



Letter from the Editor

The picture to the left is a portrait of the Florentine art critic Diego Martelli, by Edgar Degas. I had the pleasure of presenting on this portrait in an art history class at the Freie Universität Berlin, and it's one of the defining pieces that sharpened my art eye.

It's not a necessarily groundbreaking piece, nor is it particularly well-known, even for Degas, who was much better known for his ballet pastels and bathing women. It does, however, exhibit two notable things: 1) a sense of comfort and reflection, and 2) a (somewhat contradictory) spiral effect. Following the papers on the table, the couch, and the round figure of the pondering Martelli himself, your eye travels in a circular, spiraling motion. Accentuated by the elevated perspective, you almost fall into the room, a space of controlled chaos.

There are multiple points that can be made in this, and I'll leave that up to you. But remember how impactful your seemingly "obscure" contributions can be.

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Oregon Trail 2005

By Bryan Murray

February 19, 2005. Today I undertook the great 440+ mile trek from Lincoln to my hometown of Scottsbluff, Nebraska. Here's a diary of my road trip and a little insight to the sights and sounds of Nebraska I-80 exits:

12:00 noon—grab a Runza and start my trek. There are two delicacies native to Nebraska: Valentino's Pizza and Runza. Pizza is obviously pizza, but the Runza came about from the German heritage embedded in the state. Basically, it is an "oven stuffed sandwich" with hamburger and cabbage, i.e. a cabbage burger. Some people like it, some hate it. I'm indifferent, but since I haven't had one in such a long time, I decided to give it a try again, and it was delicious. My hat goes off to that old grandma who is now suing for her "Runza" naming rights.

12:20 pm—call my mom to let her know I left, told her it's raining, and I get the "go slow and be careful" motherly advice. Obviously, I must go against her wishes, and I speed up at this point. Driving in the eastern part of the state, a college atmosphere exists and today does not let me down as I pass a hot blonde, college student (easily tell by the parking sticker on the rear view mirror). Damn, I wish I was in college again instead of growing older every single day. Oh well...I'm speeding, and she's using me

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And So Time Flies By...

By Srida Joisa

As I grow up, I find I lose time more often. No, it's not like Ashton Kutcher in the *Butterfly Effect* where he literally forgets what he was doing. It's more like things take longer to do, so time passes by much faster than ever before.

I used to wonder why, but now time flies by so fast I don't really have time to think about it much.

For instance, don't you remember in 1st grade how it would take FOREVER to get from 9:00am to 10:15am so you could go outside and run non-stop at top speed for a whole 15 minutes during recess? I would look agonizing at those stupid round clocks that were bigger than I was with their round white faces, slim black hands for hours and minutes and skewer-like red hands for seconds just waiting for time to pass. And first grade was pretty fun. But nothing beat recess.

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Driver "8"

By Dan Fritz

See page 6

Bad Joke Corner

Contributed by Bryan Murray

What do fish say when they hit a concrete wall?
Dam!

Why do gorillas have big nostrils?
Because they have big fingers. ☒

Tower of Babble-ON's

"Before-and-After" Corner

By Susan Fritz

"Some people say 'what's that?' it's Pat Say-Jack, how 'bout them Viking?" ☒

Quote of the Month

By Ryan Meyer

I had on a D&T (Deloitte & Touche) shirt at the gym yesterday, and a guy asked me if Deloitte & Touche was Italian for "Tits & Ass." ☒

Problem Hole

By Srida Joisa

“Cuttin’ up the Gold to Dig a Hole”

In this 3rd installment of Problem Hole, you actually want to get a hole digger to dig a hole. Fancy that.

The Hole Digger has said he wants 1 pound of gold for every day he digs. You happen to want a 5-day hole dug. In your UPenn Franklin safety box you also have a 5 pound block of Gold.

But you’ve only got 2 gold cutters. That’s right, you can only cut the gold block twice in the 5 days.

You need to pay him exactly 1 pound of gold at the end of each and every work day for 5 straight days. You have to pay him using the 5 pound block of gold you have, but you can only cut the gold twice.

Here’s a hint: This is not a geometric question. It’s impossible to take any 3-D block, cut it across 2 planes and have it cut up into 5 equally sized pieces.

