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## Letter from the Editor

**People** like to talk about the high price of gas these days. I like to look at this picture of a gas station by Edward Hopper.

Speaking of which, I almost ran out of gas today going to work. I would have had to trudge through a mile of Connecticut slush in my leather shoes.

Meanwhile, some of you are filling out forms for a living in the cornfields of Nebraska. Some of you are reading newspapers in a café in Sydney. Some of you are on airplanes in SFO. Some of you are rolling twelve-sided dice in a basement in Atlanta.

And the main reason I know this is because of this newsletter. Keep the submissions coming!

[dan@fritzcomics.com](mailto:dan@fritzcomics.com)

## Thursday Night Texas Hold'em

By Bryan Murray

**On** Thursday night, I once again made my weekly trek to my friends' place to enjoy a wholesome night of cards, beer, and guy talk. My friends, Scott and Mark, have been playing poker for quite some time and actually built their own felt table with chip and cup holders. It's actually pretty impressive and was involved in a heated dispute when they moved to Lincoln. Even though I've only played six times since moving back to Nebraska, it is something I look forward to every week. Maybe because I've won a couple times, but hey, who doesn't enjoy taking money from others?

Now I'm not saying I'm very good, but the first time I did play for money, I took home \$180 from these guys. Maybe it was beginner's luck, but here are some tips I have learned from playing so far:

...continued on page 5...

## Blast from the Past

By Susan Fritz

**Picture** it...Sicily 1915. Wait a minute, that's someone else's line. What this writer actually wants you to picture is your trusty Saturday afternoon, "I just rolled out of bed at 4 PM and all I got in my fridge is a clove of garlic and some lousy left-over Jell-O shots (and some pickles)" state-of-being. You throw on the ol' Abercrombie sweats and that greasy Chicago Bulls cap leftover from Jordan's prime, you grab the uni-key to your trust-fund baby roommate's Passat (the responsible person's Jetta), and you head out to the grocery store. After all, it's Saturday, and they might have some tasty samples of new, inventive frozen foods. That's how you made the switch from Hot Pockets to Uncrustables, doncha' know. You arrive, and unless you live in New York City, you are faced with aisle upon aisle of processed and unprocessed consumable goods. Yellow, pink, white, and even blue Peeps spy on you as you shamefacedly grab some Cran-Grape lite (it's a bonus buy, and

...continued on page 10...

## Bad Joke Corner

*Contributed by Bryan Murray*

How do you get holy water?  
*You boil the hell out of it.*

What's the difference between roast beef and pea soup?  
*Anyone can roast beef.*

Why don't blind people like to sky dive?  
*Because it scares the dog.*

What kind of coffee was served on the Titanic?  
*Sanka.*

Where do you find a dog with no legs?  
*Right where you left him.*



## Problem Hole

*By Srida Joisa*

“Hangin’ yerself with a Rope”

**Last** time we dug a hole. This time we’re burning some rope.

You’re cooking something. Maybe the arm of the Hole Digger for screwin’ up yer hole. You want to cook it for exactly 45 minutes.

You’ve got a lighter and two ropes. You know if you burn either rope by lighting one end, both ropes will burn for exactly 60 minutes. But these ropes are f\*\*\*ed up. They don’t burn evenly. You cannot make any inference about how much time has passed based upon how far the ropes have burned. All you know is once either one of the ropes is finished burning exactly 1 hr has passed.

How do you use your lighter and the two ropes to time exactly 45 minutes?

*See next issue for the answer! Also, the answers to the last two months’ issues can be found on page 6!* ☒

Tower of Babble-ON's

## "Before-and-After" Corner

*By Susan Fritz*

“A Doll’s House of Flying Daggers”

“Milk Shake-n-Bake a Stick At” ☒

## Dictator of the Month:

### Papa Smurf

*By Fritz and Hall*

**Communism** is not cute just because you shrink it, make it blue, and put it in a mushroom. That’s right, the Smurfs are communist. This idea has been posited for years and has swept the internet and bathroom walls everywhere. Though, one must admit that, if the Smurfs are communist, they have one of the most successful models to date. Therefore, bow before the greatest dictator of all time: PAPA SMURF! Papa Smurf is lord over the many little Smurflings of the Smurf village. He assigns them their daily duties based on his perception of their abilities. Papa Smurf eradicated any type of currency so that all the Smurfs would have to depend on each other. Papa Smurf does not even allow free thought, and anyone who attempts it (namely Brainy Smurf) gets kicked on his or her head. Even his look is Communist, as he wears RED and has a Marxist-like beard (though all other Smurfs must wear anti-individualistic white uniforms). Rumor has it that Hefty Smurf received one month in the hole for getting a tattoo and expressing his personality. Though Papa Smurf himself does little actual work, he can be seen as a model for other dictators who have failed where he has succeeded. P. Smurf nurtures his Smurfs; he listens to them

and uses kindness and love instead of death and destruction. And, for the most part, the Smurfs are a very contented people (except for Trots— ...I mean Brainy). How Smurfy!

#### Past Dictators

Superbus	Rome
Musharraf	Pakistan
Qaddafi	Libya
Karimov	Uzbekistan
Taylor	Liberia
Milosevic	Yugoslavia
Saddam	Iraq
Mugabe	Zimbabwe
Pinochet	Chile
Ceausescu	Romania
Pol Pot	Cambodia



## The Criminally Comical Trials of Mattlock in Poland

*By Calderwood and Fritz*



## The Power of Mother Nature

By Srida Joisa

**I**m still whittling away time on a plane as I write this (see page 5 for my other article). At least I'm doing something productive with my time. They give you so much stuff to do on planes. There's a bunch of newspapers you can read and magazines to look through. You can go shopping by just reading some of these catalogs and using the airplane phones that charge you \$10/minute. You can watch movies. You can hit on the stewardess. You can talk to your neighbor. You can sleep—that works pretty well in making flights fly by. I think all of that stuff is boring. So, I'm writing for *Babble-ON*. I should write an article about all the stuff you can do on a plane and what it means about our society. That's pretty deep stuff. Maybe Calderwood will write about it instead of fantasizing about my Blackberry.

My plane was delayed by 4 hours because of the Power of Mother Nature. There's apparently some super storm with crazy winds that basically shut down John F. Kennedy airport for some time. All planes were stopped and told to land elsewhere or were told to just sit at their origins and wait.

Mother Nature just said, "It's time for a potty break. I'm going to dump on New York and New Jersey."

And the rest of us just need to wait and see the carnage.

I'm really talking about the wrong situation though. How quickly we forget the Tsunami that killed over 200,000 people in South/Southeast Asia. Naresh already wrote about what's happened in the relief effort.

