

THE ABYSSINIAN PRINCE #353

October 21, 2014

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E-MAIL/WEB ONLY ISSUE! PDF will be available on the website. We also are being reproduced in *Eternal Sunshine*.

Web Page Address: <http://www.diplom.org/DipPouch/Postal/Zines/TAP/index.html>

We continue with Kendo Nagasaki, join ANY time, just send me a guess!!!

This issue continues the szine/subszine inversion. As most of you know, this thing began as a "subszine" to Terry Tallman's *North Sealth*, *West George*, then became its own szine with a host of subszines. The subszines remaining will appear as sub-subszines to our new flipfopped home in Doug Kent's *Eternal Sunshine*. Doug's incessant nagging is not keeping us on schedule, but will make it so we keep going. I'd like to keep writing and doing some game GMing (note that has been expanding). I'm set on the GMing, and I'm starting to write a bit, hope there might be more. Let's get the new Diplomacy game going. Since Doug may be winding down, I may have to flip that back around again and be the centerpiece for all the subszines, we'll see.

For production, in addition to the HTML's of each separate product on the web page, I will also have a PDF that you can print of the entire subszine (including my famous handdrawn maps!). You can just print the maps if you like, but remember maps are for pikers anyway, you don't need no steenkin' maps, keep them up in your head where they belong.

General information about the mailing list is at: <http://www.diplom.org/mailman/listinfo/tap> You can sign up from there, or send E-Mails to: Tap-request of diplom.org; with the word 'help' in the subject or body (don't include the quotes), and you will get back a message with instructions. You must know your password to change your options (including changing the password, itself) or to unsubscribe.

THE ABYSSINIAN PRINCE FEATURES SECTION (CONS/LETTERS/MUSIC)

((For upcoming cons around the world: <http://devel.diplom.org/Face/cons/index.php>, but note that some of the Americans have stopped posting the tournaments there. Shame, shame, shame... We know that Carnage in Vermont will end off the Nor'Easter sequence of events the first weekend in November, the rest of the year in the Northeast is clarifying slowly. Carnage talk is all about, if you're interested in going, now is the time to make arrangements. I think most of you have seen it, but David Hill's article on being smoked at World DipCon (see: <http://grantland.com/features/diplomacy-the-board-game-of-the-alpha-nerds/>) has been generating lots of commentary, along with the appearance on This American Life, which you also can listen to on the web from the This American Life web site: <http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/531/got-your-back>. At <http://diplomacycastle.com/files/other/DiplomacyCastEp31.mp3> you also can listen to the DiplomacyCast interview of David Hill. Also, I will be running TempleCon again, February 6-8, 2015, here in Providence.))

NEW FEATURE: ROCK AND ROLL BANDS AND MOMENTS THAT MATTER

((If anyone from TAP or ES has ideas for more things to talk about here let me know. I do have five or six ideas lined up here already that I just have to write.

Richard Thompson's appearance down here (over in Fall River) sold out almost as soon at the tickets went on sale, and I couldn't go that night anyway but from my house in Maine on Columbus Day weekend, Ghod was playing at the new theatre in the Westbrook, ME middle school. I'm going to split this up into multiple parts going into next issue. Richard is doing this tour to support a new acoustic album that mostly recrafts old hits (if you can call his songs hits, as he joked during the concert). So, it was him and an acoustic guitar, until the encores. Then he brought on electro-acoustic violinist Joyce Andersen, who I think is supporting some more of his shows, but I'm not sure how many. It was an amazing concert, more below.))

DIPLOMACY WORLD CUP TOURNAMENT IS ONGOING – YOU CAN STILL JOIN!

This is the latest incarnation of this team based tournament. I am helping to lead the Nor'Easter team for people in the Northeast part of the United States. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/123795024327261/> is the Facebook page for the event.

