

## CAPTAIN'S LOG #36 BEHIND THE SCENES NOTES

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The titles of "publisher" and "editor" mean different things inside different companies. For ADB, Inc., the two (Steve Cole, Publisher and Steve Petrick, Editor) are a team, and both do a lot of things that would in some companies be considered the job of the other. Each does some things for some types of articles and other things for other types of articles.

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Much of what goes into any given issue is "filling out a format" of standard articles and features. Some of it involves selecting from available items to fill a given category. Some of it is written to order by various people. Some items are "special" features and may be written by either Steve or by any of a number of outside people.

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Neither Steve has absolute control over the issue; each looks over the work of the other, and both review the work of outsiders. Either Steve could talk the other out of publishing anything, or into publishing almost anything. Each comes up with some "surprise" material (of his own work or submissions from others) each issue, and sometimes both have items that could fit a given category and they toss a coin to see which is used this issue. Neither really has a veto but either can point out the ultimate veto: something that doesn't fit published history or background.

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The departments of *Captain's Log* are as follows:

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History: Mostly selected (and often written) by Steve Cole. Steve Petrick checks for universe continuity.

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Communications: Managed by Steve Cole. Steve Petrick checks things and Leanna spends most of the time she spends on a given issue in this department. (Ask Admiral Growler, done by Mike Filsinger and supervised by Steve Petrick, will move to *SFB* Database next issue.)

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Federation Commander: Managed by Steve Cole; checked by Steve Petrick.

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*SFB* Scenarios, *SFB* Database, *SFB* Tactics: Managed entirely by Steve Petrick. Most of Steve Cole's role here is maintaining the ship name list and doing "style book" things.

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Star Fleet Venues: Managed by Steve Cole; mostly done by the department heads.

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*Federation & Empire*: Managed by Steve Cole. The *F&E* staff is heavily involved (more so than the *SFB* staff in *SFB* sections) and Chuck Strong manages scenarios. Steve Petrick reviews the material before publication.

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Shipyards: Managed by Steve Petrick, lightly looked over by Steve Cole, seriously proofread by a team of expert SSD checkers. Selection of ships is mostly by Steve Petrick with some input by Steve Cole.

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*Federation Commander* Ship Cards: Done by Steve Cole after he and Mike West select the ships. Strictly supervised by Steve Petrick and the team that checks *SFB* SSDs, they are also checked by the *Federation Commander* staff.

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This was, in many ways, the issue that Jean Sexton built, as she not only proofread, but encouraged, organized, prioritized, and standardized the work flow process.

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Publisher's Notes for *Captain's Log* #36 -- by Stephen V. Cole

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The issue was delayed by my mother's death and by the building project. While we were two months late, the issue was not done in a rush. Some decisions were made to leave out (actually, to not bother writing) some non-critical pages such as WHY and PROPOSALS BOARD, but that sort of decision is part of every issue. We always have more material we could have included if page count were not an obstacle, but page count is calculated in dollars of printing costs and hours of designer time, and while we always pack a lot of stuff into a *Captain's Log*, there are practical limits. All that said, I think this is one of our better issues.

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We were unable to keep up the Vanessa Concept of doing so many pages per week due to my family crisis. Jean Sexton swears that she's going to force us to do it next time.

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The story was done last spring by Randy Green. We loved it from the start because of its depth and detail, but getting the tactics and technology down right took more work than any story we have ever published before.

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The "snapshot" articles came from a variety of sources. Anti-Piracy came from an attempt on the BBS to "make piracy impossible" by players who had no idea how many dollars their program would cost. Two snapshots (Further Duties of Importance, and An Understanding) were needed sequels to previous stories. Omega's Lost Futures resulted from an Email by Bruce Graw (sent when he was asked about some lost-but-alluded-to files). The memo was so good we turned it into a fascinating article. The Z-K article had to be done after this fighter was mentioned in *CL*#35.

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Nick Blank does deck plans when he feels the muse to create them, and we're fortunate to have received some this time.

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Communications Center is written over a period of months as various bits of information come to our attention and need to be passed on to you guys and made part of the official record. After Action is generated by player reports. Command the Future and most of Starline 2400 is written by SVC at the last moment based on the company's plans for future products.

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Input Guide deserves special note. Vanessa once tried to get me to create a "what to capitalize and what not to" list and the task took longer than she was with us. When Jean Sexton was hired as a proofreader, she asked for such a list and encouraged me to finish, then coaxed me into writing "the ten rules" you see here. She has been working on "standardizing" our use of terms. Her next project will involve teaching gamers to avoid cryptic codes in formal articles and use plain English.

