



Keep on Strokin'

By Grant Calderwood

As all *Babble-ON* readers will surely attest, I've been building my reputation for daring, insightful social commentary with such spectacular articles as "Cocking Off Like a Gentleman" and "Fallacious Predators, Professional Single Women." As I thought about my current work, I knew that I must put my nose to the grind stone and think outside of the box if this clichéd mental masturbation were ever to be finished.

Over the past year, I've been living in Charlotte. The population is somewhere between five-hundred-thousand and one-million depending on whether you're talking to a New Yorker or a North *Kackalackian*. Fear fills conversations about the city. Fear of minorities, fear of burglars, fear of living in a place so far away from a big city. This fear, I think, encourages people to meet in groups for dinner parties more often than anywhere else I have lived.

And it is at these dinner parties that being an armchair academic is most beneficial. Because apparently . . . where else do you want to be interesting than at a dinner party?

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James' Addiction

By James Schneider

I am James, and I admit I have a serious addiction: I am a fantasy sports-aholic.

It wasn't clearer to me than it was a few nights ago as I prayed to our Lord and savior that I would be able to hold my 6-3 lead over Brett and win Fantasy Hockey. I could have easily hit the wall any number of previous times that I'd sought divine intervention for a statistical set of happenings that favored my imaginary team over someone else's, but it was at this moment, that I, James Schneider, really hit the—sorry for the pun—realization I had a real problem.

See, I don't really like the actual sport of hockey very much. This had been abundantly clear from nearly the beginning of the season. In fact, no one who I recruited to join my league particularly cares about hockey besides Brett and his ex-girlfriend Mindy, and even then it's more a competitive and real-life cheering for actual teams than it is for fantasy hockey. Nobody liked fantasy hockey including me. And a few weeks into the season, no one was even checking who won and lost each week. I slipped further and further down, having not set my lineup at all or made any adjustments for players who had had season-ending injuries.

I checked a month or more ago and noticed that with a little bit of drop-adding I'd be able to make a vast improvement on my club, which stood in fifth or sixth place at the time. I made said adjustments and checked back a little more regularly to notice my team was really cleaning up—against a bunch of Fantasy GMs who hadn't checked their own lineups or made any moves in just as long as I had. But it seemed like a good idea to keep checking, and I got more and more excited about the prospect of actually taking first place and foisting my imaginary trophy.

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April

By Larry Simpson

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Coaster Bike

Contributed By Elizabeth Carlson



Announcement of the Month:

Congratulations to Anne Johnson,
 who is expecting a
 baby girl in July!

Hasselhoff Monthly Planner

Contributed by Bryan Murray



May 2006

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Letter from the Editor

I had a feeling that 2006 would be a year of change, and I could sense it in the air when I woke up this morning. Most people would probably agree that there was a general slump around the 2000-2001 timeframe that never really corrected itself for many people. Well, I've checked my crystal ball, and I see good things.

This newsletter is changing too, as more people are getting the writing bug. Spread the word.

Dan, editor@babbleonline.com ☒

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 to editor@babbleonline.com. ☒

Tower of Babble-ON's
 'Before-and-After' Corner
 By Susan Fritz

"Son of a Beach, Nathan"



...*Keep on Strokin'*, p. 1...

As an armchair academic, you are nimble with the cocktails, a pleasure with which to talk, and almost effortlessly, move from one subject to another. More importantly you are a beacon of hope, someone who is willing to argue a point and stick with their assumptions no matter how controversial they might be.

Picture the scene, a small suburban cottage with beautiful hard wood floors and perfect Williams Sonoma Home furniture. You open up the refrigerator to get a peak at dessert but just as you spy the double chocolate fudgecicle cherry cake, you feel an unholy presence behind you. As you stand up, you vaguely remember this person from another such occasion. And then it hits you, and you begin to panic, the person in front of you is the black hole of dinner parties, the constant work talker. You are cornered, back to the refrigerator, fenced in by all those granite countertops, stuck in the one corner of the house with no escape. The hum starts and you only catch snippets, "Did you see the latest film", Blah, "wasn't it 'interesting'?" Barf.

