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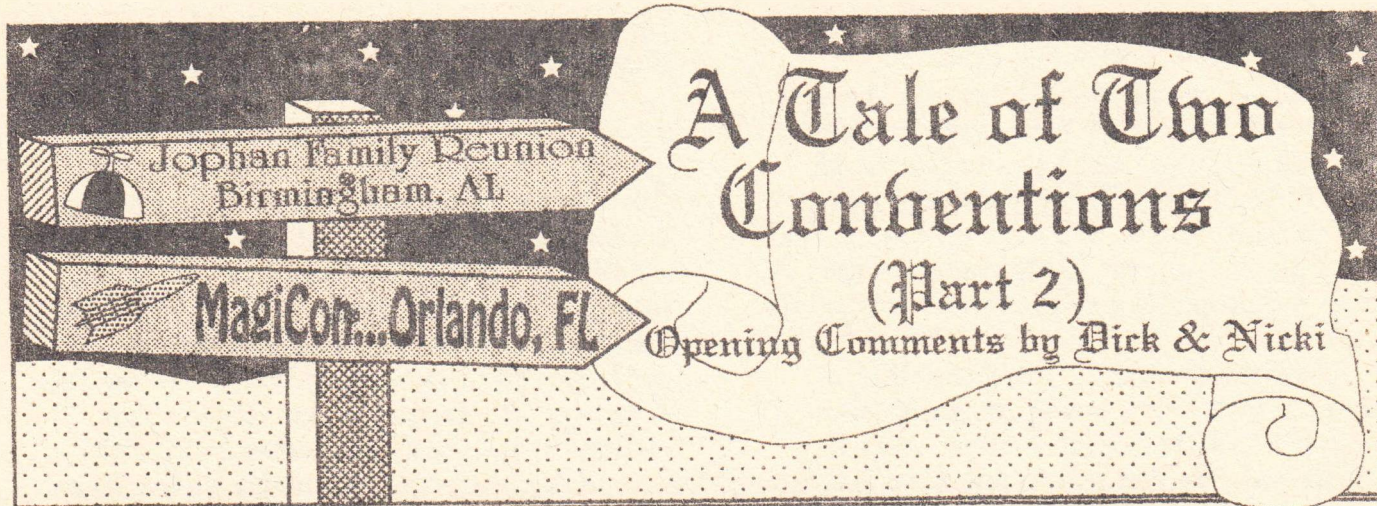


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This thirteenth issue of *Mimosa* was published in January 1993, and is available for just two dollars U.S. or equivalent. For the frugal, a letter of comment on this issue will bring you a copy of *Mimosa* 14 this summer. We also have a continuing need for first-person articles of an anecdotal nature about science fiction fandom and/or things fans do (especially those of fan historical interest); publication of same here will keep you on our mailing list for as long as we continue to publish. This entire issue is ©1993 by Dick & Nicki Lynch, with individual rights reverting back to contributors after this one-time use. All opinions expressed by contributors are their own.

☐ If this box is checked, we really need to find a letter of comment from you in our postal box to keep you on our mailing list for next issue.

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"Any publication is only as good as its contributors, and we're grateful that we've been able to publish material by some excellent fan writers and artists. This award really belongs to them."

The last time, in *Mimosa* 11, that we wrote about a Worldcon vacation trip, we prefaced our comments by saying that, in some ways, we could be considered 'convention' fans as much as 'fanzine' fans. That remained true this past year; we published only our usual two issues of *Mimosa*, but including a brief appearance at Balticon, we attended nine different conventions, and turned down a chance to be at a tenth due to a scheduling conflict. This past August and September, our longest trip of the year took in two of those conventions, bringing us to Florida for the Worldcon via a weekend stop-over in Alabama.

Our trip south to Birmingham was mostly without incident, but in southwestern Virginia we did meet up with an unwelcome visitor who had been touring Florida and Louisiana during the previous week. His name was Andrew.

By the time the storm had worked its way into the mountains of Virginia, it was no longer a hurricane, not even a tropical storm. But you could still tell it had been, once. Just north of Roanoke we hit storm bands of moderately heavy, blowing rain, followed by clearings where blue sky appeared. At one point, the rain and wind rapidly increased to a heavy, gusty downpour, then abruptly, to

clear skies with bright sunshine. It didn't stay that way for very long, though; soon it was back through a heavy downpour, and then more intermittent storm bands. It wasn't until the Tennessee border that we were finally in the clear for good.

A week later, at Magicon, there was talk about the hurricane and how close it had come to demolishing Miami and New Orleans from people in those metropolitan areas. However, we were probably among the few people there who had actually been through the eye of the storm.

* * *

If you look at a road atlas, you'll see that driving to Florida by way of Birmingham, Alabama, isn't the most efficient way to get the job done -- central Alabama is way, way to the west of the most direct route. We went to Birmingham because of a fan get-together the weekend before Worldcon, organized and sponsored by Charlotte Proctor and the rest of the Birmingham Science Fiction Club (publishers of the fanzine *Anvil*). The site was a little motel on the outskirts of Birmingham, where they'd held past parties. There was a catch this time, though; this was to going be a full-fledged convention (albeit a small one), and that had the motel management nervous. They told Charlotte that they specialized in family reunions; they just didn't *do* conventions. So, instead of arguing, Charlotte reserved a block of rooms for the 'Jophan Family Reunion', and spread the word about it to all her 'cousins' out there in fandom. (Charlotte hastily explained to the

motel that nobody with the surname 'Jophan' would be registering, because the first branches of the family tree were all female.) About 50 or 60 of us showed up, although many of them were B'ham fans who didn't need to take rooms. We were all hoping that two or three from the Irish branch of the family would make an appearance, but it was not to be...

'Kissing Cousin' Roger Weddall from Australia *was* there, though, making him easily the 'relative' from farthest away in attendance. We had previously first 'met' Roger when he sent us a long letter of comment that was published way back in the third issue of *Mimosa*. Since then, we've corresponded frequently and talked on the telephone a few times; Roger was even the distribution agent for *Mimosa* in Australia for a while. However, we'd never run across each other in our fannish travels before now; one of the reasons we came to Alabama was to actually meet Roger, in a less-congested place than Magicon would probably be.

The motel turned out to be ideal for an invitational relaxacon such as this. The room block surrounded a small green-space quadrangle that served as a natural gathering place. Chairs taken from rooms, coolers of canned drinks, and card tables filled with snacks turned the shaded center of the quadrangle into an outdoor con suite. The quadrangle area was easily large enough for a number of activities besides, so the more energetic fans played 'ghoodminton' and croquet, while the rest of us sat around under the shade trees at the center and talked well into the evening. Roger took his turn at croquet, and managed to win both games he played in, thus making him the uncontested champion of the fan universe. The defeated contenders were rewarded with (or had to endure, depending on your point of view) the spectacle of a triumphant Roger jumping into the air and clicking his heels (something that's hard to do in sneakers). Dick managed to capture it on film, either for posterity or for future blackmail purposes. "At least Roger's good at *something*," he remarked; it was the first volley in a war of mock insults

that would continue through Magicon.

Roger was here in the U.S. as the Down Under Fan Fund representative, so it was only natural (inevitable, even) that the Reunion had a Fan Fund auction. That auction featured the world debut of the new hardcover edition of Harry Warner, Jr.'s 1950s fan history, *A Wealth of Fable*. One of the several signed copies we had brought with us was auctioned, and the bidding eventually escalated to over fifty dollars under Roger's deft auctioneering. Each time when interest in the book appeared to be slowing down, Roger would prompt Dick to recite one or another of the anecdotal stories from it. This seemed to pique the interest (and loosen the purse strings) of the three or four people who were bidding on the book: The tale of Seventh Fandom and Harlan Ellison's "The Mad Dogs Have Knead Us in the Groin" quote succeeded in boosting the bid to \$35, when it looked like interested had topped out at \$30. A little later, a synopsis of the 'Midwestcon Door' episode carried the bid price over the \$40 mark. The story of the Room 770 party got the bid price up to \$50, and a short recap of some of the exploits of Walt Willis and John Berry carried the bidding to its peak at \$56. As the gavel finally came down, Dick called out, too late, "Wait! I haven't said anything yet about the Joan Carr and Carl Brandon hoaxes!"

Besides being an adept auctioneer, it turned out that Roger also knew how to handle a hot potato when he had to. We found that out the Sunday night we were in Birmingham, just as we, Roger, and Charlotte were leaving a nearby shopping mall restaurant after dinner. Charlotte suddenly remembered that she'd meant to bring the baked potato from her meal back home for her husband Jerry to eat later. Since we were already out in her car by then, she was ready to just forget the whole thing, but Roger said, "Wait! I'll get it for you!" Charlotte drove to the restaurant entrance and, as the three of us hummed the theme music from *Mission: Impossible*, Roger raced into the side entrance of the restaurant then, a moment later, came running back out again

triumphantly holding up the foil-wrapped potato. He threw himself into the car, and we sped off. It was all done so slickly that the restaurant staff didn't even realize that they had been victimized by The Great Potato Caper; it was truly a moment that fan historians of the future will marvel at...

* * *

Monday morning finally came, and it was time to head south. In contrast to the trip down from Maryland, the weather was very pleasant on the drive to Florida. The route we chose took us through some out-of-the-way places, like Ozark, Alabama, where signs pointed the way to the Boll Weevil Museum in nearby Enterprise, and Perry, Florida, where, at a traffic light, we were nearly assaulted by placard-carrying partisans of various political parties who were busily trying to get people to vote for them in the primary election scheduled for the next day. We were fortunate that the traffic signal picked an opportune moment to turn green and we escaped, but with all the distractions from the trip, we didn't arrive Orlando until well after nightfall.



The next two days we had reserved for touring at two of the theme parks, Sea World and Universal Studios. These are located at opposite ends of International Drive in Orlando, which gets our vote for the biggest Tourist Trap in Known Space. It's studded with hotels and loaded with visitors;

we heard more different languages spoken in one day on International Drive than during our whole European trip of 1990. (The United Nations should really consider pulling up stakes in New York and moving down to the south side of Orlando.) Besides the two theme parks, there were also some lesser attractions, such as a Ripley's Believe It or Not Museum (the building looks like it's vanishing into a Florida sink hole), a Wet'N'Wild waterslide park, and a UFO Museum (we kid you not). And last, but not least, there were hundreds and hundreds of souvenir shops, where you could buy everything from figurines of alligators constructed from sea shells to straw hats and t-shirts of every possible design (we think we must be the only people ever to visit Orlando and never buy a Mickey Mouse t-shirt). All of the Magicon convention hotels as well as the Orange County Convention Center were located right on International Drive, but against all of this, the convention hardly caused a ripple of notice from the mundane public -- it was lost in the background noise.

Of all the theme parks in the world that we've been to (which isn't all that many, actually), Nicki's favorite is Sea World. It must be something about those soft-and-cuddly 30-foot killer whales... Anyway, it was only about a mile from our hotel and we had a 15 percent discount coupon for it from the back of our road atlas book, so that seemed to be the place to start. The park has expanded since the last time we were there, over a decade ago. There's now more than one large show pool, which has allowed separate shows for the dolphins and killer whales. The 'Killers of the Deep' exhibit had also expanded, but the centerpiece of that display was still the Shark Encounter -- a 100-foot long, 20-foot deep pool with dozens of sharks of various species swimming around in it. Right through the middle of it, 15 feet down, is a large, clear, thick-walled, custom-built plexiglass tunnel. A moving sidewalk takes you through that tunnel, with sharks lazily swimming above and on either side of you. A 10-foot shark took up station on the other side of the tunnel wall from

Nicki, and cruised along even with the speed of the sidewalk for most of the transit, just a foot away from her right elbow. Afterwards, we couldn't make up our minds -- was it merely curious? Or maybe it was hungry. Hmmm...

Universal Studios was next, but we heard that Magicon had a supply of 30 percent discount passes, so we spent several hours on Tuesday night trying to find the person who had them. We located Magicon Chairman Joe Siclari in a snack shop in the Clarion hotel, but he thought the passes were in the con operations room; meanwhile, he'd check around. Janice Gelb was doing a late-nighter in con ops at the convention center, but she didn't have them, either. She advised us to find Cricket Fox, who was in charge of something-or-other, and meanwhile, she'd check around. Eventually, word circulated far enough that by the time we finally caught up with Cricket Fox (who didn't have the passes, either, but knew where they were), about half the con committee were on the lookout for us -- the fannish equivalent of an All Points Bulletin.

The going rate for getting into Universal is over thirty dollars per person, so those 30 percent discount passes saved us a significant amount of money -- even the lady vending tickets at the entrance to Universal was impressed enough to say, "You got a good deal!" We don't think they lost anything on the bargain, though, because we managed to spend more than our entrance fees on food and souvenirs. Nicki even added to her colleges and universities t-shirt collection, when she was in the Rocky & Bullwinkle shop and spotted a shirt for 'Wossamatta U.'.

Universal is easily worth a full day, and even then, it's difficult to see everything there. We were able to manage it, because there were only about half the number of people there that day than would be expected at a more 'peak' time of year (something we had also noticed earlier at Sea World). This meant that the longest line at Universal was only about half-an-hour long, and that was for the popular 'Back to the Future' ride. That ride was not for the faint-of-heart, or

for the full-of-stomach, either -- warnings are posted, in fact, that advise people who are prone to nausea or motion sickness not to go on it. 'Back to the Future' turned out to be a high-performance flight simulator inside an IMAX theater, which allows you to 'experience' the impossible -- flying in an anti-gravitic DeLaurean automobile, first through the time barrier, over an exploding volcano and through the mouth of a Tyrannosaurus, eventually returning to the 'present' for a safe landing in Doc Brown's lab. The IMAX provided the bigger-than-life sound and imagery, while the 'DeLaurean' flight simulator subjected you to all the turbulence, sudden drops, swoops, and banked turns you'd expect from a high-speed aerial chase.

If you think this sounds like an exciting ride, you're right, but we hadn't known beforehand what to expect and it was maybe more than we had bargained for. The four minutes or so duration of the ride seemed subjectively like an hour or more. In the end, the ride was just too intense for Nicki, who was nearly beaten into submission by it. She survived, just, but was sick with vertigo for several minutes afterward. As we staggered away, we decided that after 'Back to the Future', rush hour driving amongst thousands of maniacs on the Washington, D.C. Beltway won't be as traumatic an experience as it once was...

* * *

Two days of touring in late summer Florida seemed just about right to us, so by the time Thursday rolled around we were ready for Magicon. This year, there were *two* places where fanzine fans could convene -- the fanzine lounge, in the concourse area of the convention center, and the Minneapolis-in-'73 party suite, in the Peabody Hotel. Actually, they were two halves of a whole, since both were under the capable management of Geri Sullivan, Minneapolis fan extraordinaire. During the day, the fanzine lounge served as a meeting place, a fanzine sales area, and the location for certain fanzine-related program items like readings and the Fan Fund auction. At night, the Minneapolis suite was the preferred hangout. It

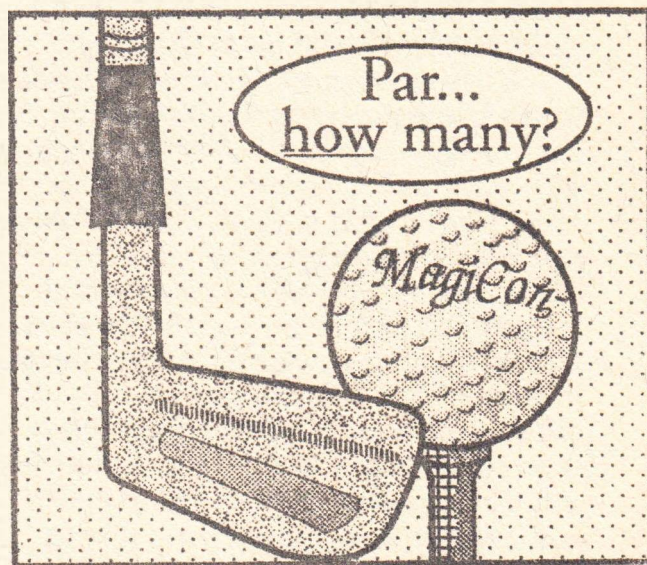
was less crowded than most of the other bid parties, and a lot more in-groupish and friendly for us fanzine fans. Walt and Madeleine Willis could be frequently found there, too.

There's no doubt that one of the things we looked forward to most about Magicon was getting to meet the Fan Guest of Honor, Walt Willis. He was in the Minneapolis suite on Wednesday night, Worldcon Eve, and with some trepidation, Dick eased on over to where Walt was sitting and introduced himself: "Excuse me, Mr. Willis..." That was as far as he got, before Walt, who had seen Dick's name on his name tag, smiled and held out his hand. Dick was feeling a bit overwhelmed by the moment, however, and before he realized what he was doing, he placed the signed copy of *A Wealth of Fable* he'd brought for Walt into Walt's outstretched hand instead of shaking it. Luckily, it was a mistake that was quickly rectified!

While Dick was trying not to appear too foolish, Nicki, meanwhile, was busy meeting Madeleine Willis and James White. James seemed to be enjoying himself immensely, laughing and joking with the various people who came over to talk with him. Madeleine was only slightly less outgoing in comparison, and seemed to make a point of introducing herself to anybody she wasn't sure she had met before (not as if she needed any introduction in the first place). Her conversation with Nicki soon turned to where 'home' was located on the map. Nicki was explaining that we had been living in Maryland less than four years, when Madeleine asked, "Meer-a-lind, where is that?" When Nicki replied that it bordered Washington, D.C., a look of recognition brightened Madeleine's face: "Oh... Mary-land!" Actually, we used to pronounce it that way too, once, but that's what fifteen years of living in Tennessee will do to you...

Walt chose not to give a Guest of Honor speech at Magicon (he was interviewed by Ted White instead), but he was very visible during the convention, as either a participant or a spectator in several other program

events. There was also an interactive display in honor of Walt, an Enchanted Duplicator Miniature Golf Course, in the concourse area of the convention center. Each of its ten holes was sponsored (and built) by a fan organization or worldcon bid committee; the design of the course allowed you to follow Jophan's journey to trufandom, culminating at the last hole where the duplicator itself resided. The whole thing was somewhat low-tech, with wooden mallet putters and plastic golf balls, but this added to the fannishness of the course, not to mention the difficulty (each hole was par six). Dick took the opportunity to play hole number five, the L.A. in '96 hole, after he delivered a signed copy of *A Wealth of Fable* to Bruce Pelz, who was manning the nearby L.A. worldcon bid table. Before Dick's first putt, the hole looked almost too easy to him; after the third putt, making par or better still seemed possible. Following his sixth stroke, Dick decided he would lower his expectations and just try to salvage his dignity; after heeling out with his ninth shot, he furtively glanced around to see if anyone was watching. Bruce was, but only smiled bemusedly...



What else can we tell you about Magicon? It was the normal kaleidoscope of fan activities, parties, and meal expeditions. We were on more programming panels than usual this year, but other than those, didn't attend all that many programming events.

Instead, we were content to visit with friends we don't get to see very often, in the fanzine lounge. It was there that Dick succeeded in finally getting the last contribution to the (still) forthcoming *Mimosa* 9.5, the audiocassette version of *Mimosa* 9; Elliott "Elst" Weinstein and Roger Weddall dusted off their best (or maybe worst) British/Irish accents and recorded the text of Bob Shaw's 'Serious Scientific Speech' from the 1990 Worldcon. We're happy to report that the tape recorder survived intact...

By the time Saturday night arrived, however, we weren't entirely sure that *we* would survive the long weekend intact. We'd been on the road for over a week at that point, and it was starting to wear us down a little. We weren't exactly looking forward to going home again, but it was on our minds. This was evident that night during the pre-Hugo Ceremony nominees briefing in the Green Room. We were told that the Hugo Nominees party later that night would be hosted by the San Francisco Worldcon committee, and when their party hostess announced that the party would begin soon after the conclusion of the Hugos and last "...until everybody goes home...", Dick looked up incredulously and said, "Tuesday?!"

It almost seemed like it *was* Tuesday by the time everyone was finally ushered into the convention giant meeting hall and found seats. We and the other nominees had endured a prolonged wait in some backstage area otherwise occupied by salad bars, steam tables, and other banquet paraphernalia. Luckily, just before leaving the Green Room, Dick had paid a quick visit to the restroom, heeding a time-honored maxim about travel: 'When on the road, never miss an opportunity to eat or take a pee.' Nicki, however, had not, thinking that the Ceremony couldn't possibly last more than about an hour. It didn't seem such a big deal at the time, but it would soon become important.

Spider Robinson was the host for the Hugo Ceremony, and was his usual entertaining self on stage, keeping the events of the evening moving along. It turned out that there were a lot more events than usual this

year, including a 15-minute retrospective slide show of past worldcons. By the time the first Hugo was presented, more than an hour had passed since we had first convened in the Green Room. There were some technical glitches that slowed things down a bit, too; separate slides were projected for each nominee, but since Spider couldn't see the projection screen from his podium, his reading the nominee names sometimes got out-of-synch with the projected slides. (Also, after each winner was announced, there was one additional slide that summarized the category and winner; we provide this last bit of information so the reader might better understand what happened next.)

The Fanzine Hugo was the third one announced; previously, Ted Chiang had won the John Campbell Award, Dave Langford had added to his rocket collection with the Fan Writer Hugo, and Brad Foster had collected his third Hugo as Fan Artist. By the time Spider read the names of the Fanzine nominees, it seemed as if all the glitches had been corrected -- the correct slides, showing a photo of each fanzine, were projected at the proper time. An envelope was then handed to Spider; he opened it and read that the winner of the 1992 Fanzine Hugo was... *Lan's Lantern*.

George "Lan" Laskowski, Jr., the editor of *Lan's Lantern* took the stage to accept the Hugo, but just as he was taking possession of the trophy, above him on the screen flashed up a slide. It read:

Best Fanzine Hugo

MIMOSA

Editors, Dick and Nicki Lynch

The audience gasped and whispered and generally looked around; where we were sitting, you could almost feel the murmur that rippled through the crowd. At that point, Nicki felt the sudden conviction that there had been some kind of screw-up, and that *we* had won, but in light of the previous technical difficulties, Dick thought that there must have been a 'winners' slide made up for

each nominee, and the wrong one had been projected -- it was just the latest in the series of glitches. We'd lost out to a fairly popular fanzine, and there was nothing to feel badly about.

George's acceptance speech was very brief; when he finished, he departed backstage. And the ceremony went on.

Three more Hugos were awarded, which led us to think that the slide *was* in fact wrong, rather than the card in the envelope. At that point, Nicki decided that she had to depart the convention hall for the ladies room; there no longer seemed to be any reason why she shouldn't. But less than a minute after Nicki left, Laskowski came back out on-stage holding the Hugo. Spider Robinson then announced that there had been a mistake, and that *Mimosa* was in fact the winner of the Fanzine award.

Nicki had been right all along, of course (we later found out that the 'summary' slides had been prepared for only the winners in each category). If the correction had been made a minute earlier or three minutes later, there wouldn't have been a problem. As it happened, it was at the worst possible moment: Dick had gone on stage, in front of a thousand or two fans, trying to stall in order to give Nicki a chance to make it back to the hall in time. When he blurted out that Nicki had just left the hall to go to the ladies room, Spider said, "That sounds like a good idea; let's *all* go to the ladies room." In the end, there just wasn't enough time -- Dick had to read both parts of the short acceptance speech we'd written on the drive south from Maryland before departing the stage dejectedly. It was unfortunate and unfair to Nicki that she didn't get her moment on-stage, but there was nothing that could be done about it.

Or was there? Nicki returned to the Hugo Ceremonies just in time to see Dick leave the stage, and to catch a glimpse of the 'MIMOSA' slide we had seen earlier. Someone next to her said, "You won! Go backstage!" She hadn't been there even a minute when we heard a commotion and were waved back on-stage to re-accept the award. Spider

apologized and had Nicki step forward to the podium. The acceptance speech had already been read, though, so she didn't have anything to say other than 'thank you'. The rest of the Hugo Ceremony was a complete fog; we were aware of other awards being presented, but we had to read the daily newsletter the next day to find out who many of the winners were. In fact, we were in such a haze that we never even made it back to our seats -- we'd forgotten where we'd been sitting!

Back in the Green Room after the Hugo Ceremony was over, a lot of people came up to us to talk to us -- so many, in fact, that at one point we were surrounded by about ten people, while just a few feet away from us Michael Whelan was standing all by himself with the two Hugos he'd just won. The room party circuit later on was pretty much the same, full of friends all wanting to know what had happened. It wasn't until much later that night that we managed to find out ourselves, and we wouldn't have known even then if we hadn't talked to George Laskowski. George told us that when he got on stage, the woman holding the trophy showed him the name plate (which correctly named *Mimosa* as the winner) and told him, "Just say thank you; we'll straighten it out later." Someone else associated with the convention committee said it took several minutes of scrambling around to confirm that the slide and name plate were right and the card in the envelope was wrong. At that point, George returned to the stage to give Dick the Hugo. We can only praise George for the way he handled such an awkward situation; he is a class act. However, if any of us had been sitting closer to the stage, we might have seen something that would have alerted us that something was amiss -- when *Lan's Lantern* was announced as the winner in the Fanzine category, convention chairman Joe Siclari (who knew differently) nearly jumped out of his skin in his haste to get back stage to find out what had happened.