See next issue for the answer! Also, the answer to last month’s issue is so intriguing, that it will appear next month instead of now! ☒

Dictator of the Month: Ancient Edition

Lucius Tarquinius Superbus

Ruler of Rome from 535-510 BC

By Fritz and Hall

Besides having the grooviest name in Ancient Rome (he was a running back that would put Bettis to shame), Tarquin II was a pretty bad guy. After being upset he did not inherit the throne, he *called* it anyway (the origin of the phrase “SHOT GUN!”). He then asked his wife to kindly run over the ruling King, Servius Tillius, with a chariot, and she obliged. Oh, did I mention Servius Tillius was her own father? (Hillary Clinton was not the first ruthless First Lady, Gub’ner!) He then engaged in wars with the Latins and Etruscans, while depriving the lower class of arms and destroying ancient shrines. His regime was one of bloodshed and violence, punctuated by the murders of Senators that did not agree with him. His reign would end when his son callously raped a noblewoman, which prompted a revolt by the Senators who were also tired of being killed. He was exiled and died alone in Etruria. Hail the last of the seven legendary kings of Rome! ☒

In lieu of a picture of Superbus, enjoy this snapshot of Tiny Tim!



Past Dictators

Musharraf - Pakistan
Qaddafi - Libya
Karimov - Uzbekistan
Taylor - Liberia
Milosevic - Yugoslavia

Past Dictators

Saddam - Iraq
Mugabe - Zimbabwe
Pinochet - Chile
Ceausescu - Romania
Pol Pot - Cambodia

The Criminally Comical Trials of Mattlock

By Calderwood and Fritz



Wine Country

By Steven Fritz

Let's take a visit to one of my favorite wineries—Joseph Phelps. Located near the end of the Silverado Road in the Napa valley, this one-of-a-kind facility is a must see. Phelps bottles a full range of wines, and I want to introduce you to one of their best—*La Mistral*. This red table wine is full-bodied and fruity without being too peppery. As with all wines, you can only call it, for example, Merlot, if it contains a great majority of Merlot grapes. Something in the 80 to 85% range. Otherwise it's technically a table wine. Well, table wine or not, I guarantee you won't be disappointed. Priced in the \$10-\$20 range, it is affordable enough to have with a bowl of popcorn, or as a companion to your porterhouse steak. The deep red cherry taste holds up well with red meats of all kinds.



Travel Tip:

Travel deep into the Napa valley to Saint Helena, take a hard right and drive to the eastern side of the valley, and you're there. The picture was taken from their tasting room patio overlooking their private valley. Napa Valley is just over that mist-stripped hill.

Cork or Screw Top:

Nothing gets people more twisted up than this question. Some of the major players in the wine business are putting (piloting) their top end wines into bottles with screw tops. That might sound like 75 cent jug wine, but it's not. Fact of the matter, with all the emotion aside, a screw top preserves the integrity of the wine better and longer. Having said that, if I had 3000 bottles of expensive corked wine, I'd want to say my stuff is done the right way. Cork, if not stored right, can leak air. That's bad for your \$100 bottle of Cab. Hey, it's from the bark of a tree after all. A screw top can't dry out. ☒

"I was attacked by a squirrel"

With mating season approaching, fur begins to fly

By Cici Zheng, Daily Pennsylvanian, February 25, 2005

Contributed By Rob Olson

College freshman Samantha Kleinman was strolling down Locust Walk one day in November when she was suddenly hit by something small and furry.

"I was attacked by a squirrel," Kleinman said. "The squirrel had jumped out of the trash can and was holding onto my jacket pocket, so I was pretty much standing there shaking it off and freaking out."

Although Kleinman's specific encounter with squirrels may be a rare occurrence, Penn does play host to an abundant squirrel population due to its urban location. ☒

See the rest of the story at:

<http://www.daily pennsylvanian.com/vnews/display.v/ART/421ed6cfa6050>

Beard of the Month

Stefan Gözl

See <http://www.worldbeardchampionships.com/> for more.



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.newsletter.fritzcomics.com>

BED

By Bed Head

Two cuddling foreheads share devotion's grace, as supple lips exchange unspoken thought. While eyebrows mesh and lashes faint embrace, warm breath escapes with glances seldom caught.

Our mouths dole tastes of candied comforting-: Reminds us both of home's security. Their cozy union promised then to bring us future moments of such purity.

