he had read something in his Amish school books about the stench of sin as you approach New York City, or was it the stench of New Jersey, he couldn't quite remember. Being slightly retarded, small details escaped him. But as he put one foot in front of the other and balanced himself with his steel handled pitch fork, he was almost certain it was the stench of sin that he could smell.

At the bottom of a large hill, he could see a farmhouse and an old barn that looked to be abandoned. He thought nothing of it but the smell grew as he approached. Sin...it had to be sin that he smelled coming from the farm. As he approached the driveway, he saw a sign. "JERSEY CITY, NEW JERSEY: IRISH NOT WELCOME." "Funny" he thought, "how come they didn't put 'confederates and pagans'?"

He decided to continue up the hill. At the top his eyes widened to a bulge. There it was, New York City, den of iniquity, nestled between the two rivers of sodomy and damnation, home to sinners, Turks, prostitutes, Greeks, coke drinkers, and his sister. He warmed at the thought of his beloved sister. He would rescue her from the city, and they could raise an Amish family together, husband and wife.

A few minutes later, Schenker was down to the river. He saw a humble old man waiting beside his raft. "May I take you across the river, sir? That will be six silver pieces."

"Six silver!" exclaimed Schenker. "That would buy me an entire beer factory. You have got to be out of your mind."

The old man cackled, "No, that is the price for foreigne. . . ."

A flash of steel glinted in the setting sunlight before the old man could finish his sentence. Schenker's pitchfork slid through the old man's neck like vergnuegen holz does a West Virginia virgin.

"Thanks for the raft, SINNER!" Schenker shouted at the old man as he let him slide into the water. The current carried the body downstream as Schenker stepped onto the raft with a thin smile.

...continued in right column...

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

The interesting thing about Schenker's brand of slight retardation was that he was constantly unaware of what he could do, and confusing it with what he thought he could, and what he really shouldn't do. Among the things that he really shouldn't do, couldn't do, and thought he could do, was use a raft to get across a river. Within moments, he was adrift in the currents, floating down the river, and very, very curious as to why New York was smaller. One would think that as one gets closer to a place, it gets bigger. That was the way it was in the Amish country, anyway.

Hours passed and New York disappeared. Schenker was patient, though, the kind of patient only possible if you were slightly retarded or a dedicated Christian with faith so deep that you would idiotically shun modernity and live in the country wearing clothes with wooden buttons and associate only with people with ridiculous names paired appropriately with copious amounts of facial hair. The size of the river grew until it was huge, and he could only see land on one side. The air smelled salty, the birds were big and noisy, and there were other boats, huge boats bellowing steam from stacks, noisily gliding past him, in front of him, and around him.

CRACK! A giant boat hit him and shattered his raft, and as he fell into the cold, cold water, his brain didn't tell him to swim, because it was retarded, and so he started to sink, away from the light, which got smaller and smaller, but as with New York, caused Schenker no worry. Darkness closed in, and his consciousness drifted, until suddenly his vision exploded with light and his chest with pain. He frantically vomited water, hacking for air, and looked up. Through his blurred vision his retarded brain processed the image of a man, drenched from head to toe, his powerful body breathing heavily, a bristly mustache quivering below small spectacles, and it returned to him one important piece of startling information.

"GREAT GOD! A JEW!"

Teddy pulled off his gatorskin hood to get a better look at the lad whom he had just rescued, but before he could react, Schenker threw up his hands around Teddy's throat.

They violently rolled around in Teddy's canoe, Schenker yelling "Jesus killer!" and Teddy getting more and more angry. Schenker, though retarded, had quite extensive training in Amish-style bull wrestling, a sport renowned for its use of ball grabbing. But Teddy was no stranger to such underhanded attacks, having smashed the faces of many Amish amateur boxers as part the Union boxing circuit. A left hook caught Schenker on the cheekbone, tearing a large gash and blinding Schenker with his own blood. Schenker fell to the canoe floor, dazed but not much more confused than usual.

"Desist, Ball-Grabber!" Teddy yelled. "I just saved your life. Don't make me take it away from you!"

Teddy laid his oar in the water and paddled around another large steamer. Over the next few hours he kept land in sight but stayed far enough away for as he put it, "to keep the dead Jesus freaks from getting in the way of the canoe." The trees along the shoreline were impenetrably thick, and Teddy, even with his sun spectacles on, could not see a sign of life, as he pointed his canoe south by south west, by five minutes longitude; he continued his way South.

