

A MIMOSA FANTHOLOGY

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Welcome to our Fanthology issue. Or more accurately, to our *first* Fanthology issue. What you have here is a collection of some of our favorite articles from the first 16 issues of *Mimosa*. Our next issue will be another Fanthology, with some of our favorite articles from issues 17-27.

The next issue will also be the next-to-last issue, and it's not because the size of this issue (or its expense to publish) has given us a case of Nydahl's Disease (i.e., burnout). We'll actually miss publishing a fanzine, but we believe that everything has a life cycle. Earlier this year we passed our 20th anniversary of publishing *Mimosa*; its existence has lasted longer than probably 99.9% of all the fanzine titles that have ever been published. This seems like a good place to stop.

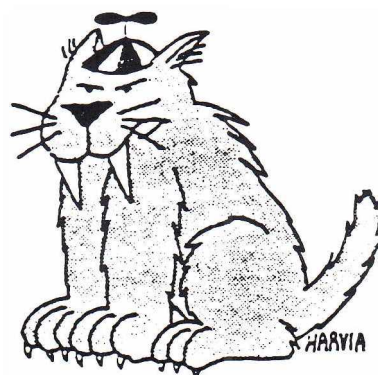
It actually doesn't seem like it's been 20 years since our first issue. Back then we were transplanted northerners living in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and had been actively involved in science fiction fandom for only about seven years. And *Mimosa* was not even our first fanzine; we became fan publishers in 1977, with the first issue of a clubzine named *Chat*. Here's how we described it in "Visit to a Small Fanzine" in *Mimosa* 7:

We don't know what originally possessed us with the idea of doing a fanzine. It was early autumn 1977, and we had just lost a bid to hold the 1978 DeepSouthCon in Chattanooga, which had left a bad taste in our mouths from the way the winning campaign had been conducted. All that is now water long gone under the bridge, but at the time we remember it was like being all dressed up with no place to go – creative energy was present, looking for an outlet now that chairing a convention was no longer in the cards. At any rate, the local SF club, the Chattanooga Science Fiction Association, was fairly new and growing. There was a need for a central focus, and out of all that *Chat* was conceived.

It was Nicki who came up with the name, a double-entendre from the fanzine's purpose (club news) and place of origin (Chattanooga). Most club members embraced the idea, and in October 1977, the first issue appeared.

Chat succeeded beyond our wildest dreams; we published it every month for 40 issues, and the page count went from a scrawny two pages at the beginning to two *dozen* pages at the end of the run – and back then, before the days of powerful personal computers and slick word processing software, each page had to be laboriously pasted-up from hand-typed copy. About halfway through the run, *Chat* gained a third meaning, as well as a mascot – Teddy Harvia, who apparently can read French, introduced a cartoon saber-toothed tiger named 'Chat' that became associated with the fanzine.

FANNISH LEGEND



The origins of *Chat*, the fourth fannish ghod, should be obvious. Ah, but how many forget and pronounce the silent h.

We ended *Chat* for many of the same reasons we're ending *Mimosa* – we thought we'd taken it as far as we could, given the constraints in time and resources available, and thought it was time to do something else. Back in 1982, that 'something else' was a different kind of fanzine than *Chat* was – one with a more open publishing schedule (about twice a year, as it turned out) and that would serve as an outlet for our growing interest in the preservation of fan history. As for what we may do next, either jointly or individually, after *Mimosa* ends... well, we're not sure yet. Right now, we're looking forward to not having any kind of publishing schedule hanging over our heads. In fact, we kind of like the sound of 'Fanzine Publisher Emeritus'. Has a nice ring to it, don't you think?

We should mention that this is an 'editors choice' fanthology – we selected articles for reprint here that we thought were entertaining and well written, but we did face some hard choices to keep the page count from becoming too out-of-control. In the end, we decided to limit ourselves to printing only one article by any contributor – not an easy thing to do when you've got multiple contributions from Sharon Farber, Dave Kyle, Bruno Ogorelec, Vincent Clarke, Bob Shaw, Walt Willis, David Thayer, and Harry Warner, Jr. to choose from. Also, all the articles we've selected for reprint in this fanthology are being accompanied by the same artwork from when they were first published. We're also including artwork from other parts of the issues where space permits, and reprints of some of the covers like this one by Charlie Williams from the first issue of *Mimosa*.

That first issue actually took a lot longer to assemble and publish than we ever thought it would; it didn't appear until January 1982, almost a full year after the demise of *Chat*. Since we hadn't published any previous issues, we looked for contributions from people we knew, either in person or in correspondence.

But the result was that the first issue, unlike most of the later issues, lacked a theme or much of anything else to tie the contents together. The resulting fanzine was a bit of a jumble and even somewhat downbeat – it included a reprint of Jack Chalker's rather pessimistic speech from Chattacon 6 on how the space program had not lived up to people's hopes and dreams and an equally gloomy but well-written article by Harry

Andruschak about how the space program had not even come close to living up to the predictions made in science fiction stories from 20 years earlier. (This was back in the Reagan era of budget cutbacks, remember, so there was good reason to be pessimistic.)

