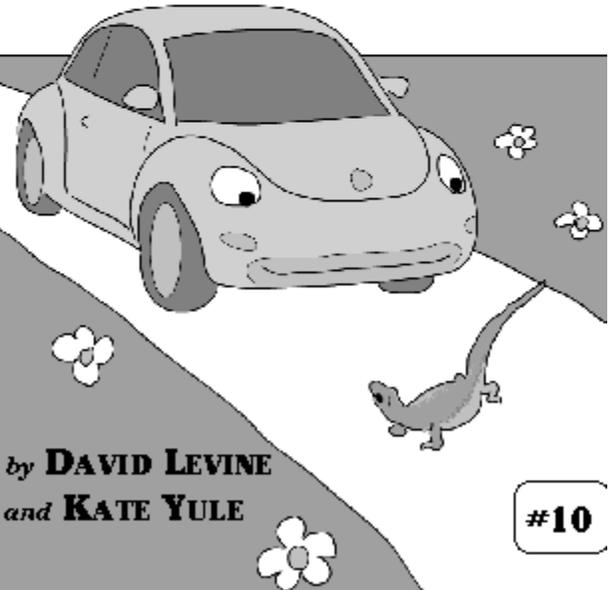


Brad Foster illo



 a Little Golden Zine™

# The POKY LITTLE BENTO



by **DAVID LEVINE**  
and **KATE YULE**

**#10**

CONTENTS MAY HAVE OCCURRED  
DURING SHIPPING AND HANDLING.

—seen on a box of Grape-Nuts

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*“It was the one about this guy, and he had a girlfriend, and they did, um...”*

*“Stuff.”*

*“Yeah, that one.”*

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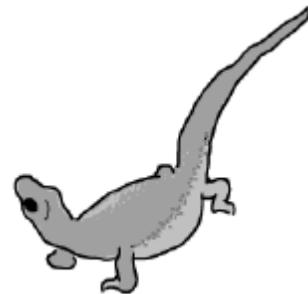
This is Bento #10, prepared for Conucopia, August 1999. It is available for The Usual (Letters of Comment, tradzines, editorial whim, party invitations, or fawning gratitude). We've got **new Net addresses** since the last issue:

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## BENTO #10

by **DAVID LEVINE** and **KATE YULE**

*illustrated by* **DAVID LEVINE,**  
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**IAN GUNN, and ART CLIPP**



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## Edible Toroids

Last year Vicki Rosenzweig brought us NY bagels, and we corresponded on the nature of The True Bagel. She said:

“... By the way, it’s not just the water. A lot of the chains (places like Einstein’s) steam their bagels instead of boiling them. And then have the audacity to, with their bare faces hanging out, complain that New Yorkers have ‘a pre-conceived idea’ of how to use a bagel. In other words, we can tell a bagel from a loaf of white bread.”

On a trip to Vancouver BC, we were intrigued to learn that there is a second, distinct species of bagel on the continent, *Bagelus montrealus*. At first we just thought this particular bagel shop was unclear on the concept, or inept. But it became clear from reading the various reviews and newspaper clippings posted on the wall that the thin (a person accustomed only to *B. hudsonia* might say *scrawny*) nature of the indigenous product was in fact deliberate, and considered actively desirable in certain geographical areas.

The proportions of *B. montrealus* are very similar to those rainbow-colored plastic stacking donuts from Fisher Price. —KY



*B. hudsonia*

equipment and surfboards. Presumably the surfboards should also be as free of residue as possible. “Let go, Gidget! You’re on shore now!! Here, help me pry her fingers up.”

Or consider this personal favorite, sweeping in scope and yet elegant in its simplicity, from the Alaska Airlines Passenger Rules and Fares Tariff. At the bottom of each and every page, it states “For unexplained abbreviations, reference marks and symbols see Pages 9 through 15.”

The punchline: “(PAGES AS-7 THROUGH AS-16 ARE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK)”.

There’s a serious side to this, of course. I have a copy of this tome because we got repeatedly screwed over by United last year, including a night spent on Red Cross cots in a baggage claim area at O’Hare.

“But didn’t they owe you a hotel room?” Damn good question. Let’s find out. Your ticket just says something like “make sure you have received the important legal notices entitled Blah, Blah, and Blah.” If it’s unusually talkative, it may say “Certain rules are incorporated into this contract by reference...rules and conditions of carriage are available for inspection at any United Airlines ticket counters, blah blah”—where they will cheerfully tell you “Oh, it explains all that on the ticket.”

Alaska Airlines also talks about their “incorporated terms” and offers a free copy on written application. I duly wrote: “Why yes, I would like to know the full terms of the contract I am entering into when I purchase a ticket from you.” Imagine that!



## We Have Reservations

*but we’re flying anyway*

I am known to the staff at my financial planner’s office as The Client Who Read the Prospectus. No, Really, All of It.

I like to read the fine print.

This can at times be useful. I hadn’t realized that “if a passenger presents himself/herself at the Alaska ticket counter no later than 2 hours after the scheduled departure time of the flight shown on their ticket, the passenger will be accommodated on a standby basis on the next Alaska flight.” How nice! (At least until you discover that they’ve already cancelled all of your connecting and return flights—Rule 60(c)(2), Failure to Occupy Space.)



And the fine print is often entertaining. I love the fact that my ticket to the opera *Marriage of Figaro* specifically waives Management’s liability if I am hit by a hockey puck. Back in the Frozen Skies, “Passengers may be required to give at least 24 hours notice that in-flight oxygen will be needed.” Shoot, no wonder it’s stuffy in Coach.

It being *Alaska Airlines*, certain unique issues are addressed:

“Antlers must be as free of residue as possible. The skull must be wrapped, and the tips must be protected. Linear dimensions may not exceed 115 inches.”

Antlers are accepted on board for \$45, or \$108 to and from the Russian Federation. In this they are comparable to pole vaulting

To my astonishment, something came! To my bemusement, it is obviously a fourth-generation photocopy of a copy with three different bouts of hole-punching in its past. Not something polished for the public, obviously. Few people will jump through the necessary hoops to obtain this information, and fewer still will persist past gatekeeping verbiage such as:

“**NOTE** By Special Permission 91097, granted to the extent that NTA(A) No. 378 commences from the revised pages hereunder. This tariff NTA(A) No. 378 is initially filed with the National Transportation Agency (Air) to become effective April 15, 1989 and the following revised pages that do not bear the NTA(A) No. 378 designation will hereinafter be deemed to bear the designated NTA(A) No. 378 effective April 15, 1989.”