Do you think Mother Nature includes things like drought? I think so. That's another major piece of evidence that Mother Nature can kick our butt any day of the week.

Ah! But we can control Mother Nature, too. Just look at invitro-fertilization. That's us telling Mother Nature, "We can make things happen when you can't seem to get your act together."

I agree. That was a good example. Mowing down ancient rain forest trees like you mow your 100 square foot lawn in front of your little white house is the example everyone else uses all the time.

The movies help us remember what Mother Nature can do, too. Remember *Jurassic Park*? When what's his name—the math/science geek guy—says something like, "You can't make them all girls! Mother Nature will kick your butt!" And then the dinosaurs magically have sex with themselves and the geeky guy says, "I told you so! They're crazy mother f\*\*\*\*\*s!"

Why the heck is it *Mother Nature* and *Father Time*? Who the heck cares about Father Time? He looks more like God to me than some guy with an hour glass (or maybe it's his millennium glass). That's a cool name for a rock band. Millennium Glass.

We're getting off topic. I mean I am. What's to say it shouldn't be Father Nature and Mother Time? Mothers are always worried about the time, and Fathers are always answering when Nature Calls. I think we should talk about Father Nature. But that's the power of Mother Nature! She even changed her own name from Father Nature to Mother Nature. Crazy woman.

When you imagine Mother Nature, do you think of a woman with short hair or long hair? The more important question, Brett, is whether she's naked or not. Because Mother Nature is always beautiful. She's never ugly. She's got short pink hair with a black leather garter belt, a massive bust and behind, and spins around a pole all day long.

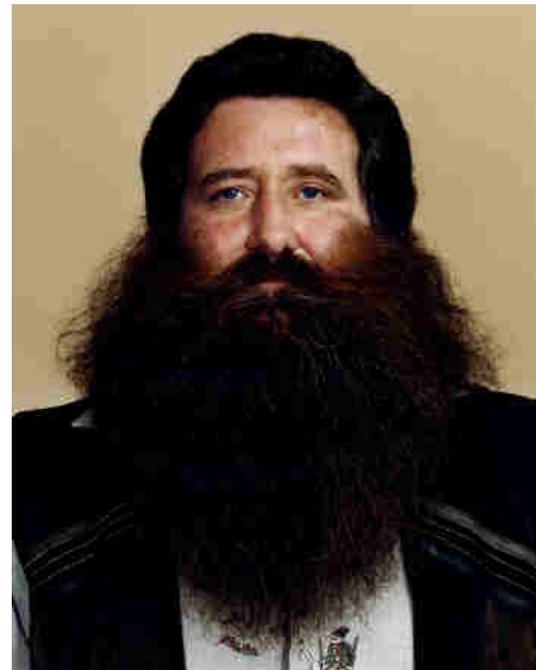
Really.

I wonder what would happen if Father Time dropped his briefs (he definitely wears tighty whities) and spun around a pole a couple of times. That's probably the secret to Time Travel. ☒

## Beard of the Month

Rheinhard Mitterhofer

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



Str8 Underdog:

AYB Fonzi

from [MLG News](#), Wednesday, March 09,  
2005 - 08:22 AM

By James "Fiend" Schneider

**Alfonso** Chartier is just another one of the many gamers who were no names in Halo 1, but who have risen to prominence in Halo 2. He's part of Str8 Rippin, a rag tag crew of "matchmaking noobs" who have caused quite a stir as of late. He's better known by the gamertag AYB Fonzi, which stands for "All Your Base," a cult montage video referenced for Halo 1 LANs. I was lucky enough to catch Fonzi for an interview and then a couple of pick-up FFA's, but we'll get to that soon enough.

"I wasn't known in Halo 1," Fonzi explains through the Xbox Live headset. "Just becoming recognized is a lot of fun." He's so courteous. He comes across as such a nice and personable guy. He might know he's sorta famous, especially to anyone following MLG, but he's not a jerk about it.

A freshman at Santa Clara University, double-majoring in computer and mechanical engineering, Fonzi is pretty busy. As a big fan of trance music, he plays the synthesizer a lot. He messes around with cars—

...continued next page...

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>

...*Str8 Underdog, from previous page...*

something he has an interest in, but not necessarily a knack for. And of course in the midst of all this, Fonzi dedicates about four to five hours a night to Halo 2.

Fonzi first got into videogames in fourth grade. He picked up a Sega Genesis and mastered Sonic the Hedgehog. As years passed, though, so did systems, and interests honed toward racing games and first-person-shooters. I asked him about competing on Grand Turismo 4, but he didn't think he could hack it. When Xbox was first being announced, Fonzi, like many gamers, watched all the videos for Halo: Combat Evolved and got really excited.

He was a good, not elite player, who teamed with Foulacy, also from the Northern California area, along with a couple others. They played and won some local tournaments, but Fonzi notes, "I got into the tournament scene late." His first taste of MLG action for Halo 1 was in San Francisco, and it was also his only entry in Halo 1. Let's just say he was still a no name after that tournament.

Then came Halo 2, a more interesting and balanced game, according to Fonzi.

"A lot of people seem closed to the idea of getting rid of the old pistol," Fonzi says. "I think Halo 1 was pretty imbalanced in that regard. It was pretty much just the pistol and everything focused around that. Playing Halo 2 it just seems like there are so many more possibilities each time you confront somebody. You could have the pea shooter and battle rifle. Or a sniper rifle if you can get away with it. It is much more balanced. Every weapon is versatile. You have a lot of options to engage people with."

Thanks to Xbox Live and Matchmaking, Fonzi was able to find his current crew, which isn't quite set even now. "If there was no Halo 2, I probably wouldn't be able to find the people I team with now. It has pretty much opened up an entire worldwide community of players I can get a hold of. Halo 1 was pretty much my local friends. We weren't too bad, but nowhere near the top."

Many people knew him for his first place rank on Bungie.net's Leaderboards, an area which has since been tarnished by cheaters. A lot of the players in Str8 Rippin achieved high profile status on those Leaderboards, which messed up some peoples set-in-stone top ten lists. Sad Panda Eh and Walka hail from Canada. What, you didn't get that from the "Eh"? They played some custom games together and soon became part of Str8 Rippin's NKOTB experience.

"Some people really despise us just because we're the new kids on the block, trying to prove something," Fonzi says. "We're definitely talked about a lot in that regard, just because of the whole controversy." This "whole controversy" surrounds not only Fonzi, who achieved a third place finish in the FFA at DC, but also his teammate for Houston, BlackJak, who was recently interviewed by Bungie.