You left, behind a fragrant pillowcase, alone I devour its committed scent and ponder the face it can not replace, still savoring the smell of time well spent.

Affection ate away our hours in bed, but true love's traces still caress my head.

☒

The Power of Caring

By Naresh Nagella

200,000 people perished from our planet over the last two months due to the tsunami, and Americans have given an approximate \$500 million in their own money to aid in mending that tragedy—in addition to about \$3.5 billion (after some hemming and hawing) that our government is giving to the relief effort. That is an amazing number—and, surely, few other countries throughout history could even come close to putting up such amounts in the face of an international, natural tragedy.

But, in the end the total aid it amounts to is about \$12.00/person for a country where per capita (that's per person so it's even counting kids) GDP is \$37,000.*

To me, that's still not great. The economic impact of the tsunami is estimated at about \$20 billion dollars. Imagine if every American family, either through themselves or through the government, which we elect, said that America was going to give \$40/person to tsunami relief. For a family of four, that's about \$160—which means perhaps eating in and renting a movie instead of going out twice *for the year*. Even at that, middle-class families could be expected to pay less if families whose incomes averaged much more than \$30,000 paid more than the \$40/person. We spend \$5/person (or \$1.5 billion) in Iraq *per week* already.

If the wealthiest nation in the world met that figure (\$40/person), most of the problems regarding the tsunami would be emotional. The economic and physical impact of the tsunami, while real, would be temporary and the healing would be that much easier.

And—get ready for the jump of logic—that's why caring is so incredibly special. You are not merely giving up some of your own resources for the benefit of someone you never knew and never will know. It's more than that, and it's *quite frankly rare*. I am not sure why—but it is. Just look at the tsunami contributions. If caring, which encompasses the giving of yourself or some sacrifice—however large or small—were easy or commonplace I really feel the aid numbers would be higher. Not that the numbers are *bad*, however. This country has tons of great, good, loving people in it. But, the attitude of caring is not overwhelmingly common. It's really not even a majority thought.

Think about it: using the power of our resources and benefits of our knowledge/hard work (which result in an economy as prosperous as ours) we would eventually be saying: “Yes, bad stuff happens. We're not sure why. Frankly, we could care less why. But, we're strong enough and we know enough to combat and beat it.” Caring binds us through the simple dignity of acknowledging our common humanity. It's the power of caring which is all the more special for its rarity and continuance in the face of an event that's so powerful you'd want to question existence itself. That last paragraph all seems so obvious—so easy, and so right—but at \$12.00/person for the wealthiest nation ever in the face of the worst humanitarian disaster ever, it's clearly far from obvious.

I want to relate my first contribution to *Babble-ON* back to Stouffer. And, I will say at least this much: reading through a couple past editions reminds me of how much I miss Stouffer and all of you. It was a great community, and I'm excited to laugh, debate, and talk to everyone again even if it's been a while. I hope everyone is well. ☒

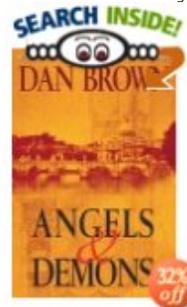
* from <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/us.html>

“World” Book Review

By Steven Fritz

About two years ago I first heard about Dan Brown's *DaVinci Code*. When I visited the book store, the sales person was knowledgeable enough about his work to recommend I read *Angels & Demons* first. I agree. This is a must read if you have or haven't read *The Code*.

We're introduced to Dr. Robert Langdon, the main character for both books, within the first few words of this exciting adventure. To say the pace is at the speed of sound is an understatement. Langdon's expertise as a professor at Harvard in the field of symbology is his ticket to ride. His job slash passion slash obsession in this field makes him the perfect code cracker. A dead research scientist in Europe is no way to begin your day, but that is exactly how we start.



Some unknown dastardly person has filched a new weapon. This is no ordinary WMD. This one can blow the ears off of everybody within a thousand feet. Think atom bomb packaged as a firecracker. Well, that's not the real story, but it does emphasize the sense of urgency. The whole book takes place in 24 hours.

Packed with jet airplanes that get you from the USA to Europe in an hour+, with underground laboratories beneath unsuspecting top-siders and with puzzle-solving at a professional level, you get a true page-turner.

