



The Drink Tank

ISSUE TWOMP



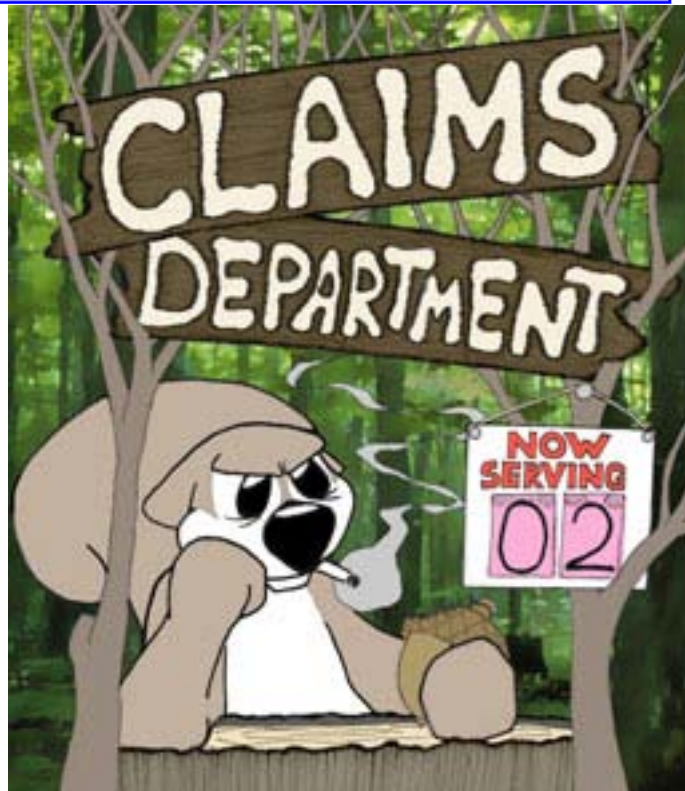
Things I am Learning from Doing Claims Department

I know absolutely nothing about the English Postal Coding System. I have a few folks in the UK that I'm sending Claims Department to and I have their addresses in a number of places from a number of sources. The problem is I have no idea what goes on what line when and how and why. It's scary, as I've always thought of myself as pretty smart, but if I see an English address, I'm doomed.

I've also learned that sometimes wasteful work is just what the doctor ordered. I print Claims Department on printers at my work. We have a deal with HP where they provide us with printers and supplies. My printing has increased the number of pages we print a month and that has led us to get more equipment. That rocks.

I've also found that I'm an atrocious proofer. I've spent at least three hours on both the issues (issue two hit the mail on Monday for most folks) and I still find a bunch of errors that I missed. Part of the problem is that I'm creating it in Adobe Illustrator and not a real page layout system. I saw InDesign, and I desperately want it, but at US\$199 for the Educational version, I doubt I'll ever be able to afford it.

All in all, I'd say that Claims Department is a lot of fun. I like having an excuse to go and spend money on CDs and Movies, and it's also forced me to start working on those hundreds of books I've never read.



The View From Higher Up

Greg Bear- April 26th, 2004

"Computers have transformed modern art, from the writing of novels to the creation of motion pictures. The precise mathematical control of pixels on a screen or in a printer has had amazing consequences already, and the revolution has only just begun. Science fiction visions of virtual reality have clunked along for the last decade, but soon could leap to commercial viability. And who knows how that will influence creative types? As well, the ability to visualize the workings of abstract or unseen phenomenon--from mathematical equations to the structure and function of proteins--allows us to more easily understand nature, and ourselves. I look forward with keen anticipation to the next twenty years, which should be just as earthshaking as the last twenty--though very likely in different and hardly predictable ways."





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Here's another of the fake comic tales I wrote for Once Upon A Dime that never got used. This one references the previous two and was the one that I showed around at WonderCon and had a bunch of comic artists laughing. It's a tragic tale that shows that not every artist wants unlimited credit for everything they ever did. Plus, I just happen to love the concept of a single character being annoying enough to bring down a number of series. Kinda like Scrappy-Doo or Oliver on teh Brady Bunch!



"When The Bottler was created, Michael Handrower was drawing Hero Tales as J.L. Lane for the issue. He's the one that should get the blame."

Ray Aldren in Comic Shoppe Memories, June 1978

"Ray created him. I'm clean on this one."

Michael Handrower in Comic Shoppe Memories, July 1978

Taking the Blame for the Bottler

There have been countless lawsuits over who created various comic characters and what royalties were due them. Only once in the history of comics was a lawsuit filed to make sure that a creator was NOT given credit for the character. The character was The Bottler: the unofficial Killer of Comics. The creators involved were Indy Comic legend Michael Handrower and long-time artist Ray Aldren.