I plowed on. Oh, here’s a gem: “If the passenger is unable to continue his/her travel due to death, Alaska will waive fare restrictions.” Golly. Elsewhere, the Definitions page confirms what we have long suspected: “Add on Fares: See ‘Arbitrary’.”



Ah, here we are. In case of a schedule irregularity, you have various rights—sorry, what am I thinking! the *airline* has various options it can choose among, some of which even involve getting you to your intended destination.

But we really don’t have to concern ourselves with specifics. Those dozen paragraphs are flash—sleight of hand—to distract you from noticing that they *never actually come into play!*

## Building: The Future

A “Schedule irregularity” is an (a) delay in departure or arrival resulting in a misconnection, or (b) flight cancellation...or any other delay or interruption in scheduled operation of a flight, EXCEPT when caused by a Force Majeure Event as defined in Rule 80(g). Let’s see... that’s—

1. Any condition beyond Alaska’s control (weather, riots, acts of God), actual, threatened, or reported
2. Strikes or labor-related disputes (anyone’s)
3. Government regulations
4. Shortage of labor, fuel, or facilities (anyone’s)
5. “Any fact not reasonably foreseen, anticipated or predicted by Alaska.”



So. Thunderstorms over Denver? Too bad. Pilots’ strike? Not covered. The caterer hasn’t shown up with the snackie-poops yet? (Seriously, United pulled this one on us.) So sorry, that’s Beyond Our Control. Whatever might reasonably be anticipated as a cause for delaying a plane, they *have* anticipated and eliminated in Rule 80(g). Any other cause for disruption whatsoever, barring a corporate declaration that “we just don’t bloody feel like it today,” would be an unforeseeable anomaly, see Rule 80(g) #5!

Impressive, ain’t it?

Whoops, time to go catch my flight to Anaheim. I’d better wrap my skull. There could be hockey pucks. —KY

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*“The Dalai Lama travels next to Bloomington, Illinois, to visit family.”*

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**Los Angeles, 2019.** Advertising blimps ply the skies, piercing the gloom with beams of light while touting Off-World Colonies and happy pills. Below, in the rain-slicked streets, replicant Pris (Darryl Hannah) awaits android designer J. F. Sebastian (William Sanderson) in the garbage-strewn doorway of his apartment building. Once inside, Sebastian takes Pris up to his apartment in an openwork elevator, which climbs the side of a vertiginous wrought-iron and terracotta atrium. Above, through the multi-paned glass roof, one of the blimps can be seen; its searchlights shine down on the mismatched pair.

The name of this building, barely visible on its marquee, is the Bradbury.

It really exists.

**Los Angeles, 1893.** Millionaire real-estate developer Lewis Bradbury embarks on what he knows will be his last development project. At the end of his life, he decides to create not just another office building, but a monument to himself. The building that bears his name must be unique, distinctive, memorable. After rejecting the plans produced by prominent local architect Sumner Hunt as too pedestrian, Bradbury asks an unknown young draftsman named George Wyman to design the building.

Wyman, who had no architectural training, was reluctant to take the job, so he asked his brother Mark for advice. His *late* brother Mark, who’d died six years earlier. Mark replied through

spirit writing: “Take Bradbury Building. It will make you famous.” Really. But wait—it gets better. Wyman was an SF fan!

Like many forward-thinking people of the time, Wyman was an enthusiastic adherent of Edward Bellamy’s 1887 book *Looking Backward*, which portrayed a Utopian civilization in the year 2000. In this book, the typical commercial building was described as a “vast hall full of light, received not alone from the windows on all sides, but from the dome, the point of which was a hundred feet above.” It’s hard for us, at the end of the Twentieth Century, to imagine how radical this idea must have seemed to builders at the end of the Nineteenth. But, backed by Bradbury’s millions, Wyman determined to realize this dream in brick and mortar.

Wyman’s design turned the building inside out. Unusually plain on the outside, the building focuses its energies on an interior atrium, five stories high and topped with glass. The Los Angeles sun pours down into this space, highlighting its ornamentation: rich terra cotta tilework, lavish wrought iron railings, Belgian marble stair treads (seen from below, they glow with the light shining through from above), and the crowning touch, two marvelous openwork elevators. This is a place of air and light. It wasn’t cheap; Bradbury wound up spending an unheard-of \$500,000 before it was done. Sadly, he died a few months before it was completed, but he realized his ambition: the building has carried his name forward through the Twentieth Century and into the Twenty-First.

Wyman never designed another building of note.

**Los Angeles, 1999.** Spanish-speaking Angelenos crowd the streets, shopping for groceries and household goods under a bright July sun. Kate and I and our friend Michael, in town for the annual gay square dance convention, have come to Broadway to visit the Bradbury. I don’t recognize it at first—I’m looking for the fancy marquee with the huge, twisty pillars from *Blade Runner*. It turns out all that stuff was added for the movie; the actual exterior is warehouse-plain. There’s a paper sign taped to the door. For a moment I fear the building is closed for the holiday (it’s Monday July 5), but the sign only requests tenants and visitors to check in with the security guard.

Kate and I had visited the building once before, as part of an Architectural Conservancy walking tour, so we knew we wouldn’t be able to go anywhere above the first stair landing, but we wanted to share it with Michael anyway because it was so keen. While Kate stuck her head in at the security office, I marveled at details: the translucent stair treads, the freestand-

Ironwork

ing mail chutes, the plugs of glass in the floor that extend the atrium's light even into the basement. (In *Blade Runner* these glass plugs were eerily illuminated from below.)

I was trying to read the label on the phone box in one of the elevators (it turned out to be the standard text, but tastefully rendered in a turn-of-the-last-century font) when I heard a voice at my shoulder. It was the guard. "Yeah, they had to put in the phone boxes, but there's no phone inside. See?" He demonstrated. Then, astonishingly: "Would you like to go up in the elevator?"

Would I!

Michael and Kate and I all piled in. The guard was apologetic that he couldn't let us get off, but we were ecstatic: we got to go up in the Bradbury Building elevator! The rising viewpoint showed us that the atrium expanded from a narrow rectangle to nearly square above the first floor, and let us see the terracotta rosettes at the top of the atrium and the wrought-iron structure of the glass roof up close.