And you can sign up for the Tournament at: <http://aqmn.asciiking.com/>. Other US regional teams are the ones in the Pacific, Dixie, and Chicago. Its unique aspect, that continues to be distorting, but in interesting ways, is its “solo only” feature. You advance from the preliminaries to the finals only by soloing, and then need solos in the finals against the other soloists. Though this started last January, it probably will be going on for at least another year, and there is PLENTY of time to jump in. As usual, for those who know me well, I screwed up my first game and allowed a solo to someone from team US. And then I could have soloed the second game, but well, I can't exactly say how I did it, but the Canadian player soloed there, with help from me. I still don't have a solo in over three decades, and now I'm waiting for my next game to start, you can join and get more games going!!! You can easily throw games, and in this format you can do it. I wonder why people like to drop the levels of the game in this way. It fascinates me. But in the finals of this tournament, it shouldn't happen, should it? The rules for the finals have been tweaked and the finals are now starting, everyone has been queried. But you also still can join the qualifiers, openings are there now!!! Word is we may cancel them, I think the finals should reignite interest. We also are picking up some discussion for a successor Diplomacy World Cup. I think we all realize that this interesting experiment has not been completely successful.

THE ABYSSINIAN PRINCE GAMES SECTION

I am continuing to note cut or failed support orders with a small “s” instead of a capital “S”. This will make it easier on the E-Mailed version of the szine to see what happened, since the italics don't show there. The italics DO show on the web page just fine. Since I'm not postal mailing the szine any more, I've dropped back to just reporting the disguised E-Mail addresses. As someone notes, if you need some more contact information, go back to past issues or ask me.

Standby lists:

Dick Martin, Brad Wilson, Jack McHugh, Steve Emmert, Vince Lutterbie, Paul Rauterberg, Doug Kent, Heath Gardner, Paul Kenny, and Hugh Polley stand by for regular Diplomacy. I've pared down the standby list according to who I'm actually in touch with. If I removed you and you want to be added back, just say so. Otherwise, just let me know if you want on or off these lists, especially OFF given the new policies.

GAME OPENING INFORMATION

I'm going to start the game opening list over. Under the new regime, who wants to play what?
SPY DIPLOMACY: Heath Gardner (not sure if that is still active), need at least six more.
REGULAR DIPLOMACY: need seven for another game start, the new one starts this issue.

THE DON WILLIAMS 57 MEMORIAL: 2014A, Regular Diplomacy

THE DUE DATE FOR SUMMER 1901 IS NOVEMBER 15TH, 2014

THE DUE DATE FOR FALL 1901 IS DECEMBER 20TH, 2014

Spring 1901

AUSTRIA (Ozog): a bud-SER, a vie-BUD, f tri-ALB.
ENGLAND (Wiedemeyer): f lon-ENG, f edi-NTH, a lvp-YOR.
FRANCE (Ellinger): f bre-MID, a mar-SPA, a par-PIC.
GERMANY (Abbott): f kie-DEN, a ber-KIE, a mun-RUH.
ITALY (Holley): f nap-ION, a ven-TYO, a rom-VEN.
RUSSIA (Rauterberg): f stp(sc)-GOB, f sev-BLA, a MOS h, a war-UKR.
TURKEY (Burgess): f ank-CON, a smy-ARM, a con-BUL.

E-Mail Addresses of the Participants

AUSTRIA: Eric Ozog, elferic of juno.com
ENGLAND: Fred Wiedemeyer, wiedem of telus.net

FRANCE: Marc Ellinger, mellinger of blitzbardgett.com

GERMANY: Will Abbott, wjja9 of yahoo.com;

ITALY: Melinda Holley, genea5613 of aol.com

RUSSIA: Paul Rauterberg, paul.rauterberg of att.net

TURKEY: David Burgess, burgesscd of roadrunner.com or dburgess of glensfallshosp.org

Game Notes:

1) Thanks for the press, we had lots of you promising more, but it didn't quite come. I would remind you in the TAP tradition to promote press, that the deadline for Fall 1901 is not technically until December, the next deadline is a press only Summer 1901 season. If you want to move along faster, send orders and tell me they're final, but otherwise, write some more press. I had a couple of you say the deadline sneaked up on you a bit, feel free to take a bit longer for Fall.