So what *did* actually happen? The only thing we're positively sure of is that there was a blunder by the person handling the

counting of the ballots and who was also responsible for making sure the right names got inserted into the right envelopes. We were told several stories, none of them entirely convincing (some of them weren't convincing at all, in fact). Apparently, it had been very late the night the voting results had been run through the computer and a copy of the summary had been printed; when the winners were transcribed from the printout, a mistake was made 'because the ruler slipped' (apparently the printout wasn't very user friendly). This story doesn't make too much sense, though, because the names of the winners had to be given to somebody who made up the 35mm slide that was projected, and also to the person who assembled the Hugo trophies, and both of those correctly had our name on it.

No matter. The 'Hugo That Was Awarded Twice' now sits over our fireplace, right next to the Japanese cat figurines (described in *Mimosa* 12) that we bought in Los Angeles earlier in the year. And we have two of them! A second, matching award was presented to Nicki after the Hugo Ceremony -- apparently the procedure is: two editors, two awards. The design of the award is really striking; since Magicon was the 50th Worldcon, the committee went out of its way to make their Hugo trophy a work of art. The rocket is gold-plated, and rests on a small rectangular piece of expanded metal that came from the gantry of Launch Complex 26 at Cape Canaveral -- the site where Explorer I, the first U.S. orbiting satellite, was launched in 1958. The award's base features a backdrop hand-painted to simulate 'infinite space'; the whole effect is majestic. It's also highly noticeable, as we found out on the way back to our hotel after the awards ceremony when we happened to pass near the hotel nightclub, a popular nightly watering hole for the mundanes who were also staying at the hotel. One drunken fellow leaned out from the doorway and, noticing the trophies we each held, yelled, "Congratulations!!! You won an Emmy!!"

This, perhaps the most surreal night of our lives, had an amusing postscript the next

afternoon at the Hugu Ranquet luncheon. In a parody of the Hugo Ceremony, Elst Weinstein first awarded Mike Glycer a certificate from the 'Hogu and Blackhole Commission', then said there had been a mistake, yanked the certificate out of Mike's hands, and presented it to us, instead. There were also fans with buttons that read, 'I May Already Have Won A Hugo'. We'd guess these are *not* available from Publishers Clearing House...

* * *

The trip home after Magicon took two days, which gave us plenty of time to think back over the trip's events and highlights -- the things we'd done and the especially people we'd met: Bjo Trimble who apparently had looked forward to meeting us as much as we did her, Chuck Harris who we'd missed meeting at the Minneapolis Corflu three years earlier, Shelby Vick who was only a few hours drive from home, and Australian fans Dave Luckett and Sally Beasley, who were midway in an around-the-world vacation trip. In addition, there were also old friends we see only once or twice a year, like Dave & Ruth Kyle, Roger & Pat Sims, Teddy Harvia, Peggy Ranson, and Guy Lillian to name a few; none of these found their way into other parts of this convention report, but we appreciated their company during the weekend just as much.

It was inevitable on the long drive home that the conversation would eventually turn to fan publishing: how much longer could we publish large issues of *Mimosa*? Burnout has claimed fans a lot more well-known than us, and we were becoming concerned that we might be running out of things to say. But just then, an amusing roadside sign advertising a restaurant at the next interstate exit reminded us of one of our epic dinner expeditions during the six nights of Magicon.

And we thought, gee, maybe this was something we could write about...

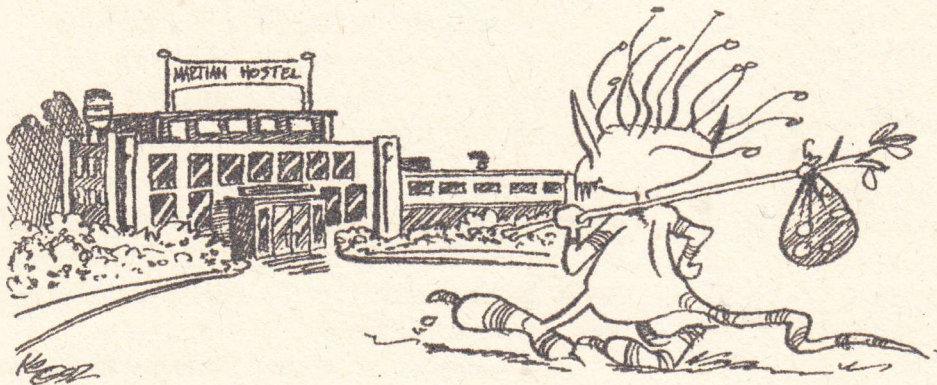
"We also want to thank you, our readers, for honoring us with this award. You flatter us greatly, and in return we hope to continue entertaining you with new issues for years to come." ➡

☞ A new year, a new issue! As we mentioned, winning a Hugo Award at Magicon was very flattering, but that surreal Saturday night at Magicon isn't really what we'll remember most about Magicon. Meeting Walt and Madeleine Willis is. Walt and Madeleine were part of the now almost legendary Irish Fandom (or IF) of the 1950s, which also included Bob Shaw, James White, and the subject (and writer) of the following remembrance...

Magna Charters

by John Berry

(Except for the non-verbal black marks on this page, which are by Kurt Brecken)



George "All the Way" Charters is up there, somewhere, sitting on a cloud, propeller beanie spinning, clutching his Max Brand anthology. I met him for the first time on one of my early visits to Irish Fandom's H.Q. at Oblique House, 170 Upper Newtownards Road in Belfast, in 1954. I was 28 years of age then, and so to me he appeared quite old. Young people are apt to underestimate the elderly, a gross error, because now that I am in that category I do really still feel mostly in full possession of my mental and physical faculties.

I hope he isn't constantly frowning at the thought of my allusions to his old age in the many fables of Irish Fandom in which he was always featured. He was venerable, of course, but mostly alert to the ramifications of his surroundings. Even when I went 'over the top' in my descriptions of his senility, he really enjoyed the allusions, especially in my "Twilight of the Ghods" (in *Hyphen* 16, of 1956). The plot was suggested by Walt and Madeleine Willis; Robert Heinlein had promised to visit Oblique House in 1956, and Walt and Madeleine were obviously enthralled at this prestigious visit and desired to hire a butler for the evening...

George raised himself to a sitting position, and, rapping his crutch against the wall, signified his intention of wanting to take part in the conversation.

"Walt," he croaked, "I have held a great variety of, er, occupations in my time, and it has, er, heh heh, always been my ambition to be a, er, heh heh, butler. It would be the fulfillment of my, er, wildest dream if I could, er, heh heh, butler on this most important occasion. Heh heh."

This shook Willis, folks. I could see that he didn't want to hurt George's feelings, as none of us did, but after all, Robert Heinlein was a pretty important person.

"I'm sorry, George..." began Walt. George looked downwards, a spasm of resignation flickering over his venerable form. There was a silence for several seconds, and then Willis, doing the stupid thing and letting sentiment overcome his common sense, gave a big sigh and nodded to George.

With a terrific show of exuberance, George gripped the side of his bath chair, staggered to his feet, and hobbled from the room, cackling to himself happily.

A message was received that Heinlein's plane had landed in Dublin instead of Belfast, and therefore he would not be visiting Oblique House. In order not to disappoint George, Walt Willis decided to impersonate Heinlein, George having poor eyesight. I was one of the first visitors, and George was on duty, ready to receive Heinlein...

I felt quite proud when I saw George the following night. He opened the door majestically to my ring, and I nearly collapsed in the airlock at the sight of him. He looked like a penguin, his remaining silver locks brushed back carefully over his pate.

"Welcome to Oblique House, sor," he said, addressing the hallstand.

"It's me, George," I hissed.

It hit him like a physical blow.

"Third time tonight," he complained.

"How do I look?"

"I gotta hand it to you," I cringed, pushing him gently out of the way as I passed, noting his red waistcoat and buckled shoes.



* * * * *

In his brief biography (in *Hyphen* 16),

George reveals he was born in County Roscommon in southern Ireland in 1910. His second christian name initial is 'L', and he quite wittily alludes to the mystery of it (I have transposed third to first person):

Many people, and even fans, wonder what the 'L' stands for. It is just not true that I was called 'Lancelot' because I suffered so much from boils in my youth. Indeed, on this sore point no information is forthcoming. Some think that because I stand over six feet tall the 'L' stands for 'Longfellow'. Others think that the 'L' stands for 'Yngvi'...

He lists the titles of books he kept as a young child, considering that *Through Flood and Flame*, *King of the Air*, and *The Second Form Master at St. Cyril's* might be categorised as science fiction!

His interest in science fiction was stimulated to such an extent that he describes travelling on a tram in Belfast when he was a young man, and seeing the words MARTIAN HOSTEL on a building. It registering slowly in his mind because he was reading an sf novel at the time. He leapt off the tram, and discovered to his chagrin that it was the SAMARITAN HOSPITAL.

Throughout the Second World War he worked in an aircraft factory in Belfast, but studiously traced "...two trickles of sf, *As-tounding* and *Unknown*." In 1947, through the pages of *Wonder*, he made contact with prominent English fans, and ultimately got in touch with Irish Fandom.

* * * * *

George was a supreme punster, well suited to the cut and thrust of the rapid verbal interplay by members of IF, always able to deliver many a *bon mot* of subtle sophistication. He was also a poet, and in *Grue* 28 (in 1959), his poem on Ghoodminton was published, written in the style of "Hia-watha." Herewith a quote...

In the finals of the contest,
"Ghoodminton," cried Walter Willis,
Walter Alexander Willis,

"We will show them how to do it
In the Walter Willis attic,
In the Willis fambly attic!"

From the pile of bats he picked one,
Tested it for imperfections,
Tried its balance, weighed it deftly,
Swung it round his head and shoulders
With the sure hand of the master;
Found it answered his requirements;
Sought and found the well-known trade-
mark,
Showing it was made by Charters,
Master craftsman, master batman,
In his lonely little workshop
By the shores of Gitchee Goomee,
By the shining Big Sea Water.

A memorable pastiche.



The final meeting of Irish Fandom took place at Oblique House on 26th April 1965, attended by Walt and Madeleine Willis, James White, Bob and Sadie Shaw, George Charters, and myself. I met George quite

regularly after that, until I left Belfast and returned to England in the early seventies. George still worked at the same aircraft factory as previously mentioned -- he had obtained the sinecure of working permanently on the night shift; almost every week he called to see me in the evening before the commencement of his nightly sojourn. I know his eyesight troubled him, yet he drove from his home in Bangor to Belfast every night. He parked his car in a neighbour's drive, once, unfortunately, when the neighbour was already parked there. We drank tea and ate toast, and philosophised about the old days.

In 1987, Walt Willis published a special issue of *Hyphen* to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the founding of Irish Fandom, for which I wrote a story, "The Re-union." The plot concerned my wish to hire an actor to impersonate George and call at Oblique House so that we would have a complete attendance at a commemorative meeting. Three other members of IF had the same idea, resulting in four pseudo George Charters appearing at the meeting. At the end of the amazing scenerio, Walt Willis bade us all sit down...

Suddenly something like an electric shock ran up my legs, up my spine. My hair stood rampant; tears sprang to my eyes. The other three also sat transfixed. There was a sudden chill in the air, followed by a warmth that somehow seemed relaxing...happy...familiar?

We looked at each other, eyes blinking in astonishment. "Gentlemen," said Walt, his voice firmly under control, "we are complete."

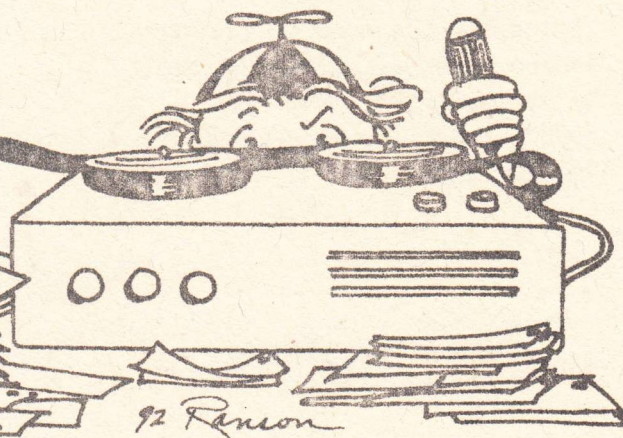
That story came from my heart.

George Charters upheld the finer Victorian principles of kindness, modesty, and thoughtfulness, and was polite and chivalrous to women (he wasn't married!). He saw and appreciated the best in everyone, and was always a stalwart of Irish Fandom. ♦♦

☞ Speaking of Irish Fandom, Walt Willis now continues his look back at the year 1954 in this newest installment of "I Remember Me." The thread of Walt's correspondence file this time takes us from London Circle fan club meetings with Vincent Clarke, to learning touch-typing with Chuck Harris, to James White's hospital stay... with lots more yet.

I Remember Me

by



Once again you are entering into the golden age of frequent letters from me.

Thus wrote Vince Clarke in a remark which went straight into the *Hyphen* back cover quotes. He went on to explain that he had lost his job, his boss admitting under questioning that he had given it to his own brother. Halfway through his letter, Vince touched on London Circle parties.

London fan parties are odd things in that, fandom and sf not being well known, the talk usually borders on the fantastic embroidery of some current news or set of facts (this latter commonly known as s-c-a-n-d-a-l), and Ted Tubb and Bert Campbell being two of the best extempore talkers around, the party usually hinges on their topics. The funniest party I've been to in London was at the Ratigans' old place, when Bea {{☞ ed. note: Bea Mahaffey}} was here, and Ted and Bert were discussing the possibilities of founding a new religion. I shall never cease to regret not having a tape recorder for that. After

laughing for three hours I had such a violent pain in my side I had to go and walk in the garden out of earshot. That was 3.30 am.

I'm getting a tape recorder this week...in bitter opposition to Dot {{☞ ed. note: Dorothy Ratigan}}, who's been trying to mother me, and who still expects fans to act like normal human beings. Would I be mothered if I moved to Belfast, Madeleine?

((Madeleine commented: No. It would be more likely that she would find you two at an auction.))

On 20th January 1954, Chuck Harris reported getting his typewriter back from the repair shop, a development greeted with relief by all his friends, who had been suffering from stiff necks from trying to read his backward sloping handwriting. I had quoted at him Napoleon's comment on the handwriting of Marshal Nez, "Who has been sending me maps?"

Top o' the morn from the top o' the heap, keed. A veritable frabjous day!

"Dear Mr. Harris," the chit said, "the Management have decided to increase your salary." All this and a FAPA mailing too.

The typer came back on Friday, but I didn't write before, because I didn't have anything to say -- which is, come to think of it, a peculiarly fuggheaded reason for not writing to you.

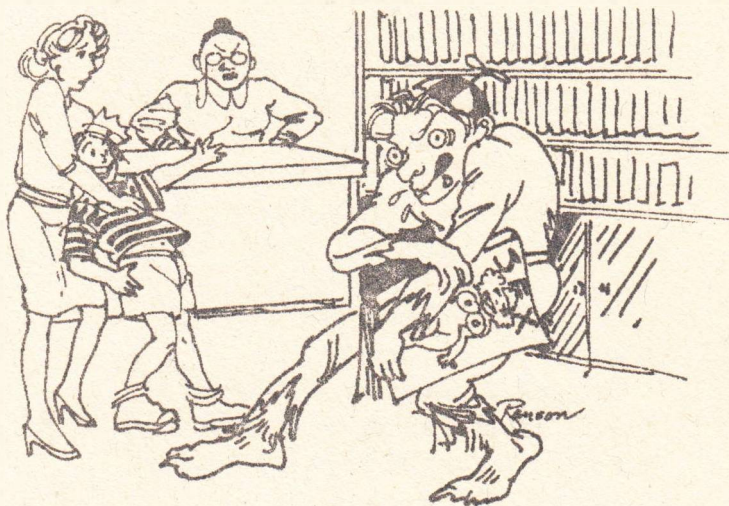
I did intend to spend some time stencilling that Redd Boggs thing, but I got carried away on a Ken Slater letter and didn't have enough time left. If I'm impotent or not working on Sunday, I'll do it then. I want some normal sex life this Sunday. Sublimation is all very well, but it gets tedious.

27 Jan 54. After the egoboo from Vince, I think the last two pages (of *Hyphen*) pleased me most of all. I always think you are at your very best when you're being icily rude to someone you dislike. I'm awfully glad that I always seem to be on your side.

Whaddaya mean, "no one, literally no one, will be told anything until the poll for TAFF closes? Do you mean me?????" Ghod, eighteen nicker in the kitty, and you go have an attack of scruples.

Feb 54. I lent an Ellery Queen book from the library months ago and I owe about twice its value in fines. I used to get special treatment down there, but I've antagonized the woman and she'll insist on every damn farthing. She's one of those motherly types, and got the wrong idea about me. At first, she used to save me all the new Westerns because she approved of them. (I didn't mind because my father likes cowboys and indians.) When I kept a book out late, she would gently chide me and let me off the fine. This suited me very well. I don't mind being polite at all, if it saves me money. But it's all changed now. I put in a reservation card for *Sexual Behaviour of the Adult Female* and she hasn't gotten over it yet. She told my mother, too!!! My mother isn't very tactful and told her that,

"He already has the other volume, but he couldn't afford this one so he's going to get it out of the library."



Somewhere about this time an undated letter from Vince Clarke, containing some unused quotes...

I will face my fate steadfastly and go down with a smile on my face and a water pistol pumping in each hand.

-- James White

Are we oneshots in some cosmic FAPA?

-- WAW

Bea Mahaffey trod on these paving stones.

-- James White

I'll retire to fondle my tramcar collection.

-- FAPA

Anything that can't be done in New Orleans is impossible. In America's Most Fascinating city it is impossible for a Science Fiction Convention to fail -- if the Con Committee should drop dead to a man, the Chamber of Commerce would all hastily become fans and carry on...

-- advert in **Dawn**, August 1950

Here's a curiosity from Chuck, undated, and containing an average of about two typos per line, each corrected in ink by hand.

Haven't heard from anyone at all since I last wrote to you. Every time this hap-

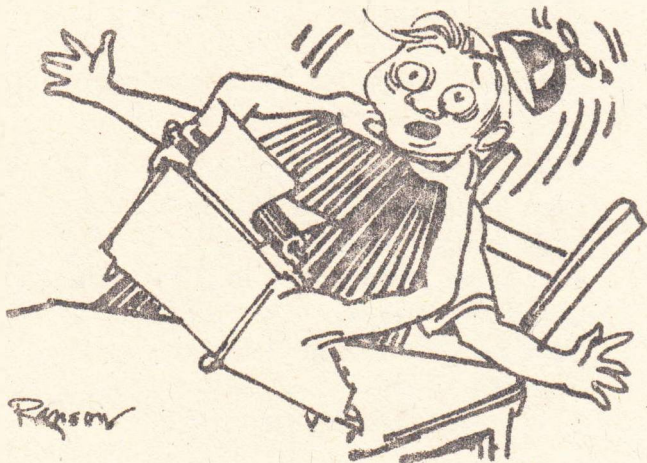
pens I start to worry. Do I stink in the nostrils of all decent fen, along with Bill Morse? Is Walt sore about the advert? Has he got pneumonia again? Did Vince finish off his part of the zine? Have I been banished to the outer wastes? Has fandom aborted again, and all my friends started to write for dirty pros?

Say something, if it's only goodbye.

I haven't been wasting my time. I am learning to touch-type. I bought a Pitman's *Commercial Typing* and have been spending all my spare time (about 15 hours so far) in practising.

Sprague de Camp is to blame for all this. In his *SF Handbook* he advises all would-be authors to learn touch-typing. That's me, Bud.

The main trouble with learning is that there is a constant temptation to cheat. It has been a little tough for me. The family have a low sense of humour and seem to find something funny in the curtain I have invented. This is a piece of cloth with one end tied to the baseboard and the other round my neck. For some reason this seems to amuse them. Last night, I forgot about the curtain and got up to fetch my cigarettes from the mantelpiece. I nearly broke my neck. They nearly bust a gut.



As you'll have gathered, this correspondence file includes Vince Clarke as well as Chuck Harris. We were at this time sending each other carbons of our letters. Here is part of a general reply from Vince, dated

10th February, 1954.

Mike Wilson and self were at Ted Tubb's over Christmas and we had borrowed Arthur Clarke's tape recorder. About 1 am Boxing Day morning, Ted and I were sitting at the table with the recorder...it had been going rather oddly and we were testing it. Suddenly, Ted leaned forward, and in the appropriate tones, went into quite a long monolog that left me with bugged eyes and a tremendous admiration for him. I won't give it all now, but this is the beginning...quite without preparation, mind...

*For there in fairy planets of long gone,
the crystalline towers of civilisations
long dust remain a mute memorial to
their wanton pride. And there the
sons of men do walk arrogant in heart
and questing of mind, to mould amid
the rotting dust, strange secrets of
civilisations spent, relearn and with
their new toys do hunt and kill their
brother men. ... On such a ship once I
served, many years ago now, Aye,
young I was then... Now, withered
and old and bent as a tree...Wed! Not
once but thrice...and red with wine
and sitting 'neath this foreign sky, this
instrument of music playing softly,
speaking to those who wander by...*

And then he went into histrionics, with self playing anti-strophe. Of course, it's not the sense in the above that matters, but the realisation of the rhyme of the words: Poetry lost an asset when Ted took up sf.

I notice from a letter of mine a mention of an issue of *Hyphen* that never appeared, a 'Special Science Fiction Issue'. This imaginary issue was to be...

...partly a burlesque of the serious constructive fanzine, with for instance a scholarly deadpan analysis of something utterly trivial, and partly our usual fannish stuff in thin disguise -- Chuck's "The Decline of *Astounding*" (with particular reference to

James' story) and James' review of the second issue of the *Vargo Statten Magazine* (in which Chuck's first and only professional offering appeared). And partly genuine serious constructive stuff better than the serconmags can do it. (Vince is the main hope for this, I think.) I'm expecting an anti-London Circle blast from Hamilton which should fit in nicely. Even Toto could fall into line, right down to cartoons like the Rotsler one: "We know all about him -- he throws away his old prozines."

On 25th April 1954, I was reporting to Chuck on James' admission to hospital: "After his food poisoning cleared up and they put him on the new insulin, his metabolism went haywire. Medical profession baffled. They were pumping him full of insulin but his sugar count or whatever it was still up there in the googols. It got so that every time he asked them how long it would be before he was out they'd double the previous answer. The last one would have taken him away past Easter (when he was to get engaged. He is engaged now officially and I can clear the information to you. They went down to Dublin for the ring on Easter Tuesday because it's cheaper to buy them there free of Purchase Tax and smuggle them across the border, and you're in fine fettle for the honeymoon when you get out of prison), and he was getting really worried. Then one evening, the doctor stopped as usual by his bed, and shook his head over him. Just as he was moving away, he asked the nurse idly to confirm that this patient hadn't been getting any drugs. 'No,' she said. 'Huh,' said James, 'that's what you think.' (He'd been getting them every other day, on the average.) The nurse clapped her hand over her mouth, and she and the MD had a hurried consultation. Next day, James was back to normal and they sent him home. Apparently there had been another patient in the ward called White, and every so often James had been getting his medicaments. Now don't go around telling people like Wilkie

Conner about this, as if it was a reflection on the National Health Service. After all, he didn't have to pay for the drugs, did he? He was getting killed perfectly free of charge."



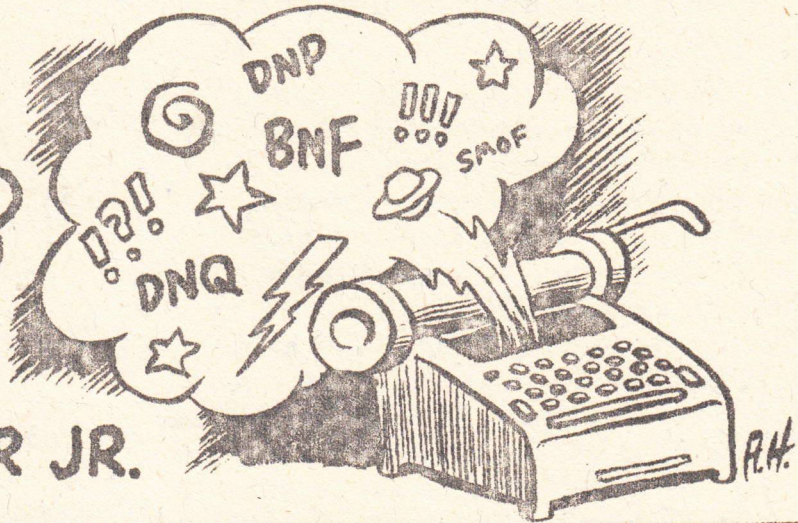
In another letter to Vince, I asked him, did he ever feel that one of his hoaxes had ever been too successful: "Mal Ashworth, evidently prompted by my cracks about first issues, sent me an 'advance copy' of *BEM* consisting entirely of spoiled sheets, scrap and slipsheets (one of them featuring the outline of a neck tie) with a neofannish note explaining it was the best they could do. Naturally I cut a hole in the stencil of p.2 of *Hyphen* 8 and inserted a violent denunciation of *BEM* as a disgrace to fandom, urging everyone to refuse to sub to it as a dreadful botch, and ran off one copy for Ashworth. Just got a bitter letter from him -- he's going to run off a circular over the weekend, explaining how his hoax was too successful, and write to KFS {{ed. note: Ken Slater}}, *Orbit*, *Space Times*, and Ghod knows who else. Poor Mal, he's all worked up about the unfairness of it all. I've just been out to send him a telegram suggesting he call on Tom White and look at his copy. Heigh ho. But gosh, he should have guessed. I hadn't time to do a proper job on the stencil and there's blank space and black lines round the inserted bit." ♦♦

-- To Be Continued --

☞ We hope by now all that our readers have been able to obtain a copy of the recently published hardcover edition of *A Wealth of Fable*, an informal history of fandom in the 1950s, chronicling the exploits of Walt Willis and John Berry, as well as lots and lots of other fans who were active then. The author of that book, Harry Warner, Jr., has been a frequent contributor to this fanzine, and we welcome him back again. This article by Harry originally appeared several years ago in the *apa SAPS*, and after that, in a British fanzine *Marital Rats of Shaolin*. We don't expect that too many of our readers have ever seen it, so we're happy to give it new life here.