Besides that, there a pleasant whimsical piece by Ralph Roberts "In Defense of the Horrid Pun," a first-person account of a Rolling Stones concert by Guy Lillian, a few book reviews by Nicki (which was the only time we ever published reviews of any kind in *Mimosa*) and Rich's re-telling of a huge misadventure we experienced on the way to UpperSouthClave 10. The most different piece in the issue was Dennis Dolbear's remembrance of Chattacon 6 ("Hawaiian Shirts?!?"), an example of that Great Southern Fan Tradition, the hoax convention report (though in this case it was semi-hoax, as at least *some* of the events he described actually happened).

There was also a short childhood remembrance from Jeff Duntemann, who started off as a science fiction writer and then transitioned into a successful career as a writer of computer books. And now he's made a return to science fiction – his story "Drumlin Boiler" appeared in the April 2002 *Asimov's*, though he reports that "I'm [still] trying to sell the hard SF novel I finished in 1999." Jeff's article in *Mimosa* 1 is, as far as we know, his only piece of writing that ever appeared in a fanzine. Here it is again...



The Ill-Fated Biocell

by Jeff Duntemann

Charlie was a high school buddy of mine. We were both class nerds and hung around together. I was building telescopes at the time and he played with electronics. He went through an alternative energy phase long before gas hit the wrong side of 40 cents a gallon.

Charlie had a ten gallon bluish glass water-cooler jug which his father had brought home from work after the bottled water company which served his office went broke. Charlie had read somewhere of the possibility of generating electricity from sewage. He decided it was worth a try. The active ingredients were cheap, and when you're a 14-year-old nerd, that counts.

All through the long summer of 1967 he had this funnel connected through a piece of rubber tubing to a cork crammed into the neck of his water-cooler jug. Charlie refused to relieve anywhere but into the funnel. I helped fill it a time or two if I recall, but I had my doubts about the whole idea. Come September it was full to brimming, a beautiful cloudy yellow, and visions of kilovolts danced in his head.

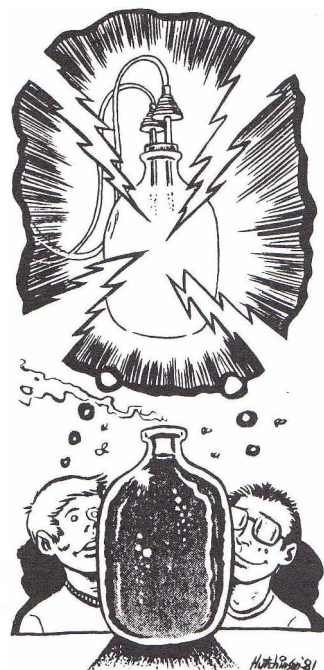
The active battery elements were a copper rod and a nickel rod he picked up at the American Science Center, battered through another cork and inserted into the neck of the jug. We measured its current producing capacity at 1.5 volts at 3 milliamps (about the same as your average hearing-aid battery).

He was certain the brew was missing something, and kept adding stuff like copper sulfate and kitchen bleach. The corrosion from the copper rod started turning the jug a pretty green. Still no additional power out of it. Charlie threw an old rug over the jug, put it on the shelf in his basement workroom, and gave up on it.

A couple of months later, Charlie's old man lost track of his electric drill, and went poking through Charlie's workroom. He tried to pull the rug off the jug to see what was underneath – and pulled the jug off the shelf instead.

Charlie and I were out in the back yard broiling giant water bugs with a magnifying glass when his old man emerged from the basement ankle-deep in ripe fermenting green pee. I left hastily, and it was some time before I saw Charlie again.

There is no moral to this story, other than: Thank God I Grew Up.



Reaction from readers to our first issue was a lot more enthusiastic than we had ever hoped for – Kim Huett provided the most egoboo when he wrote us that he “didn’t know that fanzines like *Mimosa* existed anywhere but in faneds dreams.” And the praise was spread out over the contributors, too – Avedon Carol wrote wanting to know, “Who is Charlie Williams and where can I get one?”

It would be five years before she found out, however, because that’s how long it was before *Mimosa 2* appeared. In the early 1980s, we’d both decided to go back to college at night to get degrees in computer science, and it left little time for much else. And back then there was so much nastiness in Chattanooga fandom that it really made us wonder if we even *wanted* to do anything else in fandom, much less publish a fanzine. It was our friend George Laskowski, at the Atlanta Worldcon in 1986, who finally persuaded us to do another issue; he’d just won the first of his two Hugo Awards for ‘Best Fanzine’ but seemed more interested in encouraging us to resume publishing than accepting our congratulations.

The second issue finally appeared in January 1987, and once again the contents were a bit of a jumble, but at least it was more upbeat – it included a humorous Bob Tucker speech about “The Bad Old Days of Science Fiction,” a ‘radio play’ by John Guidry and Justin Winston about the night New Orleans won the bid for the 1988 Worldcon, a really well-written article by Joe Celko (but a bit too explicit for this reprint issue) about his days as co-proprietor of an adult book store, and an article by Charlie Williams about the 1979 Louisville NorthAmerican that packed 17 pieces of his fan art into a 5-page article. There was also an article by Lon Atkins about one of Southern Fandom’s favorite pastimes, the game of Hearts. Here it is again:

The Great Hearts Shoot-Out

by Lon Atkins

Every world of special skill has its crowd of hustlers – people whose understanding and execution of the skill places them on a level so far from mere mortal performance that the gap cannot be grasped easily. The popular press tries; it calls these experts ‘Superstars’ and lines the cage of every canary in America with unbounded superlatives or snide cynicism, depending on the last time at bat.