We end up at Vatican City, with the aforementioned WMD hidden somewhere, a fantastic array of riddles and decipherable symbols, and only minutes left before it all goes up in smoke. Sprinkle in a little love interest, and you've got a best seller. *Angels & Demons* has been on the *New York Times* bestseller paperback list for ages. Way to go Dan Brown. Now you are ready for that other book—*The DaVinci Code*. ☒

...And So Time Flies By, from p. 1...

I don't remember getting tired or sweating at all during recess either. Recess was that awesome. I mean, I might be breathing kind of hard, but a good 3 minutes of sitting down in my little blue chair in front of my little brown desk staring up at the clock waiting for lunch time (12:00pm) would give me enough energy to do it all over again. If only we could run inside the classroom.

I was a public school kid. None of that preppy private school garbage for me. Fortunately, I never actually had to spend an entire year in one of those cooking ovens called Portables. We used to make fun of the “Portable” kids in first grade. Those morons had class in a Portable, because they needed Portapotties. I still don't know how to spell Portapotty.

And then it was lunch time. In most of my elementary classes I could only eat lunch during lunch time, so a whole 5 minutes of lunch time was wasted *actually eating lunch*. The rest of the time was spent doing something far more fun. Like eating your best friend's desert. Or throwing your arch enemy's lunch in the trash. Or even better, throwing your arch enemy's lunch into the fish tank and watching all the fishies swarm towards a sinking

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as wind block and to be the first caught if a state patrolman tags me. I should have toyed with her more.....damn, she's turning off now.

Exit 353—York, NE. Used to turn left to go south to Texas. That direction is full of evil due to my ex-wife. We affectionately refer to her as the “winged beast from hell.” Besides destroying most everything in my life, she did the most heinous thing imaginable: she kidnapped my cat, Toonces. Who knows how the little guy is doing...she probably sold him for crack.

However, a girl I went out with is from the little town of Fairmont just south of York. Jill was absolutely gorgeous and the sister-in-law of California Angels baseball player Darin Erstad. Jill interviewed for a job in Las Vegas, and I haven't heard from her in a long time. I think she moved, or she knew I wasn't in her league. Probably the latter....oh well.

1:00 pm—I call Dan, and he doesn't answer as always. So, I leave yet another message calling him a D-bag. I don't know what his deal has been lately....

Exit 300—Beaver Crossing...one of those things you never get tired of saying out loud.

Exit 312—Grand Island. The name of this town doesn't make sense. This is a landlocked state, where do you get Island? There are only two cities over 200,000 people in the entire state, so what makes it so Grand? This is easily in my top ten list of the most idiotic town names.....

Exit 272—Kearney. Damn....Sprint PCS ceases to exist past this point. I'm not going to pay for roaming, so the phone will be shut off until I pass this imaginary line on the way back. I feel so alone. Wow, the snow geese sure are covering the ponds. I swear there must be at least 10,000—20,000 either flying around or sitting on the lakes. February is the only time of year you really get to see them...and they're still in season. I've never shot one down, but here's something I learned: even though they are white colored, they only consist of dark meat. Interesting.....

Kearney is part of the University of Nebraska system. You can go to school here for half the cost, half the education, and half the fun, but still receive a diploma that makes it look like they went to the real school in Lincoln. This is one of those schools that students go to, because the “big city” of Lincoln is too overwhelming. They also go here, because it's closer to home for all the “Sammy Suitcases” that go home to mommy every weekend. As you probably can tell, I'm not impressed....

Also home to the Nebraska Archway, the Gateway to the West....didn't they already do something like this in St. Louis? Yet another waste of taxpayer money.....

Exit 179—North Platte. Finally, my bladder is about to explode. This is usually the only stop I make during the trek. I refuel the automobile, grab a snack and take a piss. Generally it is wise to grab a Gatorade bottle for a drink.....especially if I don't want to stop again. Guys should know what I'm talking about, and don't tell me you haven't done it before....

Mountain Time Zone: west of North Platte, I just gained an hour. Even though my clock says 3:20 pm it is actually 2:20 pm.....I just stole time from the universe!! Well for now at least, until I give it back on my return voyage. Here is something to ponder, what is your favorite time zone? Mine

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...And So Time Flies By, from previous page...

brown bag of mush while we scattered like flies. Like I said, first grade was fun.