"They view BlackJak as a matchmaking noob because he was at the top of so many matchmaking playlists," he mentions. "I think they'll be surprised in Houston, because he's an incredible player."

Looking at the custom game he has set up, Oddball on Lockout, I kid him, "Are you trying to get me to ask you about your victory over StK in that map and gametype fairly recently?" He shrugs it off, "We have beaten them a couple more times than that, not to brag."

Fonzi doesn't have to brag, so I'll do it for him. His team's performances, more-or-less out-of-the-blue serve as an inspiration to many gamers. In Halo 1 it was Zyos and the Ogres; they were untouchable. There were some others, but only a few excelled. In

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Halo 2, those players are still doing well with their teams finishing 2nd and 1st respectively, but now there's Str8 Rippin. These are the underdogs that everyone roots for, because they weren't Halo 1 gods.

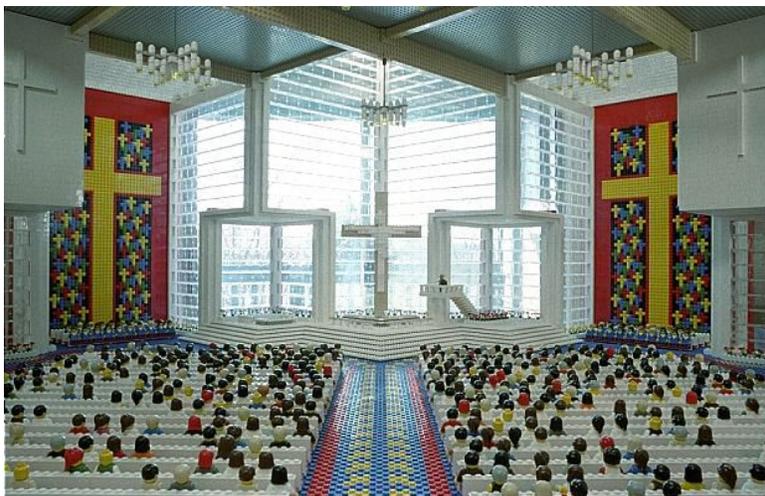
Fonzi is also kept modest by playing with the best on a frequent, if not daily, basis. He may be quite near the top of the gaming world, but he still is improving. "When I first started getting invited into the Ogres' custom games I was absolutely terrible," Fonzi confides. "They've really helped me become a much better player. At this point they view themselves as a level above us, and I'd have to agree at least for the time being. So, they've been very willing to help us get better. I just hope that continues even if we become real competition for them."

So if StK are a level above and pretty much universally regarded as such, what can Str8 Rippin prove throughout the other tournaments? Perhaps it's that a team of matchmaking noobs might be better than, say, the illustrious Check Six: "I'm pretty excited about the team we have going to Houston. I'm pretty confident. It's me, Foulacy, BlackJak and Sad Panda Eh. In terms of predictions, I think everyone would agree StK (will place) first. Maybe we can pull out a second. I don't know who will be on Check Six's team, but they will definitely be contenders."

Not surprisingly, Fonzi sees pro-gaming as a growing sport, and MLG the industry forerunner. The way he describes it, it's easy to see the parallels. "MLG San Fran... Capturing everything on VoD, streamed live online just like watching anything on TV, the audience, the two teams up on a stage—elevated, projector screens, all the details of some of the players, live commentators; the whole setup was just like a sport. I can definitely see it really opening up a lot more."

Str8 Rippin is looking to secure a sponsor, which will make the tournaments a more lucrative proposition. They are in a very active dialogue with companies including Sprint, trying to make them realize how sport-like MLG is and how big it's going to become. For now, Str8 Rippin's outlook as a squad is very similar to their game plan on the H2 battlefield: stay flexible. In the same way that they might need to change teammates, at least until Orlando when Fonzi and Foulacy will team with GhandiTheGreat and Vash, they hope to adapt to any situation. "Right now we come up with a general idea of where we want to be, and almost play it by ear, depending on the weapons we get," Fonzi explains. "We have one person for sniper, but, the biggest thing is to be versatile. If the sniper dies you should be able to pick it up and snipe." After our chat, Fonzi was gracious enough to let me and some of my lucky MLG Forum buddies (lucky to know me and lucky to be on XBL at the time) have a chance to play with him, Foulacy, GandhiTheGreat, Defy and a few others. I don't think I've ever had more fun in my life, especially dying so quickly. Being viciously, viciously, viciously and might I add viciously torn by these pros in MLG FFA for a couple games was quite an honor. And even in stomping us, they were nice about it. They didn't call us noobs, they didn't hump our corpses, they didn't tell us to quit at life, or Halo 2. Foulacy even obsessed about a peculiar sticky, shrieking for a few minutes something to the order of "Karg, you are ridiculous." They were professionals, which will go a long way in cementing pro-gaming as a legitimate sport. And that has me rooting for Str8 Rippin in Houston, 'cause I like this underdog.

Contact Fiend at [Fiend@mlgpro.com](mailto:Fiend@mlgpro.com). ☒



Lego Church  
Contributed by Elizabeth Carlson

## What Life is All About

By Srida Joisa

**So**, as I sit here waiting for my flight to leave, wasting about 4 good hours of sunny California daylight, I can't help but think that I should try to do something productive, something meaningful with my time. So here I am again, writing for *Babble-ON* while we sit on the tarmac and wait for the brutally severe weather in the Northeast to subside enough to let our dinky little plane land. And it is a dinky little plane in comparison to the awesome power of Mother Nature. But that's a topic for another time (see page 3).

I've decided I don't have enough to do in my life, and so I'd like to spend a significant amount of time thinking about what life's really about. I mean seriously, living in the world we live in today can be pretty crazy at times. We've got to eat, drink, sleep, learn, work, earn, spend, suffer, enjoy, make merry, and cry our hearts out all within a couple of decades.

This is Part 1 of a series of articles I'm planning to write. Like most things, I fully expect to have good intentions when starting and finish somewhere different than where I planned. But that's okay. This is *Babble-ON*, and the word count keeps on increasing. So, why Part 1? It seemed like a good place to start. I suppose Part 0 would have been more nerdy and in-line with my character, but sometimes I really do want to make a point. I'm just taking a while getting to it.

Seriously, this is Part 1 of what will hopefully be a 10 part series on Life. Yes, it's Life with a capital "L," but don't get too worried. I won't be imposing my will upon all you non-believers. I think this should be some interesting stuff, expanding on little truths we all know. And the end of these articles is probably going to disappoint many of you. Or maybe you'll just get bored and not finish reading the article. I'm not going to tell you what to do. You already know the answer. You just have to do it yourself.

So, let's get started. The introduction to this series is officially over.