Then, when we came down, the guard offered to show us the basement. The lush terracotta walls and imported tile floors ended abruptly at the basement door, but the ceilings were high and were made of decorative stamped tin. Holes had been brusquely torn in the tin ceilings to add sprinklers and electrical conduits, a real-life echo of *Blade Runner's* "retrofitting." The most interesting thing down there, though, was the original molds for the decorative terracotta work, still in storage Just In Case over a hundred years later.

## That's Not a VW, It's a Teletubby

I grew up with a succession of Volkswagens. They are part of our family mythos: Dad had one from Germany in the '50s, when they were almost as obscure as metric tools, and he was driving a white Superbeetle in 1970 when that station wagon came across from the northbound lanes and invoked Newton's Laws. The red Squareback moved 5 of us and a parakeet cross-country; took us to every Howard Johnson's in the thirteen colonies; made it back from Florida with a kaput starter. "You kids stay here while we get coffee, don't touch anything, and DON'T TURN THE MOTOR OFF!"

I still can feel the scratchy lining of the Bug's youngster-sized "back-back" (as hard to believe I once fit happily there as to believe I emerged from the womb), the faux-tufted plastic upholstery, my foot fishing for the cable that Dad rigged to do the job of a broken seat latch. My sister and I used to count VW's on our biweekly trips from the Pittsburgh suburbs in to the Carnegie Library (the big one, black from decades of half-burnt coal, with dinosaur skeletons and a plaster Parthenon in the attached Museum). We could break 200 on a good day, what with a round trip past Paul's Motorwerke, the VW dealership on Route 51, and the almost-aerial view of steel mill parking lots along the Monongahela river banks. Volkswagens—not just Beetles but Fastbacks, Squarebacks, buses—were all distinctive in their somewhat rounded shapes in those days (early 1970's), and easy to recognize in a sea of New World cousins. They were still making them then,

After we got back to Portland, we re-watched the laser disk of *Blade Runner* ("Look! We've been there!") and re-read sections of *Future Noir: The Making of Blade Runner* by Paul M. Sammon (highly recommended) to find out just what we had and hadn't seen. Although the atrium of Sebastian's apartment building was the Bradbury, the apartment itself was a set, as were the other half-ruined rooms through which Batty chases Decker; the exterior ledges and rooftop where the climax takes place were on the Warner Brothers back lot. The street outside the building was really Broadway, heavily redressed, but the surrounding buildings and everything above the second story of the Bradbury was a matte painting.

Even without all this artifice, the Bradbury has a genuine science-fictional quality unlike any other building I've ever met. I'm far from the only one who feels this; the building has appeared in several other SF films, including Harlan Ellison's *Outer Limits* episode "Demon with a Glass Hand" (which I haven't yet tracked down on video) and numerous commercials. Maybe that Bellamy guy had the right idea.

Art becomes reality and is then transformed back into art; the future becomes the past and is then transformed back into the future. Through it all, the Bradbury Building endures.

—DDL

and the winters and the snow and the salt hadn't won, yet, and rusted them off the roads.

They were still making steel in Pittsburgh, then. But that's another story.

For years, I knew that my first car would be a Beetle. Of course! It was never impossible. I live in Portland now, where they don't salt the roads, so potholes are rare and classic Beetles common, even though they haven't been produced for the North American market in decades. ("No salt on the roads? But what do you do about snow?" asks a Wisconsinite. "Moved to Oregon," we reply.) In the late 1990's, three things happen: I really am going to buy my first car. I decide I don't want a thirty-year-old used car with a shaky safety record and a long established tradition of No Heat. And Volkswagen announces they're bringing back the Beetle.

Hot damn.

My car, Babe, is a '94 Geo Metro. She is small and cute and functional, almost the People's Car of her day (except the heater works). We will wait a year or two while they get the bugs out of the Bug. We will let someone else drive the new Beetles off the lot and watch their value instantly depreciate like sweet green icing in the rain. And then by golly I will have my own! Maybe in that zippy metallic mint green. Highly cool.

I was disappointed by the design of the new Bug. I'm reactionary, I admit it. I wanted one just like it was before, only a little more rollproof and maybe the wing windows wouldn't have to

whistle? And they went and changed it. Hell, the engine isn't even in the trunk any more! What fun is that?!

It occurred to me, though, that the important thing is not that the Beetle look identical to where we left off, mumble-odd years ago. The question is, does it look the way it would look now, if they'd been making it, and tweaking it, all along? By that standard, hey, no problem.

We're renting a Beetle on this August's trip to Anaheim. Black. Brand new. Man, that's more exciting than Disneyland.

—KY

## A Year in the Life

*Excerpts from Kate's diary*

### Sunday, Sept. 6

An article in today's Parade magazine described Project Linus, people giving away handmade blankets to children in hospitals, shelters, foster care. They can be knit, crocheted, quilts, whatever—just so they're washable.

I've been wanting a needlecraft to take up, to keep my hands busy during convention panels, but have foundered partly on the question of what do I *want*, once it's made? I'm not the kind of person to festoon the place with pillows, and Mom produces all the patchwork we could want. One friend does so much cross-stitch, she rotates pieces in and out of storage. Good grief.

This project calls to me.

out that page and keeping it is the time equivalent of keeping a stack of catalog pages with hundreds of dollars of keen stuff marked that I'd like to *buy*—except that the catalog pages eventually are recognized as obsolete, and my pile of things to *do*, representing more hours than are available to spend on them, just grows.

### Sunday

Well! I just cleaned out the top shelf of the fridge. I threw out the dregs of three jars of jam of unknown age and two home-canned jellies of unknown species. There was a jar of biriyani paste from 1994.

This energy can be attributed to Maureen Kincaid Speller coming from England in a few days. Not only do we have a houseguest, we have a houseguest who is a guest in the country, and who as TAFF delegate is liable, nay, *expected* to write up her trip in detail and distribute said sordid detail widely within fandom! When David showed me how to look at recent postings to rec.arts.sf.fandom, I was unnerved to realize that people on two continents are looking over her shoulder to say "And what have *you* done for Our Maureen when you had her?"

We went to the new Uwajimaya yesterday. Seattle Japanese supermarket, now expanded to suburban Portland. Saw many odd & wondrous things—clam jerky, coffee-flavored peanuts, slices of Baumkuchen made in China—and bought a few of them: mango soba, mochi w/sweet bean paste (a little like spoo), black cod

We've been to the state fair! Beef cattle are *huge*. My god, no wonder they eat so much corn. Where do we get off eating them? I'm becoming more and more vegetarian this summer.

