

# Jackpot!

Issue  
#4

Dec.  
2000



## Four the Hard Way

The most significant thing about the fourth issue of a fanzine is that the minor *shticks* begun in the first issue might be getting tiresome. Even Melinda the Mistress of Magic isn't quite as eye-popping the fourth time she displays her ability to make her clothes disappear.

Let's say, for example, that you begin each editorial with a section about that issue's number. By issue #4, you've done it, done it again and done it a third

time for good measure. That's all right for what NBC's publicity Department would call "A very special night of *Friends*." Blatantly recycled bits, coming at you for the fourth time in as many months, aren't good enough for discerning *Jackpot!* readers.

If I began "Chatterboxing" with the same tired routine about the issue number, many readers will wonder, "What is he going to say about issue #17?" Or rather, they'll be asking themselves how best to remember to skip that portion of the 17<sup>th</sup> issue.

So I won't be starting with a song and dance about the unique physical, social and mystical properties of fourness. Not that I couldn't burble on for pages about *Fantastic Four* comic books, the uniform number of my all-time favorite baseball player Duke Snider and recollections of a fanzine I co-edited in the mid-1970s called *Four Star Extra*. Maybe I'd even have mentioned the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, doo-wop quartets of the 1950s an account of my feeble attempts to play Bridge and the swingers' movie *Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice*.

With a few illustrations and some



**Jackpot #4**, December 2000, is written and edited by Arnie Katz (330 S. Decatur Blvd., PMB 152, Las Vegas, NV 89107) on a surprisingly monthly schedule.

# Jackpot!

It is available for letters of comment or contributions of artwork. Both may be sent to the above snailmail address or electronically to: [crossfire@aol.com](mailto:crossfire@aol.com) or [statskatz@hotmail.com](mailto:statskatz@hotmail.com).

Bountiful thanks to Joyce, Ken Forman and Marcy Waldie for all their help in the production and distribution of this fanzine. Thanks also go to Ben Wilson for technical advice, Irwin Hirsh for his help with Australian distribution and Alan White for answering my ignorant questions about digital graphics.

Member: fan writers of America.

## Corflu 2001 is Coming!

Corflu New England, the 18th annual world convention for fanzine fans, is scheduled for Boston, MA, over the weekend of March 30-April 1. Presumably recovered from the shock of leaving the last Corflu with the responsibility for this one, chairman Bob Webber is busily arranging the usual round of Corflu events. These include serious and frivolous programming of interest to fanzine fans, the annual banquet, the "year's best" anthology and the goodie-laden hospitality suite.



The highly informal convention is expected to draw about 120 to the Mid-Town Hotel, 220 Huntington Ave., Boston, MA 02115. (The convention hotel's web site is: [www.midtownhotel.com](http://www.midtownhotel.com))

A membership costs \$55 for the weekend, including the banquet, if paid before February 20. Hotel rooms at the Mid-Town start at \$129 (though other area hotels may be cheaper.)

Get complete details at the Corflu 19 web site (<http://world.std.com/~webber/corflu18>).

sidebars, I could have wailed onward right up to the letter column. That might have crowded out a pictorial essay on lesbian erotica. I don't actually have such a pictorial essay, but I think it's important to leave room just in case.

Yet even without this extra incentive, I will resist temptation and renounce the cheap laughs I've gotten with this opening for three issues. A conscientious editor must make a firm stand and even a wastrel like myself needs to give at least sporadic lip service to forbearance.

### Inclusive Fanzines

A hot topic on the Memoryhole listserv, which is devoted to fanzines yesterday, today and tomorrow, is "inclusive fanzines." Print publica-

tions like *Attitude*, *Title* and *Hyphen*, though they differ in actual content (and quality), share a desire to embrace all fanzine fans.

The other end of the spectrum includes fanzines that are determinedly esoteric, in-group and, maybe, elitist. Such fanzines emphasize the sub-cultural context and assume deep knowledge of the group's history, personalities and literature.