...continued next page...

...*Thursday Night Texas Hold'em, p. 1...*

- 1) If you have a good hand and a guy is staring you down to "see" if you're bluffing, it's okay to smile and look down "defeated" with an "aw shucks" shrug of the shoulders. This tool confronting you is not a professional, and you've just baited him into giving you more money.
- 2) Don't jump into any big pots early unless you have a hand no one can touch. The foolish, more aggressive guys will soon eliminate themselves and there will be fewer at the table. Now you don't look like the loser being the first one or two out of the game...but those guys make good waitresses when we order our drinks. "Get me a beer, bitch."
- 3) Don't let anyone play without paying first. I'm still waiting for one dickweed to pay me \$20....
- 4) Finally, don't get distracted by the 20 year old girls one of the guys called over. They may be drinking and dancing seductively with each other, but you have to keep your composure. That is why you always pick the seat against the wall, so you have a clear view of the table and are able to watch these girls make-out with each other and still play your hand. I must say, they put on a VERY good show...but sadly, they haven't been back for a repeat performance.

Maybe these really aren't great tips for playing, but they have served me well as I prime myself for the World Poker Tour. Last night's episode went pretty well. I was winning early and often, until I was disrupted by a couple of phone calls. I answered abruptly with "I'm gambling, call you later." The magic quickly disappeared and my luck ran out...and I want to blame two people in particular. You know who you are. However, I still made it to the final, but quickly lost. All in all, my second place finish gave me back my \$20 entry, so I basically played for free.

I am now at the crossroads of a monumental career decision to make in my life. Do I continue to be a CPA and kill myself during this time of year? No, it's time to change my life once again, all because of winning a couple of small games against amateurs. Watch out Vegas, there's a new Sheriff in town. Who's helping me move? ☒

## Submission Suggestions

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

Here are a few ideas:

<b>Editorials</b>	<b>Reports</b>	<b>Philosophy</b>
<b>Reviews</b>	<b>Ramblings</b>	<b>Rants</b>
<b>Comics</b>	<b>Puzzles</b>	<b>Jokes</b>
<b>Quotes</b>	<b>Polls</b>	<b>Trivia</b>
<b>Drawings</b>	<b>Poetry</b>	<b>Recipes</b>
<b>Photographs</b>	<b>Short stories</b>	<b>News</b>
<b>Predictions</b>	<b>Advice</b>	<b>Graphs</b>

Please send all of your submissions by the deadline to [dan@fritzcomics.com](mailto:dan@fritzcomics.com). ☒

...*What Life is All About*, from previous page....

#### PART 1: FRIENDS

Friends are great. That's all I have to say about that.

No, really, friends are great. Friends laugh with you when you're celebrating a funny moment at dinner. Friends join you in playing basketball and get group games going. Friends accompany you onto the Stouffer Roof and celebrate a new batch of Juniors becoming Seniors. Friends come with you to a movie when you want to see it and no one else does. Friends take the time to remember important things about your life. Often times it's your birthday, but also often times it's just a little "hello" and "how are you doing" from time to time.

Friends also give you advice. They tell you what you should *really* do when you're thinking about applying to college. Which colleges to apply for. When to apply. How to apply. Where to look on the internet to get the "best" information. Friends also give you simple little pieces of advice. How to fix your hair, so it doesn't always poof up too much. They let you know when you have a disgusting piece of half-chewed-up spinach in your teeth after dinner.

Friends also "do" things with you. They play games with you. They play sports with you. They wander around the mall window shopping with you, because neither of you has any money. They go on long drives with you. They help you beat up your arch enemies in elementary school. They go to lunch with you. They go to dinner with you. And on and on. Lots of stuff to do.

Friends also support you. They are a shoulder to cry on when life really sucks. They help you feel good about yourself when you really don't see any reason to feel good.

Friends also give you an opportunity to relax. Well, some friends do. See, here's where I stop describing friends and talk about what really makes a friend.

When you're around friends, you're (hopefully) not putting on a show. You don't have to put a face on to impress them. You don't need to host a big party and cook a fabulous dinner and get mentioned in *The New Yorker*, because "everybody who was anybody was there and so were your friends."

I think this is probably where I differ in opinion from a lot of people. The truth about friends is we all don't have very many. But life is definitely about those few friends we really truly do have.

When I use the word friend in casual conversation, I definitely use it much more broadly. "Oh, you're talking about Joe? Yeah, he's a friend of mine from work." When what I really mean is, "Yeah, I've heard of him. He works at the same place I do. I see him from time to time and acknowledge his existence as a human being by waving or saying 'Hi' in the hallways. I might have even worked with him a bit. But we almost never hang out outside of work. He's got three kids he always loves to spend time with. And I'm not one of his kids, so I don't see him much."

Is Joe really a friend? Well, I think in normal conversation, the answer could very well be yes.

But not in this article.

See, this article is about *What Life is All About*. Life is not all about people you've met in the past. Life isn't about the people you walk by in the hallways. Life isn't really about people you hang out with whenever you have nothing else to do, although it could be.

...continued next page...

## Problem Hole: Answers to Past Problems

By *Srida Joisa*

"I want my drugs"

**You're** a drug buyer. Different from a drug dealer in that you actually buy and consume drugs. You also order drugs in bulk.

You receive a shipment of 10 bottles of pills. Each bottle has 100 pills. Each pill is supposed to have a mass of 10 grams. But you also get a note in the shipment that declares one of the bottles contains pills that are only 9 grams in mass each. Thankfully, your drug dealer shipped to you a scale along with the note. But it's electronic and only works once. You can put however many bottles or pills onto the scale, push the "Check the Mass Now" button, and out pops a number for the mass of the stuff sitting on the scale.

And then you should return the light bottle with all of its pills included.

You only get one chance to use the scale.

How do you determine which bottle contains the light pills?

### Solution:

This is such a great problem that as Dictator of The Problem Hole (I'm can't wait to get profiled for the Dictator of the Month as Dictator of the Month), I'm not going to give you the solution...

Just kidding! Ha ha ha.

Seriously, this is a great problem. If you haven't thought up the answer yet, here are some hints you can use. As Dan-the-Man-Fritz-Comics would say, "That's a bunch of crap." And in a very real sense, he's right. These are not the greatest hints. Well, actually they are. If the hints made the problem really easy right away, they wouldn't be good hints—they'd just be telling you the answer.

There are 4 hints for this problem in all. I always forget exactly what the hints are, and I tend to give the hints in different orders from time to time. Apologies if you've already emailed me for the answer, and I gave you hints instead, and you read only some of the hints, and now when you sneak a peak lower in the column you see a hint you haven't read yet. Life isn't fair.