Press:

(WILL ABBOTT, GERMANY): I never had the honor of playing with Don Williams. I have not appeared often in the pages of *TAP*. Nonetheless, I avidly read *TAP* when it comes out, even the game reports. The games with Don were usually the ones with the most entertaining press. Even in the items he did not write, he was often a leading character, and he seemed to bring out creativity in others. I can only hope to write press as entertaining as that which I read in his games. I also encourage my fellow players to strive for this level.

((Me too, I don't think any of my press over the last four decades would have been anywhere near as good without Don's influence. It probably still is pretty lame...))

I strongly believe that Diplomacy can be a spectator game. I have been around the championship game at Gencon several times, and it always attracts not only other players from the tournament, but wandering gamers who may not have played for years, or ever. I find the showcase games in *Diplomacy World*, with their commentary, extremely interesting and entertaining. In a game like this, without the commentators, the best way to make it a spectator game is through press. The readers can't see our negotiations, but we can make it a fun game for them by entertaining them in the public press.

(GERMANY to GM): I was considering doing 57 duck jokes, followed by 57 toad jokes. I was afraid that you wouldn't be down with that, and I didn't want the press in this game to croak.

(AUSTRIA to ITALY): "Trust me"

(TURKEY to INDIA): Watch out, I'm coming East!!!

(JIM to GANG): "Indians scattered on dawns highway bleeding, ghosts cloud the young child's fragile eggshell mind."

(RICHARD THOMPSON to BOOB): How'd I do?

(BOOB to RICHARD THOMPSON): Quite good! Despite your cold, the singing and arrangements were very powerful.

(MUNICH to KIEL): How do you have a whole fleet? You're just part of a boat!

(KIEL to BOARD): Anyone know a cure for the Heligoland Blight? I hope it's not contagious.

(WILL to BOARD): If you're stabby and you know it draw your knife,

If you're stabby and you know it draw your knife,

If you're stabby and you know it,

then your face will never show it,

If you're stabby and you know it draw your knife.

(PARIS): This morning the new Premier of France dedicated the largest war memorial in European history, the Arc dDon Williams. "This memorial celebrates the great victories of our soldiers over the last thousand years under the leadership of Field Marshal, Marquis Don Williams," the Premier remarked. "Under Marquis Williams, every nation in Europe has bowed to the French will and, in his honor, they will continue to bow in the future!"

Unnoticed in the crowd were the quiet orders issued to the French army and fleet to sally forth. As the fleet in Brest slipped its anchors, La Marseillaise was heard blasting from every ship, "Aux armes, les citoyens..."

In Marseilles, troops hailed their generals and pledge fealty to the Premier and started on the long arduous march across the Pyrenees. “We love our Italian brothers, but the Spanish scum must be tamed,” noted one poilu after receiving their orders. Press inquiries were quietly rebuffed.

(KOBLENZ, GERMANY): The trio of agents from the Imperial Chamberlain’s office escorted Wilhelm Fedewa out of his house at 57 Erwinsstrasse. The four of them enter a stagecoach waiting for them. Beside the driver is an armed soldier, and two additional stagecoaches full of soldiers form an escort. One soldier in the second of them says to another, “Do you think that Karl Benz’s new motorized carriage will replace these?”

“Not for military use,” says his companion. “They are too complicated. Besides, a good horse is faster.”

The agents and Fedewa ignore this. Once in the stagecoach, the most senior agent addresses the new Kaiser. “Before your coronation, we need to do two things. First, we need to visit parts of your realm. We shall take you to Munich, where you will meet with the Duke of Bavaria. Then, we shall take you to Kiel, where you will inspect the fleet. After your visits, we will take you to Berlin, where you will meet your staff and plan your coronation.”

“Ordo Romanus 45,” the new Kaiser replied.

“Entschuldigen Sie, bitte?” Excuse me, Sire?

“I want the basis of my coronation to be the ritual in Ordo Romanus 45. The monastery at St. Gall has a copy.”

“St. Gall is in Switzerland.”

“Find a patriotic monk, and send him there for a copy.”

THE PHIL REYNOLDS MEMORIAL: 2006B, Regular Diplomacy

THE DUE DATE FOR SUMMER 1911 IS NOVEMBER 15TH, 2014

THE DUE DATE FOR FALL 1911 IS DECEMBER 20TH, 2014

Spring 1911: Carnage and Surprises Abound!!!