Then we got to go to a real recess. Lunch recess. That was tough. You had to pace your running away from the girls who had cooties, because if you ran too fast in the first 15 minutes, you got tired out, dropped down on the ground *and then the girls caught up to you, touched you, and you got cooties.* Life as a guy with cooties sucks. Just ask Eric Lomazoff. I bet the girls went wild after Eric in first grade. And then he got caught, caught the cooties, and it was all over. It takes years to recover from cooties.

Life after lunch recess sucked pretty bad. Sometimes we could do science experiments like growing sprouts or something, but pretty much most of the time I'd sit back down in my little blue chair in front of my little brown desk staring up at the clock waiting for 3:30pm to roll around, so I could jump out of my little blue chair, grab my bag, run out the door, and catch the bus. I was always afraid the bus would leave without me. I'd seen it happen to one stupid kid. I felt sorry for him. He was left behind at school, and the teachers ate him at night.

That was a really long day in first grade. And yeah, it went by a little faster in 6th grade, but girls were pretty cute by then so just sitting around didn't seem so bad.

High school and college were ridiculous. In high school I'd wake up at some ungodly hour (5:30am) and arrive at school before sunrise (7:15am) thinking, “I want to go back to the stone ages when it was an evolutionary *disadvantage* to be forced to wake up in the dark.” We'd finish high school by 2pm, but that wasn't it. The day went by really fast because in a 1 hour block of time, you'd spend 5 minutes getting to class, 3 minutes being late for class, because you were talking to your friends, 10 minutes waiting for roll to be called, and 2 minutes packing up your stuff and leaving class. That left all of 40 minutes per class. And half of that was spent listening to some moronic social studies teacher droning on about something great that happened to him back when he was in college.

College went by really too fast. I don't even remember where I was most of the time. I heard I left shoes all over the place. I was probably too busy catching up as time flew by to wait for my shoes to catch up.

The thing is, work really just kept the trend going. I think the experience has been different for different people. But in my case, it just doesn't stop getting faster. Pretty soon, I'll be 50 years old and a decade will pass by in a second and SWISH! Hey! I'm 60 now!

Anyway, I've heard all sorts of theories on the subject. “You see, it's just a function of how much time is passing relative to how much time you've already been alive.” That's a bunch of crap, and you know it. I remember nothing about time taking forever when I was 1 year old. And recess went by really fast in first grade. Heck, recess went by really fast all the time. When I went over to a friend's house, I had the most fun literally 5 minutes before I was picked up and had to leave. Don't tell me those 5 minutes were moving along at the same speed as the 5 hours before when we were arguing about whose turn it was to play Rygar, because you know it isn't true. They definitely flew by faster.

There are a couple of times during the day when time slows down for me even now. I'll tell you about one of them for now, and we can talk about the other some other time—come to the Rejuvenation Center, and I'll let you know sooner. Time slows down when we're in pain. If I'm running or biking or skiing or whatever in the gym and I'm on minute #29 out of 30 or #44 out of 45, that last minute takes a really frickin' long time to pass.

Maybe if we all run all the time and all pretend we're almost ready to stop, we'll all live forever? ☒

...Oregon Trail 2005, from previous page...

will always be Mountain—always seems to be more daylight hours at the right times. Some of you heathens do not understand a “time change” or believe everything is strictly on EST or CST. I pity your ignorance....

Exit 69—Sunol. The greatest exit in the entire I-80 system!! Every time I see that exit sign I giggle to myself, and plot about stealing it. 69....hehehe.

Outside of Sunol, I see one of the messiest road kills in quite a while. A deer has been systematically splattered across both lanes leaving a nice blood stained trail, with meat bits strewn about. I can tell this is a fresh kill.... The carcass is still in the middle of the road and is pretty unrecognizable as it has been turned inside out. I would think a semi took it out, as a normal vehicle could not cause such extensive damage. Sometime I’ll have to share the story about the family of raccoons that didn’t make it across the road outside of North Platte....

