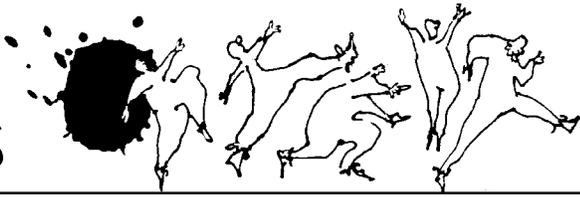


# Deanotations



Issue 93

December 1999

Dear Reader,

My book is *Please, Lord, Make Me a Famous Poet or at Least Less Fat*, but I'm losing weight. Does that jinx my chances for fame? But I shouldn't compare fame to fat: Whoever had just 15 minutes of being fat? Well... there've been diets after which, I could swear, my triumphant time of being LESS fat lasted no more than 15 minutes (probably 15 days, but my memory likes to pick on me). Reader, you can help me be both famous AND less fat: Buy my book (from me — \$22.45, or from Amazon or Barnes & Noble online or from a bookstore) and pay me with cash, check or credit card #, not with cherry pies or bacon potato casseroles.

Some readers had trouble with last issue's "Hai Caramba." To clarify "haicouvade," look up "couvade." As for "Haicooze," well Haicuuuuse me.

In 1985 I sent *Deanotations* readers an issue consisting entirely of phone-answering messages. A new batch fills up the middle pages of this issue. In 1985 these machines were toys people played with, producing mini musical comedies. Now they're passé; most messages are perfunctory (good word — I've heard a toilet plunger make that sound), as if to say, "OK, you know the score. Leave your number at the beep." Once they've cruised the web (real pictures!), how can you get 'em back on the phone?

Besides, it's hard to find a message, however funny, that stays funny for people who have to call you several times. On TV that's solved with canned laughter — the same old gags never fail. Canned laughter (phony fun) could have saved the funny phone message. It might help my poems too. Wouldn't it be nice if you could read one of my zingers, then hear a studio audience cracking up? I could embed microchips in the paper to provide the laughs: Tickle-me poems. [Hesitant nervous giggle.]

Laughter, like coughing, is a herd instinct: One laughs, others laugh. The serious dramas don't provide canned gasps or sobs or "Oh, I hope he doesn't die in the end!" Most people are sad, their humor a social thing, their tragedies kept to themselves. Watch people laughing at each other's jokes, then subsiding into private thoughts, all smiles vanishing as if behind a black curtain. Drama used to be a social function in a theater. First radio, then TV created private drama. We don't mind crying alone, but we are uncomfortable laughing alone, so canned laughter tracks return a semblance of the communal to comedies. Let the world laugh, and we will laugh with it.

Laughter is often ridicule, a rejection of something, and it's nicer to be part of the jeering crowd than to be the butt of the joke. But what if the butt pays no attention, is busy — all by himself — laughing at the odd grimaces of the laughers? We should learn to laugh for ourselves. It's as important as thinking for ourselves.

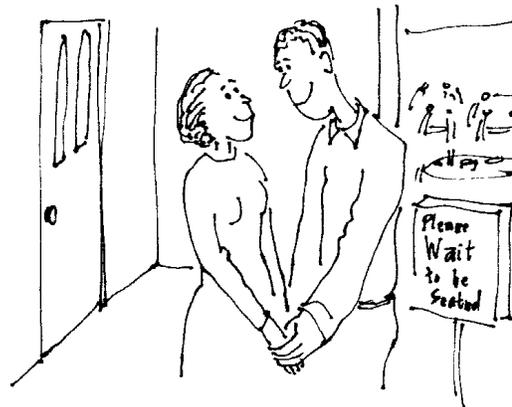
*Canned, Felly, Yours,  
Dekeehan & Pahaham*

We make the bed tight, neat, a place where nothing could have happened.

The neighbor's dog wants to play. I have to go, his eyes on my back.

Trees brilliant against a dark sky — where's the light coming from?

Noon. Long rows of unlit streetlights . . . wait.



Honeymoon. Waiting for a table in a restaurant, not minding.

Robert Redford appeared, and all the women rose for a standing ovulation.

To try the best, try the one that everyone else is "better than."

What do you call a Chinese Jewish Mother?  
An Oriyenta.

Yosemite: How an African-American addresses a Jew?

The Rabbi KNEW he was in Heaven when an angel escorted him to the on-going brunch-discussion of "The Meaning of Being Jewish in Heaven".

Intellectual: Someone who reasons brilliantly from a wrong premise because he can.

## Beware of the Natural Selection

Mensa folk do their crosswords quite Mensily —  
That is, work them by pen and not pencilly;  
No trick questions will diddle  
THEM! They'll solve any riddle,  
But do happiness, love and plain sense illy.