AUSTRIA (Burgess): a VIE S a tri-tyo, a BUD S a vie, f CON s f ion-aeg (nso),

a GAL S ENGLISH a sil-war, a tri-TYO, a SER h.

ENGLAND (James): f nwg-NTH, a LVN s a stp-mos, f bar-NWG, a fin-BER, a sil-WAR,

a STP-mos, f nth-ENG, f ion c ITALIAN a gre-nap (d r:aeg,alb,nap,otb), f GOB C a fin-ber,

a KIE S a fin-ber, f BAL C a fin-ber.

FRANCE (Holley): f tyh-ION, f gol-TYH, a nap-APU, a BUR-mun, a ven-TRI,

f ADR S a ven-tri, a ber s a bur-mun (d r:sil,otb), f TUN S f tyh-ion, a tyo s a ven-tri (d r:ven,pie,otb).

ITALY (Crow): a GRE-nap (convoy disrupted).

RUSSIA (Kent): a MOS s f pru-lvn, a MUN s FRENCH a ber-kie (nso), a war s a mos (d r:ukr,otb),

a BOH S a mun, f EAS-ion, f PRU-lvn.

E-Mail Addresses of the Participants

AUSTRIA: David Burgess, burgesscd of roadrunner.com or dburgess of glensfallshosp.org

ENGLAND: Drew James, kjames01 of twcnr.com or karelanddrew of gmail.com

FRANCE: Melinda Holley, genea5613 of aol.com

GERMANY: Marc Ellinger, mellinger of blitzbardgett.com

ITALY: John Crow, johnny.crow of hotmail.com

RUSSIA: Doug Kent, dougray30 of yahoo.com

TURKEY: Fred Wiedemeyer, wiedem of telus.net

Game Notes:

1) The DIAS, EF, EFR, and concession to E all failed. There are no new proposals

2) Still send all good thoughts to Heath Gardner, but he is doing a quite a lot better, except financially.

I think a lot of us have helped him there too though.

Press:

(ENGLAND to WORLD): Since we can’t end the game with a draw, let’s have some fun.

(RUSSIA - ENGLAND): Thanks for the note. Glad to know someone will write me, even if it is the nation who is clearly going to win.

(ENGLAND to RUSSIA): I know you got at least one email this season...

(AUSTRIA to RUSSIA): Off with your head!!!

(ENGLAND to FRANCE): Nothing personal and, yes, I know this was probably dumb, but I thought I would breathe some life back into the game.

(AUSTRIA to FRANCE): Oh, the tangled web we weave....

(DMB to WORLD): Help, I need somebody, help, not just anybody, help, you know I need someone, help!!!

(ENGLAND to ITALY): Did you make it back home after a long exile in Greece?

**FOR THE MEKONS ET AL.: Breaking Away, Designer's Rules
THE DUE DATE FOR TURN 11 IS NOVEMBER 15, 2014!!**

Turn 10: All the remaining Sprint Points claimed and a third rider dropped from the pack

90 (replenish with a 3)	Katniss Everdeen
89 (replenish with a 4)	Peeta Mellark
88 (no replenishment)	None
87 (replenish with a 3)	Haymitch Abernathy, Effie Trinket
86 (no replenishment)	None
85 (no replenishment)	None
84 (replenish with a 3)	Floyd Little
83 (replenish with a 4)	Travis (4), Larry Csonka (2)
82 (replenish with a 6)	Ernie Davis (3)
81 (replenish with a 7)	Jim Brown (1)
-S-P-R-I-N-T- -F-I-N-I-S-H- -L-I-N-E-	
80 (no replenishment)	None
79 (no replenishment)	None
78 (replenish with a 3)	Arciszewski, CMOT Dibbler, Moist von Lipwig
77 (replenish with a 6)	Sam Vimes
76 (no replenishment)	None
75 (replenish with a 3)	Dziewulski
74 (replenish with a 4)	Bowie, Mustrum Ridcully
73 (replenish with a 6)	Houston
72 (replenish with a 7)	Roberto Rojas, Sylvester Carmouche
71 (replenish with a 9)	Ryan Leaf
70 (no replenishment)	None
69 (replenish with a 3)	Jean Van de Velde
68 (no replenishment)	None
67 (no replenishment)	None
66 (no replenishment)	None
65 (replenish with a 3)	Cwierczakiewiczowa
64 (no replenishment)	None
63 (no replenishment)	None
62 (no replenishment)	None
61 (no replenishment)	None
60 (no replenishment)	None
59 (no replenishment)	None
58 (no replenishment)	None
57 (no replenishment)	None
56 (replenish with a 3)	Crockett
55 (no replenishment)	None
54 (no replenishment)	None
53 (no replenishment)	None

