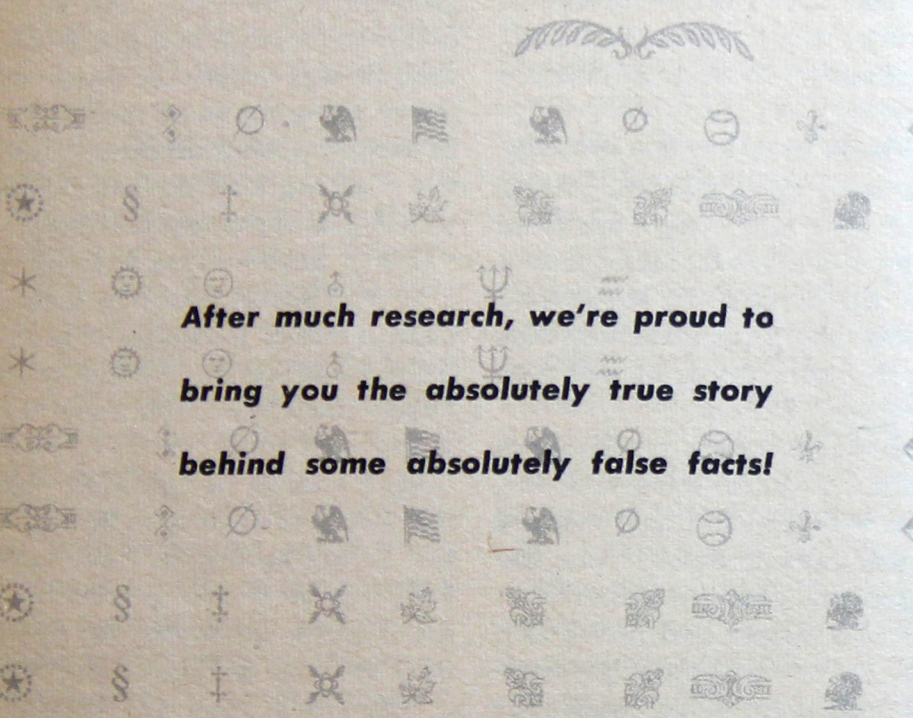


ORIGINS OF GALACTIC FRUIT SALAD

By EDWARD WELLEN



**After much research, we're proud to
bring you the absolutely true story
behind some absolutely false facts!**

MILES of glorious braid lead back to 3030 U.E., when the Galactic Council charged the Galactic Corps with the mission of lessening aggression on planets in advance of overt contact by the Diplomatic Service. It is with deepest reverence that one taps the archives of the Awards and Decorations Board of the Galactic Corps. In them one finds the notable recipients of the various medals that

came into being with that directive.

Distinguished Conduct Comet. Cast in gold and radium: obverse comet approaching perihelion, reverse comet receding.

Orbiting Porrima V, Warrant Officer Uvru Vroghlu found tribal battle impending between the Luaw and the Jhaly. Projection showed the invading Luaw would win, giving a warlike cast to the

planet's future culture. In full view of the Jhaly, the Luaw warlock prepared to foretell victory. He set out hatchetberry drupes in simulated battle formation, unpatriotically arranging the juicier to represent the Jhaly, then confidently bent his neck to his chief's blade. Birds cuneiformed out of sky. Their cropping would indicate the casualties.

Displaying amazing accuracy, W. O. Vroghlu played his vibro-gun over the drupes and caused the birds to be eerily selective. They could make off with only the drupes representing the two chiefs. The Luaw chief regained his equilibrium and easily convinced the Jhaly chief the Luaw had come on a peaceful trading expedition.

Distinguished Service Pin. Plastic, shot through with silicon and titanium.

On Izar II, through the ages, contesting armies had trampled what had once been rank borderland to dust. Neither side wanted it any more; still it knew unhappy disposition of troops, the armies of Edeen and Emeeq facing each other across desolation, both longing to about-face, neither willing to pull back with the other in view.