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***"... I will resist temptation..."***

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No sense lying; I love those esoteric fanzines. I enjoy reading them and have, I must admit, published quite a few since I first contacted fan-

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zine fandom. To make a clean breast of the whole thing, I currently co-edit such a fanzine with *nouveau* Oregonian Tom Springer. *Baloney* is firmly rooted in science fiction fanzine fandom and concedes little to people that lack intimate knowledge of its context.

I've often compared participation in this aspect of fanzine fandom to immigrating to another country. You have to learn the lingo and history to comprehend the references and get the jokes. The citizens of your adopted homeland won't learn your language and customs; immigrants must acquire theirs.

Few people want to emigrate until they check out their destination. They want to visit the Online Fan Publishing Community, see how they like it and establish their level of interest in the hobby.

Some of those tourists may have such a good time that they choose to learn more about fanzine fandom. They will gravitate toward those esoteric, "exclusive" fanzines. One thing's for sure; without tourists you won't get new citizens. People have to have the chance to like something a little before they can decide they like it a lot.

*Jackpot!* is not like *Baloney* or *Smokin' Rockets*. It's meant to be as comfortable, and nearly as familiar, as your living room. Those fanzines project the paper traditions of science fiction fanzine fandom into the electronic arena. They hope to carry the *zeitgeist* of that 70-year-old subculture to the new millennium by adapting to the digital medium. They invoke fanhistory, legend and shared experience.

I want *Jackpot!* to help create the future, not perpetuate the past. I want to support the development of the Online Fan Publishing Community. That means *Jackpot!* has to be open, inviting

## Needed: A Virtual Newsstand

My "Golden Bagel" column in the second issue of Joyce's *Smokin' Rockets* discusses virtual newsstand for electronic fanzines. I wanted to add a few thoughts here and spread the search for a site host to the *Jackpot!* readership.

My column warns that the increasing popularity of electronic fanzines will make the two top current distribution methods, attachment to email and posting on a web site, inconvenient and cumbersome. Too many attachments might clog email accounts; too many site-posted fanzines will create a confusing rat race in which many fans won't get the fanzines they want.

My answer is a fanzine newsstand, a site that posts fanzines with brief descriptions and might also present other features to entertain fans and provide an



entrance point for new recruits. The cost is very low and the expenses could be met with a small fee (\$1 per MB per month). Other revenue streams, such as a store and banner advertising, could be developed if desired.

We need both more discussion and someone who'd like to operate such a site. It would be a service to fandom, that's for sure. On a more selfish level, it is cost-free fanac and would put the host at the crossroads of the electronic fanzine world.

You can read the fuller exposition tucked in among the good stuff in *Smokin' Rockets* #2, available by request (if you're not already on the mailing list) from Joyce Katz (joyworley@aol.com).



(Left) A 10-in. Department 56 Monopoly building. The collectibles company produces a whole set of the things.



and accessible. It's a time to make friends, experiment with the form and write our own living history day by day.

I believe that fanzines have an appeal and a value that should be shared as widely as possible. Fanzines are a creative outlet, a mode of communication and an act of self-affirmation.

In a world in which everything gets hyped to the skies as a Great Big Deal, fanzines are a refreshingly Small Deal. Some fans gloss themselves with publishing house names, marginal awards and self-promotion, but fanzines remain personal and intimate. They offer we prisoners of the wide, anonymous society a chance to express ourselves and make enjoyable friendships outside our family, neighborhood and workplace.

The constraints of hardcopy discouraged large circulation, made fanzines hard to get and Balkanized the fanzine community. The digiverse has limitations, too, but it can also rip down the external and internal barriers that harm our hobby. Until I started *Jackpot!*, I never mailed more than 160 copies. I couldn't afford the additional cost. I remember all too well sitting at the dining room table, sheets of address labels in my hand, using a marker to decide who wasn't going to get that issue.

That ritual depressed me every single time.

Now I'm free, because it no longer matters. Anyone who wants *Jackpot!* can have it. Every

request gets a copy and I encourage you all to share *Jackpot!* with friends. The only thing I want is letters of comment (and artwork from those who know who they are).