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Mike Filsinger provides the raw data for Growler, an exhausting and thankless job. Ten Questions just sort of turn up. Worst Career Choices came in as a humor submission. To Kill a Mocking Drone resulted from some fun-loving banter in a staff meeting when someone asked why we don't just give yes/no answers to rules questions. Nobody can stop me from doing Filksongs.

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The *Federation Commander* section continues to evolve. We had plenty of good tactics articles but space for one. I selected three good scenarios and could have used more but need them for *Briefing* #1, which will have 24. We did not get as many Command Notes as we wanted and Petrick decided to publish only the three he found to be truly outstanding, rather than add a few more than were merely passable. Steve Petrick did an excellent job on the new tournament system, supported by his staff of judges. This is one of those articles that Steve Petrick inserted into a department normally managed by Steve Cole. The new ships came about as a result of a study of just what we wanted to do with new ships in *Captain's Log*. We wanted to use

it to expand the number of ships available, rather than just previewing new ships that were to be published as laminated cards in the next few months. War cruiser leaders were selected as useful ships that would not absolutely require new counters (which of course we could not include in *Captain's Log*). I did several of these, and ended up dropping two for lack of space: the Romulan SparrowHawk-L (which is just a flag box added to a SparrowHawk) and the Hydran Baron (which the staff didn't like as they wanted me to use the Apache instead). Next issue I want to include a Q&A section (compiling answers we give in *Communiqué* into the official published record) and perhaps a set of proposals. We did not include *Borders of Madness* in this issue for lack of time to adequately test one of the many ideas.

The scenario section is Steve Petrick's province, and I have little involvement other than reading through scenarios and discussing with him the number of pages available and what balance of empires we want. I am, however, unusually happy with the mix of scenarios he produced for this issue.

Database is, again, Petrick's territory. He does the Monster article and the campaign update. I did the Anarchist article since if I let Steve do it, the same information would take three pages, and it's not worth a lot of space. This section should in theory include an Example article, but we did not have one. Those are done months in advance, as they are too complex to do in the last month. Basically, if Steve Petrick hasn't found a worthy idea and written it up and had it peer-reviewed at least a month before the final week, we just don't do one. If you want an Example article in *CL#37*, then I suggest you Email him what you would like it to be about. (Note: we will be moving Growler to Database next issue since that is where it belongs.)

Tactics is a favorite for players, but we have had a struggle to get enough since John Michael Campbell ran everybody out of the Term Papers topic by flooding it with drivel. I hope players will come back and start submitting more papers. Normally, the winter issue is for the Origins winner, but Tom Carroll did not send his article (he has won more than anyone but hasn't written all of the articles) and we were happy to print Bill Schoeller's excellent article on his Saturday Patrol victory. My first reaction to the Fog of War articles last time and this time was "What boring filler is this?" but once I read it, I became fascinated and asked them if they could hurry up Game Six or maybe find the records for Game Three. We can always use more Tactical Primers.

Venues is a catch-all for a lot of little stuff. *Starfleet Command* is still alive despite predictions of its demise. We even have a bigger article on hand for *CL#37*. Somebody asked us to do battleship cards for *SFBF* and we did them (and will do two more in *CL#37* and probably two more in *CL#38*). *Prime Directive* should have had a real article but I didn't get one from the RPG guys ahead of time and when I realized I had never asked for one, it was too late. The articles on *Warlord*, *PBEM*, *Galactic Conquest*, and *SFBOL* are done by the department heads, and I am blessed by their abilities. We should have had something about *cafePress.com* in Venues and we didn't. I just didn't think about it, but I am making a note for next time.

*Federation & Empire* got a big section this issue, which should make those players happy. The scenario was an interesting one because for an "interesting" scenario it is actually "small" (just a few turns and only two empires). We almost did not have a scenario due to Chuck Strong's family crisis, but he was able to find time to develop Roger Morgan's draft into a highly interesting and workable one. When Chuck and Steve Petrick started arguing past each other over the reinforcement schedule, I stepped in and fixed the problem, since neither of them had seen where it really was. These are some of Nick Blank's last FEAR questions & answers, although I have a couple of pages left for next issue. The update to rule 530 came about by accident as I

had to go dig up both versions and combine them in order to answer a question. I decided it would show good faith to the *Warbook* project if we could do two pages per issue. In another 25 years, we'll have done the whole thing, two or three pages at a time!