A heat wave was due. Tempers would fray. The orbiting observer, Spaceman First Class Roby Lud-

nurk, took a calculated risk to avert the fray. He deliberately induced a highly localized heat wave. Demonstrating unusual skill in fire control, Sfc Ludnurk drew both vibro-guns and heated a thin layer of air above the ground each army stood, reflecting light rays upward.

Each army, recovering from a long moment of dazzle, saw ahead only glassy shimmering as though the other had flooded the land to deny it to the enemy. Each about-faced and marched home.

General Service Arrow. Shaft, longbow, made of branch (olive) and feather (dove.)

Chief Petty Officer Sadhm Lyddvo, observing T'ien-Kuan II, found two powers, Xebban and Kroona, anxious for their latest quarrel to come to a head. They were waiting for the people of the other great power of the planet, Vozzyl, to rebuild. It had always been their practice that two warring powers took turns clobbering a third party, the winner being the one inflicting the heavier damage. But the Vozzyn, weary of war, were dragging their feet.

Xebban and Kroona besieged Vozzyl with reconstruction funds. The Vozzyn weakened. They pocketed much of the largesse, but ultimately began to rebuild. Exhibiting unusual initiative, C.P.O. Lyddvo plied his vibro-

gun to shiver their timbers, destroying by night what the Vozzyn built by day. Xebban and Kroona sent Vozzyl bluff notes threatening war unless Vozzyl stopped sabotaging the war effort — Xebban naming the neighboring land of Unzarg as the proving ground in its quarrel with Vozzyl and Kroona nominating Bughyn. The Vozzyn, unable to stop, bravely took up both challenges.

But Xebban and Kroona were only bluffing. Through his intelligent dissipation of their grants, C.P.O. Lyddvo had deflated their war chests.

Psychwar Award. Protactinium, shielded; obverse Freud couchant, reverse Sphinx dormant, nose riddled.

At the time of the Coal Sack Emergency the Galactic Corps had recalled psychosemanticist Ira Kroh to active duty for the duration. At G.H.Q. a buck slip fluttered out the window in the paper blizzard attending the victory parade. The slip chanced to be his orders. Therefore Ensign Kroh remained manning a POW-less interrogation depot on an asteroid in the region of Sagittarius.

He kept up his morale by giving himself orientation lectures and by maintaining alertness and discipline. After uneventful years he spotted symptoms of war

pathology on Rukbat III. His scout ship sat only meters away. But he had confined himself to quarters. He opened sealed orders for such an exigency and read: "Do your best."

He policed up a paper blizzard and sentenced himself to additional confinement. By tampering with the gravistat that maintained comfortable artificial gravity, he wrenched the asteroid, losing the ship in the process, and headed quarters and all toward Rukbat III. There the war had ended. Dictator Sedauh, having won this plum, in savoring it forgot he had been eager to throw down the gage to other lands. But a portent — the sudden appearance of a heavenly body — reawakened him to his dream of glory. While Ens. Kroh fretted in the firmament at the necessarily slow deceleration approach, Sedauh's army headed north-northwest, to erupt through unguarded badlands.

Kroh anticipated their line of march. With cool disregard of personal safety, he set the asteroid down. The vanguard of the invading army came upon a building on a hill, stormed it, and Sedauh entered Ens. Kroh's quarters.

Ens. Kroh explained that this was a sanitarium. By nightfall, the portent having vanished from the firmament, Ens. Kroh had

convinced Sedaugh that he, Sedaugh, was a paranoiac who only thought he was the great Sedaugh. Sedaugh disbanded his imaginary army and committed himself.

When Ens. Kroh had packed in his own time, he stepped outside and sent up a space flare . . . only to run into charges of desertion. The oversight caused by the loss of his orders had righted itself and his relief had come — to find the post missing. But that too righted itself in time, and Ens. Kroh received this award posthumously.

Vermilion Iliion. Cast in yttrium and sodium; Troy, towers of, topless, with Horse, wooden, at gates of.