In the late 1940s, Army photographer Julius Lanewisc returned to his family home in the Hollywood hills. Lanewisc had been in charge of a magazine for the boys throughout the Pacific Theatre called On The Islands. He had learned his trade well and by the end of the war could put out an issue in less than three days, complete with four pages of comic strips that he would write and draw himself. Lanewisc returned after his stint with hopes for building a publishing empire.

"I had done comic strips for years, so I thought that doing comic books would be the same thing," Lanewisc said in a 1979 Oral History for the Smithsonian "I got my mother to dip into the trust fund and spring for a small printing press so that I could try my hand at comic books."

In the beginning, Lanewisc wrote, drew, and printed three titles under the name JL Lane; Superior Ghost Stories, Ladies Comics, and Hero Tales. The production timetable was based on his ability to complete the comics and find time to print them. There were 29 total issues of the three comics in 1947, 18 in 1948, and just 6 in 1949. It was late in 1949 that Lanewisc decided to parcel out the work for producing the comics to a small team of artists. With help from his neighbor, fandom legend Forrest J. Ackermann, Lanewisc gathered a troupe of future legends.

Lanewisc's first hire was a grizzled, though supposedly thirty-one year old, artist named Ray Aldren. Aldren, crippled since a bout with polio, had been drawing editorial cartoons for almost ten years. His work had many admirers, especially the series of playing cards that featured a cartoon Hitler in various naughty situations. Aldren suggested that Lanewisc bring in two other artists from his paper, Stan Kreeper, creator of Dr. Cat, and colorist Morgan Alexander, the future art director of such 1970s pot-boilers as Princess Petticoat and Smoke on Glass.



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The final hire was a fifteen year old artist named Michael Handrower. Handrower had been reading comic books since birth, often imitating the style of the artists he saw in the paper. Handrower had been sending samples of his work to Aldren for the better part of four years at the time Aldren got his gig with Lanewisc.

"Handrower really idolized Ray." said Comic Historian and Curator of the Aldren Comic Art Archive James "Wizard" Reel. "He had a dozen notebooks filled with perfect imitations of Aldren's work. He would sit and watch him draw in the office, which annoyed Ray no end."

The team went about creating the comics with Lanewisc editing and supervising the printing of each issue. To maintain the sense of continuity from the earlier, locally successful comics, each issue was noted as "Written and Drawn by J.L. Lane." The artists and writers were urged to maintain a single voice and style throughout each comic.

"It wasn't hard for Handrower to keep in line with my art, since he had been doing it for years." Aldren said in a 1982 deposition.

Lanewisc charged Aldren and Handrower with Hero Tales. The two collaborated on issues, often splitting the total duties of an issue in half, with one doing the first 16 pages and the other the last 16.

"Their work was seamless." Noted Lanewisc in his Oral History.

All went well for all three titles until the summer of 1954. While never breaking much beyond the bounds of the LA basin, Lanewisc had made a deal to get his comics into a few small bookstores in the San Francisco Bay Area. Lanewisc called a meeting of the staff, which by this time included future feminist comic artist Janet "Con" Condolense and Earl Whitten, who would go on to become a California Congressman.

"Jules asked us all to come up with a big issue for the Northern California expansion." Explained Handrower in the July 1987 issue of Comic Shoppe Memories "Con had decided to take Ladies Stories all to herself, Earl and Stan were doing a story each in Superior, and me and Ray were supposed to come up with a big new villain to take on Lord Bannor: The King of the Future."

Here, stories begin to diverge. Handrower says that he took a week-long vacation to San Diego and when he came back, Aldren had the issue completely written and drawn. Aldren's claim is that Handrower went to San Diego with his full art kit and came back early, dropping the pile of art on his desk with a note that read "Ray; would you mind inking this fast?"

"Aldren still has the note," says 'Wizard' "but it wasn't dated, nor even signed. Still, it's the only physical piece of evidence in the whole case."

There are many stories about what happened next as well. Lanewisc claimed that he was ill a few days and behind schedule. So he wouldn't miss his promised dates, Lanewisc claimed that he did not read the issues that were given to him and just went about the business of getting them ready to be printed. Alexander claims that he was given the pages one at a time and out of order, so he never realized what was going on. Lanewisc printed nearly twice as many as he had previously printed, spending a much larger chunk than he ever had before.

"It was his Hail Mary pass. All or nothin'" noted Handrower.

The issue had a picture of Lord Bannor, struggling against a glass wall, crying 'Curse you, Bottler!' as a hooded figure dressed in green laughed proudly with his back to the viewer in the corner. The subtitle: Who is The Bottler?