The experts themselves are a clan. They talk little of the incredible skills, preferring friendly but derogatory banter when questioned about their peers. This is called the ‘Set Up’ and has been fashionable with experts for uncountable centuries.

The Playing Public, a segment dear to the hearts of those experts, has somewhat harsher words for the experts. At the end of an evening’s play, as they extract dollars from their wallets, members of the Playing Public look those experts in the eye, hand them cash, and summon up the essence of graceful defeat. “Asshole,” says the Playing Public. But they pay.

Among the experts there is a tacit recognition of who is *in* The Group and Who Isn’t. That clan, that tightly knot band of high-tension performers, will admit to its inner circle only those who have performed with worthy results under curse of fire. Standards exist to be maintained. If there is a tougher shell to crack than the barrier hustlers exhibit to pigeons, demonstrate it.

Likewise, the hustlers take care of their own. Any band of honest outlaws will defend its own kind to the death. With hustlers this is even more so, for reputation is almighty sword and all fear its loss.

When a hustler ‘dies’ it is of grave concern to the Community. Shock and disbelief run rampant. So would it have been with me, had I not been involved in the terrible events themselves, when I read the following requiem in the *Hearts Hustler’s Gazette*...

Dave Locke (1945-1980) :

Yes, fellow hustlers, there can be no doubt but that “Devil Dave” is dead. Long the terror of New York and California Hearts tables, Dave met his demise over the table, as all true Hearts Hustlers most fervently fear. Inside reports have it that at the end he Reinhardtied twice running, then retreated into a corner with a bottle of Anchor Steam Beer in a brown bag. During his best years Dave was a big money winner on the West Coast, frequently finishing second to Lon Atkins Himself. Dave’s cool, his wit, and his talent for second-dealing earned him a niche in the hearts of all Heart Hustlers. Many is the amateur who recalls that affectionate wit in “Devil Dave’s” voice as he snapped out: “Pay up, twit!” But even the Great fall. And “Devil Dave” has departed out world. Weep with me for this Subtle Sharke...

A tear formed in the corner of my right eye as I remembered the poignant details of that fatal Petards meeting Locke co-hosted on March 29, 1980. It had all begun innocently enough. Drunk to the gills before arriving, I displayed a discouraging lack of judgement with my rapid solicitation of a Hearts game.

I should have recognized the menace when Locke smiled with terrible anticipation and introduced Terry “Trapper” Ridgeway, an offhand acquaintance who merely happened to play Hearts. At the mention of Hearts Terry began to salivate. Even as the drool ran down his rugged All-American chin I accepted the task of locating a **sucker** fourth for the encounter.

The signs were foreboding, but I went dutifully to the kitchen (where all Petards meetings take place) and came upon the corpus of Mike “Highflyer” Glycer. Mike had shown some promise at an earlier game, but had lost in the end. I felt no risk in asking this gentleman to join our fray. Indeed, I felt that the coin of the realm he would contribute was most welcome.

Co-host Dave Hulan was cooperative. Despite owning no card table, he was ingenious enough to locate a pressboard sheet about eight feet square. Resting upon a laundry hamper and the knees of the players it served well enough as a battlefield. Of course, we couldn’t move once the contraption was in place, but no one expected to be leaving the game for a while anyhow.

Things began rather unexpectedly: “Trapper” Ridgeway shot the moon on the opening hand. I stared in shock as he collected the cards, squared them on his palm, then with a deft motion ran them down to the crook of his elbow and back several times.

Terry caught my stare. “Just warming up,” he said. “Learned this exercise in Vegas.”

Locke didn’t seem bothered; he’d seen it before. I glanced at “Highflyer” Glycer and he glanced at me. We raised our eyebrows. This was, it appeared, to be a contest of *skill*. I began to flex my fingers, summoning back those forgotten manipulative skills. I noticed that “Highflyer” didn’t bother. He just smiled sublimely.

After a few more hands the proper patterns seemed to be asserting themselves: Terry the Trapper had been boosted up with healthy measure despite a second moonshot; Highflyer Glycer was high indeed – about twenty-odd points higher than the rest of us; and I was low man, with Locke hanging close. Just as I was relaxing, all Hell broke loose.

In the horrible moments that followed, the Trapper shot twice more. But worse yet, Glycer lassoed the moon *three* times. Locke and I were hurled aloft. When the game ended with Locke being pushed over the 100 mark, I was close behind.

Our second game led to relative restoration of order. I won handily, but not by enough of a margin to quite overtake Highflyer. Poor Locke, however, had come in high man again. “Devil Dave” was beginning to flake around the edges. Oh, there was good-humored jollity as the debts were paid out. Laughter and wit. But my practiced eye could see the telling signs of stress – after all, I was an expert too, and knew the terrible demands of Reputation. When Locke spread mustard on a napkin, wrapped it around a candle, and ate the whole thing without a blink I knew his mind was dwelling on the loss. I hoped it would have no long-term effects.

To tell the truth, Dave’s last-place finish went almost unnoticed in the professional world because of me. It was the first time I’d failed to finish Big Winner in a money Hearts session in almost twenty years. The speculation as to whether Atkins was losing his touch or not eclipsed poor Locke’s disgrace. Not that he didn’t get in a few digs, but it was nowhere near as bad as it could have been.