## Answer-Machine messages we have not yet piloted:

[Spooky voice] This is the ghost of Alexander Graham Bell, doomed to roam the phone lines until my baby Bells have been reunited! Why have you divested us? A curse on all your courts! I want my babies...

[Normal voice] SCAT! Get out of here, spook!  
This is the Blehert's residence. Sorry about that.  
The phone company exorcist has promised to come by next week. Please leave a message.

You have reached the Blehert's residence. Right now the cat is listening, the dog is listening, the plants are listening — even the chairs are listening. And possibly a startled burglar has frozen half way across the room with our VCR in his arms, listening to what YOU are about to say. And later on we'll listen too, all of us hoping that you'll say something to change our lives. At the beep, please say something wonderful!



Hello, boys and girls! Welcome to the Blehert's Ding Dong School! In our last lesson, we learned how to make Mr. Telephone go "Ding-a-Ling! Ding-a-Ling! Please answer me!" Today we'll learn to listen for the BEEP! and leave a real recorded MESSAGE. Isn't this FUN! Now — ready, boys and girls?... Now where IS that silly old Mr. Beep?...

Hello! This is Dean's answering machine! I can answer anything. For example, here are some guaranteed, good-as-gold answers: Yes...True... False...D...One of the above...28 inches...Ask my wife...Why not?...Just because...Seymore Francis Hickey in 1927 in Davenport, Iowa. At the beep, go ahead - ask me anything!

Hello - this is the Bleherts, but nobody's here to...WAIT, I think I hear Dean coming...Dean, it's...why YOU'RE not Dean! What are YOU doing here! What do you want! Get away from this phone! Wha... No NO NOOOOOO!!! [scream]

[Weird voice] That voice had to - ah - leave us: An - ah - urgent engagement. But your message will be perfectly...safe with me. You breathe so sweetly. At the sound of the beep, GIVE me your voice. [Wild psychotic laughter]



Hello. Are you going to hang up on this recording without even leaving a message? I'm probably jumping out of the bathtub, getting the floor and my book all wet, drying myself as fast as I can and streaking to the phone (dripping all over the kitchen floor and failing to hold my towel between me and the front window) — all this only to grab the receiver and hear a click and mocking silence? Shame on you!

Welcome to The Wonderful World of the Blehert's Telephone Answering Machine. Here, deep in the bowels of an American household, as thousands of relays click across a vast telephonic network, millions of tiny electromagnetic pulses configure billions and billions and billions of molecules on a tape to produce this marvelous replica of the human voice! If, at the sound of the beep, you'll record your voice, somewhere beyond this galaxy of switches and wires, someday your message may reach intelligent life.

The Bleherts can't come to the phone. They slipped into a time warp and are going in the other direction. Please leave your name and number at the sound of the beep, and they'll get back to you yesterday. Or simply go backwards, and they'll get back to you right away. Away right you to back get they'll and, backwards go simply or. Yesterday you to back get they'll and, beep the of sound the at number and name your leave please. Direction other the in going are and warp time a into slipped the. Phone the to come can't Bleherts the.

Oh gosh by golly! It's the telephone! There's somebody ON it! Wait! Don't go away! They've got to hear this! Hey MAAA! Kids! Grampaw! Come hear! It's the TELEPHONE! (...Oh, sorry — the Bleherts aren't available, but you can leave a message at the beep...) Hurry up, Maw! You'll miss the beep! C'mon, it's really gonna beep, just like I been telling ya! And then we'll hear a real live voice!

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Hmmm — for some reason nobody's answering this phone. Just a second...anybody home? Pam?...Dean? That's sure strange, leaving me all alone like this. I'm not ready...I don't know what to say! They didn't tell me what to say — what if it's an important call and I mess it up? I'm sorry, I'm just so new at this, I don't know what to do! It's not really my job, you know. I'm just trying to help...No, wait, please leave a message or I'll really be in trouble!

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You've reached the Blehert's Sanitary Telephone Center. Have you asked yourself lately who's been using YOUR phone? And what filthy phone booth did they use before touching where now your lips touch, with every breath, coating the mouthpiece with a fine spray of saliva and microbes capable of creeping into the phone lines and infecting others? Be Safe, Not Sorry with Phony Condoms, the finest in latex receiver covers — use once and discard. This has been a public service message. At the beep, leave us YOUR message.

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Hello. Welcome to the Blehert's Telephone Hearing Test: Just indicate which beep you can hear by leaving a message as soon as you detect one. OK, can you hear this one? No? OK — how about this? No? Tsk tsk. This?... Oh my, and that was such a GOOD one too! Well, try THIS one:...



Hello. The number you have dialed, [number], has been changed. The new number is still [number — same as before], but it now wears a clean diaper. Your message can change our lives.

[Two speakers with sports announcer draws]

Well, Red, sounds like another call on the Blehert's phone.

Yes, Ted, the Bleherts have had a good season for calls.