Miniature pigs are about the size I think of pigs as being.

Butterscotch-colored chickens! They were beautiful!

As were the blackberry jam & raspberry vinegar (backlit).

The pseudo-Scotsman with the stock dogs was pathetic, ludicrous—"it's like watching the Staten Island Globetrotters."

### September 10

It strikes me that one can live beyond one's means with respect to *time* as well as to money. "I can't be out of money, I still have checks"—right? Well, the corollary is "I can't be out of time, there's still blank space on the calendar." One can spend money on enticing fripperies, and discover too late that one doesn't have enough left for the gas bill, or nothing saved for retirement. Do that with time and the dishes don't get done, the tires don't get replaced, you discover it's been a year since you weeded the azaleas.

David found this depressing. I find it slightly encouraging—doing mundane things with some of your time isn't evidence that you're a boring person, it's just the way life is. Even Einstein had to brush his teeth.

Another corollary: this morning I circled an article in the newspaper about growing potatoes. I'd *like* to grow potatoes. I've done it before and may yet again. But will I soon? Really? Tearing

marinated in sake lees. I'll cook that up for my dinner tonight after David's gone. (Wah.)

David is off to Palm Springs on business. When I drove away from the airport I felt as if I'd lost my partner in the 3-legged race, and he took two legs with him. I count on him so much; he *completes* this team we have, this wonderful thing.

At the same time it feels a bit like I have elbow room, can stretch my arms out wide & not whack into someone.

### Saturday Sept. 18. Barely.

The Best Western in Denver has a very impressive fire alarm.

2:38 am: "But we can't go out that door! The alarm will go off!....Oh." "Are the firemen cute, that's the question!" "You have socks on. You obviously took too long." "Do we have a square?"

4:11 am: "Are you still down here from *last* time?"

4:20 am: I said I'd respond no matter how many false alarms we got. I lied.

### Sunday 9/27

I continue working on learning to knit. When I find a method that yields a clean, attractive left-slanting stitch, I'll go to the yarn shop and get what I need to start a blankie for Isobel in that diamond pattern. David is impressed. "You made *cloth*!!"

### 12/13/98

We bought a tree yesterday, a little early for us but the sky stopped dripping for an hour or so, it seemed like a good time. This is probably the first time we've ever gotten a noble fir—a nicely

thick one—usually they have branches very widely spaced on a trunk that we refer to as “a broomstick with needles painted on”. Snub, sneer. We’re inviting some people over next Sunday for a low-key decorating party.

There are a half-dozen stuffed animals still on the mantel-piece, never put away after last year’s crèche scene.

I love a sentence from a newspaper piece about holiday traditions, like our Pepper-Salted Squid on 12/25: “It’s not what you eat that’s important, it’s what you *always* eat.”

#### Monday January 4, 1999

About that New Year’s resolution, Do Less: it’s actually not so much about what I *do* or not, it’s my attitude towards the things I *do not* do. After all, a day continues to be 24 hours long, seven per week: I will continue to have 168 hours of *something* each week. Never more, never less. What I can change is the volume of stuff piled up in front of me to be attended to in the future; the number of events or actions I frantically snatch at as they threaten to move by me into the past. “Nooooo! I wanted that!!” As long as I leave the intake valves wide open, no amount of activity in any present would be enough to cope with it all.

#### Thursday 4/8/99

Awake. The hamsters are arguing over what to discuss next: what colors to paint the house, when to see *Forbidden Broadway*,

Books

*Young Vixen*, because although they offer six different permutations of shows, all assume you will see at least one from column B; so I have CDs from the library but I think *Werther* might be a bit much in November given that there’s Orycon and our dance fly-in at Halloween and 2 concerts that month I’d like to see.

The only two knitting stores I know are closing, I have 245 books on my To Read list, and US planes are bombing Yugoslavia. Just a little stressed.

#### Thursday, May 19, 1999

We see the new Star Wars movie tonight. If I were as assiduous about avoiding food as I have been with Star Wars spoilers, I would be svelte. I told Ann Hoffert I didn’t know which character Liam Neeson plays or who the little blond kid is. She was incredulous. *I don’t want to know*. As David pointed out, flipping through the comics catalog or perhaps a Toys R Us ad, all it takes is one listing for “Bibo Pukk doll with exploding head!” and as soon as you spot Bibo Pukk, you’re waiting for the kaBoom.

#### 5/30/99, WisCon

“...so all the dental students got all their basic anatomy courses at the medical school, where they were bitterly resentful because they had to study feet.” –Mary Doria Russell

Friday, drove to Olbrich Gardens on Lake Monona. I must be spoiled by the lushness of Oregon plant life; I literally walked by the iris garden three times and did not see it. There were some good surprises: oak-leaf hydrangea, and the number and variety of

our wills, the dogwood, taxes, the trips to LA, David’s sabbatical, food, sex, politics...

I’m a little stressed out.

We need to get the house painted this summer. The porch and gutters should be repaired first. I’ve hired a landscaper to redo the back yard (I surrender!), but I don’t know if I like some of her plant suggestions and I’m worried that her location for the vegetable bed isn’t sunny enough.

We have trips scheduled to Astoria, Madison/Milwaukee, LA (dancing), Anaheim (NASFiC), and Tahoe, all in various stages of airplane/hotel/activity planning and no rental cars yet. Oh, and Seattle for Foolsap.

My sister called to ask if we would agree to take baby Isobel if something happens to them.

David got his annual job review. “No wonder I’m tired,” he said, looking at the page and a half of achievements and work done. They like him a lot. They gave him a raise. And a promotion.

Don’t get me started on taxes. The Feds have us paying tax on money we don’t even have yet.

The symphony wants my decision on renewing for next year. David wants to subscribe to the local Broadway season. Oh, and since you’re subscribers, we’ve already opened ticket sales to the extra events, *Wizard of Oz* (with Mickey Rooney—“He’s a Yule, I want to go”) and *Les Mis*. Will that be Tuesday or Thursday, Orchestra or balcony, Visa or MasterCard? Season tickets for the opera would make sense *if* I want to see either *Werther* or *Sly*

trilliums. One was labeled “sessile trillium.” Are there *motile* ones? Outside of John Wyndham?

Apropos of Lise, I keep wondering what the Eisenberg Principle would be.