Hint #1: There are 10 bottles...I told you these hints wouldn't give the answer away

Hint #2: You can weigh pills (you don't have to weigh bottles)

Hint #3: What happens if you weigh 1 pill from each bottle on the scale at the same time?

Hint #4: What happens if you weigh 2 pills from each bottle on the scale at the same time?

### The Real Solution:

The hints are supposed to help people 1) remember that there are a lot of bottles, 2) remind you that you can weigh pills (and subsequently that there are a lot of pills in each bottle), 3) that if you weigh 1 pill from each bottle, the reading will be exactly 1 gram short of 100 grams (otherwise known as 99 grams), 4) if you weigh two pills from each bottle, the reading will be exactly 2 grams short of 200 grams (otherwise known as 198 grams).

So...Still didn't get it yet? Ok...no, you're not slow, this is just a really good problem...

You want to identify a bottle of pills, and if you weigh 1 pill from that bottle (and 1 pill from every other bottle) you'll be exactly 1 gram short. But if you do the same with 2 pills, you'll be 2 grams short.

...continued next page...

...What Life is All About, from previous page....

Life is about the friends that make a difference in your Life.

There aren't very many of those people around. Maybe a handful.

I'm talking about your *best* friend from high school. The girl with whom you shared your deepest most hidden secrets. The girl you checked out cute guys with in restaurants. The girl who skipped homecoming to spend time with you, so you didn't feel all alone, because the guy you really wanted to go with asked some other girl to go with him. I'm talking about your *best* friend from your church with whom you shared your love of God or your absolute hatred for the whole bureaucracy of religion. I'm talking about your *best* friend from college who went with you to every pledge event to be in the same frat as you, even though he didn't even like the Greek system. He's the same guy you had hours of conversation with late at night over drinks or coffee. He's the same friend you ate dinner with at the local diner at 4:00am so many times. He's the same friend you couldn't get rid of when you were sick of school and homesick all at the same time.

Hopefully, you've got a person or two I'm talking about in your mind right now. I doubt you can have more than two or three of these kinds of people. You just don't have enough time in the day to go to school, live life at home with your family, and make a dozen friends like this.

Life's all about that friend. Life is special and has meaning because of the relationship you and your friend have been able to develop.

There's all sorts of crappy stuff going on around the world. People come and go. People move closer to you and farther away from you. But there's a connection you've developed over the years with your friend that really helps define who you are.

You probably don't do the same things with your real friends as what other people do with their real friends. Some people just sit around and talk to each other in person. Some people go on really long runs together. Some people drink a lot of alcohol and get laid together. Some people shop together.

But what you have is a connection.

And that connection is timeless.

You might not talk to your friend all the time. You might not see your friend all the time. Heck, you might not have seen that person for years. You might not even know where that person lives today, because you've completely lost touch.

But if you do find that person (you make an effort to find them and succeed, or they make an effort to find you and succeed), despite the time apart you will still be friends.

Yes, shared experience does have something to do with it. You can't make friends with someone you've never met. But you also don't make friends with everyone you've met either. Sometimes you have that connection and sometimes you don't.

If you do find that connection, you really enjoy your friend's company. It's not awkward and weird. You're not putting on a show. You're not trying to show how successful or rich or famous you are.

You're just living life.

And that's Beautiful.

That's What Life is All About. ☒

...Problem Hole, from previous page...

So, all you need to do is weigh a different number of pills from each bottle, and the number of grams short you are is the number of pills from that bottle you pulled out.

So, if you weigh 1 pill from bottle 1, 2 pills from bottle 2, 3 pills from bottle 3, 4 pills from bottle 4, 5 pills from bottle 5, 6 pills from bottle 6, 7 pills from bottle 7, 8 pills from bottle 8, 9 pills from bottle 9, and 10 pills from bottle 10, if you are 10 grams short of 550 grams (1+2+3+4+5+6+7+8+9+10 pills is 55 pills times 10 grams per pill is 550 grams), then you know the faulty pills came from bottle 10. If you are 6 grams short of 550, you know you weighed 6 faulty pills and they had to come from bottle 6.

Tadah! (Doesn't that make you feel GREAT!)

### "Cuttin' up the Gold to Dig a Hole"

In this 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.

### Solution:

So, I don't really like this problem much. It's somewhat hard for nerdy types, and I didn't get it very quickly, probably because I'm pretty nerdy.

It's all about thinking outside the box. See, the assumption that most math-science types make is that the guy goes off and eats his gold when he goes home. That's wrong.

So, all you do is, cut 1 pound off on the first day, 1 pound off on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day, and then on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day you trade the remaining 3-pound block of gold for the 1<sup>st</sup> two blocks you gave him.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> day you give him one of his 1 pound blocks back, and on the 5<sup>th</sup> day you give him the last pound back.

I think this is kind of stupid. But hey, life's not fair. ☒

## Popcorn Pundit

### Plot Challenge: *The Human Stain*

By Susan Fritz

**Okay**, for this edition of "Popcorn Pundit," I am going to drop a movie synopsis like it's hot in such a way that will spoil it, but not any more than your average Moviefone preview (no really, this is a spoiler). As you may know, I have been suckling on the teat of the East Norwalk Public Library system for the past few months by renting DVDs, videos, books, and using the internet on nigh a daily basis. Hence, another installment for "Popcorn Pundit" that exists solely because I am starting to run out of new titles to explore.

...continued next page...

## Driver "8": Part Two

By Dan Fritz

**Last** issue we covered the driving idiosyncrasies of several different regions of the country including Minneapolis/St. Paul, Dallas, New York City, and Connecticut. Like I mentioned last time, driving (like many aspects of life) never exists in an ideal state on earth. You have to learn to take the good with the bad, whether you get to choose which template you work with or not. So, let us conclude this survey with the following four regions:

### The Bay Area, California:

This is quite a diverse region in many respects, not the least of which is driving conditions. But one common aspect pervades the area—inspired cluelessness. Everyone seems to be driving at his own pace, as though he were floating in an acid-daze. Forty-five in the left lane makes sense here. Seventy-five in the left lane makes sense. Whatever. There's no rush in your purple, '59 Beetle on the way to Santa Cruz. Just don't tumble down a hill into the Bay, because the authorities will probably be too busy assisting a marooned sea lion to help you out.

### "Big Sky" Montana:

Nobody lives here, so they let you drive really fast on the empty roads. At least, on the highways. This place used to be a nirvana for the fast driver, because the speed limit was defined only as that which was "reasonable and prudent." In other words, there was no speed limit. This fit well with those folks who just want to be left alone by the government, though today's current speed limit of seventy-five isn't that bad either. In town, be careful when changing lanes. It's not that people won't let you in, it's just that they don't notice your flashing blinker. You can't blame them for being oblivious, having just driven 200 miles on a stretch of road populated only by stalks of wheat and missile silos.