Now admittedly the armchair academic will use movies and TV as a crutch to communicate with the constant work talker, but the real dinner party shining light is hopefully somewhere past this constant work talker, maybe someone who is an arborist and reads, or someone who doesn't count money for a living and reads. But for now, stuck in front of this person, you desperately try to switch subjects from how they once had an interesting project at work to something a little more controversial, even poorly behaved coworkers.

A few more minutes of "Did you watch American Idol" and in desperation you pull a classic dinner party trick, downing the rest of your martini, cocking your head to the side, and staring into the glass, finally interrupting the constant work talker with, "I'm going to refresh my drink."

Arriving at the bar, you may run into a tricky dinner party breed. They are also refilling their glass, so you know they are either an alcoholic or they just had an encounter with a constant work talker and had to use their dinner party wit to get out of the situation. One of you sends out a probe, "Where do they keep the books in this house?" "Ah, I was wondering whether they had anything other than the *Reader's Digest*." Intriguing, so you engage with a controversial subject, one on which they might bite. "Blind people look ridiculous with their white canes after labor day." But what you have found at the bar is someone corrupted by years of corporate politics, the spineless sycophant. The response comes out in a weak sputter, "Nice idea, but I think that blind people should be allowed the dignity of someone not burdened by their handicapability. You know, because they are missing one sense all of their other senses are heightened."

Alcohol and waning patience get the better of you, and you wave to someone you don't know across the room and move off without another word toward the food strategically positioned by the couch. Ah, finally, a chance to relax and enjoy your drink and finger food in peace. But just as you place your drink to your lips, an excitable person plops down on the couch nearly upsetting your imbibitions. "I work at a store that sells bathroom tile. I sold the tile for this house. Have you seen the bathroom?" Since you are an armchair academic you switch subjects with ease trying to forget that they nearly spilled your fresh drink. "No, I haven't seen the ricotta tile

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in their spacious bathroom. So, do you have a warehouse full of different types of stone?" "Why yes, I have about a dozen people that work for me in the warehouse, and they just don't appreciate what I'm giving them."

You are stuck on the fence. Is this another constant work talker? You wait a little longer to find out. "I mean, we buy their work boots, pay for health insurance, even when they break a \$500 piece of stone we don't take it out of their pickaninny salaries." A dead silence fills the air. You think to yourself, a constant work talker, nope . . . this is the village idiot. The person shifts nervously as you let the silence push wider, the absence of affirmation sticking their nose in their racist comment. But that is not all, no, you can't let it go at that . . . why . . . because you are an armchair academic, unwilling to placate the idiots of this world, unwilling to relent logic and sound argument to illogical buffoons and political sycophants.

But before this turns into a rant about the immorality of racism and I try to depict a scene where the armchair academic savages the village idiot, I thought I would refer you to a significantly and really incomparably better piece of literature: *The Count of Monte Cristo* and chapter XXXV La Mazzolata. As I recently read, entertainment back in the day did not have to be at dinner parties. If you lived in Rome you could attend an execution at the Piazza del Popolo. In this case, the execution was one decapitation and one *Mazzolata*. Interestingly, the *Mazzolata* starts with the criminal on their knees, crowd cheering and jeering, and the executioner standing in front of the criminal. As the person tries to stand up, the executioner bashes them in the head with a stick, flips them on their back, slices open their throat and jumps repeatedly on their chest. With each jump the crowd goes wild as a fountain of blood erupts from the neck of the criminal. Exciting reading. But I digress. . . The point of my story is not purely mental masturbation but speaking up for what you know is true, arguing with people who seem to spew bull out of their mouths without regard to the effects it has on those listening. Being an armchair academic is both having a will to debate, refine, and dismiss ideas if they do not hold water and a willingness to change the subject to what other people enjoy talking about. All that said, I really hope that everyone keeps on strokin' and takes time to sink their teeth into a good debate. Some good is bound to come out of it. ☒