available for you, for next turn. Just for fun, I keep track of total replenishment, by turn, which is a rough measure of how the teams are doing. Of course, it is lining up to get across the sprint (40/80) and final (120) lines in the right places that really counts. We can calculate an “efficiency score” later, which will be the ratio of scoring points per replenishment. If I’m predicting how the future of this will come out based on doing this before, about half the players will get scores below 5% and getting better than a 10% score will be really tremendous for this measure.

2) More records for low replenishment. Racing Froggy has no points, but is catching up in total replenishment, will he break out soon?

Press:

(RACING FROGGY-ALL): “Does anyone have a clue what’s going on? We seem to be pedalling backwards...”

(RACING FROGGY-DISTRICT 12): “I don’t include you in my question, obviously, which is just as well because I don’t think you’ll hear us from way back here.”

(RACING FROGGY-ALL): “Who can we bribe to throw nails on the road in front of the District 12 team?”

WHERE IN THE WORLD IS KENDO NAGASAKI

THE DUE DATE FOR TURN 10 IS NOVEMBER 15, 2014!!

Kendo Nagasaki games in *Eternal Sunshine* continue to multiply like weeds... I’d like to get more people engaged here, not just the usual suspects from Doug’s games. The full rules for Where in the World is Kendo Nagasaki are in: <http://www.whiningkentpigs.com/DW/es58.pdf>. The player who was closest for Turn 9 has been notified by E-Mail. Note that the official rules say you’re supposed to get this by TURN 10, so you have one more shot.

TURN 9

Brendan Whyte:

Jeremy Clarkson in Copacabana, on the shores of Lake Titicaca

Tom Howell:

Mario Falcone in Cuya, Chile

Heath Gardner:

No Guess this Time

Doug Kent:

Karl Pennington in Oruro, Bolivia

Rick Desper:

Craig Ferguson in Iquique, Chile

Kevin Wilson:

No Guess this Time

Hank Alme:

John Cleese in Santiago de Machaca, Bolivia

Mike Ruttinger

Piers Morgan in Plaza, Peru

Steen Alme:

John Oliver in Tacna, Peru

Edi Birsan

No Guess this Time

HINT to the Person with the Closest Geographic Guess: You have nailed my location, but someone else has identified me.

TURN 8

Brendan Whyte:

Rush Limbaugh in Copacabana, on the shores of Lake Titicaca

Tom Howell:

Rush Limbaugh in Pisagua, Chile

Heath Gardner:

No Guess this Time

Doug Kent:

Alec Baldwin in Sajama, Bolivia

Rick Desper:

Sean Hannity in Antofagasta, Chile

Kevin Wilson:

No Guess this Time

Hank Alme:

Glenn Beck in Tacna, Peru

Mike Ruttinger

Keith Olbermann in Santiago de Machaca, Bolivia

Steen Alme:
Stephen Colbert in Oruro, Bolivia

Edi Birsan
No Guess this Time

HINT to the Person with the Closest Geographic Guess: I am NOT an American, but most Americans will have access to the TV show me and my buds have, one way or the other, and I am nowhere near as obnoxious as you apparently think I am.