This isn't a call for veteran of paper fanzine fandom to check their traditions at the door. That would be plain stupid, especially since I have no intention of turning my back on my oldest and dearest friends.

The Online Fan Publishing Community should, and will, draw inspiration from the paper pioneers. The

great print fanzines are already showing up as online archives and today's electronic fanzine fan may well delve into hardcopy history to increase their appreciation of its literature. The Online Fan Publishing Community will have stories about great events, clever hoaxes, epic battles and remarkable personalities from *all* the paper fanzine fandoms.

And we'll make new ones together. First we

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***"... fanzines have... a value that should be shared."***

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build the context; then we play with it.

More in-group, esoteric electronic fanzines already exist and more will follow. So will other "one topic" electronic fanzines on everything from science fiction to alternative music. They have their niche, but so, I hope, does a more general publication like *Jackpot!*

The beauty of fanzine publishing is that you can make your publication whatever you think it

### **Art Credits**

Brad Foster: Cover, 2

Ross Chamberlain: 20, Back Cover

Bill Kunkel: 11

Ray Nelson: 7

Bill Rotsler: 3, 7, 18, 19, 23, 25

Craig Smith: 5

should be. Right now, I want to do a fanzine that entertains readers while offering a way to get more involved with the Online Fanzine Community.

*Jackpot!* has nearly 300 readers who get the fanzine from me directly. It's rude to tell a joke when you know in advance that at least half the audience doesn't have the information needed to appreciate it. I'm trying to keep *Jackpot!* under-

Band's song of that title? –Ted White dubbed his apartment Towner Hall. It's a punning reference to New York's Town Hall and the name of a famous, fiery fanzine writer of the 1940s whom Ted admired, Francis Towner Laney.

When Joyce and I left historic Brooklyn Heights for Vegas, we thought it would be nice to name our new home. We knew it wasn't exactly Pickfair, but we felt like royalty after 20 years in an apartment.

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### ... at least one place does live up to its name/”

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standable. You may well encounter some unfamiliar names in *Jackpot!*, but I try to make such references self-explanatory.

We're all discovering new things and exploring the possibilities together. Most of all, let's have a good time.

#### Who Put the Toner in Toner Hall?

In a world in which a place called Madison Square Garden is not on Madison Avenue, isn't square and doesn't have a single growing thing, it might be refreshing to know that at least one place does live up to its name. I'm speaking of Toner Hall, the ranch-style house Joyce and I inhabit in north-western Las Vegas.

The name derives from one of those chains of whimsy that sometimes thread their way through the fanzine world. Back in the 1960s – and does anyone else recall the Incredible String

Since I admire Ted White at least as much as he admires Laney, a reference to that fanzine

Mecca Towner Hall struck a responsive chord. After Joyce and I shouted possible names at each other for an hour, we settled on Toner Hall, which honors not only Ted but also the caustic, unhealthy and absolutely necessary ingredient to modern fanzine reproduction.

Laney, who died in 1954, never visited Towner Hall, but if there's one thing Toner Hall has it's plenty of Toner. We've got umpteen boxes of the stuff, which costs a little more than an equal weight of gold bullion, stacked against a wall next to our copy machine.

Now that Joyce and I publish electronically, our toner reserve should be large enough to carry us through 2010. Since almost every make and model copier uses a distinctively shaped toner bottle, it is virtually impossible to re-sell the surplus.

Part of the overage is caused by our abrupt change in publishing plans. The bulk of our supply, however, is the result of falling for a vicious little scam. It is a harsh world, indeed,



### If You Enjoy *Jackpot!*, Share It with a Friend

Like many fanzine publishers, I've always restricted the mailing list. Partly this was a money issue, partly a philosophical one. Knowing the readers make the interaction more pleasurable for me.

This is a time of changes

and I guess that attitude is at least a partial casualty. Far from trying to restrict the circulation of *Jackpot!* I'd like to make it available to everyone who wants one.