Another entry in the Urban Vernacular Dictionary

By Amanda Hall

Solid (n) – A favor. *Yo, do me a solid and let Tim know I'll be late.*

Good Lookin' (phrase) – Thank you; meant as, "Good looking out for me." *You told Tim? Good lookin'.*

Slammin' (adj) – Good; Used to describe something that is pleasing to the receiver. *These burgers are slammin'!*

Dumb (adv) – Really, very. *Not only are these burgers slammin', they are DUMB good!* ☒

April

By Larry Simpson

This is the month of April. The month of rebirth for Mother Nature. It is also my birth month. There aren't really words that I know of to explain the euphoria. I get so happy waking up in the mild April mornings. The air is fresh and spring feely. Birds are chirpin' and all the little forest animals are coming outta hibernation. That's how April is to me...at least how it used to be.

Nowadays, I wake up to the clutter of cars and trucks. Weird speaking Germans knocking on my door for foolishness. Yeah, you get caught in Germany on the wrong side of town and see what happens. And let you be American at that. You will get hit up two ways. 1. Can you get me something from the PX (military post exchange; like a Target/Best Buy all in one)? It is tax free food and clothing at the fraction of the cost the Germans (locals) pay. You can say yes, and they will be your friend for a minute. You say no, they treat you like an Ausländer (out-of-towner). 2. Why don't you stop the war? Well, if I had the power to stop the war, I would, but I'm not fighting. The Germans act like every American they see is fighting the war.

The Germans are just as guilty as we are. Burger Kings and mini shopping malls are popping up left and right. The Germans even act like Americans sometimes. Not in my backyard!!! There are about two million Germans outta work. But they are still buying the expensive stuff. The Sean Johns, The Rocawear, ENYCE, and other name black brands. I don't even wear these items, and I'm black. Well, I could, but I don't see paying 60-100 bucks for a shirt or pair of jeans. I'd rather take that money and go spend a weekend in Holland. There isn't a day that goes by, that you see some wanna be German thug, posing on the side of the corner. Guys with their hats and pants saggin', beat boxing and spitting freestyles. *Was ist los mit meine Text! Was ist los mit deine Specs!* Women with their come-get-me shirts and tight pants. Jewelry dangling outta every hole she can put it. Makeup two layers thick. Looking around for some black American thug to come swoop 'em off the street and give 'em a tasty treat. They only look for the black American thug. So they can take 'em to the PX and other places like that.

I cannot take it anymore. I cannot walk down the street without some wanna be thug trying to dog me. You know the thug stare. I have two choices...Beat 'em where they stand or just ignore them. That's kinda hard when they jump out in front of you, and they are like "Wie gehts?" What??? Sucka, you trying me? Go crazy, and they scamper like roaches when the lights are on. They don't even step if they see three or four black Americans together. They try to blend in then. The Turks do, but that is another story for another day. I'm not complaining about the situation I'm in...yeah, I am. This needs to stop. We as a black people fought hard to make our culture the way it is. We do not need anyone else trying to copy it and perfect it. Germans are perfectionist. That's why they have great running cars and some of the best electrical appliances on the market. Can we have this...culture of hip-hop/drugs/booze/clubbin'/sex/violence and disrespect? ☒



...James' Addiction, from p. 1...

It's not like there's even bragging rights per se, and certainly no money on the line, but there's a little pixel trophy that you get for winning a Yahoo Sports League. I should know, because I check my Fantasy Trophy Case more regularly than most—and way more than any who don't know to access it at fantasysports.yahoo.com.