WHEN FANAC WAS A FOUR- LETTER WORD

by HARRY WARNER JR.



It was a lovely summer day, a Saturday so long ago that the United States was still engaged in war in Vietnam. I was rejoicing in the luxury of my day off, because I was working a six-day week most weeks on my newspaper job.

In mid-morning, the telephone rang, beginning one of the weirdest events in all my years in fandom. The caller wanted to know if I was the Harry Warner who was in fandom. I admitted the fact. Then he told me he was glad I was at home, because he was less than two hour's driving time from Hagerstown, and in a moment he would be on his way to come to 423 Summit Avenue and beat me up.

I thought I deserved an explanation and asked a few questions. He identified himself as an individual of whom I'd never heard, a commissioned officer in the armed forces, currently on leave in the United States. He said he had no intention of ignoring the slur

I'd written about him, and he was about to teach me a lesson I'd never forget.

I was as mystified as I was alarmed. Further questioning showed the slur in question was a LoC published in a fanzine edited in the nation where he'd been stationed before returning to the United States. I couldn't remember specifically what I'd written in that LoC, but I knew it couldn't be about an individual who admitted he wasn't a fan and whose existence had been unknown to me until that telephone call. I protested that there must be some mistake, but he told me he'd try not to be late, and hung up.

Of course, I suspected a practical joke from someone in fandom. But then I realized a fan would have seized upon something I'd written that could be interpreted in the wrong way. With some effort, I dug out the fanzine in question, read my LoC, and found in it not the slightest reference that my caller could possibly have considered directed at

him. All of a sudden, the summer day wasn't so lovely any more.

I wasn't quite sure what I should do. If I simply locked up the house and went somewhere for the rest of the day, it would only put off a confrontation and lengthen my worrying period. The caller's threat could, by the letter of Maryland law, justify my swearing an assault warrant against him, but I had no witness to the threat. It would be my word against his in court, so it would be better to wait until I'd been beaten up and then swear out a warrant for assault and battery. I didn't want to ask anyone to come to my home to be with me if this confrontation occurred, because I might be dealing with a maniac who would pull out a gun or knife if he found himself one against two. The only halfway satisfactory procedure, I decided, would be to step outside as soon as I saw him coming up the porch steps, and let whatever was destined to happen occur outdoors. There would probably be a neighbor or two cutting the grass, or otherwise capable of seeing what was happening, and I thought there was a fifty-fifty chance such a neighbor would call the police in case of violence, instead of helping my visitor.



Then the telephone rang again. It was the same officer. He told me he'd been talking it over with his wife. He thought I sounded like a reasonable sort of person who just couldn't help himself when impelled to write slurs in fanzines, and he'd decided not to beat me up. Instead, he would write me a letter giving me valuable information. Before he hung up, I managed to get enough information from him to solve the mystery.

I'm going to be vague about certain matters, to avoid identifying facts about this officer from appearing here. Basically, what had happened was this:

In the nation where he'd been stationed up to now, he had had a mistress, whose brother was an active fan. As a result, the American officer had had casual contact with the brother and with some other fans, he had glanced at some fanzines, and he had heard some fannish slang. He had found nothing about fandom which he admired and he had decided all fans are communists, because some of those fans he'd met had left-wing leanings.

In the previous winter, just before Christmas, the young woman on whom the officer had spent a lot of money had jettisoned him, abruptly and totally, in favor of some other man. The officer had been so shaken by his unexpected dismissal that he had spent Christmas Eve in a whorehouse. By his standards, it was a normal thing for a healthy young man to have a mistress, but patronizing a whorehouse was a disgrace, a deviation from acceptable conduct that he shouldn't have allowed himself to do. And somehow, the officer thought that these communistic fans had something to do with the loss of his mistress and a more serious event that had occurred later: he'd lost his security clearance -- he could no longer hold the duty to which he'd been assigned, and, after his leave, he would be reassigned to duty in Vietnam.

Early in that year, I received a fanzine from this nation. Each letter in the LoC section was dated and, by coincidence, several of them had December 24 dates. When I

wrote a LoC on that issue, I said my concept of Christmas Eve in that nation had changed, with fanac replacing the traditional tree-trimming and gift-exchanging. My LoC appeared in the next issue, which the officer had somehow acquired. His knowledge of fannish slang wasn't thorough enough -- he thought 'fanac' meant 'copulation'. He assumed the unhappy Christmas Eve he had spent had been gossiped throughout fandom so completely that I'd heard about it and I was referring to his whereabouts on that date when I wrote of Christmas Eve Fanac in my LoC.

I don't think he ever believed me when I tried to explain to him my ignorance of the whole series of events involving him, and the true meaning of 'fanac'. I admit that I wasn't entirely fair because fanac sometimes does involve sex, but I didn't try to go into details about the word's definition.

Several days later, a letter arrived with his name and return address on the envelope. This made me apprehensive again because

there was a great deal of newspaper publicity about letter bomb episodes in that era, and I wasn't altogether sure he hadn't changed his mind again about me. But the envelope was thin and flexible, so I took a chance and opened it.

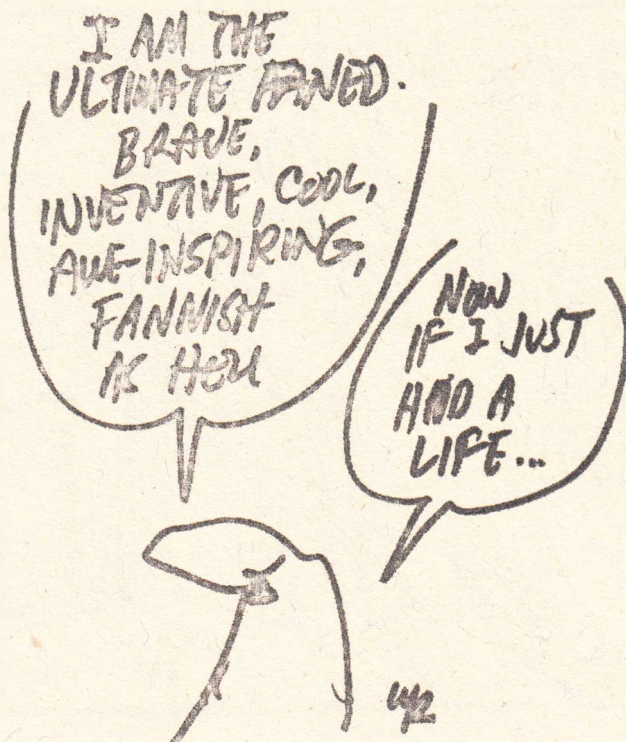
It was a nice letter, in most ways. There was no more mention of physical violence. Instead, the officer was going to give me an opportunity to serve my country while retaining my status as a civilian. He was arranging a meeting at which he and I would tell the authorities all about the communist conspiracy known as fandom. I could fill in any of the minor details about this conspiracy after he'd outlined all the major facts, and in this way, I could make amends for the awful thing I'd written about him in that fanzine.

Somehow, I escaped that peril, too. And I've never heard a word since from, or about, that man who had wrecked that perfectly lovely day off, so many years ago. ♦♦

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 Joe Mayhew - pages 41; 42; 44; 47; 59
 Peggy Ranson - pages 14; 15; 16; 17
 Bill Rotsler - pages 20; 56
 Diana Stein - pages 35; 36; 49
 Steve Stiles/Bill Rotsler - page 52
 Phil Tortorici - pages 26; 28; 29; 53
 B. Ware - pages 2; 21; 23
 Charlie Williams - pages 38; 62

photos on page 63 by Dick Lynch



☞ We stay in the Vietnam years of the 1970s for this next article. Those of you who are familiar with this fanzine know that preserving fan history is one of the driving forces that keeps us publishing. However, our interests here go beyond fan history -- we also publish stories about things fans do (or once did). The following is an example...

david
thayer

PLAY AMBUSHES



and other surprises

Before the Army sent me to Vietnam to fight, they trained me. How similar the training was to the games I played with my buddies as a child both surprised and scared me.

Mid-spring 1970, four months into my stay at Fort Polk, Louisiana, I bumped along in the back of a deuce-and-a-half truck. The fitful starts and stops threw me and the other eleven Army, Army Reserve, and National Guard privates in my squad back and forth against each other. The driver roared the engine to keep from stalling it. I huddled on the wooden bench, the pack on my back, filled with 40 pounds of personal effects, hunching me over. Sometimes I wondered if I would ever be able to straighten up. The folded entrenching tool hanging from my web belt dug into my thigh. The weight of my steel helmet pressed down on my head.

I held my black plastic and metal M-16 rifle upright between my knees. The weapon represented another encumbrance since I had no ammunition for it, nor even magazines. Silently I thanked the powers-that-be for allowing us to ride rather than forcing us to march.

The faces around me looked blank in the half-darkness. The smell of new canvas filled my nostrils. The top offered slight protection against the chill in the damp morning air. I

felt little excited about the two-week FX (field exercise) ahead, the finale to my advanced infantry training. Across from me sat Kramer, his boyish face out of place beneath his helmet. His telling me the mnemonic that backwards his name spelled 'remark' ensured that I'd never forget it.

The truck stopped abruptly, throwing us forward. I braced myself for a jerk in the opposite direction. When the halt dragged on, a private parted the flaps over the tailgate. Morning light flooded in. A cool breeze permeated with diesel exhaust stirred the air around us.

"Close that," someone ordered.

The flap stayed open. We were all equals in the back of the truck.

"What's going on?" I asked.

Another olive-drab truck sat on the elevated gravel road behind us, its engine idling. A line of uncounted other trucks closed in behind it.

Scrub brush covered the embankments on either side. The unnaturally straight edge of a piney wood paralleled the road on one side. A taut wire-mesh fence paralleled it on the other. Beyond the fence, the more natural irregular edge of another wood started. The sun had yet to penetrate into the hollows to burn off the early morning mist. I relaxed, unconcerned by the delay, convinced

the middle of the road was not our final destination, taking the opportunity to rest.

I heard the doors of the trucks ahead open, followed immediately by the door on the passenger side of our own. Multiple voices began shouting, the words unintelligible through the canvas. The palm of a hand slapped the metal rail along the side of the truck.

"What the hell's going on?" Kramer asked.

A hand threw back the tail flaps to reveal the black face of our platoon sergeant, beneath a Smokey-the-Bear hat. The nostrils of his broad, flat nose flared. Drill Sergeant Black, both our mentor and nemesis, had the power to make our lives miserable.

"Ambush!" he yelled. "Move out! Move out!"

Clutching my rifle, I tumbled out of the truck. I hit the ground hard but kept my balance. I straightened the helmet on my head.

"Ambush!" the sergeant repeated, pointing toward the straight tree line. "What are you doing just standing around? Attack!"

The absence of gunfire lent no urgency to the words. Still, we stumbled down the embankment into the brush. Wet leaves quickly soaked our trouser legs as we lurched toward the tree line.

"Make some noise," Sergeant Black yelled, right behind us. "This ain't no nature hike."

"Bang, bang, bang," I shouted, pointing my rifle at the trees.

"Ratta-tat-tat," Kramer muttered in comic book fashion.

A Southerner, a pock-faced boy from Mississippi, let loose with a Rebel yell. Screaming and hollering, we entered the woods. No enemy greeted me and we milled around, awaiting further orders. Away from the growling of the diesel engines, I heard a woodpecker hammering its head against a tree somewhere deeper in the woods. Crows flew overhead, cawing.

"What are you doing stopping?" the sergeant screamed at us. "You don't stop

when you reach the enemy position. You attack through it and secure the area. The enemy may have another line."

We charged twenty yards farther into the woods. We found no other enemy line among the shadows, and the sergeant called us back.

"We should have called in an air strike, Drill Sergeant," someone suggested.

"We did have an air strike," I remarked. "Didn't you see all those Phantoms dropping napalm?" The F-4 Phantom was the workhorse of close air support in Vietnam.

"You can't always count on someone else taking your ass out of the fire," the sergeant said. "You need to know how to take care of yourself."

The embankment seemed steeper going up than it had coming down. The exertion had warmed me, but the sweat was now beginning to cool. "Back in the truck," Sergeant Black ordered. "You don't think we're stopping here for the day, do you?" I climbed back into the truck with the others, passing my rifle in ahead of me.

The blood pounded in my brain as I pondered the play ambush. I'm hitting the dirt the first time anyone starts shooting at me, I told myself. Bayonet charges went out with the First World War. The truck lurched forward, throwing us back together.

The next morning, a boot kicked the tent stake near my head, waking me. Beside me, Kramer stirred, too. "Reveille!" Sergeant Black yelled. "Get your lazy asses out of the sack! Up and at 'em!"

I pushed back the blanket, and the sleeve of my shirt touched the dew-covered plastic immediately above me. Carefully, I scooted out of the tent to avoid further soaking. My poncho, snapped together with Kramer's, created our squat pup tent. The shallow pit beneath it we'd dug the day before offered us scant additional room. The scores of other tents of the rest of the company formed an oblong perimeter.

"Sarge wants us at the command tent," a fellow private shouted at us as I took the first bite of my breakfast, crackers and pea-

nut butter. Hurriedly, I laced up my boots and followed Kramer to the large field tent near the center of the camp.

"Take one clamp, one magazine, and four ammo clips," Sergeant Black instructed, pointing to three boxes in front of him.

I recognized the items from earlier training. The clamp, double rings of red-painted steel, was designed for use with blanks. It restricted the escape of gases when a round fired, forcing the bolt back, ejecting the spent brass, and chambering the next round. Back at the tent, I pressed it over the flash suppressor on the muzzle of my M-16 and locked it in place.

"Rock and roll," I said. "Now this baby's ready to fire on full automatic."

"Yeah," Kramer agreed. "Blanks."

Each clip held ten blank rounds, cartridges crimped on the end and plugged with a disk of cardboard. I slid 20 rounds free and pushed them one at a time into the magazine. Just then the platoon sergeant strode toward the tents of our squad, followed closely by the company First Sergeant, a master sergeant, walking like a sailor on his slightly bowed legs.

"Something's up," Kramer speculated. "Sarge's bringing Popeye over."

The senior noncommissioned officer stood barely 5 feet 2 inches tall, the Army's minimum standard. He surveyed us with one eye wide open, the other squinted. "We're going on patrol," he said through thin lips, his jaw thrust forward.

"Saddle up," our sergeant said.

"They're walking us into an ambush," I said to Kramer. "Why else would Popeye be going with us?"

I buckled on my web belt and canteen, and we took off into scrub bush beyond the perimeter. Popeye, studying a folded map, walked directly behind the point man. A mile from the camp, we entered a piney wood. Under the trees, the bush gave way to grass like green carpet. Easily-jumped two-foot-wide rivulets meandered through the wood, their waters babbling. "Nowhere for anyone to ambush us in here," I whispered to

Kramer.

Suddenly, a single shot disturbed the quiet.

"What was that?" Popeye asked in a loud whisper.

"Snake," a private ahead of us said, nudging a lifeless form on the ground with the muzzle of his rifle. Another private fired a second shot. A second snake writhed in its death throes. Everyone scooted away, searching the ground for more.

"Knock it off," Popeye ordered. "You're going to give our position away to the enemy."

"If you see any more," Sergeant Black said, "go around them."

I glanced at the reptiles as we resumed our patrol. Despite the blanks fired at extremely close range having pulverized their heads, I recognized the creatures as the same species that had inhabited the front yard of my home in Florida. "Copperheads," I informed Kramer.

I scanned the grass ahead of me carefully as we advanced, disappointed when no more snakes offered themselves as targets. Thinking to scare Kramer behind me, I softly barked, "Snake."

"Where?" Popeye asked from the head of the patrol.

Everyone, wide-eyed and frozen, was staring at me. "Only kidding," I admitted.

"Knock it off," Sergeant Black growled. Popeye glared at me a moment before turning forward again.

MAN, I NEED TO
TAKE A WHIZ!



A hundred uneventful yards farther along, we took an abrupt left turn. "Where in the hell is he leading us?" I wondered aloud. An hour later, we came to a taut

barbed wire fence. Beyond the trees on either side, I saw an elevated gravel road, but not the same one we'd traveled the day before. After conferring for a moment, the sergeants motioned us to cross the fence.

"They've gotten us lost," I said.

"If anyone was waiting to ambush us," Kramer said, "they've probably gotten tired by now and gone home."

We walked single file down the dusty road. With little chance of encountering either snakes or an ambush, I cradled my rifle loosely in my arms.

A cracker-box house appeared just off the road. On the porch sat an older man with a deeply tanned face. He wore a baseball cap, bib overalls, and work boots. Popeye showed the man his map, and the man pointed back across the road.

"He's asking a damn civilian directions," I said.

"Inspires confidence in our leaders, don't it?" Kramer agreed.

"Were you ever in the Army?" I asked the local as the sergeants discussed our next move.

"The Navy."

"When?"

"World War Two."

"Was the military screwed-up back then?" Kramer asked.

"Yup."

"It still is," I told him over my shoulder as we marched off in a new direction.

We crossed the fence again. For the rest of the morning, we wandered in and out of the woods, encountering no one else, friendly or otherwise. Finally we stopped for lunch. In the late afternoon, we came upon a dirt road, two dirt tracks through the brush. We followed it for a mile.

"There's the camp," Kramer said, pointing ahead. We left the road and entered the group of tents from the opposite direction we'd left it that morning.

"Stand down," Sergeant Black told us.

I flopped down in front of my tent, exhausted. "Combat veterans like Popeye make me wonder what Vietnam's going to be

like," Kramer said.

"He kept us from being ambushed, didn't he?" I said.

That night, I sat on the edge of a shallow foxhole on the company perimeter. Lazily, I dangled my muddy boots in the hole, their soles almost touching bottom. The light of the setting sun lingered over the surrounding meadowlands as crickets hiding in the grass chirped incessantly. Practice artillery shells, like struggling locomotives, arced overhead toward distant unpopulated targets. The roar of jet airliners out of reach at 30,000 feet teased my ears. Sergeants at the command tent behind us joked and laughed.

My nostrils had become oblivious to the smell of sweat, but two days without a shower left me feeling dirty. I fingered the grit that the oil on the metal flanks of my rifle had attracted. I played with the magazine, releasing it from the weapon and shoving it back in; I idly rotated the clamp on the muzzle.

"This is boring," I said.

"At least we ain't tramping through the swamp shooting at snakes and trees," Kramer responded.

"Watch this," I said, pulling the bolt back and chambering a round.

"What are you doing?"

"Livening things up a little bit." Clicking the safety off and pointing the rifle toward the darkness outside the perimeter, I pulled the trigger. The weapon popped and flashed like a cap pistol. The crickets didn't miss a beat. The sergeants continued talking behind us.

"Here comes another sapper," I said, swinging the muzzle of the rifle 90 degrees and firing again. "And another!" I fired several more rounds at a time. Neither nature nor the military seemed to notice or care.

"Vietnam must be something else," Kramer observed, "if combat vets don't even react to that."

"This is boring," I agreed. I clicked the selector switch on my rifle to automatic, and

pressed the trigger. The weapon ripped off five rounds in less than a second.

"Cool," Kramer said.

Footsteps ran up behind us. "What was that?" Popeye demanded.

I could not see his face in the darkness and realized he could not see mine. I smiled, feeling safe. "Someone shooting outside the perimeter," I lied.

"It sounded awfully close," he said, skepticism in his voice. "Did you see the muzzle flashes?"

"No, First Sergeant."

"Keep your eyes open," he said.

"Yes, First Sergeant."

"That was a close call," Kramer said, when the sergeant was beyond earshot.

"Yeah," I said, climbing out of the foxhole. "Popeye's got no sense of humor. Can you hold the fort by yourself for a while?"

"Where are you going?"

"I'm going to have some fun." In a crouch, I left the perimeter. About fifty yards out, I took a 90 degree turn and in the darkness, I circled the camp, stumbling through the brush and splashing through a shallow creek. The joy of being away from authority kept me from thinking about copperheads or other wildlife.

On the side of the perimeter opposite the foxhole, I paused. "Hey, G.I.," I shouted toward the camp in my best imitation Oriental voice, "you going to die!"

"Shut up!" someone yelled back. "I'm trying to sleep!"

I answered him with several single shots fired in rapid succession. No one fired back, disappointing me. I reloaded my magazine, but to conserve ammunition, decided against firing again. Instead, I moved on and found the dirt road that ran next to the camp. Casually, I strolled down it.

Suddenly, I heard voices coming toward me, joking and laughing. I ducked between two bushes off the road. Soldiers stopped right in front of me, but in the dark, I recognized no one. I clicked my rifle to automatic, the sound masked by the bantering.

"Set up an ambush here," an authorita-

tive voice said. "Half of you get on one side of the road, half on the other. An enemy patrol may be along any minute."

Two soldiers squatted down within arms reach of me. The leader told them to shut up. I waited with them, afraid of giving away my presence.

Five minutes later, another patrol approached. When it was even with me, the night erupted with pops and muzzle flashes like fireflies gone mad. In an instant, the staged ambush was over. My two unsuspecting companions jumped up. "Success!" one of them said triumphantly.

Ambushers and ambushed came together in the middle of the road. Not waiting for the leader's critique, I jumped to my feet and emptied my magazine at them. The laughing stopped.

"You're all dead," I grimly chuckled, walking through them into the darkness, delighted that I'd added an unscheduled surprise to the show. "Success," I mouthed to myself.

"Who goes there?" someone challenged me as I approached the perimeter.

"Popeye the Sailor man," I said, without breaking stride.

"That ain't the password."

"That's all right," I responded, walking past the private on guard duty. "I ain't Popeye."

I shuffled up to Kramer from behind. Sitting down beside him, I propped my rifle against the side of the foxhole.

"What'd you do?" he asked.

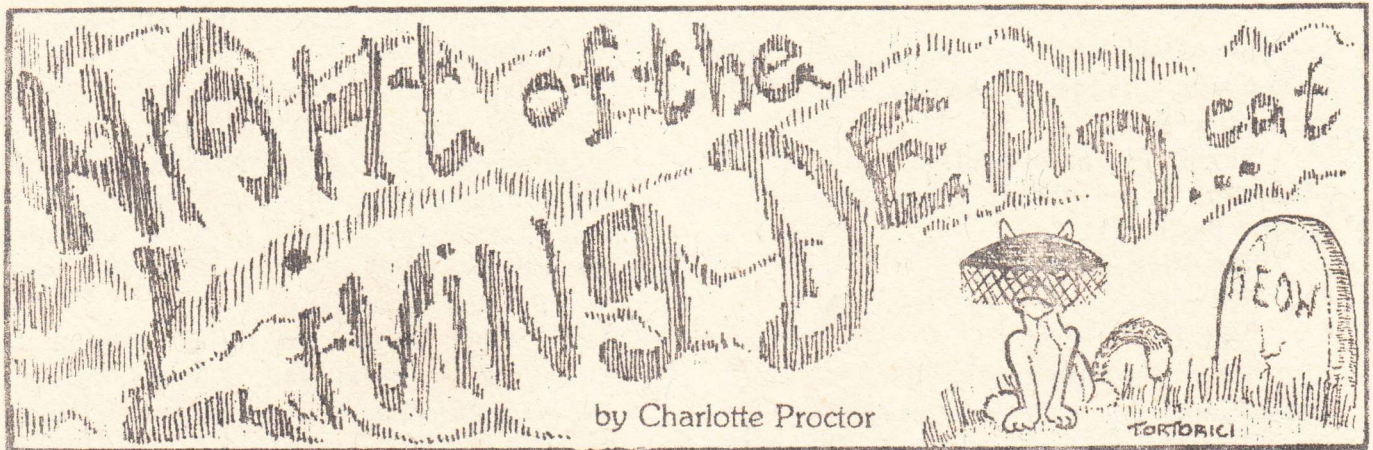
"I just ambushed an ambush," I said. "Wiped 'em out."

"Who were they?"

"Hell if I know. I couldn't tell in the dark."

Back at my tent later that night, I fell into a deep sleep, the blanks and play ambushes having inspired no fear. I feared the unknown, but it was still weeks and half a world away. If I dreamed, I dreamed of the past, of home and childhood. I could not yet even imagine the nightmares of the real world. ♦

☞ A different sort of 'war story', now, from our good friend Charlotte Proctor. We now live quite a bit farther from her than when we lived in Tennessee; until our trip to Birmingham for the Jophan Family Reunion, we hadn't been there in four years. We spent an enjoyable evening at her house the night before we left for Florida; it was a night for remembrances, which included the following entertaining tale.



My husband Jerry and I live in an older residential section of Birmingham, Alabama, with assorted friends, relatives, and cats. We live in what is called a 'changing neighborhood', and the little house next door certainly does change hands frequently, but I don't think it is because *we* live so nearby... or is it?