### Boston, Massachusetts:

So, I already covered New England by mentioning Connecticut, but Boston is truly in a league of its own. Have you ever heard of the Big Dig? Essentially, this means perpetual tunnel road construction in the heart of Boston, creating a lovely driving environment where you might not take the same path to work more than twice in a row. It's not that *you're* finicky; it's just that the road no longer exists or has been closed off for construction. Throw into this whole mess the fact that pedestrians are treated like gods, plus the fact that the streets are (once again) paved cowpaths, and you end up with a bad, bad place to stay calm. But they don't honk in Boston, because they're nice people who exhausted their rebellious nature a couple hundred years ago after throwing some tea into the harbor.

### Chicago, Illinois:

I think the key here is that you have to be resigned to the realities of traffic jams. Just as the people are resigned to the eternal, cold, cold, winter, so must you also give up any expectation of traffic flow. Most times you wanna give up, you wanna give in, you wanna quit the fight. Maybe someday they'll have enough trains around the city to make driving a little less like New York's Cross Bronx Expressway and a little more like I-80 to North Platte, Nebraska.

I just remembered that there was supposed to be a good side to the driving conditions in addition to the bad. Well, I guess I lied with respect to the last two regions. But at least Boston has great colleges, and Chicago has great pizza. Maybe that makes up for it, maybe not, but that won't stop me from wishing you...happy driving! It's part of living in America, so you'd better get used to it. "Beep-beep, beep-beep, yeah!" ☒

...Popcorn Pundit, from previous page...

Here's the character breakdown for *The Human Stain*, a movie (with about 800 big stars) that no one has seen...until now. The deal is, I give you the breakdown, you figure out the plot—or rent the movie yourself. Go to!

Anthony Hopkins plays a white guy who is really black but pretends to be Jewish. Nicole Kidman uses her stripper skills while playing an ex-blue-blooded-trailer-trash-working girl who just happens to look like a super model. She also milks cows, shovels hay, mops college floors, and works at the post office to stay afloat. Gary Sinise acts it up as a has-been writer and the part-time narrator who could easily have a separate movie made about his character. Ed Harris plays the psycho ex-husband of Kidman and looks the part with a scruffy Santa beard and a pick-up truck—remember Pollock? This guy has perfected the down-and-out look. Last, but not least, the brilliant solo performer and writer (when she'd not playing secondary parts in Hollywood films) Anna Deveare-Smith plays the mother of Anthony Hopkins—come on, don't tell me you're missing the resemblance. All the while, Sir Hopkins does not make much of an effort to lose the British accent, but I give him the benefit of the doubt that is built into the story line—he studied at Oxford. And that's all you get in order to create your own story line—good luck! ☒

## BabbleList of Distinction

The following contributors are the first to earn the distinction of *Grimmelshausen Contributor*, after counting the current issue's submissions.

**BRETT** , BABBLE-ON-IAN

A Ph.D. student in German at the University of Virginia and former international radio show personality, Brett and his masterful (and sometimes even controversial) relationship pieces and social commentaries have been instrumental to this publication's success. *Babble-ON* salutes you!

**JAMES SCHNEIDER**, BABBLE-ON-IAN

A recent graduate of the University of Pennsylvania and contributor to such publications as *34<sup>th</sup> Street*, the *Daily Pennsylvanian*, and the MLGPro.com website, James continues to provide steady, engaging articles about his personal experiences, ranging from video-gaming to buying Ikea Poangs. *Babble-ON* salutes you!

Note on the Grimmelshausen Award: Grimmelshausen distinctions are awarded to *Babble-ON* contributors who have submitted over 10,000 words. The award is named after Johann Jacob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen, the 17<sup>th</sup> Century German author of the picaresque (and very lengthy) novels of the Simplician cycle, among other works. ☒

## Wine Country

By Steven Fritz

**Let's** talk about a wine that's not really from a specific place but appears to be everywhere. Charles Shaw Merlot. Bottled by the Bronco Wineries, it is one of the most prolific everyday wines of our time. Popularly known as "Two Buck Chuck" because of its price of \$2.00, this wine is super with a hamburger, a hotdog, or a bowl of chilly. The point is that if you come home from work late and all you want to eat is a bag of microwave popcorn, you can uncork a bottle without guilt.

I find that the taste of this merlot is equal to that of *any* \$10+ wine. As with most reds, this merlot goes best with beef steaks or tomato based pasta dishes like ravioli.

Bronco bottles a Chardonnay, a Cabernet Sauvignon, a Merlot, and more if my pick is not to your liking. Don't plan on visiting the Charles Shaw winery, or the Bronco bottling facility for that matter. Unlike a true Napa winery, Bronco makes and bottles their wines from all over the place and no place specific. In fact, Bronco lost their long fought Supreme Court battle just this past week, to continue to put the name Napa on their wines. The high court refused to hear their appeal to use the Napa name unless the grapes actually come from Napa, which, for Two Buck Chuck, they don't.

In any case, two dollars for a nice bottle of wine is a great taste and value even if the fruit of the vine comes from Lodi. Here's toasting to you.

### Why is red wine red and white wine white?

Red wines aren't red because the meat of the grape is red, but rather because the skins are. After the grapes are crushed, they spend a short amount of time in a vat with the meat, skins, and all. For whites, the skins are removed within a week or two. For reds, the skins are left to "stain" the wine red. As you might expect, the staining qualities of different skins and the duration of time the skins spend with the meat dictate the redness of the eventual wine we drink. The skins are eventually removed when the juice makes its way into the fermenting barrels. ☒



## Outrunning Time?

By Brett

**Due** to time constraints I can only briefly respond to the fine article contributed by Mr. Joisa in *Babble-ON*, Volume 3, Issue 2. Throughout Mr. Joisa's fetching childhood recollections lingers a more ominous angst. While perhaps mentally nauseating to some degree, Mr. Joisa's awareness of the problem of time already signifies the first step in hacking the automatic countdown into which life locks us from birth until death. Time presents us with an infinite and immortal chimera, but whether Mr. Joisa knows it or not, his descriptions of situations out of his childhood and current lifestyle implicitly provide us with models for inviting time to stay on our side, if only for a while.