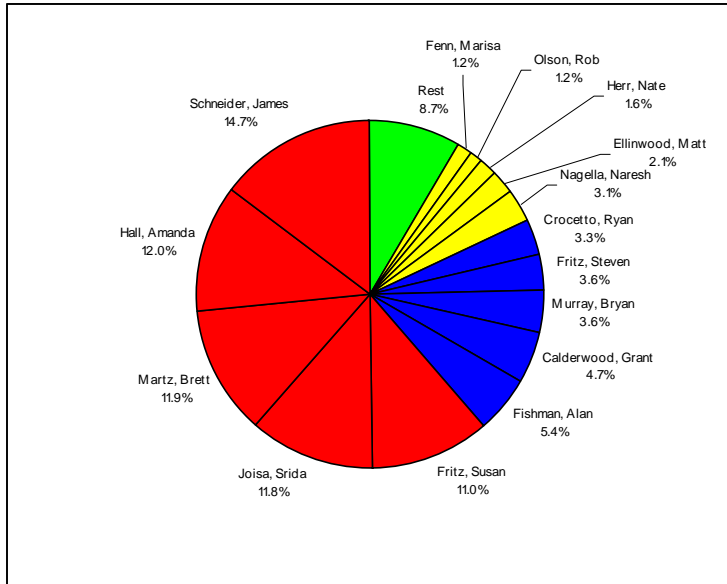
Schenker fell into a disturbed sleep. He dreamed about eating slugs, running naked through the briar patches, and how his mother had made fun of his deformity. He tossed restlessly in the canoe but as the moon came up, his dreams turned to his sister.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE

NEWSLETTER STATS

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



Contributors:

Nathan Beach
Grant Calderwood
Matt Ellinwood
Alan Fishman
Dan Fritz
Susan Fritz
Amanda Hall

James Schneider
Larry Simpson

Compiled by:

Dan Fritz, Editor-in-Chief
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! ☑

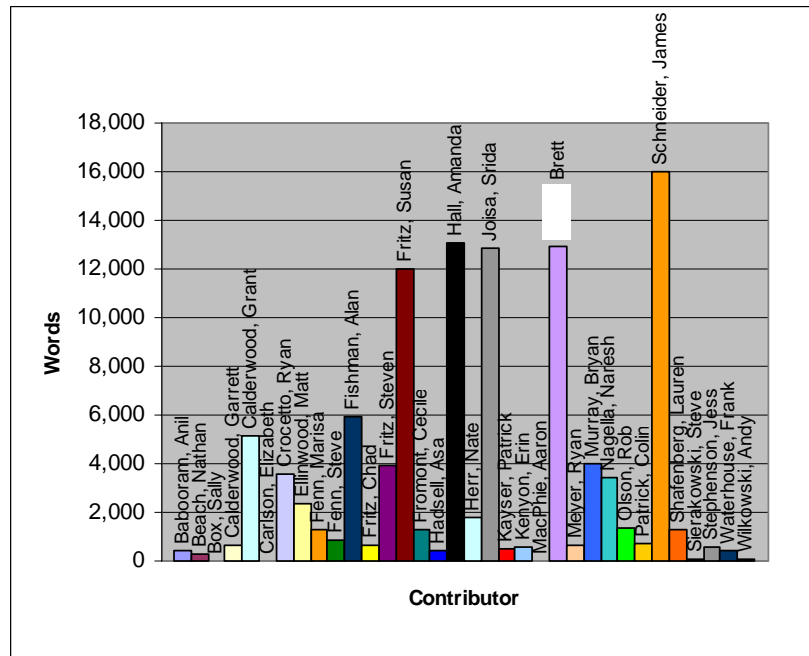
As of last issue, the top five *Babble-ON* contributors (red) had contributed 61.4% of the written material, the next five (blue) had contributed 20.6%, and the next five (yellow) had contributed 9.3%. All remaining contributors (green) had accounted for another 8.7%.

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

Current Trends:

A slight drop-off in top-tier production is allowing a couple of rising stars to gain ground. However, the second tier is still far-removed from the top tier. ☑

Words Contributed per Contributor



Global Watch Map

BabbleON has attracted contributors and readers from around the globe. In addition to the U.S. writers from 14 different states (noted on the map), there have been international submissions from:

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

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