"It was obvious from the cover that Mike had not done well on his trip to San Diego." Aldren said in the March 1980 issue of Comic Shoppe Memories. "The issue was full of bad gags and stupid dialogue. I tried to get Lanewisc to pull the issue, but by the time he saw it, it was already on the road to Frisco."

Handrower disputes all of Aldren's claims.



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"Ray was all over the issue. He usually tried to put in the silly puns and wordplay, but Jules or I would edit it out. This whole issue was him through and through."

At the time, no one was pointing fingers. The first two titles available in Northern California sold well by Lane Publishing standards, topping 85% of all printed copies sold in the first two weeks. They had increased overall sales nearly 40%. Ladies Stories was well received by almost every reader, with dozens of letters flooding into the Lane Publishing office showering praise on the issue and on Con. Superior had a similar reaction, with the short Ghost Town Time Warp getting widespread praise for its blending of western themes with horror and science fiction. Hero Tales had no such luck.

"We used to get twenty to thirty letters an issue, almost all of them praising some element of the story or saying that so-and-so was their favorite character and deserved more time." Said Lanewisc "but for the Bottler issue, we got nothin"

The following issue followed the same numbers as the previous, only while Ladies Stories and Superior sold quickly, Hero Tales sales dropped to less than twelve percent of their pre-expansion sales. Quickly, the team tried to regroup, but there was no raising sales and series was officially ended in September of 1955. Lane Publishing continued putting out Superior Ghost Stories until March of 1957, when Earl Whitten left to work the campaign to elect Edmond G. "Pat" Brown, and Ladies Stories until Con left in June of that same year. Lane Publishing then turned to printing cheap paperback books and later to low-grade pornographic material for the Mexican market.

The Bottler did not rest in peace, as both Aldren and Handrower used the character in other projects. Aldren brought The Bottler back in 1964 for his very short lived series Comic Justice. The Bottler issue signaled the end of the series as sales began shrinking at that very point. Many felt that a man who could encase something in glass was not a suitable competition for a man who could punch through a brick wall. In Handrower's final stab at a mainstream title before giving in to his independent leanings, Michael used The Bottler as a member of The Undefeated, a one-shot intended as a test for a potential series. It was never picked up and Handrower circulated it underground himself in later years as a symbol of the depths to which the comic industry had sunk.

Nothing else was heard of the Bottler until late 1977. For a cover of Comic Shoppe Memories, artist Stan Broward drew The Bottler surrounding an edition of "Superman vs. Muhammad Ali" touting the inside article by "Wizard" Reel on the worst comic book ideas of all-time. The oft-laughed-at DC title took number one, but a close second belonged to The Bottler.

'Few villains are as stupid as The Bottler. His power over any shard of glass within twenty feet is good, if he had been able to use it to actually cut things. He could build a wall of glass, but it was fragile like bone china. Useless. Aldren may be a Hall of Famer, but this was his worst moment.'

Following the publication of the article, and once Aldren was made aware, he sent in the first rebuttal letter, claiming that then underground favorite Handrower had actually done the work. Reel, confused by the contradicting claims, contacted Handrower and got a few quotes. This set off a war that took place in the pages of many fan magazines and at comics conventions. Over the following three years, each man gave at least twenty interviews, letters or discussions on The Bottler, all of them blaming the other. The battle escalated until 1982, when Handrower, afraid that his reputation as a hip, counterculture artist was being harmed, filed a defamation of character suit against Aldren.

"It was plain, old-fashioned ugly between the two of them." Noted fan editor and publisher James "Wildcat" Reese, "Comic Shoppe Memories was forced to stop running their counteractions, so they came to me to get claims into Seriously Comic Details and to Donald and Co. over at Once Upon A Dime."



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After a round of depositions, a series of health problems for Ray Aldren caused the case to be delayed. It was never restarted and Aldren passed away in 1989, officially listed as 71, though most are sure he was at least in his Ninties. Handrower, now in his sixties, lives in San Diego and has continued to draw his famously dark slice of life comics. Before his death, Aldren had been working with the Smithsonian on the Comic Book Oral History Project, which had done interviews with all the important players of the Lane Publishing world. All of these were done before the controversy over *The Bottler*, so none of them addressed the issue directly. Julius Lanewisc passed away in 1975, with the only mention of *The Bottler* in his memoir reading: 'The Bottler killed us. Plain and simple.'

Of the thirteen hundred or so issues of *The Bottler's* first appearance known to have been printed, only fifteen have surfaced. None have commanded a price higher than three dollars, despite the scarcity. There is one in the Aldren Comic Art Archive. It is signed: To Eddy, thanks for reading, Mike Handrower and Ray Aldren. Eddy had apparently not read the comic prior, and sent it back with a note attached. *No, Thanks, I don't want it anymore.*

Something A Little Less Light-hearted

Sadly, my Pops called me today and announced that the cancer he had defeated a year or so ago had regrouped elsewhere. The docs say that this one isn't really as bad as his last, but still, it's more than annoying and a bit scary.