The ships selected were an interesting combination. A player requested the D6L. I wanted the C10V because I want to include DNH-Vs in *SFB Module R12* and in *F&E Tactical Operations*, but Steve Petrick added heavy fighters and made the playtesters and SSD checkers go crazy. The four Romulan ships (and the Gorn) came out of last Origins when the *F&E* guys locked Petrick in the bathroom and would not let him out until he agreed to print them. The Kzinti DDS was my idea as a *Module R12* ship, a precursor to the later PFT and a continuation of the story line that the Kzintis actually thought scout-frigates were going to be good enough for the General War. The three X-ships were "rejects" from the *Module X1R* project, although Steve Petrick eventually decided that the JagdPanther-X was a real ship that will be published in *Module X1R*. This warmed my heart because, as some of you know, my first wargame publishing company was JagdPanther Publications. The two new CWLs came out of the *FC* project and the need for at least some hybrid *SFB-FC* ships. I do seriously want to think in terms of doing the *SFB* SSDs with vector graphics (not a hybrid with *FC*, but all-*SFB* using some of those graphic components) next time.

There is a category of "player-generated" pages including Term Papers, Tactical Notes, Victory at, Fog of War, Primers, and other things. We have done these a certain (inefficient) way in the past, and will be doing them differently in the future.

Steve Petrick works such files over (some of them are sent to peer-review panels for grading and fact-checking) and (a week before publication) sends them to me (Steve Cole). I then put the files into PageMaker, do some rewriting and editing (which I never have time to do the way it should be done, and once accidentally changed a perfectly good term paper to one that violated a rule), and only then send such pages to proofreading. Proofreading used to mean Petrick and (rarely) an odd staffer or Leanna, but this time it included Jean Sexton, who is a professional librarian and fanatical proofreader. This never worked well in the past and self-destructed this time. Any significant change of "style book" items (what to capitalize, what to spell out, what "jargon" is acceptable and what terms have to be converted into English) changes the length of lines and paragraphs and columns forcing me to do the page layout all over again to make what once fit the column to fit it again.

The new procedure is somewhat different. As such items arrive, Steve Petrick does his work on them and then hands me a hard copy which I take home, read, and mark editorial changes on. Steve Petrick then makes those changes, runs them by me again to make sure he understood my changes, and sends them to Jean, who makes more changes (style book and readability items, not changing the point the player is making) and sends them back to Steve Petrick. All of this is done in small increments over time (the first *CL#37* term papers have just been handed back to Steve Petrick with my blue marks) instead of in one huge chunk a few days before publication. At this point, items that need to be graded or peer-reviewed will be sent out for that. (Grading pools are sent out about six weeks before the issue and peer-review articles are sent out as they reach this point). Eventually, the approved items are handed back to me (Steve Cole) to put into PageMaker, by which point 95% of the editing changes have already been made. This makes last-week proofreading easier and avoids having to repaginate because changing "dirdam" to "directed damage" eleven times made a term paper three lines longer.

**Editor's Notes, Captain's Log #36 -- Steven P. Petrick**

I have been doing the "old" SSDs for a while now, and know that the program is considered obsolete, but currently I can work with the program. So if I can get SVC to generate a ship list, I do the SSDs whenever I have an odd moment. I try not to wait for the last minute to do them. Sometimes I have an idea for an SSD, and do it on my own, and sometimes SVC decides that the idea is worthy and allows them to be published. In this issue, one of those came back to haunt me. I originally created the D6C as a logical ship (since there were D6s before D7s and there were D4Cs, it seemed that there should be a D6C). Since there were no D6Cs in the General War, I did not do a D6L. Someone, however, wanted a D6L, and SVC directed that an SSD for that ship be done. About half the SSDs this time around were done well in advance (I worked up a partial list after conferring with SVC), the rest were done closer to publication as it was determined what SSDs would make a good product.

Term papers, Tactical Notes, and Command Notes I download as they are posted. I add them to the grading pool as they come in so that I am not scrambling to get them assembled into a grade sheet at the last moment. When publication date is selected, I pick a date to close out submissions for the pool, and then send the assembled papers out for grading. When they come back, I review the grades, and sometimes send papers back out to particular graders noting that there is an error in the analysis supporting grade. Sometimes the paper is revised to make the point that confused the grader clearer. An example in a recent Command Note called for using directed targeting with large plasma torpedoes. The grader noted that plasma torpedoes could not use directed targeting. I checked the rules, revised the paper to specifically note that the writer was referring to plasma bolts, which are direct-fire weapons and thus able to use directed targeting, and asked for a re-grade.