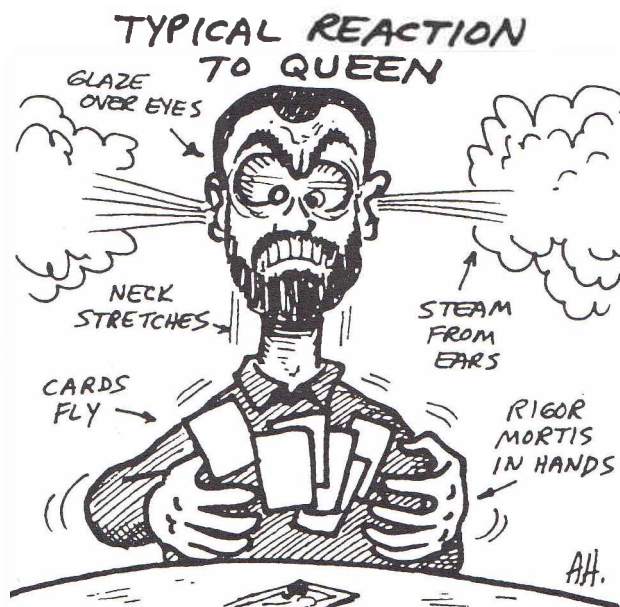
The pain was still too much. Dave got busy organizing another session and on the following Saturday a return match was arranged. I agreed without much hesitation; it sounded like more easy money. “Trapper” Ridgeway signed up quickly, too. Terry thought he had us figured out now and would be shooting the moon at will. I didn’t disagree; it’s good to leave the opposition with some delusions.

The key figure was Mike. I’ve not inquired as to what wiles Dave used to lure him down from Sylmar to Torrance, but they worked. On Friday I got a call from Locke: “Same four.” He sounded pleased!

So was I. While I’d coasted rather smoothly across the jibes of my fellow Hearts hustlers (none of them really wanted to face me in a no-holds-barred high stakes game), the minor irritation of finishing second to Highflyer was telling. Hell, he wasn’t even nationally ranked!

Locke, Glycer, and I met shortly before five o’clock. With Dave’s son Brian in tow we went out to a nearby Italian restaurant, where I had Chicken Florentine of remarkable succinctness, Mike had baked Lasagna, Brian has a Sicilian Pepperroni Pizza, and Dave consumed six pounds of Noodles. During the meal we didn’t speak of the impending game – bad form. Instead we chatted about how many women wore panties to bed and whether any good science fiction was being written these days.

Terry was late, arriving about 7:14:05. We abandoned our hotly-contested bout of Crazy Eights and arranged the table for the Real Thing. The moment of truth was at hand. In the background I heard the brassy sound of Herb Alpert and the scratching of Ernest Hemingway’s pen. Four bulls pawed (hoofed?) the earth and



snorted steam at each other. We all knew what it meant: fame or ignomy, not to mention untold riches. Locke announced the stakes. "Penny a point, pay everybody," he said.

The game started cautiously, with passing hedged with low hearts. Terry the Trapper loosened first, unabashedly starting his quest for the moon. Devil Dave played with his normal confidence, hanging low on most hands and pushing play toward smoking the Queen when he had marginal holdings. Highflyer Glycer watched his score rise ominously before trying a few moonshots. They failed, and Mike was our first Reinhardt.

I played with my usual superb skill and finished clear low man. On the last both Terry and Mike were pushed over one hundred. During the exchange of time-honored witticisms we alternated seats. Locke had insisted on changing decks (from Poker to Bridge). As the first hand of the second game was dealt he remarked as to how the cards would bring him luck.

And so they did, but all bad. Locke had settled into a pattern: he would bluff a moon shot only to watch hearts get split. Then he would eat the Bitch. It's fair to say that he avoided a bunch of hearts – Terry gathered in those. But Dave's score was soaring, and so was his temperature.

To cool himself Dave called for more Anchor Steam Beer. He was high man for the second game. And for the third. Play had settled into a rut. Dave was desperately scrambling for moonshot opportunities. The Trapper and Highflyer did that naturally, so the game degenerated into a perfect textbook example of Reinhardt's Theorem. I hung onto my lead and watched Glycer get closer as Terry and Dave receded into the distance. The pressure was telling on the players. Dead silence filled the room during the hands, interrupted only by the slap of cards on the tabletop and the munch of Glycer eating smoked almonds. Locke was smoking more than usual (i.e., more than a pack an hour). Terry was eating the ice cubes in his drink.

In the fourth game Devil Dave Reinhardt twice. This part of the article is true. He did not retreat into the corner with a bottle of Anchor Steam Beer in a brown paper bag, however. He merely flexed his arms and called for another brew. As he poured it, watching the foam rise high in his mug, he said: "I'll build up a head of Steam here."

The fact that this execrable joke was repeated eight more times in the few short hours that remained of the evening revealed much.

Mercifully, the final game arrived. By then the players were so besotted with the idea of moonshot that they could no longer defend themselves. Glycer was trying a shot, clearly. So were Locke and Ridgeway. When I grabbed the lead and rolled off two high tricks, neither Terry nor Dave thought to throw a heart – they tossed low cards in the side suits. So Highflyer shot. I cried.