TURN 7

Brendan Whyte:
Al Franken in Santa Cruz, Bolivia

Tom Howell:
Rush Limbaugh in Salinas de Garci Mendoza, Bolivia

Heath Gardner:
No Guess This Time

Doug Kent:
Gene Simmons in Oruro, Bolivia

Rick Desper:
Bill O'Reilly in Arequipa, Peru

Kevin Wilson:
No Guess This Time

Hank Alme:
Glenn Beck in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia

Mike Ruttinger
Sarah Lee née Gore in Tacna, Peru

Steen Alme:
Jon Stewart in Montero, Bolivia

Edi Birsan
Michelle Obama in La Paz, Bolivia

HINT to the Person with the Closest Geographic Guess: You still have the wrong gender, while also being quite confused about the real name of the person you accuse me of being.

TURN 6

Brendan Whyte:
Mrs. Bill Clinton in Sucre, Bolivia

Tom Howell:
Sonny Bono in Jesus de Machaca Municipality, Bolivia

Heath Gardner:
No Guess This Time

Doug Kent:
George Will in Toledo, Bolivia

Rick Desper:
Rush Limbaugh in Potosi, Bolivia

Kevin Wilson:
No Guess This Time

Hank Alme:
George Clooney in Sucre, Bolivia

Mike Ruttinger
Jane Fonda in Arica, Chile

Steen Alme:
No Guess This Time

Edi Birsan
John Boehner in Honolulu, Hawaii

HINT to the Person with the Closest Geographic Guess: My appearances on TV are still for entirely different reasons than yours have been, I have referred to something in which you appeared on my show though.

TURN 5

Brendan Whyte:
No Guess this Time

Tom Howell:
Jimmy Carter in Cochabamba, Bolivia

Heath Gardner:
No Guess this Time

Doug Kent:
Harry Reid in Oruro, Bolivia

Rick Desper:
John Boehner in Antofagasta, Chile

Kevin Wilson:
Angela Merkel in Managua, Nicaragua

Hank Alme:
John McCain in La Paz, Bolivia

Mike Ruttinger
Nancy Pelosi in La Paz, Bolivia

Steen Alme:
Michelle Obama in Trujillo, Peru

Edi Birsan
No Guess this Time

HINT to the Person with the Closest Geographic Guess: Although I have discussed the possibility of running for some much, much lesser office someday, it's likely you have never heard of those statements of interest of mine; I much more famously have labeled as an "idiot" a person in a similar specific elected position as you have.

TURN 4

Brendan Whyte:

Mrs. Al Gore in Ascención, Paraguay

Heath Gardner:

No Guess this Time

Rick Desper:

Hillary Clinton in Lima, Peru

Hank Alme:

Katie Couric in Sao Paulo, Brazil

Steen Alme:

Hillary Clinton in Bogotá, Colombia

Tom Howell:

Michelle Obama's husband in Cochabamba, Bolivia

Doug Kent:

Bob Barker in Santiago, Chile

Kevin Wilson:

No Guess this Time

Mike Ruttinger

Dennis Rodman in Bogotá, Colombia

Edi Birsan

President Obama in Honolulu, Hawaii

HINT to the Person with the Closest Geographic Guess: OK, but I am part of a larger group than that. ((*CLARIFICATION: I am a member of a larger group than the group you imply by your guess.*))

TURN 3

Brendan Whyte:

Diana Rigg in Anchorage, Alaska

Heath Gardner:

Gov. Chris Christie in Hamhung, North Korea

Rick Desper:

Stephen Colbert in Brasilia, Brazil

Hank Alme:

Landon Donovan in Quito, Ecuador

Steen Alme:

Al Gore in Buenos Aires, Argentina

Tom Howell:

Michelle Obama in Valparaiso, Chile

Doug Kent:

Mark David Chapman in San Francisco, CA

Kevin Wilson:

Stephen Colbert in Santiago, Chile

Mike Ruttinger

Tom Brokaw in Caracas, Venezuela

HINT to the Person with the Closest Geographic Guess: Oooh, I think you have the wrong gender, try again.