#### July 11, 1999

At Convention, in LA, I got to spend a little time w/Liz and Annie. Annie Bakwin was 6 weeks old at last year’s convention. This year, she’s as mobile as can be without actually walking. Stands, holding things, and can work her way around a low table or take off into the open using her stroller as mobile support. She was inquisitive about everything around her but, it seemed to me, in a much less *destructive* way than most babies—“Oh look; here’s an object, I’ll bash it against something.” No. She would try to uncrumple a piece of paper; gently explore the shape and backside of one’s badges and buttons.

I loved how friendly she was and comfortable with many adults. While Liz was dancing at the Warner Brothers Western lot a friend held Annie. I go over to say Hi, she opens up her arms quite matter-of-factly and clambers to this new vantage point. (She’s quite a tumble bug, especially w/Mom, who is willing to juggle her like a piece of mercury trying to flow downhill.) I explained what my buttons said and why there’s an embroidered lighthouse on my name badge, and we watched Mommy dance and all the other people. Jed came by and out went the arms again! If Don’t Panic made shirts in baby sizes, I’d get for Anna: “I’M NOT A SLUT, I’M JUST EXTREMELY POPULAR.”

Sunday 7/25/99

I gave away the yellow blanket Thursday, handed it on to someone from Project Linus. She had to argue with her son to get him to relinquish it and put it in the car trunk. —KY

P.S. The tomatoes have plenty of sun; I found more knitting stores; NATO stopped bombing Yugoslavia. We really did square dance on the Warner Brothers back lot, the western street. Also on Hollywood Boulevard, in front of Grauman's Chinese Theater! And Mickey Rooney was a *wonderful* Wizard of Oz.

Teddy Harvia illo

out in front of me. I flex my legs, attempt to lower my feet, but the machine resists.

Here is the part that is truly obscene: the machine resists *because I myself have set it up to do so*. When I lower my legs it raises a carriage, and I have weighted the carriage with a set of heavy iron discs. I selected the weight of those discs to *hurt me as much as possible* while not being physically impossible for me to lift. How far we have come from the primitive Iron Maiden! This torture leaves no marks.

In my Earthly life I used machines that were ergonomic—that is, they were designed to assist a user in performing a task with the minimum possible effort. The machines in this place are *anti-ergonomic*: when seated in the machine, only one motion is allowed, and that motion is made as difficult as possible. But no more so. If motion were simply impossible, the damned soul would merely be frustrated. No, motion is allowed, but is transmitted through a cunning collection of pulleys and levers to weights that provide resistance. I repeat this motion-against-resistance, over and over, until my muscles burn and joints scream. When no further motion is possible, I am allowed a brief rest, but then I am compelled to repeat. Then again. And again.

Once I lowered my legs like this without a thought. It was as simple as getting out of a chair. But now each attempt is an agony. Despite the pain I persist. Again and again I flex, bend, push. Grunts are torn from my throat, then groans, then screams. My thighs and calves quiver from the strain. Finally I can bear it no

## Purgatory

Purgatory is gray and black, and smells of sweat and metal.

I am surrounded by the punishment machines. Each is cunningly designed for a single purpose, steel and leather bent into a certain shape to most efficiently strain and pull and stretch. Men and women are strapped into the machines; heavy weights pull at their arms, their legs, their torsos. Most suffer stoically, but occasionally one cries out in anguish when the pain becomes too great. They receive no sympathy. We are all in the same boat here.

Think of Purgatory, and you think of something medieval. But although your ideas of Purgatory may not have not changed since Sunday School, Purgatory itself has moved on. This is a modern place, clean and light and airy; a place of tile and mirrors. There are no hot coals here, no branding irons, no whips, no spikes. Nor are there horned demons; the keepers of this modern Purgatory have the appearance of ordinary men and women. But they are few—far outnumbered by the damned. For, worst of all, in today's Purgatory the damned must punish *themselves*.

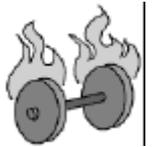
At the moment—not that time means anything here—I am buckled into a machine that resembles an ancient siege weapon. It has a seat, of sorts, or at least a set of pads that supports my buttocks off the ground. I suspect it is padded to save wear and tear on the machine rather than on me; it is certainly far from comfortable. Another set of pads surrounds my ankles and calves, which stick

longer, cannot raise the weights even one more time. I relax, at last, and the carriage crashes down with the sound of a blacksmith's hammer.

I unbuckle the straps, stand and stretch. Enough. I remove the iron discs from the carriage and return them to their storage place. Despite their concentrated heaviness, like distilled gravity, I heave them into place with comparative ease. I have said that this torture leaves no marks, but it does cause visible changes in my body. After this timeless time in Purgatory the fat has been stripped from my belly, and my arms and calves and chest are larger. But, as my own torturer, I must add more weights to the machines to compensate for my increased strength. So each new day is no easier than the one before.

But this is my last session of the day. For this is Purgatory, not Hell, and our tortures are but temporary. I am permitted a shower; I rub and stretch my aching muscles under the hot water.

The demon at the door wishes me a nice day as I return to work. —DDL



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*“When I consider the ego gratification per unit effort for getting my picture in the paper vs. getting an article I wrote published, I’d rather have the picture.”*

*“Yep, you are an engineer.”*

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## Glossary

We have oft been accused of being incomprehensible to the outside observer. We maintain that this is not so, as long as the outside observer has a good working knowledge of Monty Python, Stan Freeberg, Saturday Night Live (the original cast, before that upstart Bill Murray), Saturday morning cartoons 1963–72, and *Sesame Street*; and a smattering of Flanders & Swann and Peter Dudley & Cook Moore.

Herewith, however, a brief list of some of our unique vocabulary. Subject to change without notice; your mileage may vary.

**Asps:** After you. No, please, I insist. “Is the vindaloo hot?”

“Asps.” From *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, in which Sallah identified the situation thusly: “Asps. Very dangerous. You go first.”

**Boink:** Anything that sticks out. “How’s my braid?” “You’ve got a few boinks on the left side.” From a florist, who used the term—in all seriousness—to describe the little sticky-outy bits in a floral arrangement.

**But Miles...:** I know this is bad for me, but I want to do it anyway. “We don’t have room for another one of those.” “But Miles...!” From a John Caldwell cartoon in the collection *Running a Muck*, in which a man holds open a bag, with an inviting gesture, to two pigs. One pig says “I’m not going in there. It’s a poke. I know a poke when I see one,” to which the other pig replies eagerly, “But Miles, it’s full of garbage!”

around and around and around and around and around that little wheel. Which squeaks. The nocturnal bastards.