So, I end up winning it. Sorry to ruin the story and kill your welling anticipation, but it is really quite sad. But I took the imaginary trophy home and was pleasantly surprised to see that my Yahoo Fantasy ranking had climbed just an inch closer from Amateur to Pro. That's the goal, I suppose, to become a Pro Fantasy sports player. Yep, I'm sure of it. I've won about a dozen trophies in more than 50 games.

I've played just about every Fantasy game out there, on three different Yahoo! accounts and on several other sites including ESPN and CBS Sportsline. Fantasy Football started it all. Fantasy Hockey, the following year, grew as a great experiment into a new, different fantasy sport, with less on the line in terms of pride, and more on the wasting time checking side. I've done baseball, basketball, auto racing, golf—yes, golf.

I bet you didn't know FG existed. Well, I do, and I'm in the 92nd percentile of all FGs, beating my coworker by 200 points and well on my way to taking home the \$5 grand prize. That's some serious dough, as I've never bet on fantasy sports before. \$5 is friendly and to keep it interesting, but there is nothing friendly or interesting about the prospect of someone swiping me hard earned pot o' gold. No, this is war, and Phil, Vajah and Tiger are my generals. They happen to be my opponents' generals, as well, but depending on who I pick to win each tourney and their finishing score I amass points. Eventually, I hope to foist another imaginary trophy up on top of my little Fantasy Shelf. Oh man, I'm giddy.

During Fantasy Football, I would read every article possible during my 9-hr shifts, which often meant about 9 hours worth of reading about players to drop or add. Lineup selections, matchups—you name it, I was expert at it. I ran three Yahoo! accounts at 4 leagues each, with survival leagues and pick-'ems, adding up to more than 20 Fantasy Football leagues. That is the height of my dedication—FF—I yearn for the draft and the season already. For now, I have Baseball and Golf to occupy me and my fiendish checking.

The thing to note about this addiction is that I don't care particularly what the outcome of any event is as long as my statistics add up to more than my opponents' statistics. Whether it be points or categories in rotisserie style, it matters not.

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

<http://www.babbleonline.com>

One-Eyed Cat

Contributed by Grant Calderwood



Thai Coconut Chicken Soup

Contributed by Dan Fritz

- 1 quart chicken stock
- 1 stalk lemon grass, white part only, cracked open with the flat side of a knife
- 3 kaffir lime leaves, fresh or dried, hand torn
- 1 (3-inch) piece fresh ginger, peeled and thinly sliced
- 2 small Thai chilies, halved lengthwise
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1 (13-ounce) can unsweetened coconut milk
- 2 tablespoons Thai fish sauce (nam pla)
- 1 1/2 teaspoons sugar
- 1 (8-ounce) can straw mushrooms, rinsed
- 4 limes, juiced
- 1 1/2 cups shredded cooked chicken
- Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro leaves

Bring the stock to the boil over medium heat in a soup pot. Add the lemon grass, kaffir lime leaves, ginger, chilies, and garlic. Lower the heat to medium-low, cover, and gently simmer for 10 minutes to let the spices infuse the broth.

Uncover and stir in the coconut milk, fish sauce, sugar, mushrooms, lime juice, and chicken. Simmer for 5 minutes to heat the chicken through; season with salt and pepper. Ladle the soup into a soup tureen or individual serving bowls. Garnish with cilantro. Be careful to avoid chewing the lemongrass, ginger, or lime leaves. ☒

...James' Addiction, from previous page...

I had joked—to little fanfare—about creating a Dungeons and Dragons-based Fantasy Football for the offseason. You'd roll dice based on your player's expected points range, after drafting a mock offseason team. Since I worked overnights throughout the whole football season and only watched two or three games a weekend, DnD-style offseason football wasn't much different than what I was dealing with. I'd wake up with my imaginary set of scores up against another imaginary set of scores. My happiness for that entire week revolved around how my players' collective scores added up on that Sunday and Monday, finally calculated at just after 4 am Eastern.

I now hate the Eagles for ruining my fantasy season through issues with T.O. I have hatred for this organization, and Donovan McNabb, that has elevated their status of suck nearly as high as some members of Congress.