So feel free to send it to friends or even post it on a web

site. In fact, I encourage you to do so.

I'd appreciate it if you would also mention that the only "payment" for my effort is letters of comment and that I would love to hear, even briefly, from all recipients.

## Good Housekeeping: Inside Jackpot!

Some may have noticed this sidebar in each of the three previous issues and thought to themselves (as they ogled Diane Webber or Minka), “Why does he write about the same women’s magazine every issue?” A few may have even suspected that it was the *same* section, inadvertently repeated.

I’m not very angry if you, laboring under either delusion, skipped “Good Housekeeping” in the past. Anyone can make a mistake. Just read it without fail in the future and it won’t go on your permanent record. Let’s not sully the pages of *Jackpot!* with a description of the penalties for a second or — ultimate horror! — a third offense.

I also tell myself that you didn’t pause to read the sidebar, because you were spellbound by “Chatterboxing.” I also tell myself that I am irresistible to women. I tell myself a lot of stuff; it gets me through the day.)

A few readers probably overcame those misperceptions and read “Good Housekeeping.” Yet even they may want to know why it exists,

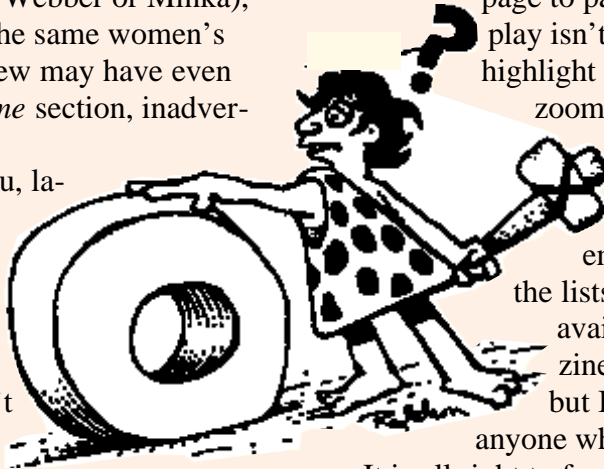
As much as I’d like to focus on the content, this fanzine has more nuts-and-bolts issues than most. I would rather keep them from overwhelming the letter column, so I put them under this heading. Now you know.

John Foyster, whose *eFnac* ([foyster@senet.com.au](mailto:foyster@senet.com.au)) is one of the best electronic fanzines, sent me an eloquent plea to put *Jackpot!* in landscape configuration.

It comes down to attitude and personal taste. I want those who read *Jackpot!* on the computer screen to perceive the graphic relationship between facing pages rather than see each page as a screen-filling unit.

When I read an electronic fanzine on screen, I set the “View” menu to “Continuous — Facing

Pages.” This puts two-page spreads on the screen and avoids the automatic jumping from page to page that occurs when display isn’t continuous. To read, I highlight a column and then use the zoom feature to increase the point size for comfort.



Ned Brooks sent an email, drawn from one of the listseervs, asking about the availability of electronic fanzines. I can’t speak for others, but I offer our publications to anyone who wants one.

It is all right to forward *Jackpot!* to a friend or give him the [StatsKatz@hotmail.com](mailto:StatsKatz@hotmail.com) email address so they can request one directly. We would appreciate it if you would mention that these are non-commercial in nature and that the only return on effort is letters of comment from readers.

D. Gary Grady sent a private letter about site

***“Let’s not sully the pages of *Jackpot!*...”***

vs. email distribution of electronic fanzines. I don’t entirely agree, but I hope this issue’s commentary will encourage him to write a version I can publish in the letter column next issue, because he presents the advantages of site-based distribution extremely well.

Although I like email distribution as a primary method, I’m part of a group within Las Vegas that’s looking into setting up site-based delivery. It’s all very tentative at the moment, but I’ll probably have something to report by *Jackpot!* #5.

The biggest help to electronic fanzine distribution would be for fans to give up services like Hotmail that limit the size of attachments. If everyone had AOL, we could send each zine as a single file.

when a simple fanzine publisher is easy prey for the men some other men call... The Toner Gypsies.