Exit 59—Sidney. My last exit on I-80, now I continue on US highways. Oops, didn’t grab the Gatorade in North Platte, so now I must make a stop. Sidney is the home of Cabela’s, the greatest place for the avid outdoorsman. Outside of vegetarians, everyone would admire the numerous stuffed animal exhibits and heads mounted throughout the store. During the great closeout sale in the summer, people and their RV’s are literally camping out and waiting in line for about a week before the sale begins. Don’t get me wrong the sales are awesome, but what is the cost benefit of taking 3+ days off work to save maybe a couple hundred dollars? Well, I do admit the clientele isn’t exactly the brightest, I mean they drive RV’s....so you know they like NASCAR. Enough said.

State Highway—on my way to Bridgeport. This is a nice break from I-80. The “suggested” speed limit is 65 mph; however, the actual is between 75-80 mph. I hear tales of people getting ticketed for 3 mph over the limit...these have to be myths to scare the young ones. In fact, I’ve NEVER seen a patrolman on these roads in 12 years....

Final stretch—on to Scottsbluff. This is my most favorite and scenic part of the drive. Right outside the town of Bayard lays Chimney Rock, a famous landmark of the Oregon Trail. I quickly remember the days in the 4th and 5th grade of how the Oregon Trail was a major part of our curriculum and our area history. Down the road a ways, I see Scotts Bluff National Monument. It’s basically a huge bluff that overlooks the valley and my hometown. In the summer, it’s fun to make the 1.5 mile hike up the trail to the top. On a clear day you can see Laramie Peak on the Wyoming mountain range. Ah, the memories of driving home and seeing what was left behind...which really was nothing once you figure the economy and job market into the equation.

I eventually make it home in less than 6 hours, a new land speed record. After figuring in my one stop, I easily averaged close to 80 MPH. Given that the last 90 miles consists of old highways with a speed limit of 60 MPH, and my vehicle registration has expired, I would say that was damn good! ☒

Driver ‘8’

By Dan Fritz

The slow-moving grandmas, the laneless autists, the cut-you-off narcissists, the potholes, the accidents, the cardboard boxes on the side of the road that cause a forty-five minute jam (even though they’re not in any lane)—all of this boils down to the joy of driving. And if you live anywhere in the United States, aside of a small minority of citizens who live within walking distance of an adequate public transportation system, you *have* to own a car.

It’s imbedded as a necessity and a way of life in this country. Go to any mall, and you’ll see that the largest use of space—by far—is the space allocated to the parking lot. Look at what the average Friday night activity is in small-town (and sometimes big-town) America—cruising. What do people spend a good 15-25% of their incomes on? Their cars. Cars and the driving of them are imbedded in the culture, from such mediocre movies as *Gone in 60 Seconds* to *Day of Thunder*. One of the coolest parts of *Batman* is when we get to see all the different features of the Batmobile. Don’t you wish you had one too? Then there are songs, most of which stem from an earlier time in America—I can hear the Beach Boys singing in my head right now, “Giddy up, Giddy up 409....” If you’re lucky enough, you might even get the ultimate present when you turn 16 (or 15 or 17 depending on where you live), that being your first car.

As you can see, there is a heavy focus on cars, and there also happens to be a strict necessity to drive them. It would either be impossible for most of us to get to work/school, or it would simply be prohibitively long in order to arrange that. And face it, if it’s prohibitive for most of us to arrange a door-to-door carpool, it’s that much more inconvenient to take a two-mile bike ride to the bus station, where we have to catch a bus within five blocks of work, all of which we then have to walk. Add a thunderstorm to that mix, and you’d decide to buy whatever car you could find faster than your pants would dry off.

The expansion of the suburbs is clearly interrelated. As the highways expand ever outward, more and more cheap houses are built, and people are willing to give up their commuting time in order to save money on housing. It’s virtually impossible for public transportation to compensate for this expansion, except maybe from main suburban centers to downtown, but never very adequately intra-suburbs. Only the “lucky” few can get away with, say, walking to the grocery store in the suburbs. None of those neighborhoods are designed with that lifestyle in mind. It’s all a perpetual cycle, and it leads to slightly different driving cultures based on what region of the country you live in. Which brings us to the center of this article....

Just as the need to drive has been firmly established in everyday life across the country, the actual driving styles have been adapted according to each regional American culture. There is no such thing as the ultimate place to drive—it’s just a matter of which annoying aspect of driving you can live with. I’m going to give you a sampling of eight different driving subcultures in America (four in this issue and four next issue), and how they are reflective of the general cultures of those areas. Who couldn’t benefit from a few more stereotypes?