With only a gravi-ray ring, Corporal Sally Sims landed on Alpheratz VII and, posing as a trader, made her way along the Yilla River to the city of Udt. Forces from Vhyudt would soon besiege Udt and Cpl. Sims had to bring about a stalemate. Using her gravi-ray to tip the scales she amassed enough to purchase a tavern for cover.

The NO TRUST sign over the bar was sinisterly appropriate. By now Vhyudt had invested Udt and every friend might be foe. Aid from Dulk, an ally of Udt, seemed a forlorn hope. Despite taunts from Udt women, who were unconscious fifth columnists,

the besiegers let attrition and rumor do their work. Then one night provisioners from Dulk poled up the Yilla. They clung to the walls of Udt and clamored quietly for the water gate to open before Vhyudt soldiers upstream in ambush, expecting relief to drift down into crossfire, got wind and arrived. Udt awakened. The fifth column blocked off the water gate mechanism, the sixth column attacked the fifth, the seventh tore the great cannon from its embrasure and rounded it on the sixth. Cpl. Sims sprang into action.

She locked her cash box and called Nitam, her tapster, to follow her to join the eighth column. She had used her wiles to win Nitam's loyalty against the moment of need. Loud clamoring spurred the eighth on to win. Cpl. Sims and the other survivors drew fallen out of the way to round the cannon on the gate and so finesse the fifth. But Nitnam, unmasking himself as a ninth columnist, leaped to the breach. Cpl. Sims advanced alone, trusting to Nitam's love. A near miss; Nitam quickly reloaded. Cpl. Sims with a prayerful gesture set her gravi-ray to give extreme weight to the shell. Nitam fired. The shell remained in place an instant, then dropped; the gun itself shot backward and breached the water gate. The relief party poured in.

Order of Persistence. Plastic; teeth, set.

Major Wrejy Nulzo, observing Sirius I, dog-eared his telemach of Bull Run and broke out his weapons. A peace mission from Jodlu was nearing the bridge to Pujra.

On the Pujra side the jingoist C.O. of the border watchtower planned to blow up the bridge in the teeth of the peace mission. Once the Jodlu envoys crossed safely the danger would pass, for a Pujra escort waited to whisk them to the capital to finalize an immediate mutual pullback.

Maj. Nulzo tried to lift away the powder charge under the bridge or shake loose the wiring. But he had failed to keep his gravi-ray and vibro-gun in working order — or else they were lemons to begin with. Undaunted, Maj. Nulzo landed his scout craft in woods nearby. He stripped and crept toward the stream. Before he could plunge in to disarm the charge a Pujran sentry halted him with a shout.

To Maj. Nulzo's horror the sentry patted his flank. The Pujran had taken him for an ovbuk, an animal that made a fine mascot, and was sentimentally protecting him from the charge, rather than vice versa. Pujran troops to a man were nearsighted, as befitted a tradition of coming to grips with the foe.

Balked, Maj. Nulzo padded into the watchtower in time to hear the C.O. give the order to detonate. A yeoman poised a finger over a button while the order passed down the chain of command. Maj. Nulzo slowed the order by distracting the officers with moist friendliness, but the order came down inexorably. It reached the yeoman's immediate superior. The envoys were on the bridge. Maj. Nulzo, resolute in this extremity, bit the yeoman's finger.

Nursing it, the yeoman looked helplessly from his other digits to the button, while the mission crossed safely.

Brevet Ribbon. Sodium bicarbonate spectrum.

Mess Sergeant Vhedj Tvekvi, hopping his field kitchen from outpost to outpost, was the nearest corpsman when the Botein II emergency came up; the Sector Computer called on him.

Though he had none of the conventional weapons at his disposal Sgt. Tvekvi touched kepi and changed course. Fields fattened and bins bulged in Potmu but the populace was not content. The gnashing of irredentists was heard in the land. Potmu expansionists demanded collops out of neighboring lands under the pretext of errors of marking: some faulty registration of map colors

blurred the borders. The government set up conscription. The conscripts accepted their lot; theirs but to bow and obey. They were even now on menacing maneuvers.