So, I ask for a fantasy intervention. But really getting this off my chest helps. I cry now. ☒

Fill the Empty Spaces

By Dan Fritz

I'm lucky that I'm the one who puts this newsletter together, because if I didn't, I'd submit far fewer articles. Basically, what I'm telling you is, it's Wednesday morning, and the newsletter was due for online publication yesterday, but since I still have this empty space on page 5, I'll fill it with a few run-on sentences, or, as I call it, the world's second extemporaneous article, this time not "joint extemporaneous," since Susan is at yoga at the moment.

Topic One: One-Eyed Cat Pictures. I considered not including that picture, since it is disturbing. Which leads me immediately to...

Topic Two: Disturbing Pictures. How many email forwards have you gotten that include pictures of cute little dogs, elaborate sand sculptures, or pictures of natural wonders—the opposite of disturbing, though sometimes campy? My mom sends me these forwards all the time. On the opposite end of the spectrum are the pictures that the internet and email forwarding have provided to the world in train-wreck-esque fashion. These pictures include: guys caught cheating on their wives who have axes through their heads but who will miraculously survive and recover, or explicit cartoons of Homer Simpson with Marge. Why? Oh why? Thanks a lot, internet!

Topic Three: Matt Ellinwood. Matt is one of my friends from high school. During college, we used to have epic email battles that included many emailed picture attachments. One time, he sent me an explicit cartoon of Homer Simpson with Marge. Another time, he put a picture of my head on the body of Richard Simmons. Matt is a bastard.

Topic Four: Fruit Loops. This is actually a different topic from the previous one, though it's difficult to tell sometimes. I never really liked sugary cereals, and as a matter of fact, I stopped eating breakfast cereal almost entirely when I was in junior high. I ate boxfuls of Eggo waffles instead. But I did enjoy the occasional Lucky Charms, which is one of the sugariest of breakfast cereals.

And there you have it. Let this article serve as inspiration for you—if this is good enough to publish, you can certainly write something too. I look forward to seeing your creation. ☒

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

(PART 9)

By Several Bored Office Pukes

In our last installment, Teddy and Schenker continued sailing toward South America until they ran into the Mexican Greeks on their way to Cuba. Meanwhile, Madeleine experienced a personal crisis while serving sushi at an art show in Manhattan. Back with Teddy and Schenker, their boat approached the Cuban dock.

"WAR!" shouted Teddy. He had heard that a war with Spain had erupted, but the siren call of Brazilian beauties had bested him. But now that he was close enough to hear artillery and smell gunpowder on the air, his vision cleared, and he knew his destiny. He was a warrior, and he would assemble a band of warriors, well-trained, well-dressed, well-manicured, and one slightly-retarded, and he would lead them to glorious victory.

Castro's band of models, owing the debt of their freedom to Teddy and his good friend Strom, joined him without question, leading astride stallions, never geldings, took up arms to fight for their ferocious liberator and to secure their place in history. Legends would arise and describe their heroics, remembering only that the band was called the Rough Riders, but not why, and only that they killed many enemies, but not that the most murderous among them was slightly-retarded and screamed "SINNERS!" with joyful glee, as he fired round after round from atop a donkey of similar mental acuity.

The Rough Riders would spend the next year fighting together, a strong bond forming between all of them, and they could not imagine ever again being apart. Meanwhile, in New York, Maddy's hatred of the Irish had festered and began to twist her soul. She was consumed with the desire for vengeance, but she knew that she could never wield the power necessary to destroy them as a simple fashion model. She knew that she must improve her station in life.

By chance one day, she turned a corner onto Park Avenue and ran bodily into her old friend Strom Thurmond, who was on vacation from Washington, where he had been lobbying the revocation of the 13th and 14th Amendments to the Constitution. He could tell his friend was troubled, and they sat down to tea so that she could relate her sad tale. When she had finished, his face was confident.