**Lem:** To follow the herd. “Everyone else is going that way. Let’s lem.” Butlers buttle, ushers ush, lemmings lem.

**O!** Look, there’s (a parking space, your keys, etc.)! From the Japanese for “Look! There’s Godzilla!”

**Sheep/Goats:** Desirable/undesirable members of any set.

“Where’s the Sunday paper?” “Sheep are in the parlor. The goats are already in the recycling bin.” From Matthew 25:32-46, in which the people of all nations are divided, “as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats,” and the sheep inherit the kingdom while the goats get told “You go to Hell.” (What’s so great about sheep anyway?)

**Sw—:** So sweet it makes your teeth hurt. “I tried the Pecan Pie ice cream. Oooh, it was sw—.” From Hobbes’ reaction to Chocolate Frosted Sugar Bombs, an appalled “Sw— sw— *sweet!!*,” to which Calvin replied “Yeah, it’s not too great until you put a few tablespoons of sugar on it.”

**Thing?:** I’ve lost my nouns and cannot form a coherent sentence. “I was just... uh... with the... um... er... ah... Thing?” Literal translation of the Italian *Cosa?*, colloquial abbreviation of *Che cosa è?* meaning “What?” When in Italy we tended to lose our nouns a lot.

**Voom:** To vanish rapidly. “Where are the Mint Milanos?” “They went voom.” From Monty Python: “‘Voom’? This parrot wouldn’t ‘voom’ if you put four million volts through it!”

**Doggie:** Any quadruped other than a dog or cat. “Look at the doggies in the field over there!” “Are they cow doggies or horse doggies?” From the stereotypical small child who runs up to the Bengal Tiger or Enraged Rhino, arms outstretched, with a glad cry of “Doggieeeee!!” Also **horse-drawn doggies**, a horse-and-carriage.

**Eat like kings:** A spiderweb across the path. “Watch it, they’re eating like kings on the front porch.” From a *Far Side* cartoon in which two spiders have spun a web across the bottom of a playground slide. One says to the other “Yeah, but if this works, we’ll eat like kings!”

**Funge:** To tidy up. “Are we doing anything Sunday?” “We should funge.” Leisurely version of “scurryfunge,” defined in *Words* by Paul Dickson as “hasty tidying of the house between the time you see a neighbor coming and the time she knocks on the door.”

**Glork:** From a linguistic exercise by David Moser: “This gub-blick contains many nonslarkish English flutzpahs, but the overall pluggandisp can be glorked from context.”

**Gronions:** (Pronounced “grunions.”) Some people call them green onions, but they’re really scallions.

**Gronk:** I’m not awake enough to be coherent. “Good morning.” “Gronk.” Origin obscure, or possibly all too obvious.

**Hamsters:** Persistent thoughts that won’t let you sleep. “The hamsters kept me up until 2 AM.” From the way hamsters go

**Wombats:** The things that go to the bottom of the salad bowl. The good bits. From *The Wombat and Cereal Lover’s Dilemma*: what do you do when you’re all out of wombats and there’s nothing left but the cereal?

**Yog:** Dannon Lowfat Coffee Yogurt in the 8-oz. container, an indispensable household staple. “Argh, we’re out of yogs!” From the abbreviation on the cash register tape. (See also **Moz Dong** and **Curtation** in *The Devil’s DP Dictionary* by Stan Kelly-Bootle.)

**Yoicks:** Let’s blow this joint. Can also be used interrogatively. “I’m bored. Yoicks?” “Yoicks.” From the cartoon *Robin Hood Daffy*, in which Daffy Duck swings from a tree with the exclamation “Yoickth, and awaaaay!” only to slam into the next tree (repeat as needed).

Yoghurt Shoggoth

### Quiz Yourself:

1. “Yoicks?” “Asps.”
  - a) Everyone else is going; we should go too.
  - b) Shall we go? OK, but you first.
  - c) Argh! We’re out of yogurt.
2. “Gronions go voom?” “I funged them.”
  - a) Have you seen my hairbrush?
  - b) I can’t seem to form a coherent sentence.
  - c) Did we eat all the scallions already? No, they went bad.
3. “Morning.” “Gronk.” “Hamsters?” “Gronk.”
  - a) Did you sleep well? No. Something on your mind? Yes.
  - b) Did you sleep well? No. Something on your mind? No, you were snoring like a drunken goose.
  - c) Argh! We’re out of rodents.

—DDL

(locs)

### Brad W. Foster

Irving, TX

August 19, 1998

Another Worldcon and another *Bento*. I love how that works! ... oh, excuse me.... I seem to have dozed off there for a second, and now I find that there is a fillo sitting here next to the keyboard that I evidently drew in my sleep.... you guys must *not* ever abuse this power!!! [*See back cover. Mwah hah hah.*]

Boomers, Generation X, Generation X-and-a-half, Cusper—labels are a lot of fun, but I’ve been happy that, at least in my own mind, I seem to be in between most of them. I’d rather belong to my own non-recognized (and thus non-over-analyzed) group than any others. (Of course, seems people who *like* to be able to say they are part of one of those groups also insist on lumping me in one of the others, but then that’s their problem.) I simply hate commentaries that involve phrases like “men think” or “women think”

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*“What’s your fortune? Mine says ‘kisses kisses kisses!’”  
“Um, I don’t think Hershey’s Kisses have fortunes.”*

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or “whites think” or “blacks think” or “this-or-that-age- group-all think this.” It’s kind of like Astrology, that over-simplification and grouping together of huge groups of disparate personalities, all because they share one very narrowly-defined item.

### Lloyd Penney

Etobicoke, ON

Saturday, September 26, 1998 1:26 PM

A great cover, and so true, too. [*“Worldcon friendships are 5 days wide and 10 years deep”*] For many of us, though, 10 years is a conservative figure. Worldcon friendships can last a long time, especially for First Fandom, with friendships that have stood time through 60 years or more. I hadn’t been to a Worldcon since the 1994 Worldcon in Winnipeg, and there were a lot of friends at Baltimore I hadn’t seen in some time. The feelgood was everywhere when we met again.... I am not sure what else I could do that would engage my interests as much as science fiction and its fandom, and still bring together the friends and acquaintances I have.

The first Barney movie was shot just outside of Montréal. (Too bad Barney wasn’t shot outside of Montréal...) This Alan at the Microsoft ActiMates Barney help line...his last name wouldn’t be Rosenthal, would it?