Like most copier owners, we have a contract. We lease the machine and get service and supplies for a monthly fee. One day, though, we got a call from the Toner Gypsies.

The man on the telephone seemed very matter-of-fact as he explained that his company had assumed fulfillment duties for the copier company's contracts. He wanted to know if he could send over the toner. Since I've sometimes had trouble getting the stuff in timely fashion, I airily gave permission.

The toner arrived in several batches, each closely followed by a bill. Joyce doesn't like to put my free-spending hands within reach of serious money, so I was not aware of the requests for money, which somehow became confused with

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### ***The man... seemed very matter-of-fact...***

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the legitimate payments to the copier place.

As crooks do, they overreached themselves. Joyce took a call from the head conman, who told her we needed to accept an addition \$3,300 worth of toner! When she refused, noting that we already had a lifetime supply of the precious black powder, he turned threatening. This set off alarm bells for Joyce, who checked the records, found the anomaly and wrote a stiff letter to the company, the Better Business Bureau and, I think, the Florida Elections Commission.

Silence reigned for about a week. Then came an apologetic phone call from the manager of the company that tried to cheat us. He promised to zero our account and end the harassment.

Now here I sit in Toner Hall, staring at a wall piled high with the substance that gave our house its name.

Ain't life ironic?

### **That Dare Not Speak Its Name**

The five men, all pillars of the community shuffle into the small dusty room above the hair-



Harold Peary, who helped pioneer radio in the 1920s, played Thockmorton P. Gildersleeve first on *Fibber McGee & Molly* and then on his own sitcom, *The Great Gildersleeve*.

cutting place. They trade guilty glances and look back over their shoulder apprehensively, lest the town learn the secret of this

gathering.

Is this the start of a story about depraved and hopeless high society crackheads?

No, indeed. It's a meeting of The Jolly Boys, the club Thockmorton P. Gildersleeve periodically attends on the classic radio sitcom *The Great Gildersleeve*.

Despite the stealth, Gildersleeve, Floyd Munson the barber, Judge Hooker, Peavy the pharmacist and Police Chief Gates are doing nothing

more illegal than penny-ante poker. Their worst offense is a penchant for singing barbershop ditties that were elderly even in the 1940s when *The Great Gildersleeve* reigned as one of the most popular programs on network radio.

As a lover of vintage radio, one of my weekly treats is the trio of *Gildersleeve* episode Wayback Old Time Radio posts on the Internet each week (<http://www.wayback.net>). It's part of The Gildersleeve Project. The site runs the show in chronological order and has just rung in that year of postwar hope, 1947.

There are a lot of episodes, so *The Great Gildersleeve* is now as much a habit with us as *Monday Nitro* and "must see TV." After six months of steady listening, Joyce and I are nearly as fascinated by the show's minutia as the adventures of a blowhard who raises his orphaned niece and nephew in a small Midwest town. The commercials, public service announcements and minor plot elements take on new significance through comparison with today.



Louise Erickson (*right*) played Gildersleeve's niece Marjorie. She was what might be called a professional teenager. The character started as a high school girl in the early 1940s, graduated and began dating a returned serviceman by mid-decade — and then somehow retrogressed to being a high school sophomore in 1947.

Most of our observations aren't especially surprising, like the scarcity of the sponsor's products during the final years of World War II and patriotic pleas to support the eighth war loan. *The Great Gildersleeve* conforms to what most people think the US was like back in that day. Yet even the most trivial bits add a color and humanity to dry history lessons about how American Won the Big One on the Home Front.

I've noticed at least one thing, though, that I didn't expect. Repeated references in episode after episode suggest that drinking cola is not quite nice. Though the bottler removed cocaine from its formula a couple of generations earlier, Gildersleeve and his cronies consider their small refrigerator full of cokes as the club's greatest secret, even above the poker-playing.

The first couple of times this came up on *The Great Gildersleeve*, I incorrectly assumed that mentions of soft drinks were code for beer or liquor. This included the scene at the Jolly Boys that leads off this section. The men, expecting a visit from the local pastor, put away the cards and agree to hide the cokes.