That moment of reckoning. The final score was me the Big Winner. My mantle was resumed, my Kingdom intact. But Dave, poor Dave, was high man.

He took it well enough, visibly. With his own calculator he computed the settlements. His eye was clear enough when he shook my hand at the door and made a single statement. With sincerity and dignity he looked me full in the eye and said, "Nobody but a pure bastard would publish an account of this disaster."

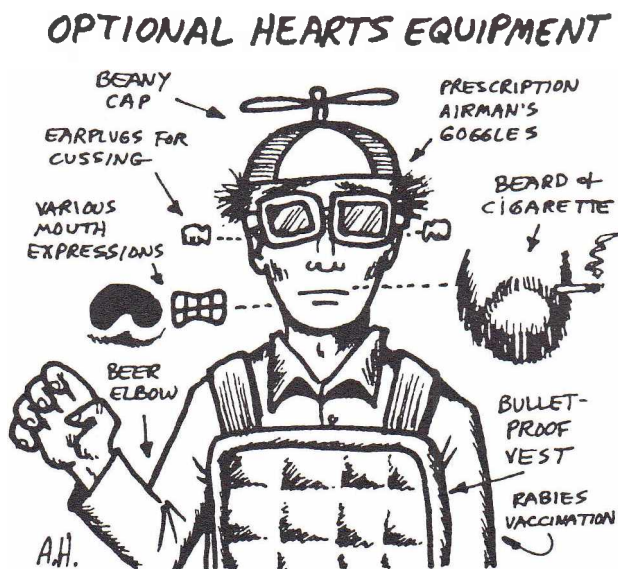
"Yes," I said without expression. "You are absolutely right."

EDITORIAL ANNOTATIONS:

Hearts: Readers unfamiliar with the fannish game of Hearts are encouraged to consult *Hoyle's Rules of Games* or some similar reference. The object of the game is to avoid taking 'points', i.e., hearts and the Queen of Spades; low score wins.

Petards: A Los Angeles area fan organization, hosted each month by a different member.

The Queen (a.k.a. The Bitch): The Queen of Spades, equivalent in point count to all 13 hearts (each heart is worth



one point). This is one card you definitely don't want to take. Unless, of course, you're attempting a moonshot.

Smoke the Bitch: To lead spades at all opportunities in an attempt to force out the Queen. Often creates ire in other players, especially the Queenholder.

Eat the Bitch: One result of **Smoking The Bitch**, where the Queenholder ends up with it at the end of the hand. Ouch!

Shoot the Moon: An alternate strategy, where the player attempts to take all hearts plus the Queen of Spades. Successful moonshots are worth +26 to each of the other players' scores and +0 to the moonshooter's score. Successful moonshots are worth gloating over.

Reinhardt: A failed moonshot, where a player takes only 25 of the 26 points of the hand. Disasterous to the attempter's score. Named after Southern fan Hank Reinhardt who (as legend has it) unintentionally perfected the technique.

Reinhardt's Theorem: The editors are unfamiliar with this concept. It probably goes like this: 'A player who frequently attempts to take all the points will usually only very nearly succeed.'

Dave Locke: Despite this article, is alive and well and in good humor and still playing Hearts, now in the Cincinnati area.



Lon's article succeeded in coaxing an all-too-rare letter of comment from Mike Glicksohn, who wrote us that "Dave Locke is one of the people I like and admire most in fandom. Over the years we've devoted quite a few pages, a number of minutes, and several brain cells to ridiculing and insulting each other in print, the way good friends often do. So nothing could please me more than to read this article about him falling on his face, heartwise."

In *Mimosa* 3, which appeared in September 1987, in the interest of fair play we published an article by Dave that got back at Lon, again in the spirit of fun, where he admitted that "Lon is definitely a Legend in the game, a public relations giant in the mold of Harlan Ellison, though Lon is much taller."

Mimosa 3 was also the first issue in the run that we really tried to make a seamless entity, as opposed to the somewhat disjointed efforts the previous two issues had been. We prefaced each article with introductory comments (something we would do for all subsequent issues), though we weren't quite yet at the stage where we would build the issue around some particular theme. It was also a larger issue, in terms of page count, than either of the first two issues and contained some very entertaining and well-written articles – Elst Weinstein recalled his medical school days in Mexico in "Nightmares of a Quesadilla Fiend," Roger Sims gave a short and amusing history of the new Second Fandom, and Arthur D. Hlavaty provided a short essay on the perils of writing an article for a fanzine that might come back years later to cause you a bit of embarrassment, in which he stated that "there may well be some corollary of Murphy's Law stating that it's the worst (or at least, most embarrassing) zine you do that survives the longest."