The Twin Cities, Minnesota:

First of all, what are the “Twin Cities?” These are the two neighbor cities that make up roughly half the population of Minnesota, namely Minneapolis and St. Paul. Though the beltway around the city lies in highly suburbanized areas (which generally all major beltways do), it has only four lanes throughout much of its length, and it’s still trying to catch up to the

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...*Driver 8, from previous page...*

expanding traffic needs. Add to this the fact that Minnesota is buried in a snowdrift for a good part of four (+) months, and you've just made everything slow moving. Or have you? Minnesotans are notorious tailgaters, even in inclement weather conditions, but they do drive the speed limit in their Dodge Caravans. In one way that's a blessing and in another it's a curse. When traffic is indeed moving, it's moving at a reasonably good pace, as if everyone's cars were marching to the beat of the same drum. In both the left lane *and* the right. So, forget about using the left lane as the "fast" lane or—God forbid—to pass someone. Everyone is driving the same speed in every lane, a half a car length from the person is front of them. And this works out perfectly fine for the Minnesotans who exhibit a definite herd mentality, who are publicly very polite and "nice," and who have a clear penchant for following the rules. If you cut people off here, you're just being rude, you dissident!

Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas:

Somewhat the opposite of Minnesota, Dallas is filled with big highways and good driving weather. It's also filled with a bunch of people who think they own the road. As such, don't attempt to change lanes without first making sure that someone isn't speeding up in their luxury SUV to keep you out. And they just might, because it's all very individualistic and flashy in Dallas (hence the *luxury* aspect of the cars). While you are driving down the road in your Dallas-standard BMW three series next to a high school kid in a Viper, don't forget that driving fast and passing people is an *inherent right*. But do so with caution—there are cops everywhere, and if you happen to be driving through one of the richer neighborhoods, they won't hesitate to pull you over if you're driving a "junker" (read anything under \$20,000 MSRP). A good trick to combat this: put a lawnmower in your trunk, and they'll think that you're part of the hired help. You'll be able to speed away scot-free!

New York, New York:

The mere thought of driving in New York is enough to make me angry. Think of taking a big highway and running it through a Salad Shooter—that's what the engineers who made the highways did with their design plans. The roads are a confusing spaghetti-network that are usually laden with the worst bumps and potholes you've ever encountered. But one thing that sets New York apart is that everyone knows that cutting off and being cut off is a way of life. You need to change lanes? Just do it. Being friendly will get you into a wreck. You might get honked at, but honking in New York is akin to answering a rhetorical question in class—it's usually unnecessary, but it does remind you of that person's existence. This works when you're walking down the street in New York, too. There are so many people around, it's inevitable that you'll bump into someone at some point in time, but it's a case of no harm, no foul. Somehow, some way, even though someone might have an "episode" and flip out, everything flows. People in New York deal with "weirdness" as the "norm."

...*continued in right column...*

...*continued from left column...*

Connecticut:

Welcome to the land of paved cow paths. You thought that Connecticut, being a particularly wealthy state, would have a respectable network of roads, didn't you? You thought that the folks in Fairfield county, where the average income is over \$60,000/year, would ride smoothly to and from the golf course. First, paved cow paths aren't smooth. Second, most roads are two lanes with no shoulder and windy, so you'd better hope that it's not garbage day, so you don't get stuck behind a garbage truck. The densely forested state also lends to every Connecticut driver practically pulling out into traffic in order to see if they can make their right-hand turn. Fearing unknown forces in the world, the people of Connecticut jam up the roads every time a snow storm is brewing, in order to get supplies at the grocery store. When calculating travel time, take this into account. (*more next issue*) ☒

BabbleList of Distinction

The following people have been (or will be, after this issue is released) awarded the following *Babble-ON* distinctions. Congratulations!