Then came the Christmas 1946 episode in which nephew Leroy begs for a coke on Christmas. Gildersleeve at length consents, noting that it's a special enough occasion to justify this breach of propriety.

I'd hate to hear the bombastic Gildersleeve's



comments on my profligate Diet Coke swilling. I only drink a frosty cab of this effervescent ambrosia at special times, like when I'm awake. I

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### ***“Those enslaved by the soft drink habit...”***

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don't drink the caffeinated version, though, in an effort to spare you a future “Chatterboxing” about a prostate operation.

The evolution of soft drink consumption over the last 50 years is amazing. In the 1950s, Pepsi marketed its 12-oz. bottle as big enough for two. Try selling that one to the next person you see with a 12-oz. can.

Those enslaved by the soft drink habit laugh at a mere 12-oz. cab. They go to convenience stores that gleefully serve them 48-, 60-, 72- or even 84-oz. drinks. In other words, some people now wash down that fully loaded hot dog with a six-pack or more of soda!

The logical next step is a tank of coke



that straps to the back. A mouthpiece adapted from those twisty crazy straws allows the wear to suck down soda continuously.

In the far future, a face-covering soda mask will replace the straw. Cracks, leaks and clogs will trouble soda fiends no more!

Soon, people will be able to subsist solely on coke laced with dissolved nutrients and mood altering drugs. (No more killing sprees inspired by Jolt Cola.) The human body will adapt over the generations until evolution produces the first human who has soda instead of blood in their veins.

And all little Leroy wanted was one itty-bitty eight-ounce coke for Christmas.

### On the Dole

I've spent the last three months in an unfamiliar position: out of work at CollectingChannel

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## ***"... people will be able to subsist on Coke..."***

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and collecting unemployment benefits. This is the longest period of professional idleness I've ever experienced and the first hiatus of any duration since 1985.

Leeching off society has certainly become more civilized than I remember from that previous stretch of joblessness. A visit to the New York State Unemployment Division is no one's favorite outing. The lines are long, the other unemployed are surly, drunk or both and the clerks are contemptuous. Faced with a workday defined by whining and hard luck, most acquire the detached air of a biologist observing bacteria under the microscope.

Nevada, on the other hand, has brought refinement and convenience to the dole. The friendly, if ignorant, job counselor welcomed me to temporary indigence and gave me a



phone number to file a weekly report. The system is totally automated, so it takes about 30 seconds to fulfill my obligation. The checks come more or less on time, though they would be larger in many other states.

Being out of work certainly has its sunnier aspects. I have had a lot more time to work on fanzines – oh, you guessed? – and the more leisurely pace is a nice change from my usual ram-page through the workday. I can take an afternoon nap, enjoy a *matinée* or watch a movie without feeling that I am steal valuable time from some deadline dash.

I'm also fairly certain that I am never going to retire if I can help it. As a certified introvert oddball, I've always had the ability to keep myself entertained. I'm almost never bored and can always think of something to do.

Being out of work didn't affect that at all. I haven't lacked for activities.

What's missing is the thrill of putting my ass on the line as a writer and editor and the challenges I meet in my work. I love doing *Jackpot!*, but I'm really risking very little. Sure, I cry myself to sleep when many of my closest fan friends don't write, but the stakes are so much greater in the professional sphere.

What scares me is that my mind slowed down to stay in synch with the reduced demands on it. Since I don't need five fresh ideas before lunch, my mind roams in other fields. It offers up maybe two ideas and a lot of deep analysis of stuff like pro wrestling plotlines or the relationship between Will and Jack on *Will & Grace*.

Encouragingly, my brain seems willing to speed up as rapidly as it slows down. I helped out a friend on a freelance basis for a couple of days and I felt that I was back to working to my potential by the second day. It seems like that *Jackpot!*, despite what I wrote about the absence of risk, may help keep those vacationing gray cells from going on permanent holiday.