[*Yes, it was a sly fannish reference. As it happens, Alan Rosenthal had just finished work on some help text for Barney when he received the piece from me in e-mail.*]

I know what happened to your Coffee Man...he was probably bought out by The Second Cup. The coffee capitals of North America are Seattle, home of Starbucks, and Toronto, home of The Second Cup. Odds are if the little coffee shop you enjoy isn’t a Starbucks, it’s part of a chain owned either wholly or partially by The Second Cup. [*Yep, you pegged it!*]

### Karen Stephenson

Corvallis, OR

Oct 5, 1998

This particular issue seems to have been very in-tune with my current state of mind. At least it has been when I can pry it away from Fiona (age 2) who identified it as something both interestingly grown-up and just her size and has proceeded to carry it around and read it enthusiastically. [*Good for her! You can’t learn to read if you’re not comfortable with books/magazines.*]

I had to laugh at the Microsoft Barney Help Line. The purple one has taken on a whole new meaning in my life. That half-hour in the morning \*\*\*all to myself\*\*\* is truly as blessed as Prozac.

As well as changing the design for See-and-Says, another tragedy of toy-safety has been the shortening of strings on pull toys. Even a toddler has to stoop to keep all the wheels on the ground. And about age specifications on toys—there must be a child safety fairy who visits every child on its third birthday with a magic blessing.

I do remember when it was all fields ’round ’ere.

**L. P. Levine**

Milwaukee, WI

Tuesday, October 06, 1998 6:43 AM

On page 21 of the current Bento you quote me as discussing hearing voices. For the life of me I cannot remember saying this to you so I checked my email and lo and behold there it was in a mis-sive dated 10/6/97.

What the hell was I talking about? I cannot remember but I do know we talked some time ago about hearing music, I get the band going all the time and often waltz to it. But voices?

Perhaps we were talking about reading material written by someone you know and hearing the voice of the author as you read and recognize his/her writing style, that might be it.

Mother dear says that she thinks that when she thinks the thoughts are actually articulated in her own voice. That is not how it works for me, the thoughts arise out of seemingly nowhere and “just pop out.”

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“...denying [Alan Sherman] the obscurity he worked so hard to deserve.”

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**Barbara Haddad**

Campbell, CA

7-Oct '98

The on-going mail-a-weasel liner notes were wonderful! The last one caught me quite by surprise and I startled my cat when I laughed aloud on reading it. [Actually, it was ferrets.]

BTW, having been born in '57 myself, I have also felt like someone trailing after the pack. You summed up some feelings well, but I grew up during the building process—stuffed in crowded classes—watching the construction outside. Frustrating.

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*The thought of actually picking up and holding a penguin had never occurred to me.*

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**Moshe Feder**

New York, NY

Wed, 7 Oct 1998 07:06:04 -0400

As someone who's long been interested in the nature of human consciousness, I continue to be struck by the fact that, as you mention, knowing that the gungey veil [of depression] is an illusion is no help at all. If I cut my finger, thinking at it that I want it to stop bleeding has no effect, and I accept that. Somehow, thinking at my brain that I want it to stop feeling sad (or too happy) for no reason is harder to accept. But eventually one does, and

**Kathryn Ice**

Seattle, WA

Wednesday, October 07, 1998 9:24 AM

I really enjoyed receiving your latest creation. I don't think that I want to think about the main topic of discussion. I am a lousy square dancer and at least once in every dance crash into my partner. That could really be uncomfortable in the nude! [No, that's half the fun of it! Much comfier without all those buttons and buckles and things.]

[Meanwhile, at the SCA...] I went out to Sergeant's Trials this last weekend and got impressed into service to make up a reel. One of the candidates was teaching us how to do this reel and she was a little intimidated. She got us going and then when we were supposed to cross (one line breaking and going under the raised arms of the other) she lost it and collided me with Canute!

At least that time it wasn't my fault for getting the wrong foot forward! We did make a great chinking sound as we collided and then it took a bit of time to disentangle his numerous necklaces from my buttons and cloak clasp. Alissandra spent the whole time apologizing for not explaining more carefully. On the whole it was a blast though.

I enjoy medieval dancing but it always seems that we spend ages learning a piece and then only dance it one time and so you have to spend ages learning the piece each time it comes up in the feasting season. [Yeah, I (David) had the exact same problem with country- western line dancing. That's why I gave up on it.]

knowing that there are now drugs that can do what thinking alone cannot makes that easier. Yet I wonder if someday we'll figure out a way to take more direct control. More likely we'll get at the genetic roots of mood disorders first.

“Coping” was something I usually could manage when I was younger and the depression was milder, but if possible at all is much harder now. I've never had much patience for self-help books but I'd be curious to know which ones you found worthwhile.

Thought the maxim in cross-stitch on the cover was a nice bit of proverb coinage. [We did too—someone said it in the Fan Room at OryCon.] Of course, the second number would be somewhat larger for some of us. For example, in my case with some people it would be—oh my god!—27 years. Of course, I am ten years older than you guys, but boy did that time just zip right by! Well, they do say it flies when you're having fun don't they?

Anyhow, here's hoping those five-day-wide friendships keep right on deepening for a long time to come.

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*There's a camel for everyone this season, but you have to choose carefully.*

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**Jerry Kaufman**

Seattle, WA

Thursday, October 08, 1998 6:33 PM

I got to watch Tami's face when I showed her she was an interlineation. (She hadn't read her own copy yet, who can blame her? She was in the middle of packing and moving.)

A lot of people in Seattle must have had a similar experience with Starbucks. (Similar to your "Coffee People" experience, I mean.) Someday I'll read the same story about Taco Del Mar or Rudy's Barbershop. I remember when it were all Fields around 'ere; now it's Nordstrom everywhere I look.

**George Flynn**

Cambridge, MA

Oct. 14, 1998

Thanks for *Bento* 9. It is indeed full of "strange and interesting tidbits," most of which are too lapidary to require any comment.

*[Anyone who thinks this is a highfalutin' way to say dilapidated, check your dictionary. It's quite a compliment.]*

"The local place name has only two syllables." I actually live in Somerville, and yeah, I guess people do often say "Som'v'l." More commonly, however, it gets extended into "Slummerville" (not necessarily by natives, to be sure).

So when will we stop having to turn the *computer* on early to warm up? (And my mother still throws cans in the trash.)