Time flies. Prog rock classics such as Pink Floyd's "Time" or The Alan Parsons Project's "Day After Day" remind us of how Mr. Joisa's infectious worries can pervade society. People claim that time flies when one is having fun, but this statement misleads one into thinking that the state of "having fun" is the only necessary precondition for time flying, when actually, time flies no matter what, but it only seems like it "flies" to us, because we attempt to measure it empirically, and this standard negotiates a terrible exchange value for the experiential act of "having fun." Time flies to us, but of course it always is, and as such, remains inescapable. If it already exists as the future, it honestly need not move at all. Therefore its boundless endurance guarantees that any attempt to outrun it would result in a rather futile, treadmill existence. Neither a rapid nor pedestrian lifestyle ensures any successful negotiation with our friend, time. It just seems to fly. In order to avoid falling into the impossible theories about which Mr. Joisa already warned in his article, I will quickly and for the sake of time move on to my position on evading its sinister tricks.

Why is it that Mr. Joisa felt as though the last five minutes of his time spent at a friend's house were the "slowest"? Well, our experience aligns itself with time. The problem occurs when one mechanically engages with life, in which case, time remains wholly irrelevant. A year could go by as quickly as a day, relatively speaking, and meanwhile, one might be caught in a pensive situation, or in Mr. Joisa's "pain," and time takes its sweet old self, sometimes in a seemingly punishing manner. So what about those "5 minutes"? Their significance rests precisely in the convergence of the previous two antithetical relationships to time into an optimum state that would surely make Csikszentmihalyi proud. Remaining entrenched in our time vernacular, one might say this union represents the precise "moment" when one "feels" life. A snapping out of an "ontic" relationship to the world occurs—and one is conscious and thinking about what one is doing while one is doing it: "in the zone" so to speak. Remember going to college for the first time? All of a sudden within the last thirty minutes before your departure you looked at the room in which you grew up for 18 years and it seems as foreign as a hotel. Time skidded. It bumbled. Then you got into the car and everything proceeded at warp speed again until graduation. Relating to time has nothing to do with fun or anything like that. Instead, one must be like Mr. Joisa in those last five minutes at his friend's place, knowing that his parents' car set a definite limit to his time well spent. Yet, one must be aware of time without it causing worry. This awareness deviates from our typical relationship to time by calling it into question. Since we have no answer, the question is our only recourse, and even this is momentary. And one must shake hands with each moment, without actually counting it, and do it effortlessly, if only for five minutes. ☒



Letters  
from  
Italy  
By  
Garrett  
Calderwood

...*Blast from the Past*, p. 1...

you're saving the calories for ma's hot cross buns!) You make your way to the Goya/Asian foods aisle, because the coast is usually clear. Wheeeeeeee! I'm skating down the aisle like a free-style grocery cart tobogganer...hot dog! The beat goes on until the assistant manager Larry approaches you with an admonishing look, and you stoop down, pretending to tie your Chucks. The shoes are black and white checked, dude. They are the schiznit. That's right, man.

It's at this point in your shopping adventure that you hear sounds that tickle your nostalgia bone. "Never gonna give you up, never gonna let you down, never gonna something something, and hurt you..." Wait a minute, I know this song. Crap! That Tiffany girl from my seventh grade shop class loved this dude. Shoot, I gotta call my sister before the song's over, she'll know. But wait, there's no service, so it's time to play the cell phone bar game. Where's that "Can you hear me now?" chump when you really need him? Just when you're about to ask that assistant manager for a copy of the store's play list, eureka! You have 3 bars—just enough to punch speed dial number 4 and ask the pivotal question.

Ring...ring...(come on!)...ring...

"Hello?"

"Hey, dude. You know that song from when we were in middle school by that guy with the voice that sounds like he's constipated and imitating Alf at the same time?"

"Um...you'll have to feed me a few lines, homes."

"Ok, it's like, 'Never gonna give you up...'"

"Oh, that's totally Rick Astley!"

"Yes—score! I knew you'd know. Listen, I'm at the grocery store, and my phone is probably gonna cut out, so I'll call you later."

You're feeling good now that Rick's mind has re-entered your consciousness, so you write it down just to make sure you don't forget again. There's one thing in the cart, though, and it's salad dressing. Time for some serious food shopping.

As the reader can clearly surmise, a trip down the produce aisle might "produce" more than a cart full of trendy, overpriced pomegranates. It just may provide you, the consumer, with a "consummate" trip down musical memory lane (does that pun even fit?) For example, on every one of my food shopping trips to that East Coast chain Stop & Shop, I have spent more time singing along with the likes of Brian Adams, DJ Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Prince, and even the occasional Genesis than stocking up on delicious treats from the "natural foods" aisle. I have electric slided my way through the frozen foods section more times than you can shake-n-bake a stick at. I have boot scooted my achy, breaky boogie with Billy Ray Cyrus while stocking up on paper towels and vanilla extract...all without a single arrest. The best thing about this grocery store soundtrack of our lives is that it's not even elevator music—no muted trumpets or toned down synthesizers—the cats singing are the real deal! I am usually so entertained that I forget myself and the price cuts on Barilla Rotini. I'm telling you, more than once have I threatened to ask the store manager for a copy of those nostalgic tunes. The moral of this story is that sometimes the seemingly mundane can supply a few ounces of glee, although one should never lose one's head enough to forget to swipe the savings card. A trip to the grocery store is like a *Blast from the Past!* ☒

## Half-Way-Through-the-Book Review:

*Lolita* by Vladimir Nabokov

As reviewed by SJMF, esq.

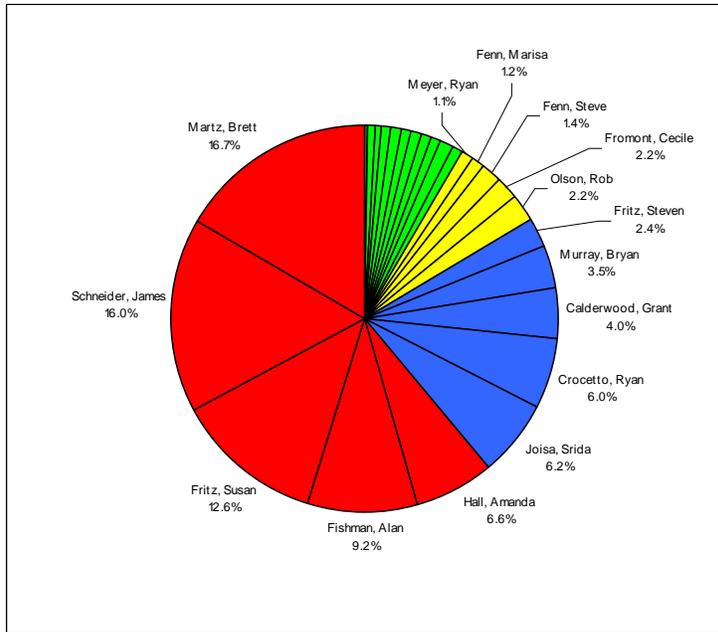
"Nabokov writes prose the only way it should be written, that is, ecstatically." Having made it about half way through the novel, this review by John Updike verifies itself through page after page of heart-wrenching, nerve-twisting, and at times disturbing prose. The concept of "ecstatic writing" does not take pages to appreciate. Nabokov affects his reader instantaneously. Thanks to this furious pace, it was easier to push past my initial revulsion at the premise of this scandalous 1955 classic and continue turning the pages. *Vanity Fair*, a literary authority when the quote suits the cover, calls *Lolita* "The most convincing love story of our time." I'll be the judge of that. That is, after I finish the entire book. As of now, I am on page 185 of 317.