One holdover from the first two issues was that we began the issue once again with a speech reprint. This time, it was a *really* good one – Bob Shaw's "Serious Scientific Speech" from that year's Rivercon. Bob Shaw was one of the funniest, friendliest, and most entertaining people we have ever met, and his death in 1996 left a huge hole in our personal fandom. He was also an excellent writer, and even though we still miss him a lot, as far as we're concerned he lives on in his writing. Please enjoy the following scientific treatise:

What I Learned From Watching *Star Trek*

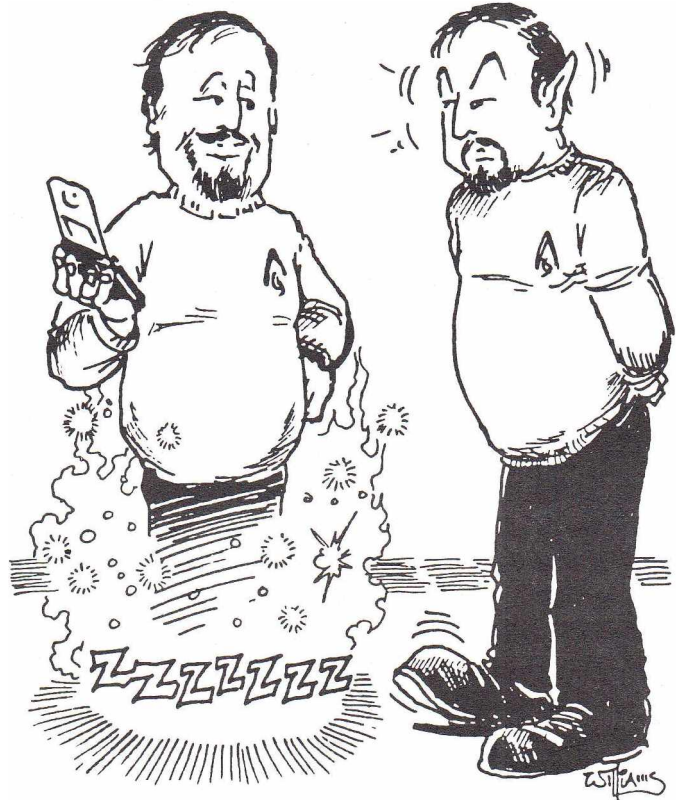
a 'Serious Scientific Speech'
by Bob Shaw

I was very interested just now to get the recipe for that great southern fan drink 'swill'. It sounded pretty good, and it's prompted me to give you a recipe of my own. One of the most famous drinks in the world is Irish Coffee. It's a good drink, but unfortunately everywhere I've traveled I find that people make it all wrong. They get the proportions a bit out of balance. To get the proportions right, what you do is take a large glass and fill it with Irish Whiskey, and you get a coffee bean... You tie it on a piece of thread and you dip it in there three times; any more spoils it... Then you throw that bean away because it's finished...

This is one of the craziest conventions I've ever been to. I've been to lots of crazy conventions, but for different crazy reasons. One of my weirdest experiences ever was when I was invited to be Guest of Honour at a *Star Trek* convention. The only reason this strange event came about was because in the talks I do at media conventions, where people with brains go, I used to do a talk about *Star Trek*. The whole idea of it was that while we're watching *Star Trek* every week, something awful always happens. They run into a vast invisible force field and everybody gets thrown out of their seats. And even though it's three or four centuries in the future, they've forgotten about seat belts.

It's occurred to me that this is happening once a week without fail, and it's always with the same people on the bridge. And assuming that the ship works three eight-hour shifts, it means there are two other crews on that ship that nothing ever happens to. They're just as well off, really, because of some of the things that *do* happen. Take Scotty, for instance; he was at the *Star Trek* convention where I was a guest. He was a more important guest than I was – I know that because they gave him more whiskey than they gave me. And he drank it faster than I did! I never really thought much of him as an engineer. I was in aircraft design myself, and aircraft aren't as far advanced as space craft, of course, but I never liked the way Scotty went about his job. Every now and again he had to fix the main drive, and he wouldn't delegate it to one of the two or three thousand assistants; he always did it himself. Which involved lifting up that hatch, just outside the canteen, and getting down in there and moving the different colored Lego blocks. I was always amazed he did it right...

But Scotty was at this convention and I was very pleased to meet him in the flesh. He allowed me to buy him a drink, and then he allowed me to buy him another drink. And then he allowed me to buy him *another* drink... So at that point I sort of lost interest in the whole thing. When he came out to do his talk the audience went mad. He walked up and down a bit, then he explained that being in *Star Trek* for so many years had given him an insight into how space ships worked... He said that McDonnell-Douglas had invited him to go to see how they were getting along with making some part of Challenger or something. He said they took him in this design office and these engineers were all sitting there looking sick, because they had been working on this



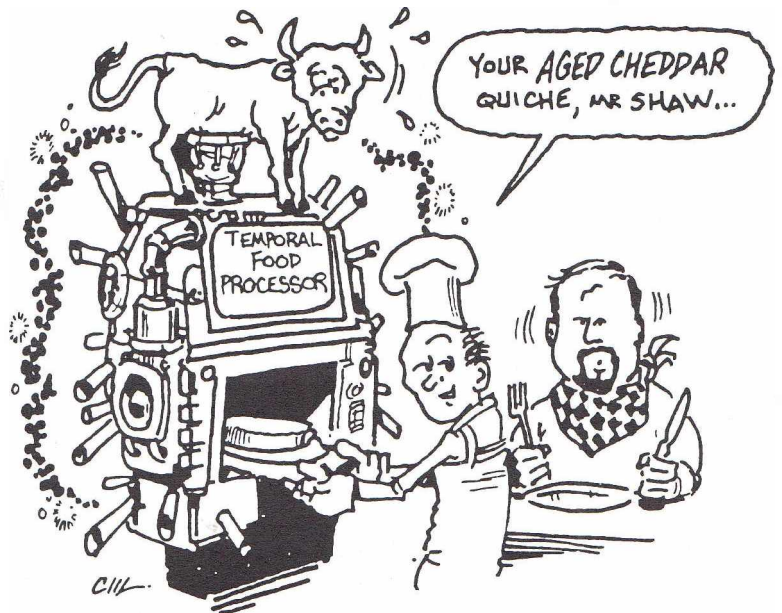
problem for about four years and they hadn't been able to get anywhere with it; they were stuck. And Scotty looked at it and summoned up all his space ship expertise which he'd acquired from *Star Trek*, and he looked at them and said, "Have you tried putting that there, and that there, and that there?"