Several years ago a retired couple moved in. They were both little people, short in stature and small in girth. I think they were both obsessive compulsives, too, judging from their frenzied activities: planting bulbs and flowering shrubs, and 'fixing up' the little house. They loved to talk, and would catch Jerry or me outside and bend our ear for hours (it seemed). They told us about the previous place they had lived that they had liked so much -- what a lovely street it was, and such fine neighbors, until for no apparent reason the neighbors (not all of them, just one houseful) had turned ugly. The situation became so untenable they had moved, and were looking forward to fixing up this new (to them) little house and getting to know all the neighbors, etc. etc. They also went to flea markets, and had a constant turnover in their 'collectibles'. I remember Mrs. Barber (for that was her name) gave me a pair of embroidered pillowcases that said

'Mine' and 'Yours', and one time they bought a small desk which we later bought from them for ten dollars. That desk is now a reloading bench in our first born son's home.

The continuing conversation at our common fence brought to light the sad fact that the place they had lived two residences previously *also* had neighbors who at first seemed friendly enough, but had "turned on them" for no apparent reason. And the house before that... I lost count after the recitation of about four bad experiences, and they all began to run together. In each case, the Barbers had felt they had to move to get away from vindictive neighbors.

Our household at that time was probably at its most active. SCA fighter practice was held in our front yard on Sundays, and SCA meetings in our living room on Tuesday evening. Our children were teenagers, with the accompanying teenage friends hanging out at our house. Hank Reinhardt (Ulrich Wolfhaven, a.k.a. the Grey Wolf, or Ghod of Southern Fandom, depending on the venue) came to visit from time to time. I remember one time when Jimmy Fikes (blacksmith/knifemaker) was there, too, and the guys decided to have a kyber toss. This involves throwing a heavy weight very high up in the air. The yardstick was our phone wire. No,

the phone wire didn't come down, but there are indentations in my front yard to this day. It was a busy time, active, noisy, and full of laughter.

Our cat population at that time included Aldor and Baldor, two black and white cats named after favorite D&D characters... oh, I forgot to mention the D&D games around the dining room table. If one was scheduled for Sunday night while Jerry and I were trying to watch *Masterpiece Theatre*, there were sometimes altercations about the loudness of the TV in the living room versus the loudness of the gamers in the adjacent dining room. It usually ended with me shouting "Dammit, this is *our* house and we want to hear *our* TV!"

Uh, where was I? Oh, yes, the cats. There were Kira and Kinsey, named after Gordie Dickson characters, and Calico, the top cat. Calico was the oldest of all, and had presented us with countless litters before we wised up. Calico was getting up in years, but she never let her position in the household be challenged. Sometimes on her way through the house, she would go out of her way to cross the room to slap another feline resident up alongside the head. The chastised cat would hiss and assume a non-threatening position. Calico, satisfied, would continue to the food dish, where there had better not be another feline dining.

But, after a long and full life, Calico lay down one day in the warm sunshine and went to that big litter box in the sky. It was a peaceful end, but we couldn't help but feel sad. We had had that cat longer than we had had some of our children.

A proper burial was in order. It had gotten dark by the time we were ready. Calico was laid to rest in a fine shroud; a stone with her name and the years of her life marked her grave, and a plastic red rose adorned it.

Now, just where do you bury your dear departed pets? Certainly not in the middle of the yard where you might walk on the grave. Of course not! You bury them on the

perimeter. And when it is dark outside, you dig where light happens to be shining. It just so happened that spot was on the side of the yard adjoining the aforementioned neighbors, the Barbers. This was pointed out to me the next morning when I went outside, to be greeted with their shrill indignant cries. "How dare you bury that cat right under our noses?! What have we ever done to you?! How could you bury that animal right where we will have to see it every day?!" ...and variations on the theme. My explanations, denials of evil intent, and protestations of innocence fell on deaf ears.

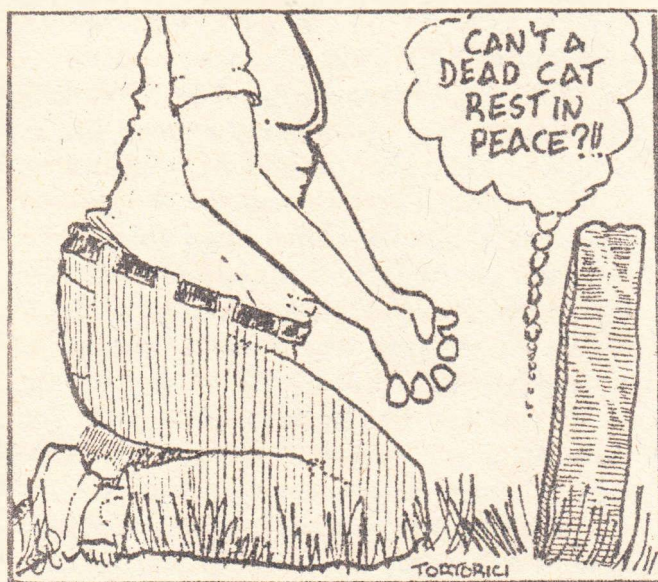
Neighborhood relations began to go downhill from there on. The Barbers *dug up* their bulbs planted on the other side of the fence, and transplanted them elsewhere. They filled in a place in the fence that was not complete. They began to berate the children playing in our yard.

I don't know what you call the kind of aberration they suffered from, and shared, but I knew we had joined their list of persecutors. Trips to the basement, yard-raking, and forays to take out the trash became fraught with danger for us. You never knew when the two of them would appear, like a couple of Pekingese nipping at your ankles, yipping and yapping in unison. We grown-ups tried to ignore them and go about our business after efforts to talk, reply, or reason with them proved fruitless. But what do you say to the children who come in from school having been yelled at by these crazy people, as they walked by the Barbers' house? You certainly don't want your children to reply in kind, to stoop to their level as it were, but this is difficult to explain to angry, defensive kids. I remember one weekend during this period that our friend Guy Lillian was visiting. Guy was in the yard with the kids, trying out their rope swing, when the Barbers came out and launched into their verbal attacks. He herded the children into the house. I didn't like the idea of my children being kept from their own yard, but he was probably right to bring them in.

I had told friends about Calico's demise, and one of them, Bill, the owner of Calico's son, came by to pay his respects one evening. Really. Bill stopped by after work, in his suit and tie, and we walked to the back yard and stood at her grave. She was a good cat. Yes. we'll miss her.

I also told another friend, Barbara, not only about Calico's passing, but also about the Barbers' reaction to her grave site. This was a mistake. Barbara was in the car with me, and when we got to my house she got out and, much to my amazement, began to wail and weep at the top of her voice, running across the yard to throw herself on her knees at Calico's last resting place. "Oh, poor Calico!" she keened (screamed, more like it), "Why did she have to go?! Poooooor Calico... *sob*, *gasps*, *sob*..."

Naturally enough, I rushed to comfort Barbara. Well, actually, I tried to make her shut up, get on her feet and into the house. Geesh. With friends like this, who needs enemies?



Lest the escalation seem one-sided, listen to some of the volleys *they* fired. A large piece of tin was put on their side of the fence, so they would not have to see the cat grave. And one night they called the cops on us. Well, this is a story in itself...

It was an SCA evening, and many peo-

ple were at our home. The grownups were doing grownup things like talking, drinking, and singing Irish songs. The teenage boys were outside doing whatever teenage boys do. I looked out from time to time and saw them sitting on the hood of the car and fooling around in the yard. In a little while, Dennis, the most timid of the bunch, came in and sat on the couch. "Oh, ho," I thought, "the boys are up to something Dennis would rather not be associated with." Not long after, the other seven came in and scattered to the bedrooms and bathroom on the Barber side of the house. They did not turn on the lights. Well, I'm no fool. I knew something was going on, and they were looking out the windows from darkened rooms so as not to be seen themselves. (I later learned that the police came in answer to a call from the Barbers accusing "them boys" of trying to break into their garage, which abutted our property beyond the break in the fence. The police shined their lights on the lock and could see no evidence of tampering.) As there were no hostile knocks on our door, I didn't pursue the matter any further that night.

The next morning I was met at the fence by two hysterical senior citizens. "Them boys were throwing knives in our garage!" they shouted.

"They were not throwing knives," I replied (for it was now all falling into place), "they were throwing shurakins." (Throwing stars, à la *Kung Fu* and other martial arts movies, were the newest 'toy' in the SCA crowd.)

Undeterred, the Barbers screamed in unison, "There were six of them, and we know who they are!"

"There were *eight* of them, and I know who they are, too," I rejoined.

"We called the police, and we are going to call the FBI!"

There didn't seem to be any reply to that, so I got in my car and drove off. I asked the boys that night why on earth they didn't throw at our tree instead of *somebody*

else's garage! "If we missed the tree, we might lose them in the grass," they explained.

That night, Jerry decided enough was enough. He built a very tall, very wide, very white cross. He planted this tall white cross at the head of Calico's grave, where it rose high above the piece of tin, and the late afternoon sun cast a no doubt pagan shadow across the Barbers' property. Reaction was not long in coming.

The very next morning as I was about to leave the house, who should appear at my back door but the Barbers. They had never crossed the property line before, but there they were, looking very subdued. "Oh, please, we don't know what we have done to offend you, but please forgive us!"

My jaw dropped open. What's going on now, I wondered?

"We don't know what we have done, but we are so very sorry! Please forgive us; we'll do anything to make it up to you, whatever we have done, but please take down that cross!"

"I can't take it down. My husband put it up. I'll ask him when he gets home tonight."

They had to be satisfied with that, and went home, heads hanging, defeated in the great neighborhood wars once more. Of course, Jerry took the cross down that night. He knew what their reaction would be, and it was, in spades. But it had done the trick, and they quit yelling at us every time we or our children stepped outside.

A little later, during the time Jeff DeWitt (Jeff is a rotund, hairy individual who looks like a large economy size Fidel Castro) was sleeping on my couch while he was between jobs and places to lay his head, Baldor was hit by a car. Mr. Chandler, our neighbor on the other side, called me early one morning. It had just happened. I put on my dressing gown, combed my hair, got some newspapers, and went down to the end of the alley. There was Baldor, deader'n a doornail. I wrapped him in newspapers and strode up the alley, holding him as far in front of me as

I could, in case he dripped.

He was heavy, especially in that position, and my progress was stately. The English gentleman who lived down the alley came to the fence to express his condolences. I said it was quick, and Baldor didn't suffer. The body was still warm. Mr. Chandler came to the alley, too, and I thanked him for letting me know so I could take care of things.

Upon reaching home, I put Baldor's body down in the backyard. Jeff (asleep on my couch, remember?) had always said for me to let him know if he could do anything to help me out. Well, this was it. I woke him up and said, "Jeff, would you please bury Baldor?" To help a bleary-eyed Jeff grasp the situation, I added, "He's dead."

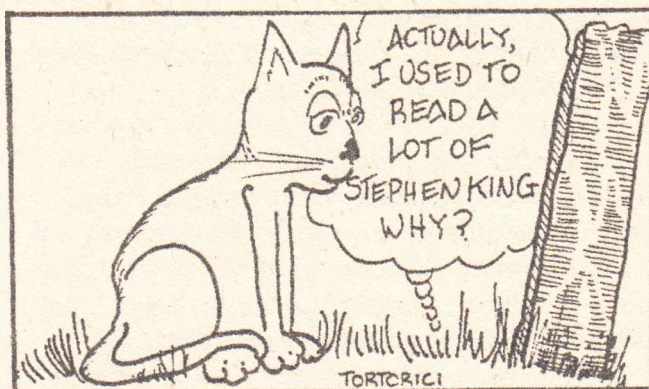
"Uh, yeah, sure," Jeff replied. I got dressed and went to work.

Well, wouldn't you know? Without any malice aforethought, Jeff buried Baldor on the Barbers' side of the yard.

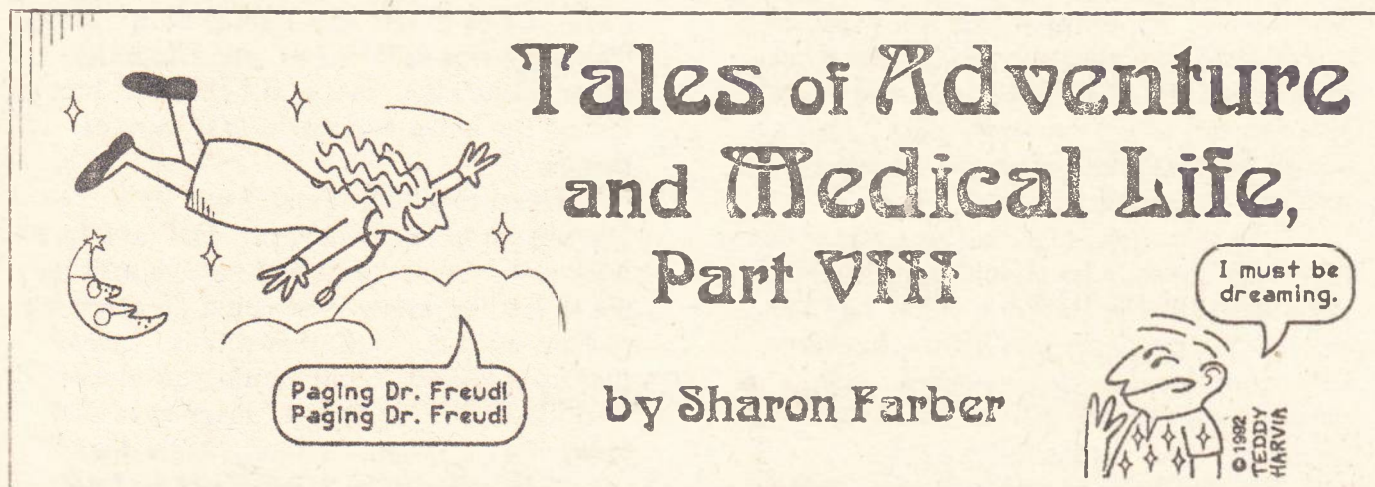
And that evening, there was a 'For Sale' sign in the Barbers' front yard.

* * *

The little house next door has had many tenants in the past twenty years. One couple entertained us to no end when the biker husband came home, drunk. He generally stopped his bike by running into the oak tree whereupon his pregnant wife would come out on the porch and beat him about the head and shoulders with a broom, yelling great imprecations all the while. But none shall burn so brightly in our memories as the crazy Barbers and the Great Pet Semetary Wars. -->



∞ On our way to Birmingham, a stopover in Chattanooga, Tennessee seemed only natural, since we lived in Chattanooga for 15 years before we moved north in 1988. The evening and following morning we were there, we managed to look up many of our friends there that we don't get to see very often any more, including the writer of the following...



Surely the most annoying thing about going to the doctor must be having one's symptoms be greeted by disdain or obvious disbelief. "Hey, I'm hurting and you're supposed to make it stop," one says. "Yeah, yeah, sure," replies the doctor.

Readers of the last seven installments might understand how doctors can be so casual or uncaring in the face of illness. The disbelief is another matter. The average patient is totally unaware that as many as two of every five visitors to an emergency room are trying to get drugs or are otherwise faking it. When you're puking your guts out from a migraine, it might not occur to you that the last such patient was caught sticking her finger down her throat.

Outright fakery is one thing -- people who want narcotics, or a work excuse, or to sue bigtime for a minor injury. (A friend asserts that the world's worst prognostic sign is the phrase 'Fell at Walmart'.)

The truly difficult patients are the hysterics -- only one percent of the population but, since their lives revolve around imaginary symptoms which they consider real, are a much higher percentage of the patient population. These are not normal people. They have weird ideas of cause and effect, and weirder coping mechanisms. I won't discuss what underlies their bizarre and troublesome

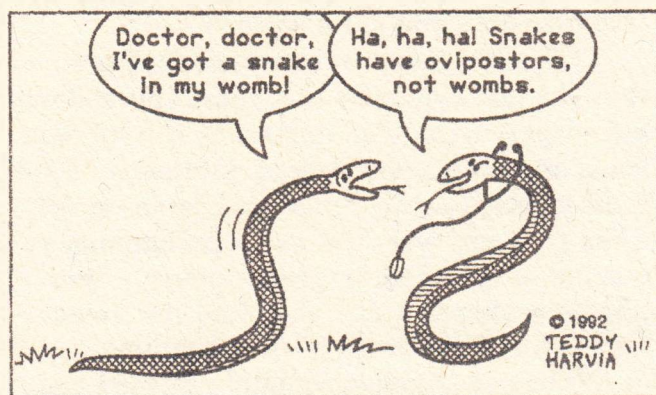
personalities any further because I went to a medical school with a purely biological outlook on psychiatric disease. We just figured it was something genetic and incurable, and left it at that.

Fifty years ago, when my mother attended medical school, her psychiatry class consisted mostly of Freud. (She told a funny story of the day the professor stated, "Men who go to bars together are latent homosexuals." Now, about the only extra-curricular activity any medical students back then had was to go out for a couple of beers. Every member of the class immediately looked panic-stricken, and for the next week or so there was an epidemic of sobriety.)

All we were taught about Freud was that, being Jewish, he was not allowed to attend at the Viennese mental hospitals and see the really crazy patients, so he wound up basing his theories of mental illness and the normal subconscious on Victorian hysterics. Nowadays, sophisticated hysterics have stomach-aches and headaches. Naive or unintelligent hysterics still have the symptoms of Freud's grand hysterics -- paralysis, blindness, fits. I once read an article in the *British Medical Journal* by an English doctor who did some time in St. Louis, and was astonished to find himself seeing patients identical to what Freud might have seen at

the Salpetriere a century earlier.

(Freud is still occasionally applicable. A patient at the mental hospital once ran up to us crying, "Doctor, doctor, I've got a snake in my womb!" I'm afraid that we were caught off-guard and laughed.)



On the subject of the biological viewpoint of psychiatric illness, perhaps I might quote a song from our second year class show, a *My Fair Lady* take-off. (It was a hilarious skit, and I'm not biased as one of the authors. Honest.) Sing it to the tune of "Get Me to the Church On Time."

I'm treating crazies in the morning,
Dingdongs with problems on their minds.
First diagnose them, then with drugs dose them,
And get me to the couch on time.

None of this free association.
Adler and Jung are not my line.
Don't Sigmund Freud me, you'll just annoy me,
And get me to the couch on time.

If they're depressed then
Nortriptylene
If they are schizo
Phenothiazine

Even though our psychiatrists were more scientific than the average, we medical students still had the doctor's vague contempt for the least scientific specialty, as witness our last verse:

She's going to start psych in the morning,
Easy rotations are sublime.
Won't have to think now, she'll be a shrink now,
So get me to the couch, get me to the couch,
Make sure you get me to the couch on time!

(I'm no poet, but I am excessively proud of the Sigmund Freud rhyme. My friends thought my better lines from the sketch were, "When I'm chancellor of Wash. U., I'll just reach right out and squash you," and that exultatory homage to syphilis, "The signs of sin are often on the skin.")

#

As a neurologist, I occasionally see people faking numbness or paralysis. The fakery is generally pretty easy to detect, though impossible to treat, stemming as it does from primary gain (the patient's got problems) or secondary gain (if I'm paralyzed, I won't have to go to work or I'll get a lot of money from the insurance company.)

Patients faking coma -- yeah, it's a weird thing to do -- are also easy to detect, though it can be hard to convince them to wake up. A neurosurgeon once told me of working in a hospital in Philadelphia that got lots of coma, and thus lots of pseudo-coma. He claimed that the refractory cases -- you knew they weren't comatose but couldn't convince them to give it up -- were treated in this cruel but effective manner: All the patient's clothes were removed, and the gurney on which the patient lay was kicked out into a busy hallway. My friend claimed that not a single patient failed to jump up and run for cover.

(I recently had a patient paralyzed all over. Her family haunted her bedside, waiting on her, even putting cigarettes in her mouth. The psychiatrist wrote an order that no one could help her smoke and, sure enough, the next day we found that one hand had been healed. "It's like a miracle!" she said.)

The hardest patients to diagnose or treat are those with pseudoseizures -- patients who fake epilepsy. For one thing, you have to be there sometimes to know if they're real or not, and for another, a major proportion of patients with pseudoseizures also have real seizures, and it can be tough knowing whether they need more anticonvulsants. (And occasionally pseudoseizures are actually real, but that's extremely rare.)

The first time I saw a pseudoseizure was when I was the medical student at City. We were leaving the ICU to go on ward rounds. There was a long bench outside the ICU. As we passed, it was hard to ignore a young woman lying down jerking all four limbs. She was not unconscious, however, but was following us with plaintive eyes.

"Sorry, dear, we don't have time for this now," said the chief resident as we walked by.

#

Pseudoseizures can be very dangerous. There is, after all, a natural tendency for non-neurologists to consider them genuine and treat accordingly. This can especially be dangerous if the patient presents to the emergency room faking *status epilepticus* -- a series of grand mal seizures, a life-threatening emergency treated with dangerous medications and invasive procedures.

A friend told me once of a patient who kept faking seizures until the interns in the ER decided they needed to intubate her (stick a breathing tube down her throat -- necessary in an actual case of *status*.) Once they started shoving it down her trachea, the patient stopped faking and began fighting. At this point, a neurologist would have known what was going on and stopped (we tend to feel that if the patient doesn't want the tube, he probably doesn't need it), but by now the interns were in epinephrine storm and restrained her in order to intubate. It was messy and she wound up with a nasty peritracheal abscess.

The reason I remember this so well is that, when I was the neurology resident rotating on the psych ward, I told this case to the psych interns as an example of how far hysterics will go. I had no sooner finished the story when I was paged to see a new patient -- and it was that lady! Just one of those weird coincidences better suited to Dickens novels than real life.

As a first year neuro resident, I was briefly fooled by a pseudo-seizer. We had been paged to the ER at City Hospital to see a woman in *status epilepticus*, who had been

found down on the floor of a fast-food restaurant. She had no identification. Her backpack contained personal articles that were all hospital-issue -- hospital-brand kleenex, plastic cup, toothbrush -- and a notebook in which was scrawled in childish handwriting over and over for many pages, the phrase: 'What to do if you get a seizure'.

On exam between convulsions, I saw that she had evidently had chest and abdominal surgery as well as numerous thrombosed veins and scars from venous cutdowns. I put it all together in my mind, and came up with some poor girl who had had a malignancy requiring lung and abdominal surgery -- lymphoma perhaps? -- and then had her veins ruined by chemotherapy. I was wrong.

She was actually a mildly retarded girl who travelled about the nation faking seizures whenever she needed a meal or a place to stay. All her scars were from treatment of her fictitious disease -- the thoracotomy scar was from when an attempt to place a central intravenous line had given her a pneumothorax (collapsed lung) and then an abscess requiring surgery. The veins had been ruined by the caustic, dangerous anticonvulsants. This girl was in constant danger of being killed by well-meaning doctors.

I stopped her seizures as the intern was doing the spinal tap. (Hysterics will allow the most painful and dangerous things to be done to them. A couple of years back, I read of one who faked a movement disorder which was intractable to therapy. It wasn't until they were wheeling her to the surgical suite to have a large portion of her brain removed that the patient suddenly sat up, completely well, and said, "Okay, I'm out of here.")

"You know," I said, "if this doesn't work, we'll have to intubate her." Evidently, she'd been on a breathing machine before, knew how uncomfortable it was, and decided that a prolonged stay in our hospital just wasn't worth it.

(One pseudoseizure at City, a down-and-out drunk, faked anesthesia. He would actually grab the pin from our hands and ram it into his leg until blood welled up, saying

cheerily, "Look, doc, I can't feel it." This sort of behavior is a pretty good clue that something off the norm is occurring.

(The intern, wanting to prove that the man had intact sensation, snuck up one day while the patient was asleep and jabbed him gently with a pin. Sure enough, he woke up screaming.

(After that he was a bit miffed. He put on his civilian clothes and pea coat, and walked up and down the ward cursing out the intern. I ran into the doctor, who looked quite pale -- and he was from India.

("What's wrong?" I asked. "You're not scared of that dirtball?"

("No," he said; obviously shaken. "But now that he's dressed, I recognize him." It seemed that, about a month earlier, he'd seen a drunk lying asleep with his head on the freeway. The intern had stopped and pulled the man to safety -- and now realized that it was this patient! Another one of those Dickensian coincidences.)

#

Confronting the patient with his faking doesn't work. My usual method of stopping intractable pseudoseizures was to administer a harmless medication -- normal saline. It only worked if you explained how unfailingly effective it was in an authoritative voice, and if no one cracked up. One laugh from a medical student, and the game is over.

I had this down to a fine art as chief resident. Once, I was called to the ICU to see a new patient who would not stop faking convulsions, upsetting the family and disrupting the unit. "All right," I said, looking sternly at one of the nurses. "Ordinary medication hasn't worked. We need XJ-47!"

"But doctor, isn't that dangerous?" asked the nurse loudly.

"Yes, but we have no choice!"

The nurse called to the other nurses.

"Dr. Farber is going to give XJ-47!"

"Oh, I want to see!" Pretty soon, every nurse not otherwise occupied was crowding around, as the first nurse -- shoulders shaking as she tried to hold back chuckles -- stood at the medicine shelf drawing up normal sa-

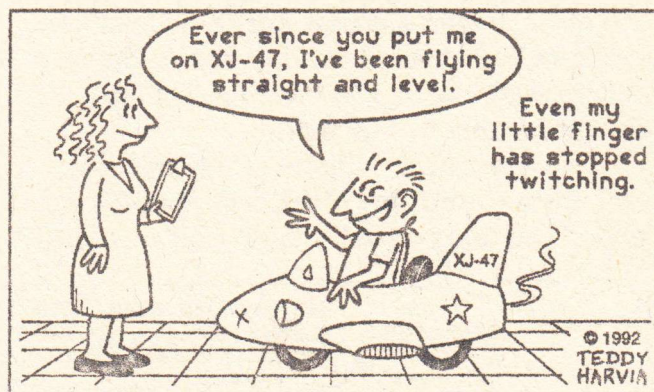
line into a syringe.