A word of warning to the unwise: this novel is not for the faint of heart. As a point of reference only Stoufferites will fully understand, it is my understanding from prior discussions with him that the novel in question is indeed one of our dear friend Brett's top picks. You do the math. Indeed, those who have high blood pressure, diabetes, glaucoma, are pregnant, may be pregnant, have a mother who at one time was pregnant, are seeking treatment for erectile dysfunction, etc., should skip this book and reroute that trip to Barnes and Noble. Go get some curly fries or something. Isn't it time for your free Subway six inch? Seriously, it's Girl Scout cookie time, and little Susie is waiting. However, if you are daring or enjoy a challenging and/or disturbing read, pick up a copy if you must.

Since I have left college and am no longer required to read books that would better serve the world as kindling for a campfire, if I start a book that turns my stomach, annoys me, or otherwise makes me want to blow up financial institutions a la *Fight Club*, I do what any reasonable and free American would do—I stop reading the thing. After all, if one continues to read a book one does not enjoy on some level, then the terrorists have won. In other words, it means something if I stay with a book until the bitter end, and to *that* end, I am providing for your reading pleasure perhaps the most unsettling paragraph in the first half of the novel. If you make it past this one, you just may be hearty enough to complete the entire novel.

"I now think it was a great mistake to move east again and have her go to that private school in Beardsley, instead of somehow scrambling across the Mexican boarder while the scrambling was good so as to lie low for a couple of years in subtropical bliss until I could safely marry my little Creole for I must confess that depending on the condition of my glands and ganglia, I could switch in the course of the same day from one pole of insanity to the other— from the thought that around 1950 I would have to get rid somehow of a difficult adolescent whose magic nymphage had evaporated—to the thought that with patience and luck I might have her produce eventually a nymphet with my blood in her exquisite veins, a Lolita the Second, who would be eight or nine around 1960, when I would still be *dans la force de l'âge*; indeed, the telescoping of my mind, or un-mind, was strong enough to distinguish in the remoteness of time a *vieillard encore vert*—or was it green rot?—bizarre, tender, salivating Dr. Humbert, practicing on supremely lovely Lolita the Third art of being a granddad." *Lolita*, pp.173-174

Ultimately, the creepiest thing about the experience thus far reading *Lolita*—aside from the businessman on Metro North who announced to me proudly that he and his college roommates had the book more or less committed to memory—is the fact that I *want* to keep reading it. When I'm not on the train or need some excuse to be sedentary, I actually have a slight craving to experience again the luxurious descriptiveness of this undoubtedly great author. But even if I make it to the end, which seems likely, I might just keep my opinion of *Lolita* to myself. Therein lies the mystique of the half-book review. ☒



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*These awards could be yours!*

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

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

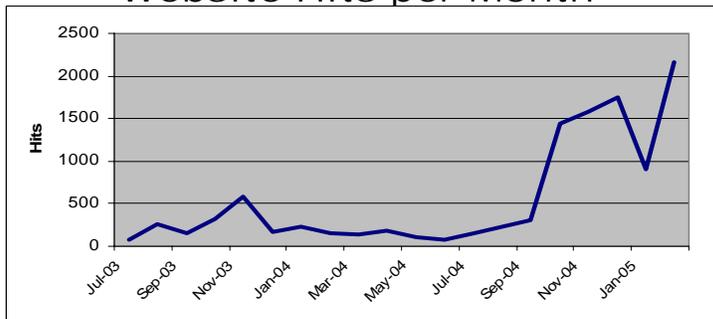
Good luck, and keep the submissions coming! ☒

## Words Contributed as Percentage of Total (see above)

As of last issue, the top five *Babble-ON* contributors (red) had contributed 61.2% of the written material, the next five (blue) had contributed 22.3%, and the next five (yellow) had contributed 8.2%. The remaining half (green) of the *Babble-ON* contributors had accounted for another 8.3%. ☒

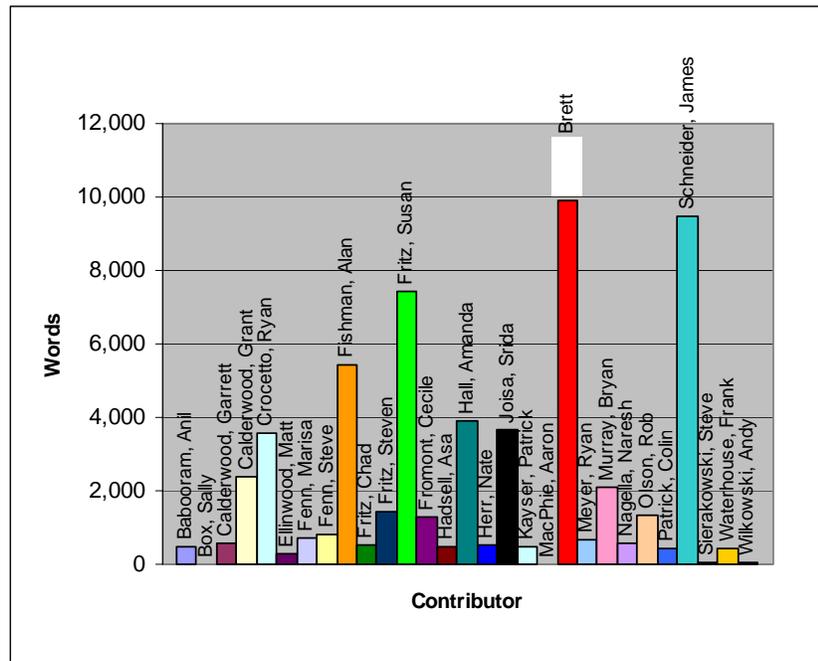
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## Website Hits per Month



## Total Words Contributed

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



## Global Watch Map

These maps were created using Microsoft Streets & Trips.