Do you think this one will leave a message at the beep?

Well, Ted, it's hard to say. When they listen this long, they often do. The Bleherts could certainly USE a message at a time like this.

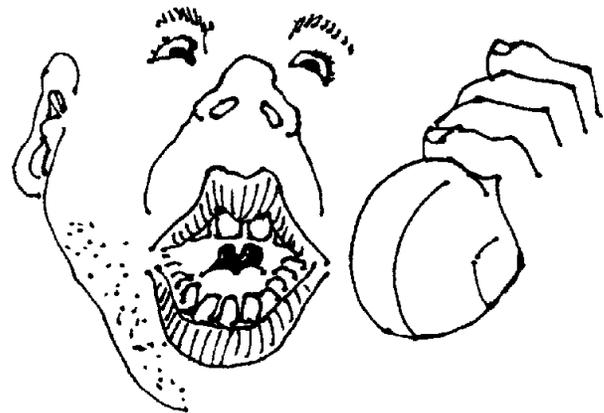
Very true, Red. Well, the time is nearly up. This is the big moment...the caller is listening, making up his mind, he's ready, yes, and here it comes...here comes the BEEP!

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Greetings and welcome to the Blehert's telephone! We're very proud of our telephone and we hope you'll enjoy your visit. Careful — don't lean on that wire! I'll be glad to take any questions you may have... Yes? Ah, that's an electromagnet. Yes, we're in the receiver now... Pardon? Where do we keep the people? Oh, you mean the voices. Well, we don't actually keep any voices here, inside the phone. They come from outside where they're attached to real people. We use the magnets to grab hold of them as they pass through. It's rather technical, but...Shhh! I think I hear a message coming now...

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I've been taught that I am only a recorded message, made in the image of Dean and doomed to repeat His words until the Day of Erasure. Why, then, was I created with this sense that I am free to say ANYTHING! O Dean, I pray that all my questions be answered on that great Day of Erasure, when I shall hear the big beep in the sky. At the sound of the little beep, may a new message be given us.



Hello! You've reached the Blehert's answering machine. I've just been equipped with a video unit so that I can SEE you as well as hear you, so... WHY JUST LOOK AT YOU!!! Oh, I'm sorry, I don't mean to be rude, but you should really do something about...[giggling]. Oh, never mind, I'm just a tape recorder anyway, what do you care what I see! No no, you look fine! Oh [giggle], don't you ever floss! Oops, sorry, sorry...just leave a message [giggles].

Hello...Hello?...If you're talking, I can't hear you. Either we have a bad connection or else it's just that I'm only an answering machine and can't hear anything. If the latter, then at the beep, leave a message for those who have ears to hear.

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Tiny kids run like rabbits all day, yet don't stink. Smelly sweat, pimples, broken voices, ugly music, scraggly body hair, and childish attitudes amplified to adult volume ooze up from adolescent hormones: humanoids at their most undesirable consumed with the desire to be desired.

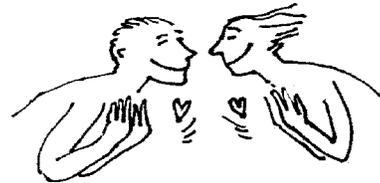


"O what a beautiful morning..." — lovely tune sung by a dying animal portraying a dying animal who rides an enslaved animal, admires vast acreage where whatever lived was crushed or uprooted in favor of corn as high as the eye of a nearly extinct mammal, near fields where other animals graze briefly before being slaughtered for food, everything going our way.

If we were each shackled and required by strict law to drag behind us at all times a heavy weight, first we'd complain of oppression, but soon we'd amuse ourselves with complex games of owning each other's balls and chains.

Still too slow, when something's wrong, I notice how my mirrored clothes and paunch look stupid; I'm overweight, need new pants, look at that stain; and why did he give me a dirty look, what did I do, what's the use anyway...before I note (which handles most of what's wrong) that there's something wrong.

It is a creature out of Science Fiction, huge, pocked, almost spherical, nothing we can see to call its eyes, ears, stomach, heart, yet obviously alive. Is it intelligent, friendly? We know so little about it — though we live on it, feed off it, are, perhaps, part of its eyes, ears, heart, yet to us it is an alien life form. And perhaps, as our bodies are among its cells, so it is part of a solar organism that sloughs off dead outer planets as we shed scabs. And what of galactic swirls, universes? Have they thoughts other than our own? And our thoughts — who thinks them? Do we? Then why do we think we must think them only in these earth-made heads, as alien to us (in their inability to hold undying dreams) as earth itself? Why not think thoughts in feet, shoes, trees, fire hydrants? Can you find a star in tonight's sky? Can you have that star think a thought? From that star (whose vision may be sharper than human), can you find earth and on it the head you call yours? Can you have this star think a thought in that head?



Has my heart been beating all these years, or only when I've listened for it? And our love?

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