Babble-ON-ians (5,000+ words):

- Alan Fishman
- Susan Fritz
- Brett
- James Schneider

Little Scribblers (1,000+ words):

- Grant Calderwood
- Ryan Crocetto
- Steven Fritz
- Cécile Fromont
- Amanda Hall
- Srida Joisa
- Bryan Murray
- Rob Olson ☒

The State of Babble-ONline

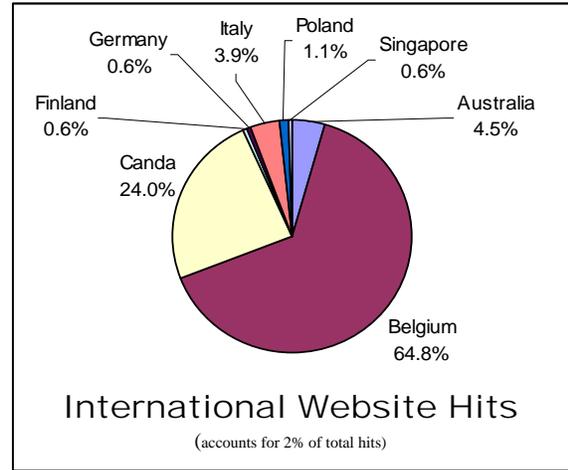
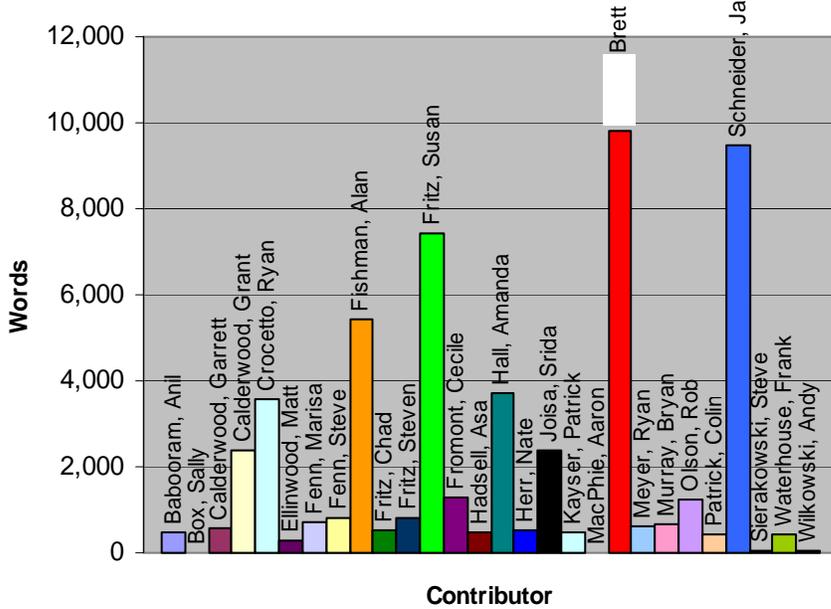
A note on Website Statistics

The Babble-ONline community is growing in direct proportion to the length and quality of this newsletter. After several months of sustained growth in website hits, January saw a steep drop-off due entirely to the release date of the newsletter, namely the last day of the month. This also highlights the flurry of hits that accompany the release of each newsletter and the inevitable drop-off until the next issue. All things taken into account, February will reflect a continuation of the growth that was recorded in the last quarter of 2004.* ☒

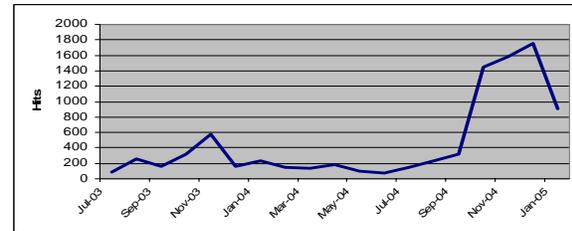
*Also of note, the official Babble-ON statistics are compiled using the website's tracking tool, as opposed to ExtremeTracking, which is linked to the site. Extreme-Tracking counts differently than the website tracker, so the raw data will not match.

Total Words Contributed

These are close approximations. Does not include current issue or editor.



Total Website Hits to Date



Contributors:
 Grant Calderwood
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Compiled by:
 Dan Fritz
 in Norwalk, CT
 for the February 28, 2005,
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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. ☒

Awards

These awards could be yours!

- For Total Words Contributed:**
 1,000: Little Scribbler Contributor
 5,000: Babble-ON-ian
 10,000: Grimmelshausen Contributor

- For Exceptional Content:**
 Alfred, Lord Tennyson Platinum Seal of Excellence: This award is a very rare distinction, awarded only for indisputably masterful work.

Good luck, and keep the submissions coming! ☒



Global Watch Map

These maps were created using Microsoft Streets & Trips.