Sgt. Tvekvi digested all this and drew up a plan of rumble. He passed up meals till hunger pangs had grown severe, then opened a ration-pak. He sniffed ravenously. He set it aside. The pangs grew almost unbearable. Making do with regulation mess equipment he tapped his veins, isolated the hunger hormone from his blood, and placed it in a protein reproducer.

Even as it was synthesizing in quantity, the expansionist leaders were issuing marching orders. The troops bowed snappily. Then, while the leaders looked on much moved, the men made for a thorny thicket through which a trail twisted toward neighboring Vatnobj.

Sgt. Tvekvi hurriedly injected hormone into aerosol cans. Hovering unseen, thanks to a spatter of food colors with which he camouflaged his craft, he sent down a mist that clung to the barbed growth. When the column was well in he tossed an economy-size package of self-hydrating greens to obliterate the trail.

Lost, the troops tore out of the inoculating thicket, and found themselves embarking on a mad

foraging over the fields of Potmu. By the time the leaders caught up with them the troops, looking a ragged but gluttonous rabble, had gorged themselves too obese to do obeisance. This insubordination proved as demoralizing to the leaders as to the conscripts themselves. The expansionist government forgot the *casus belli* and fell in its haste to demobilize.

Meanwhile Sgt. Tvekvi had dutifully stuffed himself against having to inoculate the troops with his satiation hormone. He feared they would strip the fields and empty the bins, then turn again toward Vatnobj. But the hunger hormone had spent its force and they returned home peaceably.

*Refraining-from-Action Medal.
Cast in calcium and lithium;
palm, preventive.*

Petty Officer Dexter Murrey put in for transfer to straight duty but drew Aspidiske V — notoriously pacific. Languishing in his vigil, he glowed to see Epsht-men in armor descend upon Alodzn-gryv. He prepared to distinguish himself, then found those of Epsht were merely trooping in for annual servicing of their ceremonial armor, which the armorers of Alodzn-gryv took care would not articulate a blow. He went back to his vigil.

After a time he glowed to see

armies assemble in Gilev and in Mirj, receive an issue of blades and march head on. He prepared to distinguish himself . . . then watched each force simply prune its side of the boundary hedge. He went back to his vigil.

When his tour of duty was nearly up he glowed to hear alarums of war — and in the most lethargic area of Aspidiske V, along the Fblaex-Laxehfha border. There was no trespass as yet. Constant watch had begun, however, with a frenzy of build-up. But he saw with misgivings the two chiefs of state secretly rendezvous. He listened in — and knew joy.

They were planning not to ease tension but to further it. Here was his chance to punish dishonor and distinguish himself. His finger moved to a trigger, but he chose to savor the moment. And he heard them in breaking up the parley remind each other of their aim and of the need to stand fast.

In both Fblaex and Laxehfha much had long wanted doing, but sense of urgency had faded and gathered smell of must. Now their economies were rolling along on bogies of war. E.g., under guise of bringing up fill for potential crump holes they were building roads their forerunners had planned but never begun for lack

of funds. P. O. Murrey went back to his vigil.

Meritorious Service Ribbon. Mica, with embeddings of beryllium and lithium constellating a milky whey.

W.O. (jg.) Hazzut saw war threaten all Acrux XX because one Uvjvikj, wishing to get rid safely of one Sarado, his rival in love, planned to trick their nation into war and send Sarado to the most dangerous front. Having charge of the government computer, Uvjvikj set it to misinterpreting findings (so that preventive war seemed in the cards) and to foretelling the most dangerous front (so that it might cut orders sending Sarado there.) W.O. Hazzut, demonstrating superb remotemanship, beamed his gravi-ray to weight the statistics Uvjvikj fed into the crude computer Acrux XX was conversant with. This created a lag, enabling W.O. Hazzut's own advanced model to advise him how best to joggle the bits of information with his vibro-gun. Uvjvikj, finding that whatever action Sarado might figure in he was bound to reap not death but glory, had his computer predict the country would lose the war, and recommend preventing its start.

— EDWARD WELLEN