So they looked at him and went (*smacking palm on forehead*), "Why didn't we think of that!" And the audience went mad, in that they believed every word of it... I was in aircraft design and I knew it was all lies. They were *good* lies, but they were lies...

Also at that convention there was Chekhov, Walter Koenig. He was a nice guy, but he came up to me and he said, "I understand that you go on making a lot of money making jokes about me." I didn't try to explain to him that I go to conventions as a fan. It costs me *money* to make jokes about *Star Trek*! And also, even more, I didn't like to explain, but I haven't made any jokes about him because he's too unimportant... So that night, when I was doing my speech, I put him in especially, just so his feelings wouldn't be hurt.

I find from many years of reading and also writing science fiction that I too have picked up this mistaken knowledge about the way things work. I'm not very good with motor cars, but I know how space ships work, and time machines and things like that... Time machines were a favourite of mine; my favourite design of a time machine came out in a mystery story in *Analog*. Time machines all sponsored the same description; there was a cage made up of shimmering rods, and if you remember, they always went together at certain angles that were very hard to comprehend. When you tried to study the shape of one of these cages, you got a curious wrenching sensation behind your eyes...

I loved those time machines. I put one of them into my science fiction novel called *Who Goes Here*; it's ten times as funny as *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, but nobody seems to realize it except me... But in there I have one of these time machines with a cage made of shimmering rods. And this one was used in a restaurant where, if you wanted a vintage wine you just ordered a new wine and shoved it in there, switched it on, and waited a while. You could have it thirty years old if you wanted, forty even. You took it out, and *lived* it.



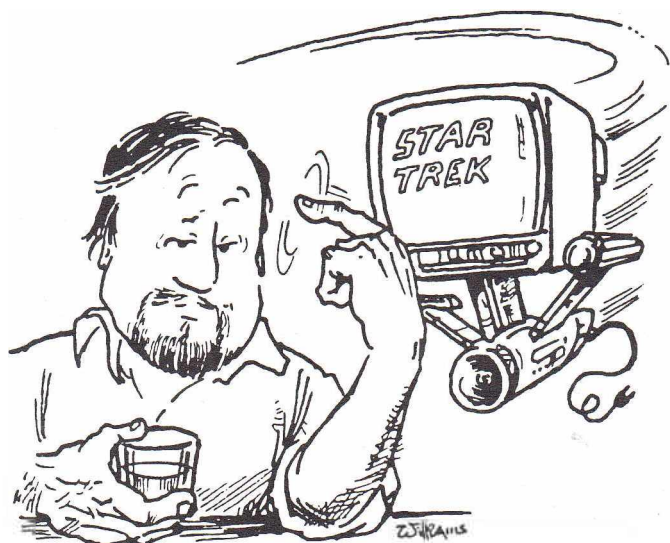
I don't plug my own books, of course... In that same book I had some wonderfully funny ideas. For instance, I had a species of insect that was so ugly, so awful looking that it reproduced through being stomped upon. It's body was full of acid and also eggs, so when you stomped on it the acid ate through the sole of your shoe and before you could get your shoe off you had a foot full of little bugs. They went right through you and it was too late. Mmm; that's nice stuff to hear right after a banquet...

But we're drifting away from the subject of time machines, which as I mentioned is a favourite subject of mine. I remember many years ago back in Ireland in the 1950s, for the cover of a magazine I had to do this picture of a time machine. The only material I had to work with was a wax stencil and a dried-up Bic ballpoint pen. And so I decided not to attempt the shimmering rods and the curious eye-wrenching effect, on the wax stencil with the dried-up Bic ballpoint... Even Da Vinci couldn't have done it... So I went in for a time machine which looked a bit like a telephone booth, and it was for sale in a shop window. It was obviously a time machine; there was a notice on it – the thing was called 'Chrono Clipper Mark IV', price \$10,000. And there was a note under it which said, 'four years to pay'... That's a very subtle joke... The idea was that a person could go into that shop, give the owner a hundred dollar deposit, jump into the time machine, come out four years later, and you'd *own* it! But I never figured out who was making the payments...

All this goes to show you what a complicated thing time actually is. We tend to visualize it as a straight

line, where the present is a dot. It isn't like that; time is more complicated than that. People often get precognizant dream, and sometimes *know* something is about to happen before it actually happens. For instance, just last week I dreamt that I needed a haircut... And I woke up in the morning and I *did* need a haircut! It's incredible...