Scenario submissions come in, get formatted and sent to playtesters. Some scenario submissions fall by the wayside without any effort being done. An example was a huge scenario involving masses of drones. A few exchanges with the author revealed he had done nothing to test the basic premise and his proposed tactics were worse than unworkable in any case. After a couple of exchanges of Email on the scenario it was dropped as completely unfixable without far more time than I have available. One of the problems that comes up with playtesting is trying to find, and get past, the blindspots of groups. A scenario that was playtested by one group was reported as unplayable because the attacking force was able to destroy the defender's ground bases from outside of the effective range of those defenses. The group was completely unaware that small ground bases could not be targeted at any range greater than five hexes, and unaware of atmosphere effects on weapons. Another group found a different scenario unbalanced because the defenders lacked sufficient firepower, but had not even considered using the phaser-3 pods to increase the one-turn firepower of the defender's fighters, which in the close range fight of that scenario would shift the odds. Playtest reports are often affected by little things a given group does or does not do, including their own local rules, and finding out what those are is always a problem.

I started the Monster Articles on my own, and have simply continued them. Since I know they are going to be in the product, I just starting writing it when I have a quiet moment, and will generally revisit the article several times between when I first start writing it and when it is published. I am not as creative as SVC, and it takes a while to solve conundrums (mostly coming up with some background explanation of why the monster is not hunted down and killed by the various races). In some ways, the articles are something of a disappointment as I really hoped that some new scenarios might be written about the various monsters. I add scenario ideas at the end of each article, but there has not been one scenario submitted as a result.

I am something of a nightmare for the fiction stories. I like for them to make sense to me and dislike overly contrived things (like the son of an ambassador having attained command of a ship, and then being given command of a squadron of ships, and it just happens that all the other ships are commanded by his personal friends from other races that he met as an ambassador's son, so all of them get along). I also like for things not to depend on the characters "knowing what the author knows". An example of this being a story in which a captain had perfect knowledge that the opposing Kzinti ships do not have any type-IV drones so that all of the maneuvers and allocations of defensive phaser fire are based on every drone the Kzintis launch being type-Is. Even if the scenario to accompany the story will say that the Kzintis only have type-I drones, the characters cannot know that, and must act as if any drone the enemy launches might be a type-IV and take that into consideration in their actions. I also dislike stories that rely on the enemy simply being an idiot, but I recognize that it is very hard to create a reasonable "mistake" that an opponent might make.

The *Federation and Empire* scenario had, to me, a lot of background and force balance issues that needed to be resolved, and I did not see it until very late in the process. The result was a sea of green ink all over it that took SVC and Chuck Strong a little time to fix. In have asked that they give me the scenario a month or two in advance in future.

**Proofreader's Notes, Captain's Log #36 -- Jean Sexton**

When I was reading the older issues of *Captain's Log*, I found myself wincing at some of the typos and misplaced phrases ("I fired at the SB with the phasers" could mean that you fired *SOMETHING* at the starbase that was armed with phasers as opposed to the starbase armed with disruptors). I wanted to see the presentation of a *Captain's Log* reflect the care and work that went into it. I also admit that I knew how frustrated I was with the jargon in the articles. It looked like English and it quacked like English, but it was really SFB-ese and F&E-speak pretending to be English! So it was time for the company to take the next step and to move to the next level of professionalization. The content needed to match the covers and the print capabilities. That is my primary goal -- to make this magazine be all it can be. My secondary goal is to make sure that the people who play the various games present the best aspect of their games and expand their player-base.

It was tough coaxing Steve Cole into doing the capitalization list, but it was for his own good. He broke down in tears when he saw my first proofreading report, which had about ten times as many fixes as a typical report from a volunteer gamer-proofreader. Steve Cole is a creative guy and he wants to create, not make proofreading changes in stuff he created yesterday. He cries a lot when he gets lists of changes to make to pages he already listed on the BBS as finished pages. But he knows he needs to.

Steve Petrick is, in some ways, worse. He has to struggle to write, but he picks his words carefully, and when told to make fixes to pages he struggled with for entire days, he tends to curl up into a little ball and moan a lot.

However, both of them are writing in a more consistent fashion after only a few weeks of training. I hope (in their deepest thoughts) that they actually like having a set of rules to write by. I know that I enjoy reading their writing even as I write back, "Change Ambassador to ambassador (lower a) and remember to italicize *Captain's Log* (three times)," knowing that the story will look better to the reader.