**Pamela Boal**

somewhere in cyberspace

Sat, 17 Oct 1998 17:48:24 EDT

I'm glad you wanna play too, because yet again you prove to be first-class players. *Bento*, the little package that gives food for thought without being pretentious, and also manages to offer some delightful chuckles.

I am a great fan of crossword puzzles and I have never seen one quite like your variation on the theme. To be honest I could only do about half of it, the computer jargon and references being outside my ken. I had to look up Pi, somehow I have never had occasion to use it in the fifty-plus years since I learnt it. How nitrous oxide and sulfuric acid stuck in my mind I have no idea, because funnily enough I have never had to write them down either. So you are way too clever for me but I do like the concept and hope you do another one. It would be great if you could include more rebus answers like the T42.

I have a great distrust of fashionable drugs and worry about the number of American friends who are being prescribed Prozac. You have greatly reassured me by relating how Prozac really does help the awful condition of clinical depression. I'm still a bit concerned that it is given to people who should be given time to come to terms with, for instance, the grief of a loved one dying. That they could wind up for years on a chemical prop (it is not a treatment thus used, whereas with true depression it seems it can be) when caring counselling would be more appropriate.

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*You know, you can shake a stick at an awful lot of things at once!*

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**Sue Yule**

Seattle, WA

October 15, 1998

Bento IX????? I just about dropped my Bento when I saw the cover. Hard to believe you guys have produced 9 of these pithy suckers.

I find the idea of aerosol Valium to be very appealing. This is of course coming from a person who has been working nights for 5 years in a successful attempt to avoid having to deal with my coworkers. I found the crossword puzzle very nasty until I stumbled upon the key and saw that numbers were allowed. Duhhh, I am such a linear thinker.

I always look forward to Kate's contributions to Bento because I get echoes and glimpses of my childhood. The "Things I remember" really made me smile. As the youngest of the clan, it was expected that I would dive in the back of the VW hatchback (way back) or the back of the station wagon. I remember coming across the country in 1975 and laying in the back of the very full station wagon, sharing the little space I had carved out with the dog and the guinea pig. Seat belt, what seat belt?

*[Kate remembers her day back there was Wyoming. All day.]*

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*Is that a red herring on the mantelpiece, or are you just glad to see me?*

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**John Dallman**

Somewhere in the .uk domain

Monday, November 16, 1998 11:44 AM

How to write a LoC to Bento? A huge screed would be inappropriate: let's try to write some neat little bites:

Coming out with an explanation of the title that implies such high quality would be egotistical if you didn't justify it so well.

Microsoft Barney. I have been trying not to think about that idea. Is Bill Gates a fan of H. P. Lovecraft, does anyone know?

Thank you, Kate, for a nice, clear, quotable description of what my depression feels like. Seroxat isn't quite so anti-catty as Prozac, but it works.

Being a just-after-boomer over here is different: there are too many people just senior to us, and we get worked to death. The curse of competence.

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*Are vampires visible in the night half of a day-night mirror?*

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**Bob Pownall**

Fort Collins, CO

November 21, 1998 5:03 PM

You Can Tell A Native—I fit point 3 (visiting local tourist attractions just before leaving) perfectly. I lived in Oregon for over 16 years before I finally got around to seeing the McLoughlin House in Oregon City, or Silver Falls State Park. Oh well, better late than never. I'm going to be sure not to make the same mistake in Colorado.

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*Cat Weather: when it's raining out one window and sunny out another.*

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**Roger Waddington**

Norton, Malton, North Yorkshire

23rd November, 1998

Microsoft Barney [has] the ring of truth to it. And it does make me wonder about this present generation, growing up to believe that stuffed toy animals can talk. Of course, it was just the same for my generation, but then that could be blamed on a vivid imagination; so what happens when imagination becomes reality?

I don't know whether it's anywhere near the truth, or just one of the more believable travellers' tales, but the prime example [of the truncation of place names] must be Lea and Perrin's Worcestershire Sauce, imported to the US of A. Apparently, Americans pronounce all its syllables whereas we, through long usage, just

The architecture here is even stranger than, um, postmodern Portland. What's really amazing is it's more than 100 years old! [This was sent on a postcard showing the Casa Batlló, which resembles a half-melted Art Nouveau apartment building with giant bugs' heads for balconies.]

**Jakob Hovman**

Somewhere in cyberspace

May 02, 1999 6:31 PM

Now... you did it again...  
put a bento on some 'pleet stranger...  
nice job!!!.....

Searching the net for japanese houses.....  
Yahoo sends me straight into bento....  
well...your balsabento...

great writing and yes I rekkon' there's got to be....  
people behind....  
brains 'nd emotions...an'all...

[The above haiku-like eLoC comments on the online archive of Bento ( ). The "balsabento" is a balsa-wood model of the structure of a Japanese house ( ).]

manage the sneeze-like "Wooster." True or false? [Part true. The typical American pronunciation is approximately "Wustersher," which is neither sneeze-like nor wrings out every conceivable syllable.]

Appreciated the fable for our time about the Coffee People; though I'm not sure whether the moral would be "great oaks from little acorns grow" or "you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs." [More like "beware the Law of Unintended Consequences." ] But Ghu preserve us from such uniformity, such conveyor-belt marketing; it must be one of the benefits of small-town life that there's nothing likely to attract the interest of big corporations, or enough of a customer base to set up their own branches here. All our food and drink outlets are resolutely local, and likely to remain that way; and I speak out of long experience.

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*What do the shuttlehens look like?*

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**Allen Baum**

Palo Alto, CA

4/19

I thought no one could beat the Japanese at vending machines, but I just came across one that does. Just off Plaza Jaume here in Barcelona is a french-fry vending machine. Put in your 200 or so pesetas, and 90 seconds later you have very freshly cooked pommes frites, and not half bad. You can hear them sizzle and everything as they cook.

**Women's Air Heroism Force**

(or, We Also Heard From): **Ben Yalow** ("the Barney Help article was absolutely brilliant"), **John Hertz** ("Thanks for Bento; now I often think of you at lunch"), **Cheryl Morgan** (see Emerald City #36), **Michael McMullen** ("that's Balmer, Murrllin"—he also pointed out that Rehoboth is in Delaware), **Todor Stoyanov** (who sent a Virtual Flower Bouquet), **Mog Decarnin**, **Geri Sullivan**, and **Michelle Franz** ("writing a postcard to my next door neighbors seemed like a lot of fun!").

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*"I don't mind being stung by a bee, because after it stings you it dies. Wasps can go home and brag to their friends."*

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