What does this mean to you, my loyal readers? Well, most likely I'll be taking a issue or two off when the chemo gets bad for Pops. That's pretty much a given. Otherwise, I'll keep up the steady stream of work. It also means that I'll be redoubling my effort to get Pops a few of the fanzines he loved back in the day, so if anyone has issues of *Granfalloon*, *Schred* or *Xero* lying around, I'll pretty much pay ya what you want for 'em.

Anyone having any advice on doing a One Hour Fanzine? I'm teamed up with Katheryn Daugherty to do just that at BayCon, and while I have done a few issues of *The Drink Tank* in an hour, I was hoping to make something a little more substantial. Any advice would be much appreciated.

Also, if you're planning on going to BayCon, let me know, especially if you receive *Claims Department*, as it will save me the postage to just give it to you. I'm planning on debuting *LISP* there and having at least 50 issues of *Claims Department* for folks. Plus, a special *Drink Tank* that you'll like. Trust me.

M Lloyd Prestents: A Very Short Story My Favorite Club

We've all seen them dancing in the sweat and heat that makes me fell like we're back in Grandpa's greenhouse. I'm sure you have too. This girl, Raven or Syden or Hypna or whatever, she's every girl we know. She's hip-swinging and beautiful, deep ingrained. We've seen her dancing outside of the club, in the rain, in her stocking feet on a kitchen floor. We know her, and so do you. She is that girl, THE GIRL, the one we wish we knew better, knew best. Her mouth alone brings us to new places.

And of course, when we can't own her, we create her, short skirt and fish-netted, the pixels showing a bit too block-like for the tastes of some.





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COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

SENT TO GARCIA@COMPUTERHISTORY.ORG

BY MY GENTLE READERS



Eric Mayer- Blog: <http://www.journalscape.com/ericmayer>

Hi,

Those circus trees in Drink Tank 19 are amazing. The closest things I've seen -- and very common -- were the apple trees in my grandparents' backyard. Each tree boasted three or four apple varieties. My grandparents had moved from a farm and hated to leave the orchards behind so my grandfather grafted as many kinds of apples as he could onto the trees they could maintain in the more limited space just outside town. As a kid I found those trees incredible.

Wow, a Apple sampler tree. That's neat! Sadly, while I love trees, I don't know much about them and the fact that you can graft apples of various kinds on to one tree amazes me.

Although it doesn't boast any unusual trees, when I went to Knoebels amusement park once I was impressed by how well they maintained the feeling of the countryside by leaving so many large trees in place.

I've heard that's one of the prettier amusement parks around. There's a large community of Park enthusiasts and I've seen more than one note on that one.

Just browsing their website, <http://www.knoebels.com/>, I couldn't find very good examples but I recall that the waterslides, in particular, seemed to be out in the woods, twisting their way through fully grown pines. At the furthest end of the miniature train ride was a squirrel feeding station. You can't beat that.

It certainly looks heavily wooded from the shots on the web.

That SBS game can eat up time, simple as it is. A lot of the team files come with very interesting essays on the seasons involved. I liked the one low minor league season from the 50s that is there because former NY governor Mario Cuomo played for one of the teams. Japanese baseball is interesting but I haven't seen a website that covers it well in English.

I have to admit I am an Ichiro fan. He showed up all the naysayers. Good for him! Hideki Matsui has been terrific for the Yanks but the few other Japanese position players haven't shown much thus far.

You know, as much as I like Japanese Baseball, I've never had Ichiromania. Kaz Suzuki and Hideo Nomo, yeah, I'm big on them, but not Ichiro. Maybe it's my fondness for good pitching (though Nomo had a few awful years) I also love it when a player goes from the US to Japan, like Carl Bass (I think that was his name) or Bob Horner. Saduharu Oh actually told his pitchers to walk Horner in every at-bat so that his single season home run record would still stand!

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Eric

The Drink Tank Issue Twomp was written by Christopher J. Garcia and M Lloyd, designed by Christopher J. Garcia and posted to eFanzines.com by Mr. Fanzines himself Bill Burns. Any of Chris' works are free to reuse with or without permission. The art featured in this ish was by Jason Schachat (Page 1) and Dawn Caramen on Page 2 and SaAaB for page 5. You best ask them if you'd like to use any of their work in the future. The Drink Tank will return next week with more news and fun. LoCs can go to garcia@computerhistory.org or 1401 N. Shoreline Blvd. Mountain View, CA 94043. Claims Department two has just hit the streets! When life gives you lemon, just squirt a little juice back in life's eyes.