TURN 2

Brendan Whyte:

Diana Rigg in Pyongyang, North Korea

Heath Gardner:

Henry Kissinger in Sao Paulo, Brazil

Rick Desper:

Zsa Zsa Gabor in Beverly Hills, CA

Hank Alme:

Stephen Ambrose in Seattle, WA

Steen Alme:

Kim Jong-Un in Sevastopol, Ukraine

Tom Howell:

Jennifer Jones in New York, New York

Doug Kent:

Harrison Ford in Mexico City, Mexico

Kevin Wilson:

Dennis Rodman in La Paz, Bolivia

Mike Ruttinger

Scarlett Johansson in Havana, Cuba

HINT to the Person with the Closest Geographic Guess: While I also have appeared on television in some form, I have done so for different reasons than you.

TURN 1

Brendan Whyte:

Diana Rigg in Anchorage, Alaska

Heath Gardner:

Jimmy “the Greek” in Las Vegas, NV

Rick Desper:

Eddie “the Eagle” Edwards in Sochi, Russia

Hank Alme:

Ian Fleming in Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Tom Howell:

Rex Roberts in Alexandria, Egypt

Doug Kent:

Charlton Heston in Rome, Italy

Kevin Wilson:

Pierre Trudeau in Montevideo, Uruguay

Mike Ruttinger

George McArthur in Seoul, South Korea

HINT to the Person with the Closest Geographic Guess: Unfortunately, you are very much dead, while I am very much alive.

LAST WORD: So, let’s finish off this page with the first part of a review of both the Richard Thompson concert and the accompanying album *Acoustic Classics*. I decided intentionally to refrain from buying or listening to the album until after the concert and I didn’t write down all the songs he played in almost two hours including the encore. But I think he played nearly all of the fourteen tracks on the album. And to me it easily is his best album in the last couple of decades on first listen and hearing the songs in concert. Of course, that at least partly is because it could be viewed as a “greatest hits” album, although most people wouldn’t put such a downer song as “From Galway to Graceland” on a greatest hits album. Richard Thompson is a god of modern music to those of us absolutely convinced that he is primarily for two reasons. First, he is flat out 100 percent THE best guitar picker alive, and possibly ever. I didn’t hear some of the classic mid-20th century pickers live, so I won’t make comparisons that are too strong. I say specifically “pickers” since his picking style is fast, light, tuneful, and pretty much unlike anything anyone else can do. But I wouldn’t try to line Thompson up against the standard rock guitar heroes. Neither the insiders like Steve Val and Jim McCarty nor the classics like Pete Townsend, Keith Richards and Eric Clapton play anything like Richard. Jeff Beck and Jimi Hendrix are the comparisons to me for their unique styles of playing. Somehow Richard Thompson never ends up on these lists, and I simply don’t get it. Really! “1952 Vincent Black Lightning” has always been the song you send people to in order to demonstrate the whole package, the tune, the concept of the song, the songwriting and singing, and above all the guitar picking. You sort of knew before you even started that this song would be on this album, in this tour, and be a true acoustic classic (the 1991 original also was acoustic, but I think this one benefits from all of Richard’s work on improving the resonance of his rich baritone voice). This version is the all-time keeper for me already. Taking songs from their full band versions to stripped down acoustic guitar solos has been a bit of a mainstay in the music world for a while now, but Richard is nothing if not blatantly uncommercial in his approach, so it is unsurprising that he hits up this idea now rather than ten years ago when it was really hot. Richard last released an acoustic album like this in 1982, “Small Town Romance”, that I have on vinyl and haven’t played in two decades! Second, of course, is that Richard Thompson’s choices always are uniquely his own and emphatically non-commercial. If you really want to study this in depth, and I have, though I don’t expect you to do so. The way to do it is to compare closely the released version of perhaps his best album ever, *Shoot Out the Lights* with the Gerry Rafferty mixed “supposed” commercially mastered version that you can find on CD if you look about enough. Listening to this version, that both Richard and Linda Thomposon hated, and pretty much everyone thought was a failure with hindsight in tow, there is NO doubt to me at all, though I infinitely prefer almost all of the versions in the released album, that this album would have been the hit that Richard Thompson never had. But why would he do that? I am pretty darned sure he is happier doing what he did and being as aggressively non-commercial as he is. Thus, he is the indie’s indie hero. More detail in review next issue.