Meanwhile I, with stern gaze to keep any med students from laughing, explained that XJ-47 was a new anticonvulsant available on research protocol from the National Institutes of Health. Not only did it never fail to promptly stop seizures, but if the seizures didn't stop, they clearly had not been seizures to begin with. (That was the important point to get across to the patient, to convince them to quit.)

The resident, getting into the spirit of the thing, actually had the gall to pimp the medical students on the side-effects of the non-existent medication.

When I gave it to the shaking patient, I made sure to ignore her completely, meanwhile lecturing my subordinates. "Now, she may feel some burning as it's administered. Within fifteen seconds -- here, you time it -- it should start to take effect. First the little finger will stop twitching... Ah, there, you see? Now the left arm will stop shaking..."

If you were mean enough and convincing enough, you could draw it out indefinitely into a bizarre comic opera.



One day, when I was a first-year resident, we had a patient who had intractable pseudoseizures. She was a grand-hysteric. She also had mutism, being entirely unable to speak for the last six months, ever since her first day in a job-training program. (Secondary gain.) The attending wanted a good videotape of pseudoseizures, so we took her down to EEG, wired her up (to prove there were no abnormal brainwaves during the attack) and then started her convulsing with

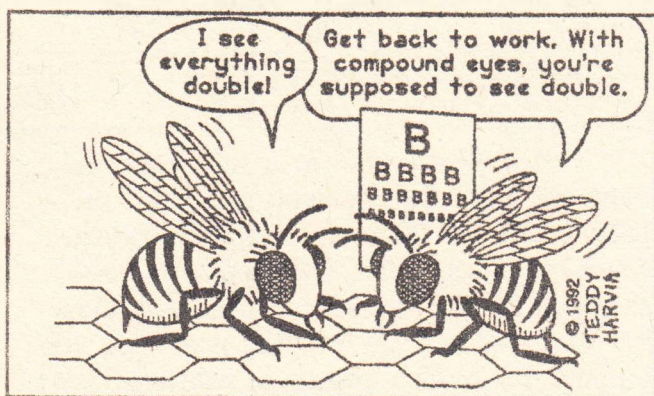
an injection "...to bring out your seizures." It was that versatile medication, normal saline.

She began to seize, sure enough -- and wouldn't stop. I gave her the normal saline again and she kept going. It was now almost five. The EEG tech and the cameraman wanted to go home. I had been working continuously since 7 a.m. the previous day, and I wanted to finish up on the ward and get the hell out of there, too. But she wouldn't stop, and we certainly couldn't return her to the floor like that.

Disgusted, I looked about the room for something I could use as fake medication. There was nothing except EEG supplies such as electrode paste (too messy). Then the little light bulb went on over my head. I got an eyepatch and soaked it in peroxide, all the while explaining to the intern that this was the most powerful anticonvulsant known to medical science, so strong you couldn't risk giving it by vein; you just put it in behind the ear (like transdermal scopolamine) and it absorbed right through the skin into the brain!

It was pretty hair-brained, but we were all desperate. To my shock, it worked, and she quit. I then assured her that these convulsions had cleaned out her brain, the way driving fast cleans your engine, and she should be able to talk again.

No such luck. The next day she was still mute -- until my chief, who was fed up, said, "You know, you're faking all this stuff."



"No, I'm not," she said. A cure! Except the next words out of her mouth were, "I see everything double." Her mother said she cer-

tainly couldn't go back to the job training program with double-vision. With hysterics, you just can't win.

The next year I missed the grand rounds where they showed the videotape. I got a lot of compliments for my ingenuity with the transderm peroxide, except for one cranky professor emeritus who evidently watched my performance, stood up, scowled and shook his head and said, "It just isn't fair."

#

All medicines, including normal saline, have risks -- though not necessarily to the patient. Later that year, I admitted a young man faking seizures intentionally. (His new baby had seizures, and he was jealous of the attention.) He kept starting seizures in the ER, in radiology, even in the elevator. Since no one except my team seemed to understand that these weren't real seizures, every time he started shaking again they would call a code, and doctors and nurses from every part of the hospital had to drop everything and come running. I quickly got his spells under control with normal saline, restoring calm to the hospital.

The next day, after getting another injection of the medication, he 'woke up' and said to the student nurse, "That stuff's powerful. What is it?"

"Salt water," she replied cheerily.

I meanwhile was turning the patient over to another neuro resident. "He acts like a turkey," I said, "but the spells are controllable with saline." I didn't know that the student nurse had just totally blown it.

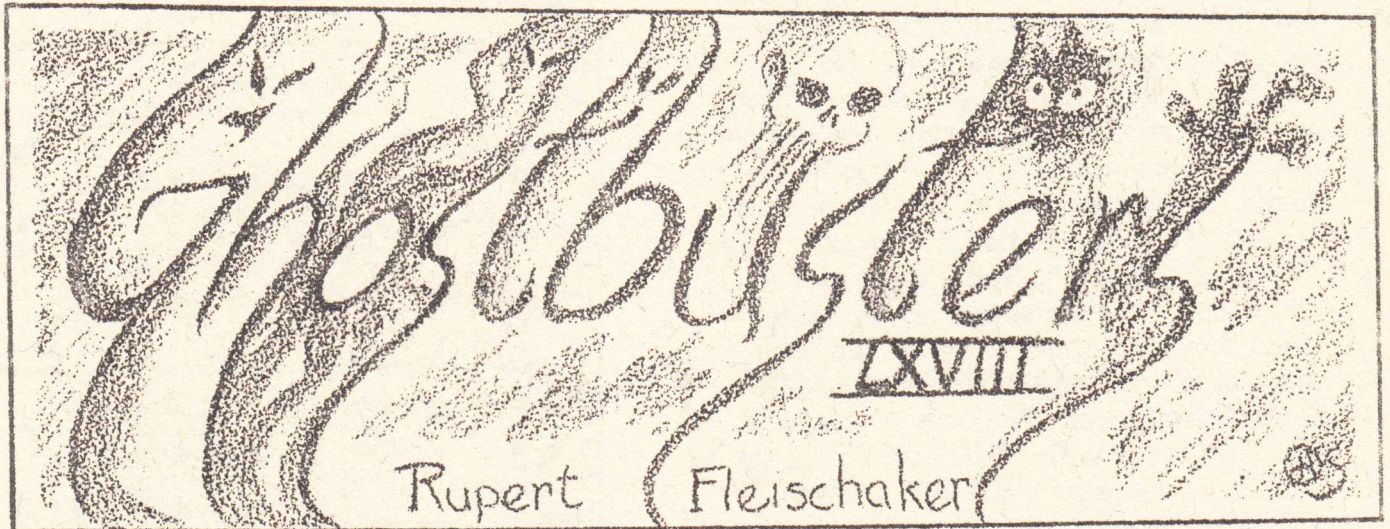
The patient began another fake seizure, and my colleague hurried off to stop it. There he was, jerking arms and legs, seemingly unconscious. The resident drew up the saline, injected it, and said to her students, "See? Now the seizures will stop."

She leaned in closer to watch, and the patient's jerking arm suddenly flew up and punched her in the nose.

"Well," I told her later, "you knew the job was dangerous when you took it."

"No, I didn't," she replied. ♦♦

☞ And now for something completely different. At a convention last year, the following article was handed to us in a plain brown wrapper, by a distinguished-looking Queen's English-speaking gentleman who claimed to know, among other things, the metaphysical implications of the Claude Degler's Cosmic Circle, whether or not Roscoe is the one true ghod, and who *really* sawed Courtney's Boat. Honest.



This is a tale that has waited over 21 years to be told. It happened over a long time ago and far, far away (nearly four thousand miles), and I have only ever told it to a handful of fen until now. However, it is now more than old enough to fend for itself, so it can now be told...

I should also briefly mention that all the names have all been changed, not so much as to protect the innocent (there are none) or to protect me from libel suits (this tale is true, although you probably won't believe it). No, it is simply because after all those years I honestly can't *remember* all of the real names any more.

It happened during my misspent British youth when I was very interested in flying saucers. It was because of this interest that I ended up on a ghost hunt.

The sequence of events was this: I met up with a fellow named Dick, who had formed a local UFO investigation society. He, in turn, had met up with a fellow named John, who had formed a local psychical research investigation society. As neither group was particularly large (each consisted of only one person), they joined forces. John's investigations had in turn brought him into contact with The Roost, a rock'n'

roll group that was B) having a spot of trouble with a poltergeist, and A) about to release their first single. Does the word 'publicity' mean anything to you?

Now note that I said rock'n'roll group, not rock. Even during the sixties "rock'n'roll" seems to have remained a comfortable label on the U.S. side of the Atlantic (i.e., "...like trying to tell a stranger about rock'n'roll" and "I dig rock'n'roll music" etc.), however, across the British shore rock'n'roll was two four-letter words. It was also nine years dead along with Buddy Holly (and Elvis Presley getting his call-up papers). The phrase envisioned Bill Haley fans; near-extinct neanderthals in teddy-boy jackets, crape shoes, and D.A. haircuts that oozed Brill-cream.

In the late sixties the music world was an expanding universe reverberating with the sounds of Sgt. Pepper, "A Whiter Shade of Pale," Jimi Hendrix, and Cream. And what was The Roost planning to conquer the whole scene with? "Don't You Rock Me, Daddy-O!" To be fair, they did have their sound together, and one of their songs had been recorded by Manfred Mann, back before his Earth Band days. But that was simply it -- the song was recorded and stored away in

some can for *possible* use on a future album.

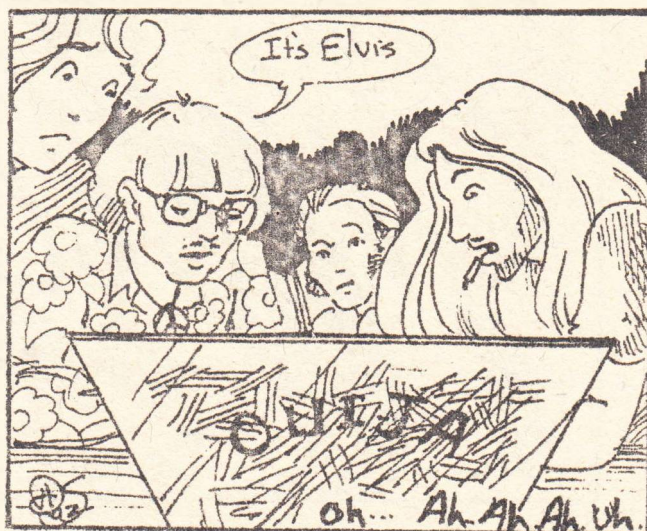
The Roost itself was led by Charlie on guitar. He, his wife, and two naked toddlers lived in a house of which only one room had carpeting and looked halfway decent. This was THE GROUP'S ROOM, its walls bedecked with mementos such as a poster for The Monkees' tour. The Roost had been offered one of the supporting-bill slots, but had refused, because they didn't want to be outshone. It's therefore a bit of wonder that they didn't have a poster for the charity gig they turned down "... 'cause there was no money in it," or the summons they received when they abandoned their broken-down and unlicensed 'van' on the side of one of the Queen's highways. The 'van' was a huge furniture truck with "THE ROOST" in three-foot high lettering on the side. Charlie blamed their getting caught on their agent.

The rest of the house was not only devoid of carpet, as I said, but almost totally devoid of furniture as well. There were also several spray marks low on the walls, their heights suspiciously corresponding to the heights of the children's inside-leg measurements. Someone called the place "the sewer" and I got credited with the remark (erroneously, let me tell you).

Charlie's younger brother, Steve, played the drums and the fool (the latter somewhat constantly). Malcolm was the bass guitarist and also a general dogs-body at a men's boutique; he was also into many a get-rich-quick scheme, all of which had an 80% chance of being illegal. The only 'normal' member of the band was the lead singer, Ray; the rest of the group admitted he was their only 'ace'. Ray was soft-spoken, articulate and friendly, he had an immaculate home, a 'sweet suburban wife', and was just recovering from a nervous breakdown.

As for dealing with their paranormal visitations, their own research consisted of sitting around an ouija board which would deliver messages from "the other side" only when Charlie's or Steve's pinky was on the pointer. Odd to relate, the spirit world contacts were always atrocious spellers and dis-

played a copious capacity for swearing, but as Charlie's and Steve's conversations were chock-a-blockful of profanities, it wasn't too hard to theorize where that phenomenon originated.



On one occasion, the ouija board directed us, conveniently on a Sunday afternoon, to go to Copped Hall, a once stately home that had the singular distinction of having burned down twice. After the second roasting it was left a roofless shell. Its inners were a maze of bare brick walls and rubble floors; in one shaft a dumb-waiter's pulley rope slowly twisted, reaching up three stories to nowhere. The lack of a roof admitted incongruous amounts of bright sunlight, and when I commented to Dick that this was hardly compatible with ghost hunting, he informed me that they had decided not to start the seance till after midnight. Sticking around till the wee small hours just to play phantasmatical pantomimes somehow did not appeal to me; it lost any appeal whatsoever when I realised we had no food with us, so I left the intrepid ghost hunters to their collective fate.

Their fate, it turned out, was rather more lively than expected (if 'lively' is a word to use about the undead). Ray had taken my place, with Malcolm 'guarding' the exit (if you hadn't cottoned-on already... we were trespassing). Just after the main team had started up with "Is Anybody There?"

Malcolm became agitated -- in fact, it's fair to say he became downright hysterical, screaming like a man condemned and taking a swing at Ray with his flashlight, then running off helter-skelter into the night.

Eventually, the team managed to catch up with him and calm him down. He claimed he'd been attacked by a phantasm which looked somewhat akin to "... a flying fag machine." (Now, before you let *your* imagination run riot, I should tell you that Malcolm was referring to a cigarette-packet vending machine.)

Later that week the ouija board was again consulted, and it told us (between obscenities) that Malcolm had been attacked by a vicious demon spirit that had disguised itself as a fag machine. This prompted one of the smokers in the group to ask how one could differentiate between such a demonic spirit and a *real* fag machine. The ouija

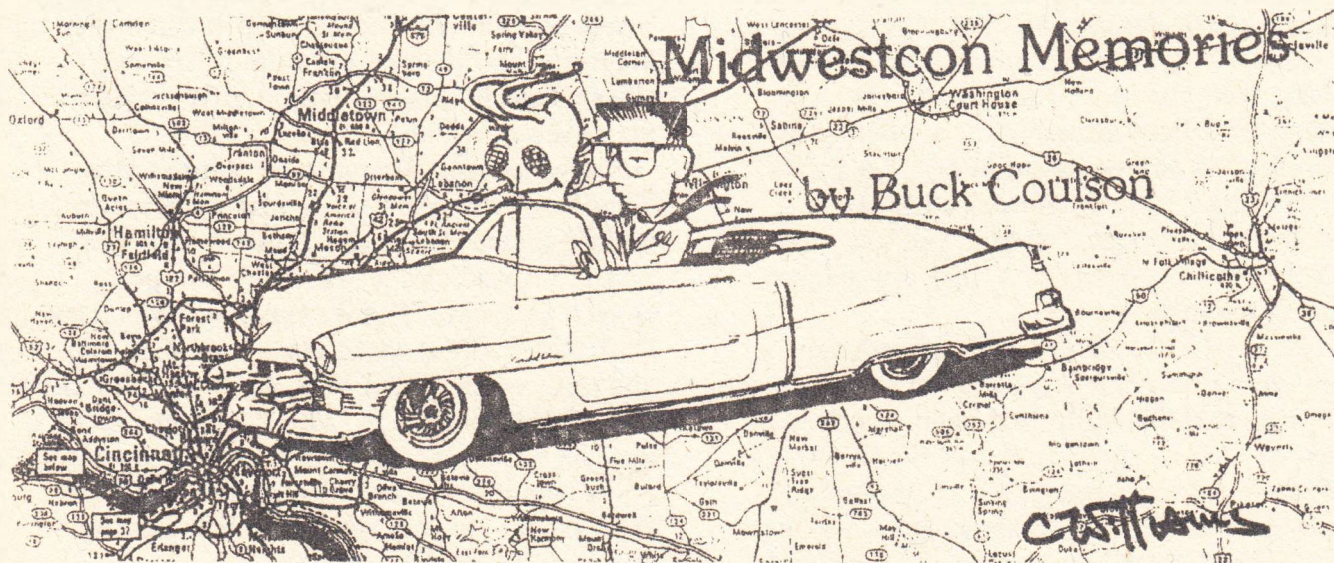
board's advice might well be taken to heart, especially if you are addicted to the tobacco weed yourself; it decreed that whenever one buys a packet of Player's from such an apparatus, one should *always* (and it did stress *always* -- as much as an ouija board can stress, that is) always hold a silver crucifix up to the machine.

Postscript. A couple of months later, The Roost launched their first single, which quietly glided down the slipway onto the totally unpredictable waters of the pop charts, and immediately sunk without trace. Dick (the UFO investigator) suddenly got married; when asked why, he said, "For the size of her charlies." (The marriage lasted as long as you'd expect such a marriage to last.) John (the ghost hunter) probably did better than most -- at last report he was having conversations with God. ♦♦

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☞ Time to tie down some loose ends. In the letters column of *Mimosa* 11, we promised an article about the infamous 'Midwestcon Door' incident from 1954. In fact, it seems like we haven't really mentioned much at all lately about the Midwestcon, which remains our favorite convention. In an attempt to rectify this, here's a look back at some of the earliest Midwestcons.



The first Midwestcon I drove to see was the last one held at Indian Lake, Ohio, in 1953. The first one I attended, however, was the first one held at Bellefontaine, Ohio, in 1954. The reason for the difference is mostly that I'd grown up in a small town and was ignorant of certain aspects of U.S. culture in the 1950s.

My first convention of any kind was the Chicago Worldcon of 1952, but I was too much of a neofan to meet anyone there; I didn't even know about parties. It wasn't until 1953 that I discovered the Indianapolis Science Fiction Association; I attended a meeting in February 1953, and I met my first real fans (including a Juanita Wellons, who became important later). In March of that year, I met Gene DeWeese; he lived 20 miles from me and didn't have a car, so he needed a way to the meetings. Gene had corresponded with several other fans, had written fan fiction, and knew his way around fandom better than I did (not that I was willing to admit it). He'd been corresponding with a girl, Bev Clark, in northern Indiana, and wanted me to go with him to meet her, which suited me fine; I was finally finding girls I could talk to. Gene arranged things

and we went up. It was the first time I'd met a black (or African-American, if you prefer) person socially. We got along fine, and later on we'd arranged that the three of us would drive to Midwestcon, again in my car; that car got a lot of use that summer. Juanita and her friend Lee Tremper would meet us there, and we'd have fun.

We arrived at Beatley's Hotel (or Beastley's-on-the-Bayou, which was one of the fannish descriptions at the time) but Bev was refused admittance. No blacks allowed. None of us had even considered the possibility. On the way out, we talked to a few fans sitting on the hotel porch and some anger was expressed, especially by Harlan Ellison, who said that all fandom would hear about this outrage. We drove home, and as far as I know, nobody ever mentioned the episode again. Except me, of course. The con site was changed the next year, but I've been told that this was because Randy Garrett was surprised by the house detective in a compromising situation, there were blows exchanged, and the convention was invited to go somewhere else.

Later on that year, Bev did go to the Philadelphia Worldcon with Gene, me, Juan-

ita, Bob Briney (a Michigan fan who later became a partner in Advent:Publishers), and Eleanor Turner (a friend of Bev's), and there were no room problems. In fact, one evening when we hadn't seen Bev and Eleanor for a while, and had worried, they came in late to a party and said they'd been at a reception for Sugar Ray Robinson, and gee, we could have got you in, if we'd known where you were... Last time I saw Bev was at Chicon V in 1991; she didn't attend the con, but she and her son came to the hotel one evening and sat around and talked to Gene and Juanita and me.

Next year, 1954, we had a lot less trouble at Midwestcon in Bellefontaine (Bev didn't go), and enjoyed ourselves. The convention was spread over two hotels; we went to the Ingalls because it was cheaper; it was something like \$1.50 per night. There was a reason for this, of course; even in those days, that was a cheap room. The bed was okay, but there was no attached bathroom. There was, in fact, one bathroom per floor, with tub and toilet. If someone actually took a bath, everyone else on that floor held themselves in or hunted another floor. Our room did have a laundry tub, however. Juanita commented that this was all right for the males, but uncomfortable for females. One year the hotel manager caught a bat in the lobby, and Noreen Falasca convinced him to take it outside and let it go. You don't have entertainments like that these days.

Those were the days when the trains still ran, and big-name pros occasionally came to the con. Bob Tucker, of course, was a regular. Bob Bloch showed up a few times, and Evelyn Gold at least once. Isaac Asimov came one year, and was induced to give a talk. Sputnik had just flown, and Asimov berated scientists for taking the bread out of the mouths of hard-working science fiction writers, ending with the ringing declaration, "If God had meant for basketballs to fly, he would have given them wings!" Edmond Hamilton and Leigh Brackett were also regulars at Midwestcon, as they lived in Ohio. At

one later con, a fan asked Leigh how she could live in Ohio and write for the movies. Straightfaced, she said, "I commute." The first time I met her, I was too awed to say anything. (I know this is hard to believe, but it's true.)

Eventually, Midwestcon had to leave Bellefontaine as well. This came the year after a group of fans went down to the center of town for some reason, and Harlan Ellison was inspired to auction off Lynn Hickman's pregnant wife on a street corner, with spirited bidding from the rest of us. Doc Barrett, who had been making most of the arrangements for the convention and who was a resident of Bellefontaine, reportedly announced, "I've got to live in this town!" The convention moved to the North Park Plaza hotel in Reading, a northern suburb of Cincinnati.

Before the convention moved, however, the Broken Door Incident occurred. The Ingalls Hotel was old-style, opening directly onto sidewalk and street, and the front rooms overlooked the sidewalk. My knowledge of the event is mostly hearsay; Mary Southworth, who was on the spot (and who still comes to conventions here and there as a huckster), had a somewhat less dramatic and perhaps more factual account, but I don't recall it well enough to retell it exactly. The report I heard was that Harlan Ellison was amusing himself by dropping water bags out the window, restricting himself to fan-nish targets. Jim Harmon, who was both a big-name fan of the day and a rather large, rotund one as well, got splashed and resented the fact. He stormed up to Harlan's room, where Harlan had prudently locked the door. When Harlan refused to come out, Jim began to batter his way in, knocking out one panel of the door. There was a lovely story that Harlan was frantically calling the police while Jim was trying to drag him out the hole in the door, but this seems to have been fiction -- for one thing, the Ingalls didn't have telephones in the rooms. Someone did call the police, however, and Harmon disap-

peared leaving Harlan to explain things, while most of the rest of the convention milled about in the hallway enjoying the show. The police left and that evening Harlan came around to various room parties, apologizing for the affair and taking up a collection to pay for the broken door. A bit later, Harmon came around, 'disguised' in Lynn Hickman's coat (which was about half the size he usually wore), apologizing for the incident... and taking up a collection to pay for the broken door. Our group tossed quarters to each one.

The next year, we were back at the same hotel, to find that the broken door had been repaired with a piece of unstained and unpainted plywood, and that the hotel now had a redecorated meeting room. I've always wondered just how much money was collected for the door...

Affairs at the North Park Plaza were relatively sedate, though I did get my one and only experience with 'Detroit blog' there. There were usually several Detroit fans at the con; "Big-Hearted" Howard DeVore was the one I knew best, since I bought quite a bit of stuff from him (mostly science fiction magazines in those days). Howard and Martin Alger, from some place in Michigan, were the major hucksters in the midwest at the time. Alger would come down from his home with a hearse full of books. There was no huckster room at those early cons; you sold out of the back of your car (or hearse). In Bellefontaine, the dealers parked along the street and sold; at the North Park Plaza, the huckster room was the parking lot. I remember Howard telling me once that I qualified as an 'old-timer' because I'd done some selling from my car.

I can't recall what year it was that a group of Detroit fans made blog for their party. It consisted of sweet wine, dry wine, vodka, a quart of 200-proof medical alcohol, frozen lemonade, fresh lime juice, and some cherries to give it "body," and possibly a few other ingredients as well. The cherries sank to the bottom, and the lime halves floated on

top rather like little green corpses. It was mixed in a galvanized bucket (this was before plastics); the color was a revolting shade of brown. Harlan took one look at it, and stabbed it several times with a butcher knife to make sure it was dead before he drank any.

Filk singing got a boost at the North Park Plaza. The con suite -- the only public room in the hotel that I recall -- was in the basement, and a door from it led to the furnace room, which was also used as a corridor between the two buildings that made up the hotel. This room was well soundproofed, with concrete walls that gave great resonance to voices. The singers, who were none-too-popular at parties, could go in there and not disturb fans in the con suite next door. The usual group was Juanita, Les Gerber, Sandy Cuttrel, George Heap, and occasionally others. Nick Falasca was there once, and gave a stirring rendition of the KKK marching song that he'd learned from a 78 rpm record that he'd picked up secondhand.