"Maddy, you need to get into politics," said Strom. "There, you can find the means necessary to destroy inferior races. But first, my dear, you need a new name. Who on Earth would elect a Schenker? That sounds retarded."

She hadn't heard that name in what seemed like ages, though she did agree that the name smacked of retardation. Her mind a whirl, she responded. "My last name is *Klum*, not Schenker. Schenker is my brother's name...."

"Oh, uh, yeah, that's what I meant." Strom's face suddenly grew bright red.

"That's a pretty uncommon name...Schenker." Something suddenly triggered in Maddy's mind. "I don't think I've ever mentioned my family to anyone, Strom. How did you know his name?"

Strom's face started turning a deep purple from lack of oxygen.

"How did you know his name!" she shouted.

Clutching his chest, Strom fell over sideways, knocking the teacup off the table. As the porcelain shattered, Strom gurgled a sentence.

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

"I...I've got something...to tell you...Madeleine." With that, Strom breathed his last, his head hitting the ground with a thud.

Madeleine was in shock as her Earl Grey steamed slowly in front of her. Strom Thurmond was dead.

It wasn't very long before the horse drawn ambulance arrived and carted Strom's body to the emergency room. Maddy had heard of the miracles of modern science, and she knew from her childhood Amish teachings that dead people didn't always stay dead. She remembered her father yelling at her as a young child: "If you show off your ankles like that in public one more time, I'm going to stone you and resurrect you like Lazarus to stone you one more time!" Madeleine thought that was a pretty elaborate threat which lost most of its impact through convoluted allusion, but seeing Strom on the stretcher brought back such memories.

Eight hours later, Madeleine leafed through the Sears catalog in the waiting room. She used to appear in there on almost every other page, but now it was only every third. By now, most of America had seen her ankles, so she was losing much of her former charm. A doctor appeared from a side door and approached her.

"Well, Miss Klum," he began, "I have good news and bad news. The good news is that Strom is alive and in stable condition. The bad news is that he doesn't want to see you."

Madeleine was flummoxed. "Alive?! But I saw him die before my eyes."

"We installed an electromagnetic heart turbine in Strom about thirty years back, during his 174th birthday celebration. A solar flare must have overloaded the turbine."

Madeleine had no idea what any of this meant.

The doctor, seeing Maddy's confusion, continued, "Let's just say he had a heart attack. It happens every now and then. But the fact remains, I'm going to have to ask you to leave. He gave express orders that he didn't want to speak to you."

Emotionally confused by the rollercoaster of events, Madeleine again thought of the mention of her brother's name and became enraged. Backhanding the doctor like a seasoned supermodel would, she flew through the side door, directly into Strom's room. He threw up his hands as he sat in bed. "Now wait, Maddy!"

"Strom, you've got about ten seconds to explain to me what's going on!"

Strom didn't have the strength for this. As resignation set in, he sighed and began to tell his story. "Maddy, it's no coincidence we met the day that grubby Irishman crashed into my stagecoach. It's been so long now, but I could never bring myself to tell you."

"Tell me what?" Madeleine fumed.

"That I have the most disgustingly rich chocolate plantation in the entire United States. It is almost vile, how many tons of sweet sweet chocolate, my African pigmy slaves, I mean *I*, can produce. There are golden tickets. . . ." Strom trailed off.

"African pigmy slaves!! CHOCOLATE!"

"Wait Maddy, let me explain. Your brother, before you were born, was living in New York City, performing as a dancing girl. He used to go down to little Havana and make the crowds wild with his clip clopping across the stage. Not only was he a good dancer, but his wit was famous throughout New England. He was a celebrity of sorts. When the War of Attrition started you were still locked in your parent's basement because your parents did not want the same fate for you. They were hoping you would see the light so to speak, in the basement."

"Pigmy slaves." Madeline squeaked as she burst into tears.

READ THE DRAMATIC CONCLUSION NEXT ISSUE!

