

40 Years in the Desert

Volume 1
Number 2

The Further Adventures of Matthew Saroff, Itinerant Engineer

As always, any recording or rebroadcast of *40 Years in the Desert* without the express written consent of the *Washington Redskins* and the National Football League is strictly prohibited. I had to give the 'Skins this one, look at the year that they are having (sniff). As one of their fans, this has been a depressing season. Actually, don't reproduce this without **my** permission, but I figured I'd start off with a bit of the surreal.

I have started a new job. I am on contract with Rockwell (Collins Division) designing the installation of MilStar data terminals on Humm-Vees for the US Army. This is in Richardson, Texas, just north of Dallas.

Dallas is just a little bit strange. The Dallas-Fort Worth area is referred to as "The Metroplex". Having read Howard Chaykin's graphic novel *American Flag*, I find the application of the term Plex to a metropolitan area to be rather disquieting.

I will be hitting Dallas's major tourist attraction, Dealy Plaza. The 6th floor window is open to the public, so I'll take a look out and eyeball how hard the shot is for an ex-marine with a 'scope. Personally, this is one serious advocate of the lone gunman theory.

I am working on a pre-SPARC Sun work station. I wouldn't say that a Sun 3/110 is particularly slow, but I am considering bringing my beard trimmer into work. I figure that I could groom the beard between redraws. I might even be able to schedule a teeth cleaning between redraws.

Of course, I am availing myself of the only benefit commonly available to contractors: **cheap coffee**. It's 10¢ a cup or \$1.00 for coffee for the whole week. I go for the dollar deal, and I'm generally ahead by mid-Tuesday morning.

I don't really have a contact number in Dallas at this point, and by mid-January, it's about 80% likely that I will be in Erie, Pennsylvania. I will be doing work for General Electric Locomotives. I should be there for about six months. If you need to contact me, continue to use the return address on this issue or call (409)885-3988. I remote access my answering machine daily.

It is kind of strange that, just after graduation, I would laughingly tell my friends that I went to all this trouble to be an engineer, and now they would not allow me to work on a choo-choo train.

Now it looks like I'm going to be working on a choo-choo train.

Now that I am commuting on a about 5 hours one way on an almost weekly basis, I have come to appreciate books on tape. I've actually "read" more books recently than I normally do. If this keeps up, I may actually have a clue about things literary. If anyone out there has a good source for trash Sci-Fi and fantasy tape, please tell me.

I am **definitely not** interested in the works of Mary Monica Pulver, arguably the worst writer in the English language. If you doubt

me, borrow or steal (don't buy, it might encourage her to write more) *Murder at the War*. It is the worst prose, and the worst mystery that I have ever read. I'd rather have **Ross Perot** as a wet nurse than have to read that piece of trash again.

I have a family now. I have acquired 2 cats *Lavi* (Hebrew for young lion) and *Tudza* (Chinese for rabbit). They are 6 months old, and probably* brother and sister. *Lavi* is a female, all black except for a star on her chest, and *Tudza* is a male, black and white (He looks like he is wearing a Tuxedo with spats).

I named the female *Lavi* because she seemed very brave, and I named the male *Tudza* because he seemed so timid and he wiggled his nose and he hopped a lot. Now it looks as if he'll probably top 15 pounds, and he is absolutely fearless. Just what I need, a monster cat with an attitude.

I state categorically, and for the record, that I have the cutest cats in the cosmos. They are also pretty good (To the degree that any cat can be called good) cats.

I have had some minor differences of opinion with the cats, and generally I have come out the loser. When they made a break for the outside, I ended up on the ground nursing a mildly sprained ankle. It's embarrassing being wrestled to the ground by something that you outweigh by a factor of 20.

I have decided to exploit cats major weakness in order to reassert my authority: Cats are notoriously bad with tools (*Lavi* and *Tudza* can barely operate my PC, they keep trying to eat the mouse), so like my pliocene ancestors used tools to govern the untamed world, I will use tools to govern (well, maybe achieve a reasonable level of parity with) my cats. I have acquired a high-tech long range feline attitude adjustment system.†

I am planning to go to *Arisia* this year, so expect me to be up there around January 21. I plan to enjoy myself as much as possible as it is likely that this will be the last year where *Arisia* will be an entity independent of *NESFA*. After all it's already gotten to the point where the meetings go on in the *NESFA* club house, and looks like *Arisia* will be paying rent‡ for the privilege.

I am a little bit disappointed, but I don't intend to spend my time at *Arisia* complaining to everyone around me. I've mellowed out some. I will throw a party instead: an Irish wake for *Arisia*. There are some difficulties involved, particularly as I am about as Irish as Margaret Thatcher[§], but I believe if I really put my heart[¶] into it, there will be one hellacious wake for *Arisia* this January.

And so it goes.

By the way if any of you know where I can rent a coffin cheaply for the wake, please call me and let me know.[¶] I have objections

Never do anything to a lover that you wouldn't do to an Expensive waterproof wristwatch

—P.J. O'Rourke

to grave robbing, so don't try to loan me a "hot" coffin.

You may notice a new feature for *40 Years in the Desert*, a one frame cartoon. I commissioned a cartoon from my brother Daniel. I also use it to update job shops in a post card.

It took him two tries to get the cartoon right. The first try was just a little bit over the top. I was looking for Charles **Addams**, I got Charles **Manson**.

Dan intends to send the first effort to some of his friends at a later date. Close personal friends of Daniel Saroff, **be afraid**. **Be very, very afraid**.

As always, if you have any suggestions on how to improve this "publication", please drop me a line.

That's about it for now, but stay tuned for the further adventures of *Matthew Saroff, Itinerant Engineer*.

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The Hills are Alive © Daniel M. Saroff, 1993

*It's an interesting story how I found them. When I was in Ohio, I was going on a drive, and after a few miles, I decided to empty the washer fluid into the reservoir under the hood. When I opened the hood, I saw a tiny black ball of fluff (Lavi). I took her inside and fed her, and the next day when I left for work, she was crying through the door to Tudza. Having two 5 week old cats, I tried find to their mothers owner. She was feral, so this Damn Yankee in Texas now has two Damn Yankee cats.

†Come on folks, it's only a super soaker! I promise not to go nuclear before North Korea. After all, I'm not even halfway toward having enough weapons grade Plutonium. There is no need for donations of fissionable materials I picked up plenty at that truck "accident" in Springfield last year, but I am looking for a good used vacuum centrifuge.

‡My apologies, a "voluntary donation". War is peace, freedom is slavery, ketchup is a vegetable.

§But I probably look almost as good in a an evening dress.

∅And liver.

ϕI said that I had mellowed, not that I had become normal.

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Address Correction Requested