Eventually, the convention moved on to other hotels and motels in the Cincinnati area. Don Ford took over the organizational duties from Doc Barrett when the con moved to the North Park Plaza, and other people took over when Don died in 1965. In the 1970s, Rivercon began in Louisville; Juanita and I went to both conventions for a few years and finally decided we couldn't afford both. Rivercon won, and we haven't attended a Midwestcon for years. These days we need income from huckstering to offset expenses, and Midwestcon was never a good convention for hucksters -- the fans who attend already have what science fiction books they want. But Midwestcon was always a lot of fun. There was the time in the 1960s that Tucker brought along neofan Roger Ebert (yes, the same Roger Ebert who reviews movies on television). Roger ended up wearing a wastebasket on his head in lieu of a lampshade, and Tucker went around apologizing for him. And... but enough is enough (for now)... ♦♦

☞ Speaking of Midwestcons, the next one is 'only' about six months away as we write this. It's not too early to begin making plans for it! Attendees at this past year's Midwestcon were surprised and delighted that Dave and Ruth Kyle were present, for the first time in too many years. Dave's article for us in this issue is a nostalgic look at science fiction movies...



I love the movies. Especially science fiction and fantasy movies, of course. Once upon a time, those kinds were terribly difficult to find. In the 1930s, when I was a boy living in a small town with only one movie theater, I desperately yearned for them.

Sixty years have brought slick sophistication, superior technology, and oversaturation, but good sf films are still hard to find -- for me, that is. The special effects technicians have taken over spectacularly. Granted the novelty has gone, but the stories so often seem banal or routine, lacking the sense of wonder.

Don't get me wrong. I still dote on sf and fantasy movies. It's just that I miss the old tingle, the quiver of excitement, the keyed-up anticipation I once had when the screen credits started to roll. Well, not quite, I admit, for each and every recent decade has offered me joy -- *Forbidden Planet*, *2001*, *Star Wars*, and more.

How can I explain to anyone, even to myself, why the original *Flash Gordon* serial of the silver screen, childish if not downright stupid, still delights me? Sure, there's a smug feeling of superiority engendered by the outlandish hackneyed storyline, and crude costuming and special effects. How awful is the rocketship of Mongo, which swings around the miniature set suspended by a

thread, trailing a shower of sparks and flame while the smoke swirls unconvincingly upward in the hardly moving air. Wow! The power is in the imagination. The illusion was made not on the screen but in my mind. I participated in those old movies. I collaborated.

Old movies with their fanciful plotting and cheap or flamboyant production values never bothered me. Nor do they now. It's the trend to pretentiousness and the fixation on ugly reality that kills the romance and repels me.

The first science fiction picture which I vividly remember is *Mysterious Island*. That was in the winter of 1929-1930. I didn't know it was science fiction. It was offered as an imaginative story from the mind of the famous writer of fantastic novels, Jules Verne. When Count Dakkar (whom we know as Captain Nemo) flung open his collection closet to reveal the partially reconstructed body of the frogman, I was enthralled. For years, for decades, I remembered that Lionel Barrymore was the star, that June Collier was the heroine (she wasn't -- Pauline Starke was), that it was in color(!) and that it had sound and talked(!).

Early in the 1930s, when I finally found out about scientifiction and my interest in the field became almost an obsession, I was

starved for science fiction films. So were my fellow fans of that time. *Tarzan*, which came on the talking scene in 1932, helped fill that emptiness. That same year of 1932, a genuine sf film appeared, a British production called *F.P.1 Doesn't Answer*. The 'F.P.1' was an abbreviation of 'Floating Platform Number One', a landing field in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. Conrad Veidt was the star, well-known for his villainous roles in the fantasy film *The Thief of Baghdad* and the silent classic *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*. *F.P.1* was excellent -- I was told. But I didn't see it -- it didn't come to my town. Even worse luck, I had missed the wonderful science fiction musical(!) which followed shortly after *Mysterious Island*. That remarkable 1930 picture, *Just Imagine*, didn't come to my town, either.

1932 was an incredible year. *Frankenstein* reached most theaters as the year began, plus terrific technicolor horror shows. *Doctor X* (with its ghastly synthetic flesh: "...synthetic flesh...heh, heh, heh...") starred that perennial villain Lionel Atwill with the one-armed detective Preston Foster and the beautiful Fay Wray. That same year, Lionel and Fay were united in another horror thriller, *The Mystery of the Wax Museum*. The following year, Fay really made her everlasting movie mark as the harassed screaming heroine in *King Kong*.

I took the 1932 Johnny Weissmuller - Maureen O'Sullivan version of *Tarzan* to my heart, for it helped me quench my thirst for sf movies. The few small-town fans who were my personal friends also did, and the sf attachment for *Tarzan* grew with the coming years for all the sf fans I got to know. What a thrill it was many decades later to actually meet Johnny Weissmuller at a worldcon, when he came as the guest speaker at the Burroughs Bibliophiles noontime banquet, and then to have a one-to-one talk with him sitting in the lounging area of the VIP floor of the con hotel. A very similar occasion happened at another con with Buster Crabbe -- another *Tarzan* who was more famous for being *Flash Gordon* and *Buck Rogers*. Bust-

er, who was then around seventy (he died in 1983), was proud of his physique and rolled up his Hawaiian shirt to show his trim stomach and slap its muscular hardness. At other such BB banquets I met other *Tarzans*: Bruce Bennett (Herman Brix) and Jock Mahoney.



Maureen O'Sullivan, the lovely young ingenue actress, didn't make her first film appearance by playing Jane, *Tarzan's* mate. Her first picture was in that *Just Imagine* of 1930, in which she played 'L-N'. After thirty or forty years of yearning, I finally saw that classic, with old friend John Flory, at an all-night movie program at a worldcon -- at 5:30 a.m. How could I have missed it on first release? Did it come to my Monticello, New York theater and pass unnoticed? Maybe it was because in 1930 I had limited funds and time -- then I was only eleven years old, going to school, restricted in my evening activities, and operating under the close parental supervision of that period. I have since, in my much older age, seen *Just Imagine* many times and can even sing (only to myself, of course) its sentimental and silly songs.

In 1935, I suffered great agitation and terrible frustration when I saw an advertise-

ment in the New York *Daily News* for *The Lost City*, a science fiction film about which I knew nothing. There was an irresistible review of the picture, describing it as juvenile, yet giving it an unbelievable three stars. It turned into an enormous adventure, because I traveled a long way just to see it. However, it turned out to be only a feature version of a serial.

* * * *

In 1948, I moved to New York City and enrolled in some publishing and editing courses at Columbia University, to help me in my new enterprise -- publishing sf hardcovers under the name of Gnome Press. There I met Marty Fass, a lawyer who was shifting his career from law into the literary field. We subsequently organized a company named Argonaut Books, which never did set sail. Around 1950, Marty knew a would-be movie producer and told him of my expertise in the science fiction field. The man and I had a coffee conference, during which he explained that he wanted to make some kind of monster movie, perhaps about space aliens who threaten earth. At the time, there were many films being churned out about aliens, monsters, and atomic mutations. I told him I'd instead like to make a sensible sf film. His focus, however, was on the box office -- he wanted terror, horror, mystery, fear, and the budget had to be "...low." Use had to be made of certain valuable material he had. This 'valuable material' he revealed as newsreel footage he owned -- thousands of feet of film around a Canadian mine disaster. Thoughts of 'cavern disasters' or 'subterranean journeys' or 'lost civilizations' or 'encounters with semi-human creatures' came to my mind -- plus the dominant thought that I wanted no part in his project. I told him if he paid me a retainer I would preview his material and write some plot lines, but I never heard from him again. In retrospect, I feel I made a bad mistake -- I should have stretched my imagination, pumped up my enthusiasm, previewed his film footage, and gone along with the project on speculation. I

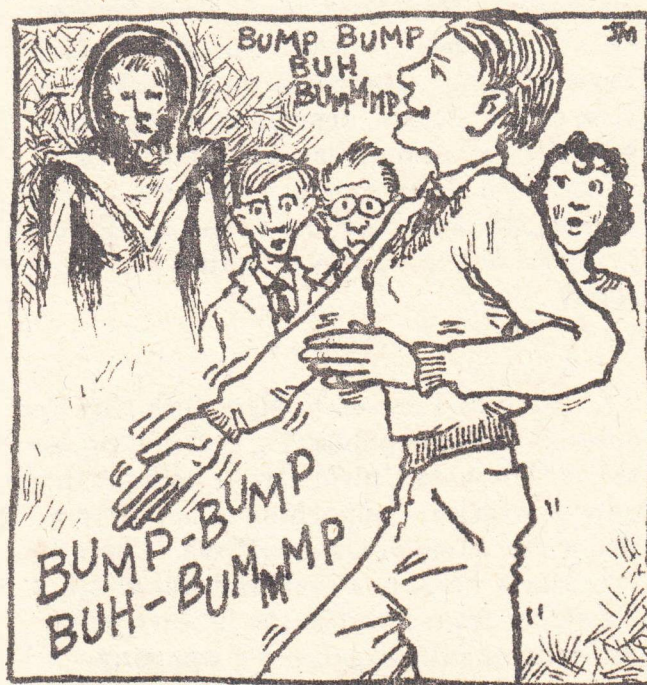
could have had a lot of experience and probably much fun. After all, bad pictures are entertainment, too. I might even be admired today for the trashy effort. Years later, I did eventually collaborate with screen writer Richard Aubrey on a movie script, about a post-atomic war subterranean community, but it was never marketed.

In the summer of 1951, I planned a first for a world science fiction convention -- the premiere showing of a major science fiction movie, at Nolacon, the ninth worldcon. I had known of a film being readied for release, George Pal's *When Worlds Collide*, a version of the Philip Wylie - Edwin Balmer novel, and contacted the Paramount office in Manhattan and convinced them to have a preview at the con. In New Orleans, working with the regional publicist, I arranged for a 35mm movie projector for the convention hall in the St. Charles Hotel, even though con attendance was less than 200. Though such a showing at no expense should have been the 'coup' that Sam Moskowitz later acknowledged, it wasn't the success I expected. In fact, criticisms were mixed with the congratulations. How had I failed? Well, my triumph had been trumped on the Saturday night of the convention by Mel Korshak, my friendly, fannish publisher-competitor (Shasta Publishers). True to his remarkable entrepreneurial abilities, he had promoted a preview showing of another sf film, *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, at the Saenger Theater in downtown New Orleans. That event was *really* big-time Hollywood -- an exclusive showing, press coverage, preview cards, a 'special award' by the con management to 20th Century Fox, and a photo session the following day with Michael Rennie's silvery Klaatu suit (worn by somebody whose name I can't recall). In comparison, my event had been good, but inferior -- the showing was hardly perfect, with interruptions of the projection on the portable screen for changing the 35mm reels. Old-timers, reminiscing about that Nolacon as the very last of the 'intimate' (read: 'small-time') worldcons, recall that midnight theater preview -- while

some don't even remember my Big Event. Yet, *When Worlds Collide* was a George Pal movie of a classic book depicting a realistic rocketship, not an alien UFO. It was in Technicolor with Chesley Bonestell art, not in black-and-white. And it later won an Oscar for technical effects. What could I tell my Paramount PR man when the 'convention' unanimously praised the rival picture while criticizing his own? Fortunately, I don't remember being embarrassed. I probably was. He probably wasn't. At least earlier I had an excellent studio-paid-for dinner at Antoine's to discuss the project. But then, that's show biz...

* * * *

Perhaps the greatest science fiction film ever made (with a sincere tip of my hat to Stanley Kubrick and Arthur Clarke) is H.G. Wells' *Things to Come*. I first saw the film, which was released in 1936, sometime in the summer of 1937 in a small movie house in the little town of Woodridge in Sullivan County, New York. I bought one ticket, but I watched it later on the following two or three nights for brief periods of time without paying again. My special privilege came from being a country newspaper editor who knew the manager. That film has made an enormous impression on my life. At my first chance, I bought the recording of its exceptional musical score (by the English composer Arthur Bliss) and listened to it frequently. That summer and fall, I would go down to New York City for a weekend, with the score playing in my head. My destination was the legendary Ivory Tower apartment in Brooklyn to visit the Futurians. Dick Wilson, my best friend, lived there. My other best friend, Dirk Wylie, was practically a resident, along with regulars, Doc Lowndes, Don Wollheim, Fred Pohl, and others. As I tramped along Bedford Avenue from the IRT subway, I would "bump-bump-buh-bummmmp" the dramatic 'March' segment and vigorously pump my arms rhythmically with the music. It was emotionally stirring for me -- I was marching into my own personal, inspiring milieu.



That strange sense of another world, of science fiction becoming reality, overwhelmed me again later, in December of 1942 when I was a Second Lieutenant in the U.S. Army. I was stationed at an air base in Northern Ireland in the middle of a world-wide war. It was midnight and I was working behind the drawn blackout curtains of my tiny Nissen hut office. My radio was tuned to the high-brow channel. "This is the BBC," the English announcer said, and then Bliss' march from *Things to Come* flowed out of the speaker. Suddenly, I was Cabal and Passworthy, back in time listening to the wireless on the evening that hostilities began. I was living Wells' nightmare! I will never forget the creepy thrill of that eerie moment -- and now, tonight, as I write this, chills run up my spine.

Later the following year, now stationed at an aerodrome in East Anglia in England, I went to London on pass. I bought a copy of *What's On*, and scanned the extensive cinema listings. Out in the Golder's Green neighborhood I found *Things to Come* listed -- how could I resist? So I took the Underground out there and saw it. Seeing that film in blacked-out, wartime London was another overwhelming experience, but a most amaz-

ing coincidence for me was yet to come. The following evening, I was having dinner with a Canadian officer in the Savoy Grill. Across the room I saw a man in a RAF uniform. I immediately recognized him as Edward Chapman, the actor who played Passworthy opposite Raymond Massey's Cabal in the Wells movie. I excused myself, and hurried between the tables toward him. "I beg your pardon," I said to Chapman, "but --" and I told him that I had only the previous night seen, once again, that great movie in which he starred. He was gracious. He was impressed. He told me that for him, too, the movie was special. "Thank you for telling me this," he said. "This has been a difficult day for me. You have made it so much better for me. Thank you very much for such kind words." How lucky I was that weekend! Chapman was in another excellent H.G. Wells film produced by Alexander Korda just about the same time, *The Man Who Could Work Miracles*. I wish I had told Chapman about how much I loved that film, too. (I was thrilled later to find a thin volume of the published scenario.)

* * * *

In 1966, Ruth and I were in England with our son Arthur C. and our daughter Kerry. He was not yet five years old and she not yet two. We visited the set of *2001: A Space Odyssey* at MGM's Boreham Wood studios as a guest of Arthur C. Clarke. Arthur took A.C. by the hand and led him around the lot, introducing him as "the other Arthur C.". This was fun for A.C., but not recognizable at the time as something so very, very special. We saw the oasis scenery, the site of the monolith, which hadn't yet been dismantled. Stanley Kubrick was shooting a scene in the air lock with the globular maintenance craft. Arthur introduced me to Kubrick; I know I met him but I also know he never met me. His mind was completely into the movie. I also met Roger Karas, doing the publicity, who was extremely friendly and showed us so many things, such as the wealth of art renditions and visualiza-

tions which foretold of the masterpiece being created. Most impressive was the huge construction of scaffolding which contained a sort of ferris wheel. This unsightly structure of wood and steel hid an incredible movie set within the suspended, hollow doughnut. A.C. still remembers clearly being boosted on my shoulder for us to poke our heads up into the interior of the circular control room of the spaceship. I wrote an article for Ted Carnell's *New Worlds* magazine about the project, and saw the final result at the preview screening in New York in 1968. After that screening, Ruth and I, going out through the lobby, met Lester del Rey. I was enthusiastically bubbling over for the picture, but Lester, forever the analytic critic, told me he thought it was awfully disappointing. That evening I spoke on the telephone to Arthur Clarke, who had just seen the preview in Hollywood. I congratulated him, but wondered, "Tell me, Arthur, what does it all mean?" "Read the book I've written," he told me, "the ending is explicit. You'll find the answers." I did, but I still wonder.

Later in 1968, we were in Los Angeles and went on the set of *Star Trek*. This was thoroughly enjoyable (they were making "The Day of the Dove"), but the differences between television and movie sets were quite remarkable. *2001* had exquisitely realistic, carefully engineered props; the *Star Trek* set was mostly illusion: the furniture was worn but serviceable, but the walls were mostly cardboard, very scary to me because I was afraid to bump anything should I knock it down or fall through a flat.

In the 1970s, when I was living in England, I knew a fellow Rotarian in the Walton-on-Thames Rotary Club, J.D. Thomson. One evening, sitting opposite him at the dinner table, we talked about the old English movie studios. A small one had been in the center of Walton village, another at Shepperton, not far across the Thames from my house. "I was an extra, in the thirties," he told me. "I was in *Things to Come*," he said, and I jig-gled my demitasse and expressed my fascination. He described how he was one of the

peace soldiers who jumped out of the back of the huge flying ship to take over the land of the local warlord. I remembered well those black-suited paratroopers of "Wings Over the World", stepping off into space one by one, and told him how much I envied his experience. He recalled how H.G. Wells himself would come into the sound stage and, with the movie crew gathered around him, he would chat. I envied my friend even more. One day at the Weybridge-and-Byfleet Rotary, my luncheon club, a fellow member told me about his small engineering and tool company, which was working on an unusual order for a film company at Shepperton. He was making futuristic hand guns for a science fiction movie, and he knew I would be interested. I was, but not all that much because production of cheap sf movies seemed never-ending around London, especially for television. I never bothered to check out the action, but I certainly should have. The movie was *Star Wars*.

Our house in England had been named "Two Rivers," following the English custom of address identification. The river Thames was twenty feet from our front deck and the river Bourne (a small stream) ran through the back garden on its way to join the Wey and then into the Thames. A foot bridge led to our garage and the private road. It was indisputably the exact location which H.G. Wells chose in *War of the Worlds*, where the Martian fighting machines crossed the rivers. His description of the action I chose as an excerpt for inclusion in my book, *The Illustrated Book of Science Fiction Ideas and Dreams* (Hamlyn, 1976, London). Philip José Farmer, on a visit to Two Rivers, wanted me to put a bronze plaque in our garden to commemorate the event, but I never did.

England is a small country and London is its heart, so occasionally I would see or rub shoulders with a recognizable person from the stage or screen. Celebrities of sorts lived all around us. The Beatles for a while had a fancy home in posh St. George's Hill, a quarter mile away. Once at an Eastercon, the big British event (big, meaning several hundred

persons), Christopher Lee attended. He was riding a crest of cinematic popularity at the time and his presence created a stir. Ina Shorrock of the Liverpool SF Group was standing near him and confided in me on how much she admired him. I asked if she wanted to meet him; she did, so I led her to him, a very tall impressive figure, and said, "Mr. Lee, may I introduce Ina Shorrock to you -- she much admires your work." He acknowledged her with a friendly smile and she was thrilled. "I didn't know you knew him," she said to me later. "I don't," I said. "He doesn't know me. But you wanted to meet him, so I introduced you." Conventions are, after all, very friendly occasions.

I never met Bela Lugosi, but I do have something to boast about. I saw him perform on stage as Count Dracula, on Broadway in 1927 when I was eight years old. The event was accidental because my mother had planned to take me to a different show on Broadway. She frequently took me to New York from Monticello for several days of shopping, sightseeing, and the theater; I was a very lucky kid. This one time, at the last moment just before the matinee curtain was to go up, she hurried out of one lobby (SOLD OUT!) to another theater next door for a desperate last-minute purchase, unaware that that play, for that times, was a horror show. I did not, repeat not, draw her attention to what hung on the wall over the ticket window -- a skull, with empty eyesockets glowing with red light and bat wings spread out from its temples. I was entranced. A quick transaction and we were into the darkened theater, the show having started. I noticed at least one woman in a white uniform stationed at the rear, but I said nothing. (The management had 'nurses' in attendance at the performances for shock victims as part of the publicity.) The mood of the play grew more and more somber, and my poor mother suddenly realized the extent of her thoughtless error. We had a whispered argument about taking me out of the theater and, for some wonderful reason, I won. I can still remember some of the theatrical effects: the



baying hounds, the red skull which slowly materializes over the back of the couch bathed in the glow of the fireplace -- the only light in the otherwise pitch-black room. Then, suddenly, the stage lights turned on and people rushed through the door as a bat bobbed across the ceiling. The Count's magnificent cape, purple-lined, swirled as he, encircled by the hand-held crosses, was touched by the dawn and vanished before my eyes (through a trapdoor, of course). I reassured my mother that the performance had been enjoyable (it was) and assuaged her feelings of guilt. Another time, though, she was not so lenient. She pulled me out of a 'musical show' -- *Body and Soul*, I recall -- when the blackout sketch took place in a bedroom with a scantily-clad lady in the bed, a man under it, and her husband storming in to make a scene. (Clifton Webb was the star, to whom I have since been compared.) And I also remember how my mother chewed out the ticket seller for selling her two tickets when he knew, positively, that the show wasn't fit for a child. I'm glad my mother was more forgiving of vampires than of bedroom farce.

* * * *

Shepperton Studios was nearly obliterated by a housing project while we were still in England. It was partially saved by being turned into a 'four-wall' operation, meaning that it became a bare-bones facility, essentially just a place for a movie company to rent for a short term. All the props and accumulated bits-and-pieces, large and small, were put up at auction. Ruth and I wandered through the back lot, examined the merchandise the week of the sale, and went there on the day of the auction. We bid on many items, including a model airship from Verne's *Master of the World* (which starred Vincent Price) requested by Forry Ackerman. Limited by our funds, we obtained only a big batch of artwork with a couple of sf pieces. (A series of watercolors from Burroughs' *The Land That Time Forgot* were in the pile we examined, but when we picked up the illustrations, someone had stolen the very ones we most wanted. We could only shrug off the loss.)

Living in England made it possible for me to become personally acquainted with the famous Ray Harryhausen and his family. On the stairway landing of his home in the Kensington section of London he has a fabulous glass-sided cabinet, where many of the models actually used in his movies are displayed. When he was making *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad*, I went to his rented workshop on Gold Hawk Road to discuss a project concerning the Science Fiction and Fantasy Film Society which my friend John Flory and I had organized. I was interrupting his work, but he graciously stopped to talk. He had the model of his centaur on a pedestal, lights and camera set in positions around it. "Go ahead, continue your work while we talk," I told him, trying to be helpful. His reaction was swift and unexpected. He threw a cloth over his model and steered me away from the circle of light. He then explained, almost apologetically, his instinctive reaction -- no one was allowed to see him work. I understood. What he did, the way he did it, was a mastery of a craft which he himself had developed. Unwittingly, I had caught him off-

guard and embarrassed us both.

I never dreamed that Ruth and I would become personally acquainted with *Sinbad's* stunning heroine, Caroline Munro, at a later Omnicon in Florida. Nor did I dream that she would briefly show up later at the 1987 worldcon in Brighton and mention her hope to see me. We missed each other, but her query rippled throughout that weekend -- I was terribly flattered with a kind of notoriety, and avoided mentioning that our casual relationship was really very tenuous. (Omnicon also made me some other special acquaintances: the very likeable Kirk Alyn [the original serial Superman] and some Doctors Who: Jon Pertwee, Patrick Troughton, and Colin Baker, who asked *me* for *my* autograph because he was a Lensman fan and read my books! I also wrote a 'radio script' for one Omnicon which had Majel Barrett as one of the stars.)

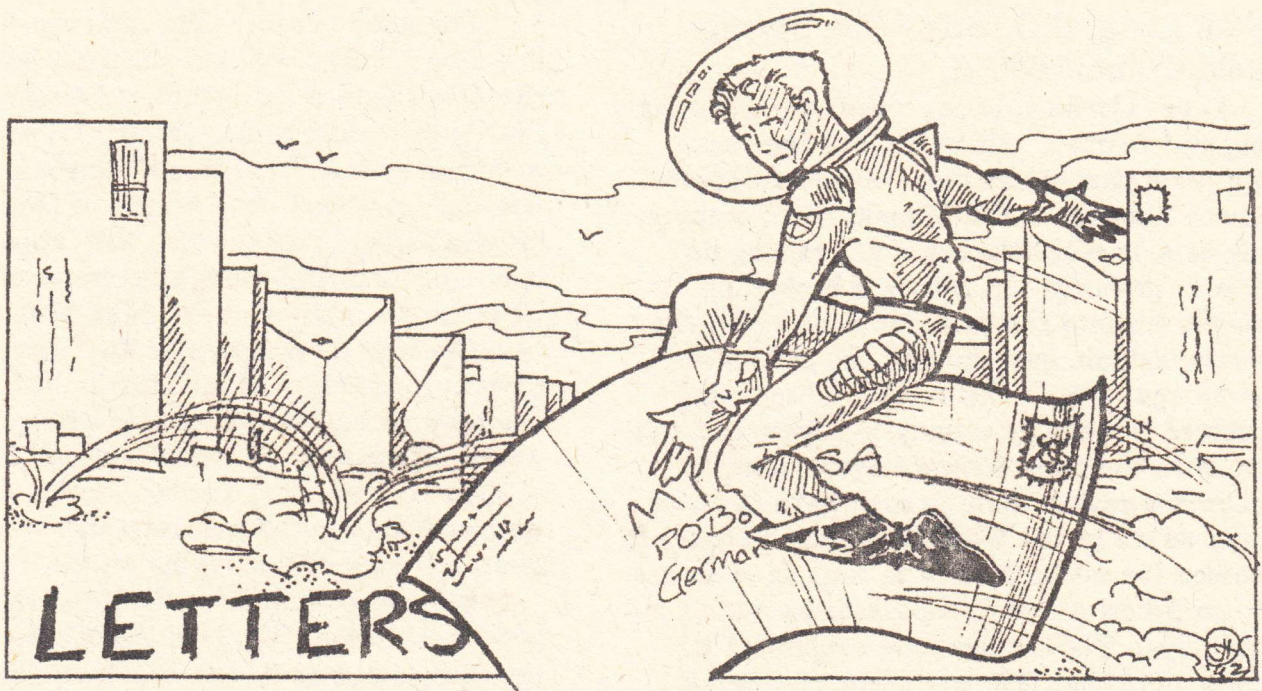
Another Brighton worldcon had been held in 1979 (Ruth's contribution: the slogan "Britain is Fine in '79"). Ruth didn't get there; I did. After the con, I visited the Weybridge area, in Surrey, paying a visit to friends and the old neighborhood. Bernard Cribbins, a movie actor, was still living a few houses down. He was in the 1965 H. Rider Haggard movie *She* with Ursula Andress, and a 1966 *Daleks* movie with Peter Cushing. When Bernie Cribbins wasn't acting, he used to fish the Thames off our front garden. By chance, I discovered that Dino de Laurentiis' *Flash Gordon* was being filmed in the old British Aircraft Corporation hangar close by, where the supersonic Concorde had been constructed. I couldn't resist. I talked my way onto the lot, conferred with publicity men, was shown the sets, and said I would follow up the production with publicity when it was released the following year. Dr. Zarkov's smashed laboratory was very interesting (a re-write of the original comic strip scene), but Ming's palace set was truly magnificent. I had great expectations, but when the film finally appeared, I was so disappointed that I never wrote a word of publicity from all my notes and handouts. And I

never dreamed that one of the actors in the movie, Robin Langford (who had also been in a British sf TV series, *The Tripods*), would eventually become a son-in-law.

* * * *

I do miss John Flory of Spacefilms, Inc., who died not too many years ago. He was older than me and very much a fan, but known by very few in First Fandom. He was a retired Eastman Kodak executive who had a large house in a wooded area outside Rochester, New York, built over an enormous cellar which was a miniature film studio. He was working on a feature film from a story by Lloyd Biggle, Jr., but it never materialized. In between the '73, '74, and '75 worldcons, we organized the Science Fiction and Fantasy Film Society and planned annual awards to those who had made outstanding contributions to the sf field in the movies -- an idea similar to the First Fandom Hall of Fame Awards. The trophy itself was a faceted plastic crystal with tiny lights arranged within it, which we named the Starfire Award. The first recipient was to have been Fritz Lang, the creator of the masterpiece *Metropolis*, who died in 1976. Everything about *Metropolis* never ceases to intrigue me. I constantly look for different versions with different soundtracks, and find them.

In that bicentennial summer of 1976, I had come back from England with a shipment of my first fancy book, *A Pictorial History of Science Fiction*, and the elderly Lang died before John and I could arrange to honor him. The next recipient of the Starfire Award some years later was to have been George Pal, but while we were still fumbling around with limited financing, he died too. Then, shortly afterward, John Flory also died -- and so did the Starfire Award. The only Starfire trophy in existence was loaned to someone who promised to manufacture more, even better ones. That person's name is forgotten, and the award has disappeared. John Flory deserved better. To me, his passing marked the end of an era -- he loved the movies as much as I still do. ♦



{☞ We know we've said this before, but publishing a fanzine is both laborious and fun. The difficult part is actually putting the issue together -- soliciting material to publish, editing the material into a fanzine, and producing copies for 300 or so people and fan organizations on our mailing list. Receiving your letters of comment in the mail is the fun part, and is the energy source that motivates us. We're particularly pleased when we hear from first-time readers; the first two letters this time, in fact, are from first-time respondents.

From time to time we hear from loc writers who are disappointed that more of their letters don't see print, or that only find their names in our 'We Also Heard From' list. We apologize, but ask you to keep writing your letters; your purpose is still being served, because we send your comments, whether or not they appear in print, to the respective contributors.

Meanwhile, we were once again gratified by the sizeable number of letters (and trade fanzines) we received from *Mimosa* 12. First up are a selection of comments about our trip to Los Angeles for the ninth Corflu fanzine fans' convention... }}

K. Hainsworth, 833 North Lucia St.,
Redondo Beach, California 90277

My local shop orders a copy of *Science Fiction Chronicle* for a certain customer, and when he moved away a couple of months ago, they put his unclaimed copy on the rack for sale. His loss was my gain -- I discovered it, snatched it up, and have been buying it ever since. It lists fanzines available, so here I am, writing a loc to *Mimosa*, which was the first one that arrived. I opened it eagerly, and read, to my surprise, an article that mentions my very own neighborhood {☞ "Corflu Odyssey" }. I live but a stone's throw away from Manhattan Beach, site of the hellish getting-lost-on-the-way-to-the-restaurant story. It was somehow very humorous to open up a fanzine published 2,000 miles away and read about familiar landmarks that I pass every day. (By the way, I think that you were **generous** when you described the Cockatoo Inn as "trying desperately to retain its dignity." When my friend Sean's bar mitzvah was held there a decade ago or so, the place had already had a few whacks with the tacky stick. By now it must look like a Fifties time capsule!)

Sam Long, P.O. Box 7423, Springfield, Illinois 62791

Your "Corflu Odyssey" was very entertaining and fannish. About the cat figurines with one paw raised that you saw in Japan-town: They are called Maneki-neko, beckoning cats, because the cat is not raising its paw in greeting, but rather is beckoning customers into the establishment in the Japanese fashion, paw up with the pads facing away and down. The Japanese beckoning gesture is made by waving the fingers to and fro with the palm down or away from the beckoner rather than up or toward the beckoner as we in the West do it; thus a Japanese person for cat beckoning to someone appears to an American or European to be waving good-bye. The cat figurines originated a little more than 200 years ago, as ceramic figures beckoning customers into two tea-houses next to a popular Shinto shrine near Tokyo. The beckoning cats became popular, and over the years smaller versions of them became the mascots of people whose business depends on public patronage. The closest parallels to the beckoning cats that I can think of in our culture are the trademark figures some restaurant chains place outside their doors, e.g., the Big Boy, or Ronald McDonald, or the burger King; and we might consider the cigar-store Indian as an example from the past.

But back to "Corflu Odyssey": whatever happened to Herbangelism? I've always thought Ghu was the supreme fannish deity (*pace* Chat), for is not 'ghu' the first word a trufan says as a baby? On the other hand, perhaps this fannish deity business is Overdone...

An' I seen 'er furst a-pubbin' on a mimeo black as soot,

An' a-wastin' fannish kisses on an 'eathen idol's foot.

Bloomin' idol o' egcboo

Wot they calls the great ghawd Ghu.

Plucky lot she cared for idols when I gave her some corflu.

-- "On the Road to N3F"

For some reason -- I'm not sure why -- I find medical stories à la Sharon Farber's series {{∞ "Tales of Adventure and Medical Life" }} particularly interesting. I always turn first to the "Vital Signs" department in *Discover*, and read the "Annals of Medicine" articles in *New Yorker* when they appear. I enjoy the lucid and thoughtful prose of Dr. Oliver Sacks, author of *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*, and the classic and adventurous fiction of A.C. Doyle, MD. It has been noted that physicians who go into writing often make excellent authors because of their training in close observation, deduction, and the careful and exact use of world. Sharon is very ably carrying on the tradition.

Richard Brandt's article {{∞ "My Place in Medical History" }}, from the other end of the stethoscope as it was, was interesting, but also a bit alarming. How did the TSS bacteria get into his bloodstream? Through a scratch got while he was weeding, perhaps? His experience is a salutary reminder to the rest of us that even in these days of medical miracles, we can still easily get infections that can kill if not promptly and properly diagnosed and treated. Richard had a close call; Jim Henson wasn't so lucky.

Andi Shechter, 8618 Linden Ave. N.,
Seattle, Washington 98103

It occurs to me that I've been reading Sharon Farber's articles in *Mimosa* on a regular basis, and have never written to say just how wonderful I think they are. Whenever I see a copy of *Mimosa*, that's what I immediately flip to, and I've never been disappointed. I have a memory of Sharon coming to a party at my apartment many years ago (it must have been around 1977 or 78). The party was apparently held on the day that, according to Bishop Usher the earth had begun, Sharon brought an anniversary cake to celebrate -- complete with a sign on a toothpick reading 'you are here'. In all those years of internship and residency and no-sleep, she hasn't lost her edge. I hope to

keep reading her "Tales of Adventure" for years to come (there are always new adventures in medicine, yes? Ask Richard Brandt!)

Also, I loved your story {{ced. note: in "Corflu Odyssey" }} about Dave and his mobile phone -- you guys did exactly what I would want to do in that situation and probably would only have thought of later.

Diane Fox, P.O. Box 9, Hazelbrook,
New South Wales 2779, Australia

Interesting article by Sharon Farber about the patient faking blindness -- yes, I'd like to know her motivations. Surprising that she went through with the unpleasantness of the spinal tap -- sounds like she thought she *might* have something wrong, and it would do no harm to check it out. Continuing on Medical Matters with Richard Brandt's article, if I'd had tingling hands while weeding, and taken sick afterwards, I'd have expected that some sort of chemical was to blame -- I've heard some horrifying tales of insect sprays and weed killers (the infamous Agent Orange is more powerful version of the latter). I'd have been extremely relieved to find out that a bacterial infection was to blame. I don't think toxic shock is

very widely known about in Australia yet, but it is associated with tampons, so Richard would have heard the same annoying jokes if he'd been treated here.

Tom J. Fülöpp, Šrobarova 33, Poprad
05801, Slovakia

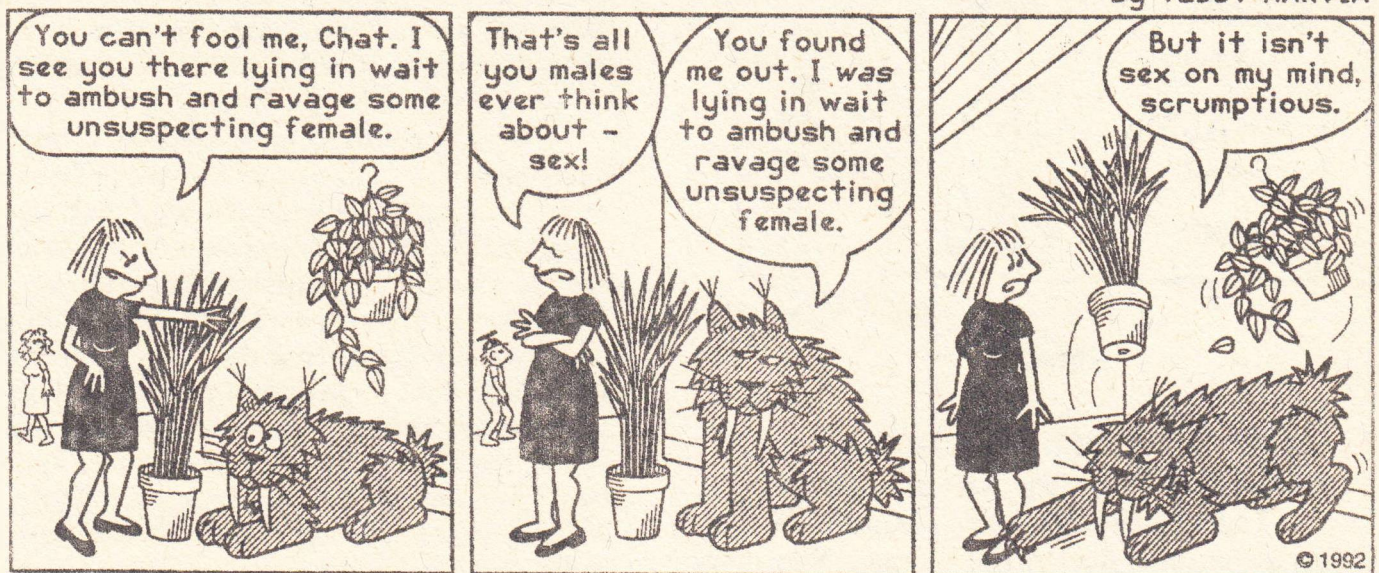
Read, smile, open the dictionary, jot down a new word, read, laughter... This is the way I carried on several hours until I turned the last page of *Mimosa* 12, then shut my atlas which I look into when reading a zine and thoughtfully leaned on the back of my chair. Behind closed eyes I saw my aching head trying to cope with that flood of English, and I knew I just have read a piece from the fannish sky...

All that you wrote in "Corflu Odyssey" is so much different from reality over here, that it more resembles to me an American movie than common life. Airplane and rental car, restaurants and parties, mistakes and big fun. It is written so vividly that I felt like I was in LA, laughing at Foss' hand-drawn map and 'Dave' and his telephone number.

Sharon Farber's medical adventure was excellent and, especially this article, I regret-

CHAT, THE 4TH FANNISH GHOD

By TEDDY HARVIA



ted that I can't read its previous six parts. I didn't even have to know the meaning of some diseases mentioned, but I laughed just imagining The NICU: Not Just an Ordinary Airline or that faked faker obediently holding up the hammer in a 'paralysed' hand.

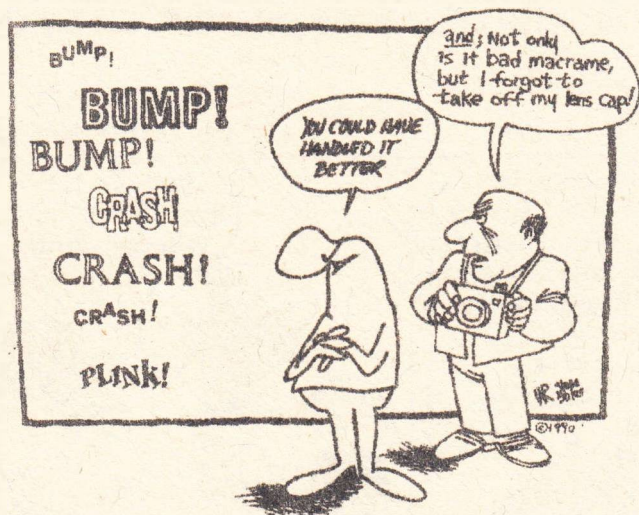
David Thayer's discovering SF literature in the Vietnam War {{☞ "War Fiction -- A True Story" }} was also very impressive; not many people have entered fandom this way, I think...

One point more: I found very useful those short explanations you write above each article -- it helps me to understand what led you to publish this or that and what the previous parts were about.

Ben Indick, 428 Sagamore Avenue,
Teaneck, New Jersey 07666

I can't believe David Thayer is really David Thayer and not anagrammatically Teddy Harvia. Must be a different David Thayer. Teddy seems much more younger. Kindly explicate.

{{☞ You mean there might be *other* David Thayers?!? }}



Jürgen Thomann, Breslauer Str. 18,
D-W-7858 Weil am Rhein, Germany

I liked David Thayer's second report of his adventures during the Vietnam War more than his first. Telling which books he read

under difficult circumstances and how he found the source of endless reading eventually was very impressive.

A zine like *Mimosa* doesn't exist in Germany. It is hard to find articles about fan history and living as a fan. You especially won't find stories about being a fan which aren't related to fandom. Also, all articles in the two *Mimosa* issues I read are written in a style German fans wouldn't write. The only zine which comes near to the *Mimosa* style in Waldemar Kumming's *Munich Round Up* which publishes translations of Shaw and Langford.

This reminds me to mention the very good illustrations in *Mimosa*. Your artists don't just simply illustrate, they even interpret the articles.

Todd Mason, P.O. Box 21, Fairfax
Station, Virginia 22039

Congratulations on your second well-deserved nomination. Issue #12 might be the most impressive issue of those I've seen; it certainly maintains a high standard. My copy of Wollheim & Carr's *World's Best SF: 1970* is in storage, but I remember the Tip-tree story as "Your Haploid Heart"; as for Thayer, but under much less trying circumstances, it was one of my introductions to SF. I can't get over the feeling that Farber is "A little cold around the heart", to swipe a phrase, more so that is necessary for psychic self-preservation in medicine.

Kyle's memoir of Isaac Asimov {{☞ "I Remember Ike" }} is one of the best I've seen recently -- most of the obituaries I read or experienced through electronics were infuriatingly inaccurate or misleading, even AC Clarke's on NPR, where Clarke sought to accredit Asimov by tracing the *Star Wars* films' genealogy from *Foundation* and its sequels. Without yet having read the November *Asimov's*, the best posthumous tribute to Asimov I've seen has been Budrys' in *F&SF*, written with knowledge that I.A. was seriously ill but with some hope of recovery. Even

Edward Ferman got some obvious facts wrong in his requiem -- your work in attempting to preserve fannish history, you can see and I know you do, thus becomes even more important: if Asimov, "our" least obscure figure, can be so carelessly misrepresented at the most solemn occasion of review of his life and work, who then can speak for the events that helped shape the SF/fan community? (Time for portentousness remedy, I know.) Your contributors. You. Keep it up, please.



GRAFFITI OF THE GODS

Lloyd Penney, 412-4 Lisa Street,
Brampton, Ontario L6T 4B6, Canada

I wrote a column for *Astromancer Quarterly* a while ago which mentioned Isaac Asimov, and the charisma and charm the man had. I met him only twice, and I wish I'd had the chance to talk with him many times more. In my early days, connected with Trek fandom, Isaac would speak about science fiction and whatever else his heart desired, at the Trekcons of the 70s that used to be held every Labour Day at the Statler-Waldorf Hotel in Manhattan. (It's now the Penta, in case anyone wonders what happened to the hotel that did have Pennsylvania 6-5000 as its main desk number.) I've no doubt that some of the Trekfen there had no idea who

he was, but most did -- he didn't live that far away, and probably took a cab to the hotel and back home. I think that he knew that no matter your interest in the sf universe, whether you read his work or just watched Trek, you knew the feeling of goshwow, the discovery of science fiction in one form or another.

Walt Willis' short bit {{☺ "I Remember Me" }} is a signpost of fannish life, and a signal that our Shields of Umor have grown tarnished with time. The bit from Robert Bloch about meeting and corresponding with other fans in order to survive and enjoy fandom is spot on. (I met Robert Bloch for the first time at Rhinocon 2, an sf&f and horror con in London, Ontario, just a while ago. A very short conversation about fanzines...later, we auctioned off a shower curtain with his autograph on it. Bloch was superb that weekend, and a great gentleman, too.)

In the letters column, I must agree with you and R Laurraine Tutihasi on fleeting fame with fanzines and cons. I have been working on cons for eleven years now, and the people who know that live between Detroit and Montreal. I've been working on fanzines, pubbing and loccing, for about 5 or 6 years now...not long ago now, Greg Hills called me from Australia to ask if I would nominate him for DUFF. I was happy to, seeing I sent Greg issues of *Torus*, and he sent me issues of *Secant*, and we've corresponded through the zines for while. When I asked if I should indicate where I'm involved, since I'd be unknown to Australian fans, Greg told me that most of Australian fandom knew my name. Oh, frabjous day, a double helping of egoboo, and thank you very much.

Also in the letters column, a minor point in your comment to Andy Hooper -- the Winnipeg Worldcon is 'Conadian', while the annual national convention in Canada is the 'Canvention'. I wonder how many of the people who aren't going to Conadian are doing so out of pure xenophobia, and how many are not going because they are far from bosom buddies with the con chair. I refuse

to think that fans in the U.S.A. aren't attending because of sour grapes, so there must be a legitimate reason. What is it?

{{☞ We know of several people who have said they aren't planning to attend Conadian, but we've not heard of anyone who isn't going because of a dislike of Canadians. [Are you sure you're not over-reacting on this?] As for us, we're looking forward to the convention. For one thing, it may afford us the only opportunity we'll ever have to see that part of Canada. }}

R Laurraine Tutihasi, 5876 Bowcroft
Street #4, Los Angeles, California
90016-4910

I had a different reason from Andy Hooper's for voting for Winnipeg. I have decided to support the bid most friendly to a non-smoker sensitive to smoke. Both Louisville and Winnipeg replied to my enquiries. I applaud them for that since this year neither Atlanta nor Glasgow responded, and I voted for neither and do not plan to attend. I hope to attend Winnipeg. If I can find a job early next year, I should be able to save enough money.

In reference to Mark Blackman's letter, Los Angeles still has Rent-a-Wreck. I did not find their prices particularly low. Lower was a company called Ugly Duckling. Their cars operate but lack any of the extras, such as air conditioning. I used Rent-a-Wreck several years ago in Phoenix. They rented brand new Ford LTDs.

{{☞ Hmmm... }}

Buck Coulson, 2677W-500N, Hartford
City, Indiana 47348

I'm certainly not going to Winnipeg, but then I doubt if I'm one of the fans that Andy Hooper particularly wants to see. For that matter, I don't know of any forthcoming worldcon that Juanita and I are going to.

Also, I agree with R Laurraine Tutihasi about making more lasting connections through fanzines. But one can also do this

at a local fan club. Meetings at conventions are usually quite short; frequently there are long intervals between cons, and one meets a lot of people at a con. All this makes it harder to remember specific names and conversations. All my oldest friends, including my wife, were first met at club meetings or during personal visits.

Concerning your opening comments, you ought to come out here sometime for your collecting. Ball University, some 25 miles from us, has college sweatshirts imprinted 'Ball U'. Juanita has one, but they're actually rather scarce in fandom.

George Flynn, P.O. Box 1069, Kendall Square Station, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02142

R Laurraine Tutihasi is of course correct that it's harder to receive recognition in convention fandom than in fanzine fandom, but I don't think it's because there's a greater likelihood of offending people in the former. (Pause to contemplate great feuds in fanzine history...) No, the main reason is just that cons are more perishable than zines -- though this may be starting to change: we just brought out the first of (we hope) several videos of Noreascon 3.

Matthias Hofmann, Kirchbergstraße
14, D-7800 Friburg i. Br., Germany

In general, *Mimosa* is very well edited. Interesting, clear and crisp. Small wonder that it won a Hugo as ▶Best Fanzine of the Year◄, finally. I also like the short introductory text to every article.

Although Dave Kyle's reminiscences lack a little bit of consistency in terms of being a collection of anecdotes rather than a real article, it is good that *Mimosa* reflects current events in fandom or the science fiction field in general. The danger of a fanzine such as *Mimosa* is that its contents is yesterday-oriented too much. Most of its contributions concern fandom of the forties and fifties, which is okay and highly interesting for

me. But...don't you think that *Mimosa* should cover fandom of the nineties as well? (Your Opening Comments were about Corfu, etc., but I think that this is not enough and the exception from the rule!)

{{☞ We welcome well-written first-person articles from all fan eras, but there are only two years of the 1990s (so far), in comparison with a combined 30 years for the 1940s, 50s, and 60s. }}

On the final note, I like to point out that almost all of the artwork you published in *Mimosa* #12 is top-notch! Whether it's Joe Mayhew, Teddy Harvia, Peggy Ranson, or Stu Shiffman -- awesome stuff!

Harry Warner, Jr, 423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, Maryland 21740

I believe Dave Kyle's memoir of Isaac Asimov is the longest article of its type I've been in a fanzine since his death. It's certainly among the best. One thing impresses me, mute evidence of how much Asimov was liked by fans. I haven't seen even the vaguest hint in any fanzine since his death to the effect that his behavior around female fans could be labeled as sexual harassment if done by almost any other male in fandom or mundania. That's as much love as never having to say you're sorry.

If Sharon Farber continues to turn out these wonderful accounts of hospital adventures for you for a few more issues of *Mimosa*, there will be enough of them to fill one season of a real life television series along the lines of the cop reality shows that have grown so popular. I once played a minor role in a drama involving a woman who couldn't be convinced she was getting better. It was during the same broken hip winter that I mentioned in my last loc. My surgeon got me up on crutches and took me into the room of another of his patients, to demonstrate to her that it really was possible for a person with a hip fracture to get around on crutches, something she insisted her own broken hip prevented. I teetered and tot-

tered a good bit and Dr. Swatten never did tell me if I'd given a convincing performance, but at least she had listened to me walk out of there and down the corridor without a crash indicating that I'd lost my balance.

David Thayer's contribution is different from the rest of the issue in its basic grimness despite its surface light touches. I think it's one of the finest fanzine articles I've seen this year and I hope it's remembered if a fanthology for 1992 is someday put together, even though it isn't the all-out humor that usually dominates such collections.

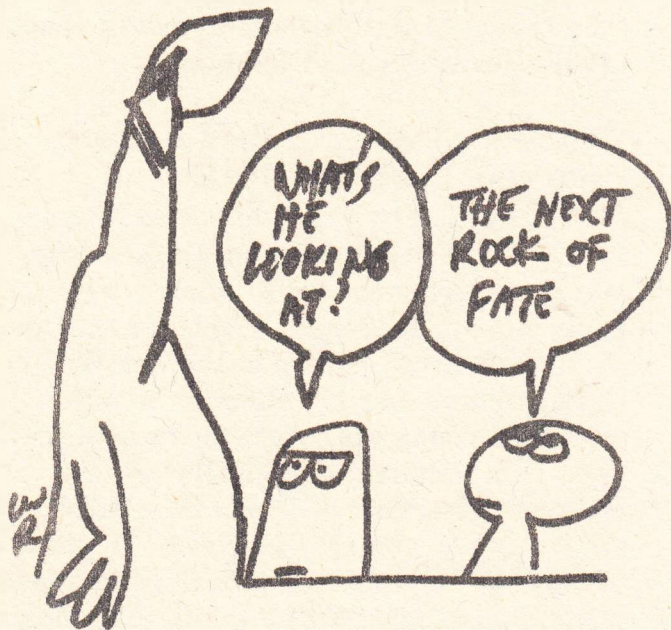
Dennis Dolbear, 217 Betz Avenue, Jefferson, Louisiana 70121

The article by Ted White {{☞ "The Bet" }} is the one I found most interesting, since as a fervent record collector -- a group never quite in their right minds -- I can sympathize with both parties in the Ted White - Harlan Ellison dispute, although Ellison's drawing a pistol was absolutely beyond the pale. (I'm thinking of Mike Glicksohn's reaction to Lester Boutillier's Don Walsh article {{☞ed. note: in the *Mimosa* 11 letters column }}). I wonder what he thought about *this*?) I guess what White should have done was relieved Ellison of a couple dozen -- maybe fewer -- of the choicest items, and told Harlan that the lesson for today was never bet anything you can't afford to lose with a shrug, and if this was all he paid for learning that valuable lesson, it was cheap at twice the price.

{{☞ Would *you* want to try relieving Harlan of some of the choicest parts of his collection? Not us... }}

But like I said, I understand both sides. White's lust for expanding his collection is the same sort of mania that impels individuals I know to be utterly pacifistic in normal life to step on my hand (s'truth) at book fairs, just to get at some Winston juveniles. And Ellison was probably simply driven over the edge by the thought of losing his...that I can **really** understand!

David Thayer's article on discovering the joys of SF in the middle of the hell of Vietnam was gripping, but I had a start when he said, "No flesh and blood Aslan was coming to save me and my buddies..." since I read it as "No flesh and blood *Asian* was coming to save me and my buddies..." And I immediately thought, *no, they're out there in the jungle, trying to kill your white ass.*



Gary Deindorfer, 447 Bellevue Avenue #9-B, Trenton, New Jersey 08618

Nice preliminary descriptions of L.A. and the cat signs in Japantown, etc. in your opening comments. And LASFS headed for a **three thousandth** meeting! That is a beautiful, living example of fannish timebinding. Tell this to Dale Speirs in the letter column, where he says that most sf clubs burn out after five years. What is even more amazing is that during the rioting of not so long ago, presumably the LASFSers went to that Thursday night's meeting too. What pluck! What courage! Well, maybe not **THAT** Thursday night, eh?

{{☞ We've read that five people did, in fact, show up for the Thursday night LASFS

meeting during the L.A. riots, maintaining the LASFS consecutive weekly string of meetings. }}

Dave Kyle's memories of Isaac Asimov are wonderful. My own tiny contribution to the Asimov Legend is that when I was a teenaged neofan, the Coulsons accepted a humor article I wrote for *Yandro* entitled "The Chancelike Workings of Chance" by Isaac Lassitude. This was a take-off on Ike's science articles. Next issue I was steeped in glorious Egoboo, because the Master had the lead-off loc in the letter column, allowing something along the lines of: 'every barb went through and through me'.

I also liked Steve Stiles' article {{☞ "My First Orgy" }}. Steve has been my friend for about 30 years now, and I haven't gotten tired of the old campaigner yet. He wears well because of that inimitable Stiles Personality. Things happen to Steve that could only happen to him and seemingly not to anybody else. His first orgy, for instance: everyone gets food poisoning because they order oysters and can't do the orgy. Steve, however, is all ready to go, because he had a steak. I swear, who else could that happen to but Steve? Now, notice, he called it his *first* orgy. Does that mean there have been others? Let's hear about them, Steve! And the lead-off Stiles illo, by the way, is hilarious.

Good to see Ted White getting active again in fanzine fandom. He, of course, long has been one of fandom's literary masters. I have always admired his clear, no nonsense prose style. No fancy lit tricks, just commonsensical spelling out for the reader of what he wants the reader to "get."

Hurray for R Laurraine Tutihasi! She has been writing thought provoking, intelligent locs for fanzines for years now without getting the recognition I think she should have. She is such a fine writer, maybe it would add to her glory (and our enjoyment) if she would try an article for a zine once in a while, and not merely locs.

{{☞ We second the motion... }}

Martin Morse Wooster, P.O. Box
8093, Silver Spring, Maryland 20907

There were two major themes in *Mimosa* 12 -- horrible medical injuries and unusual collections. I'd rather not comment on other people's medical misfortunes (although Sharon Farber's tales were as funny as always and Richard Brandt's anecdote was particularly disgusting), so I'd rather discuss collecting for a bit.

The collection I would like to know about is Dick Lynch's collection of state capitols and suspension bridges. These must be quite hard to collect; you need to have extra-roomy suitcases, and Dick must work out quite a bit to carry them home. And how large must the closets in the Lynch household be to accommodate a few suspension bridges? However, I am now certain that the Lynch's house is very easy to spot -- just find the home with the bulging marble done in place of a roof.

{{☞ Maybe they do take more room, but it's harder to lose a suspension bridge than almost anything else you might want to collect... }}

The collection I most enjoyed reading about was Harlan Ellison's record collection, in Ted White's article. I thought White's piece amusing, because it was, by today's terms, a bit antique. Translate the story to today's equivalents, and it doesn't seem quite as funny (or as hard) to carry a thousand compact disks or cassette tapes.

But the collection I most sympathized with was Nicki Lynch's collection of t-shirts from college. I have a similar collection; I am trying to see a game in every professional baseball park (long-season A-ball and up) and bring something back from it. I maintain that after I have finished this Quest (which will include Japan, Mexico, other Caribbean nations, etc.) I will have obtained Ultimate Knowledge. (What knowledge would that be? I don't know. That is why it is Ultimate Knowledge.) The difference between my collection and Nicki's is that I do not just have

to bring back a t-shirt; I've brought home plastic cups, scorecards, pens, and my favorite, a cap from the second Comiskey Park that honored the White Sox by just having a white sock on the center of a black diamond. It strikes me as a quirky cap, celebrating the essence of, well, sockiness.

Sam Moskowitz, 361 Roseville Avenue,
Newark, New Jersey 07103

I found Dave Kyle's article "I Remember Ike" particularly appealing because the night before I read it I had completed a lengthy article titled "I Remember Asimov" and interestingly, there was no duplication of material whatsoever.

{{☞ Sam's article will appear in the next issue of A. Langley Searles' fine fanzine, *Fantasy Commentator*. }}

I also enjoyed the article by Terry Jeeves on old popular science magazines {{☞ "The Wonders of Science" }}, but he had my memory spinning for a while when he referred to the January 1924 issue of *Everyday Science and Mechanics*. He has this confused with *Science and Invention*. *Everyday Science and Mechanics* was first issued with the date of July, 1930 as *Everyday Mechanics*. It incorporated *Illustrated Science and Mechanics* which had been launched about a year and a half earlier out of Chicago by another publisher. This explains why collectors referring to that 'first' issue will find it numbered as Volume 2 No. 4.

There was a January, 1924 issue of *Science and Invention* titled *The New Science and Invention in Pictures*. The \$12,000 contest which Terry speaks of was first featured on the cover of the October, 1923 issue. With that issue Gernsback presented the first issue of the magazine completely in pictures and captions, except for the editorial, the fiction and a few departments. The idea had been tried by other magazines previously and would not catch on until *Life* appeared in 1936.

Oh, yes. The Harlan Ellison/Ted White

bet was, to put it mildly, incredible. Ranks as one of the crazier fan incidents.

Brian Earl Brown, 11675 Beaconsfield, Detroit, Michigan 48224

David Kyle's "I Remember Ike" was a particularly fine tribute and Terry Jeeves' article about silly inventions was a delight, but I'd pick Ted White's article as the best of the issue. It covered a part of fan history I wasn't as familiar with, was well told, touched on the careers of a lot of people, told some very good anecdotes leading up to the central story. I truly do enjoy Ted's writing on fan history, especially his fan history even if I doubt that we'll ever agree on the theory and practice of fanzines.

And it's always fun to hear Roger Sims and Howard DeVore talk about the wild and crazy days of midwestern fandom {{cc "A Brief History of the Morgan Botts Foundation" }}. I'm not quite sure why Howard decided to call his weekly poker game The Morgan Botts Foundation. I know Roger explains who Morgan Botts was, but not exactly what it meant to Howard or fandom in general at the time.

I loved Linda Michaels' drawing for the letters column. I'm so glad she's finally sending art out to fanzine editors. And I hope she will continue to do so after the Niagara Falls worldcon bid for 1998 is resolved.

Patty Peters, 7501 Honey Court, Dublin, California 94568

The Wayne Third Foundation of the early seventies sounds a lot like Roger Sims' description of DSFL in 1952: lots of people sitting around an office in Wayne State's student union building. Some talking, most just staring into space. We didn't have Howard DeVore at the moment, so enter "The Suburban Femmefen." (We were not yet named.) Four teenage girls showing up at an SF club meeting can disrupt the dull balance of things just enough, and parties became

regular. I don't remember a *lot* of poker, but beer (and whatnot) was plentiful. Since that took a little more than 20 years to repeat, I wonder what the next couple of years will bring to Detroit fandom.

It's good to see fans like David Thayer are coming to feel comfortable writing about their experiences in Vietnam. I was too young to be involved myself but, being the youngest-by-far of a large family, my life was touched through a brother-in-law and several cousins. The first time I realized young people could die was when I attended the funeral of a cousin lost in a helicopter. Watching the news footage nightly must have had effects I still do not realize. It was good to have the space program as counterpoint, but is strange to have the two inexorably linked in my memory. People shooting at each other, people capering about in low gravity, and people burning their neighbor's homes (or their own brassieres) are the images that come back to me when I remember being ten.

Ted's account of "The Bet" was both well-crafted and entertaining. My mind's eye stayed in Harlan's apartment, watching him go from disbelief to outrage to the snapping-point as each batch of his precious albums were carried away. To be a fly on the wall and hear the dialogue he must have carried on with himself while Ted and Larry were in transit! I guess this goes to show that everything can become a funny story eventually. That would have taken longer than 22 years for me, though.

Gary Brown, 4320-C Colonial Circle, Bradenton, Florida 34208

For some reason, this struck me as your best issue of *Mimosa* yet. Dave Kyle's remembrance of Isaac Asimov was both informative and moving. Roger Sims' "A Brief History of the Morgan Botts Foundation" made me chuckle. Only real fans can relate to the truth hidden in this article.

I'd say my favorite piece was "The Wonders of Science" by Terry Jeeves. Funny, all

too true, and intriguing. Who wouldn't be anxious to read, and believe, stuff like The Municipal Announcer and 'A Flying Car in Your Garage'. Oddly enough, after reading Jeeves' piece, I turned on CNN to watch a clip of an invention called 'the spring walker', a device that allows humans to cover more ground, faster with less effort. The device looked like the inner structure of some smaller dinosaurs. It may prove that dinosaurs did get around on pogo sticks, as has been theorized by some.



Jeanne Mealy, 4157 Lyndale Ave. S., Minneapolis, Minnesota 55409-1446

"The Wonders of Science" by Terry Jeeves was a delight to read. There's a sense of wonder, indeed, when reading his descriptions of the amazing (potential) inventions that Hugo Gernsback and others expected would exist any day now. A surprising ele-

ment to this article was the contrast between the (potential) inventions and Terry's living conditions. A soap-box car powered by an old washing machine motor was hardly a possibility when their washing was done in an iron tub with a plunger, scrubbing board and blue-bag (what is that?!). {{ed. note: 'Blueing' was used to whiten clothes before there were chlorine bleaches. Don't ask us how it worked... }} I was also reminded of *Mad* magazine's bizarre inventions -- am I dreaming, or did some of them become reality? I would swear I saw cartoons making fun of people wearing radios strapped to their heads, for example.

"My First Orgy" -- bait and switch, I wail! The article was full of teasers about Steve Stiles' experience with both food and sex -- AND NOTHING HAPPENED! That makes it a *potential* orgy, not his first actual orgy. And then there's that punchline. Ohhhhhhhhhh, Steve. How could you DO that to us?

In the letters column, if George Flynn is correct, it's a shame that younger fans are addicted to computer bulletin boards (and whatever else exists by now) and aren't attracted or even aware of the fanzine network. The slower fanzine traffic and the quick computer connections each have their advantages and disadvantages. Nearly-instantaneous "conversations" via computer are entertaining and satisfying. On the other hand, it's easy to say something inappropriate that might be thought better of when writing a LoC. Will there come a time when only the older crowd actually writes a letter or prefers holding a zine to tapping a keyboard and reading a screen? I doubt it. There are throwbacks in every generation.

Darroll Pardoe, 36 Hamilton Street, Hoole, Chester CH2 3JQ, England

Terry Jeeves's article on the remarkable inventions in Uncle Hugo's magazines calls to mind a more recent crazy inventor named Arthur Pedrick, who flourished in the 1970s.

This gentleman had been a patent agent, and acquired some sort of a grudge against the British Patent Office. When he retired he used his extensive knowledge of the procedures to file patents which, although their subject matter was utterly ludicrous, were yet written in acceptable form and gave the Patent Office no way of rejecting them. So for several years a wonderful series of patents issued in Pedrick's name. For instance, there was the automobile in which the passengers sat at the front, and the driver in the back seat (somewhat raised so as to be able to see over them). Best of all was his crowning glory, the combination 1,000 megaton orbital weapon and selective cat-flap. The patent for this (I still have a copy somewhat) was full of wonderful nonsense about his cat Ginger being troubled by the black cat from next door coming in through the cat-flap and stealing his food. Hence the flap which opened only for cats of the appropriate colour. Apparently the technology was also adaptable to large nuclear missiles in orbit which would detect the launch of any surface-based missile and paste the country involved. How the Patent Office much have gnashed their teeth when they were forced to grant this patent! But they had no way of avoiding it.

 Steve Jeffery, 44 White Way, Kidlington, Oxon OX5 2XA, United Kingdom

Your Corflu trip report was full of entertaining bits and pieces. I've never eaten in a Peruvian restaurant, but I suspect amplifiers are not a traditional part of their folk music, unless the tops of the Andes are provided with more power points than I suspected.

Terry Jeeves' "The Wonders of Science" is like an orphan looking in on a toystore window at Christmas. With the Municipal Loud Hailer, it is probably best that Gernsback went into SF magazines rather than civil engineering. Some of the other ideas, like personal air conditioning, surface occasionally in Japanese patents. Japanese re-

searchers are encouraged to patent furiously, and the review system seems to take a lax view of novelty or practicality. I remember one for a refrigerated hat, to cool the brain.

I laughed at "The Bet" until about halfway through, and then it turned ugly and disturbing. Harlan might write like an avenging angel (when the muse takes him) but anyone who fools around with a gun like that, unloaded or otherwise, ought not to be let out without supervision. Harlan may have got his records back, but he lost. I wonder if he realizes how much he lost.

 Terry Jeeves, 56 Red Scar Drive,
 Scarborough, North Yorkshire
 YO12 5RQ, England

I enjoyed Vince and Chuch's excellent piece on map stamps {{☞ "Seen Any Good Stamps Philately?" }} immensely, and agree with Vince's comment on boring (older) UK stamps being replaced by the current flood of ghastlies. I just spent £6 on the Tolkien issue -- only to find it was a slim booklet of natter about the man, plus a load of completely normal definitive issues. What a rip-off!

Now to the heading of that article, where it says that Vince helped to found the British Science Fiction Association. As far as my memory serves, he had no part in it other than attending the general fan meeting at Kettering {{☞ ed. note: in 1958 }}. At that meeting, Eric Bentcliffe and I were reluctantly elected as joint Secretaries, Archie Mercer was Treasurer, and Ted Tubb was to edit *Vector*, with me duping it. A few weeks later, Chairman Dave Newman vanished from fandom, Tubb sent me some material and resigned as editor, and Eric and I were left to create a BSFA from nothing. Eric did all the secretarial work, and I edited, duplicated, collated, and mailed out the first four issues of *Vector*. Between us and Archie Mercer (at the purse strings), we *were* BSFA for its first year. Then Bobbie Gray became *Vector's* editor, I became (over two more years) Vice-

Chair and full Chairman, and Gillian Adams became Secretary. Ella Parker followed me as Chairman, as far as I can remember. I don't think Vince had any hand in the BSFA formative years.

{{☞ Thanks for the additional information. The two sources we have on 1950s British fandom (Rob Hansen's *Then* #2 and Harry Warner, Jr.'s *A Wealth of Fable*) indicate that Vincent Clarke's contribution to the formation of BSFA came much before the Kettering convention of 1958. Vince was one of the most visible agitators (in print, that is) for the formation of a national fan organisation; that was what we referred to when we stated that 'he helped found the BSFA'. Obviously, you, Eric, and Archie had an even greater role, that of keeping BSFA alive for the first few years after it was formed, and we apologize for the oversimplification. }}

Darroll Pardoe is a trifle off in his comments in your letters column on the Knights of St. Fantony and Doc Weir Awards. KTSF was a fun thing, not an old fogey's power bid. The ceremony was just a send up. The Doc Weir Award (as we set it up -- and I was one of the Committee) was NOT awarded for fannish work or merit. I proposed the wording accepted, so I know...it was to be voted on by anyone interested enough to attend the annual Con, and attendees were urged to vote for "The one you would like to see win the Doc Weir Award." It may have been abused and altered in later years, but that's how we set it up.

Robert Lichtman, P.O. Box 30, Glen Ellen, California 95442

You know, it was months ago that I read *Mimosa* #12, and while I enjoyed it immensely -- I believe it's by far the best issue you've done so far -- I have very few other checkmarks. One is by Eve Ackerman's letter, which I regard as high praise for *Mimosa* in its ongoing emphasis on fanhistory, and particularly on the direct reminiscences of

the fans who were originally involved. The other checkmark is by Bloch's letter and its mention of sending off his autobiography to his publisher. As you can well imagine, starting after Labor Day I began making more frequently checks of the various bookstores, both sfnal and straight, that I visit. So far it doesn't seem to have been issued; as of last Saturday, Tom Whitmore (at Other Change of Hobbit in Berkeley) didn't have copies either on hand or coming.

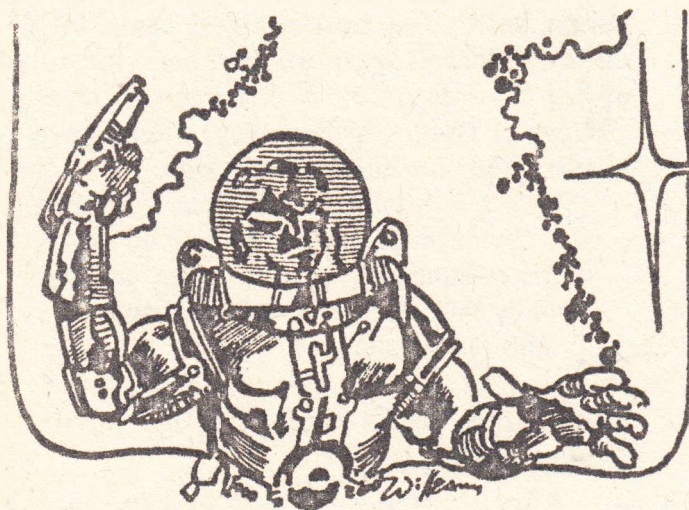
{{☞ We're hoping that it's soon available, too. Meanwhile, readers should be aware of the re-issue of *The Eighth Stage of Fandom* by Wildside Press, a collection of Bloch's fan writings. }}

Don Fitch, 3908 Frijo, Covina, California 91722

After reading each issue of *Mimosa*, I think back over the contents and decide that well over half the zine deserves permanent, archival preservation, either in zine form or as reprints in (hardback) collections & anthologies. Much thought I like the traditional paper (both nostalgically and tangibly), I have to admit that it isn't likely to hold up for much more than 50 years (if that), and I sure hope you're mimeoing a few more copies on archival, acid-free bond paper, and/or preserving the master copies of the pages & a few good photocopies of them, in secure places, so that they can be reprinted easily (artwork & all) when the time comes.. and, of course, that you're also preserving the text on computer disk, for similar purposes. No? Oh, well... At least I've been very glad to see that you've produced substantial over-runs, and have copies of these for sale at occasional Conventions. Too many excellent fanzines, of far more than ephemeral interest & importance, have had less influence than they should, simply because the editor's financial restriction limited the print-run to the (small) mailing list.

{{☞ Thanks for the compliment. Actually, we do save our WordPerfect disk files of

each issue (which includes everything but the artwork), as well as the paste-up masters of each page. We don't mimeo extra copies on special paper, but our first issue is now ten years old and the fibertone paper hasn't noticeably embrittled. }}



Kristin Thorrud, Ullevålsalléen 8,
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Personally I must admit that I'm a bit critical of the whole LoC business -- it's become such a duty to some people, it seems compulsive; although it ought to be impulsive. I am myself a poor LoC-writer at the best of times, always was, and always will be. Furthermore I'm in a very unstable phase of my life, unlike a lot of other (older) fans who seem to have settled down, finished their studies long since, and have steady jobs. I'm in the final uncertain (read 'traumatic') stages of my studies, have been moving around too much (from Norway to Sweden and back again), live separate from my husband (because of my studies), and exist on a student loan/grant. It goes without saying that fanac for me is very much a question of having surplus energy.

Myself, I'm usually happy if people send me LoCs once in a while to show me they're still alive out there, but I don't expect it or demand it. It's not that I don't understand you; because I used to publish more sercon fanzines some years ago, and of course the

letter columns were for fun then. But I soon tired of those zines, and wanted to do something just for my won pleasure instead (self-centered, perhaps?). Your kind of zines carry so many expectations from various people (who expect to see their LoCs, articles, etc. in print); the zine that I publish now is totally free from forced publishing, and subject only to my own whims and creative urges (and economy). Sometimes I really believe the letter columns are a matter of status and great pride in some zines; but mind you, I too think that feedback is nice.

This criticism is not directed towards anyone in particular, but was intended as a constructive exchange of views; I just wish to question the system. I think that your kind of zines are important; they give us a sense of continuity and communication, in sharp contrast with my egotrip of a fanzine.

Anyway, I do appreciate getting *Mimosa*. I'm grateful that you still bother to keep me on your list, because LoCs aren't my forte as you will have realized by now.

But then, this turned out to become a LoC after all, didn't it?

We Also Heard From:

Harry Andruschak; Nancy Atherton; Pamela Boal; Lester Boutillier; Ned Brooks; Terry Broome; G. M. Carr; Russ Chauvenet; David Clark; Vinç Clarke; Chester Cuthbert; James Dignan; Carolyn Doyle; Cathy Doyle; Tom Feller; Eva Hauser; Lynn Hickman; Irwin Hirsh; Arthur Hlavaty; Rhodri James; Deb Hammer Johnson; Kovačić Joža; Ruth Judkowitz; Dave Kyle; Dave Langford; Hope Leibowitz; Fred Liddle; Ethel Lindsay; Adrienne Losin; Joseph T. Major; Gary Mattingly; Patrick McGuire; Pat Molloy; Joe Moudry; Pär Nilsson; Stan Nuttall; Jodie Offutt; Elizabeth Osborne; Hans Persson; Derek Pickles; Peggy Ranson; Gary Robe; William Rotsler; Dave Rowe; Ron Salomon; Ben Schilling; Julius Schwartz; Julie Scott; Steve Sneyd; Alan Stewart; David Thayer; Roger Waddington; Henry Welch; George Wells; Taras Wolansky

Remembering Roger

Memories can be wonderful things. They are moments, frozen in time -- much better than photographs because they are three-dimensional rather than flat, holding so much more than just isolated bits of scenery; they don't fade with the passing of years, either.

We've already mentioned, in our opening comments, that we had been corresponding with Roger Weddall for several years (and had gotten to know each other quite well through the mails, if such a thing is possible), but had only met each other for the first time at the Jophan Family Reunion. It was during the Jophan Family Reunion that we found out Roger was having health problems, and wouldn't be able to visit us in Maryland as he'd originally planned. As Down Under Fan Fund representative, Roger had wanted to spend six months here in the U.S., visiting all the centers of fan activity at least once. But instead, he now could only spend four weeks here (most of which had already elapsed at that point), and would have to return to Australia right after Magicon to continue chemotherapy treatments for lymphoma.

We didn't have a chance just then to find out more, but at Magicon the next week, Roger assured us that the cancer was controllable -- had been controlled, in fact -- and nothing, but *nothing* would prevent him from returning in 1993 to complete his DUFF trip. As the convention closed, we bid each other farewell, hopeful that we'd see him again, fearful that we wouldn't. And now, just three months later, we've received that long distance telephone call that we were dreading would happen, the news of Roger's death.

It is difficult for us to accept that we're not ever going to hear from him again. But we're fortunate that in the relatively short time we knew Roger, we managed to accumulate many memories of and about him that we'll continue to treasure: Roger had an unpredictable side where he would do memorable things from out of the blue from time to time, like his 'telephone call from the future' to us one New Year's Eve (he was on the other side of the International Date Line, where the new year had already arrived). We also knew him as someone who would gladly go out of his way to do something for you that he knew you wanted; we've lost count of the number of times we've received letters from Roger where the envelope was almost completely covered with different postage stamps -- all because he knew that Nicki collects Australian postage stamps.



Nicki gets a helpful hand from Roger at Magicon

And lastly, there was the Roger we knew from this past summer -- he was so hyperactive at Magicon that hardly anybody had the energy and stamina to keep up with him. That's the way we'll remember him most -- full of life and enthusiasm. Roger was that special kind of person who could brighten up your day whenever he wrote or called; the world will be a less friendly place without him. We *will* miss him, a lot; we already do.

He was our friend.