I've come across only one serious attempt to travel into the future. This was an idea invented by an Irish science fiction fan named Walt Willis, who's one of the best writers I've ever met. He invented something called 'subjective induced temporal acceleration'. The system is that you put a person in a very cold, miserable, damp room, and you keep him there for two or three days. He's not even allowed to drink anything except



alcohol-free lager, and he's forced to listen to Barry Manilow records. After he's been there for about four days, you pull a handle and the poor bloke falls through a trap door, and he lands in a room where there's beautiful nude young women plus champagne and cigars and everything like that. You know how it is when you're not enjoying yourself, time slows down? Well, when you're enjoying yourself time speeds up. So while he's been in this awful business time has been dragging on; then suddenly he's dropped in this other situation so he goes into temporal overdrive... And disappears into the future... I don't know how far he got into the future, but I volunteered for experimentation...

Science fiction writers do not deal very much with time travel. It's a difficult subject. Take traveling into the past, for instance. One of the best ways

to travel into the past is to be struck by lightning. For ordinary people in real life, if you get struck by lightning you just die. But in science fiction if you get struck by lightning you get thrown into the past. And the distance you get thrown into the past is governed by certain variables – your body weight, the exact number of billions of volts in the lightning stroke, and also the period of history that the author wants to write about... I've never read a time travel story yet where somebody has got thrown into the past where he couldn't speak the language...

That's possibly enough about time machines. I'll tell you what I've learned about space travel through watching *Star Trek*. I can tell you one thing; the old idea of firing people into space by a gun doesn't work ... That's no good. The old Jules Verne idea of a gun a mile high is a total impossibility. When you think about a gun a mile high, how could you ever get enough leather to make a holster for it... And who could wear it? You can't even think about wearing it underground because it's illegal to have a concealed weapon...

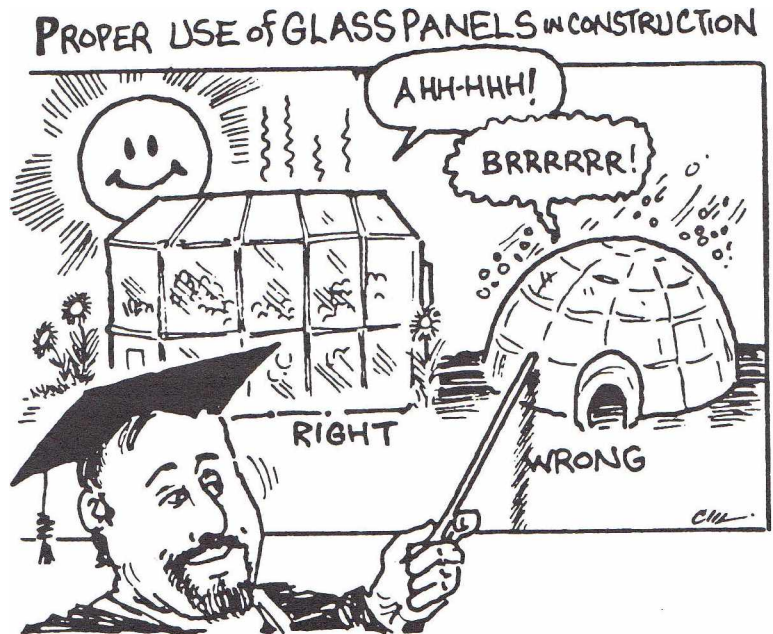
Then there's the modern communications revolution. There's so much happening these days with computers! I'm not quite caught up in that yet; I'm still stuck at the Alexander Graham Bell stage. I feel sorry for that guy; he built himself a telephone and it was no good, because there was nobody to ring up. He finally realized what was wrong, so he invented another telephone and he gave it to somebody so he could ring him up... Then after a while he invented a third telephone and he gave it to somebody else, and when he rang up the second telephone it was engaged...

Well, that covers the field of telecommunications. I think that science fiction is becoming part of education. I remember a good four years ago in Britain we'd been having a series of very bad summers. We haven't had one this year; it's been awfully good, but four years ago it was a typical summer – raining, cold, and miserable. One day when I was sitting chatting with the landlord, he said, "You might not quite buy this, but we don't get good summers anymore." I was interested, so I said, "Why? What is the reason?"

He said, "It's this business they've brought in about leap years. Every fourth year they put in an extra day. These days are all adding up, and the calendar is getting out of step with the seasons." There followed three hours of innocent conversation, where I tried to persuade him that he had a nut loose, and that the extra days

were there to keep the thing in step. But he won in the end when told me, "Just look right through the door. Is it summertime, Sir?"

There's also the greenhouse effect. Everybody's worried about the ozone layer disappearing. In Britain, energy costs are a bit more expensive than they are here, so people get double glazing on their windows put in to save on their heating bills. And it's a funny thing about this. If you know the greenhouse effect, you have a little glass house; it keeps the heat in and plants grow better. That's what greenhouse means. So, what they're saying is, if you have a greenhouse, the heat comes in and stays in and keeps the place warm. But when you have an ordinary house with windows in it, the heat goes out through the glass and makes the house colder. So after many years of study I realize that house builders in Britain are putting the glass in the window in backwards... You've just got to turn it around, and all the house will start being warm. Of course a few people made a mistake with greenhouses and they end up with little icehouses instead...



Well, I presume everybody has heard about the Bermuda Triangle mystery. That's another one I solved through my intuitive knowledge of science gained by watching *Star Trek*. The big thing about the Bermuda Triangle is that ships and things keep disappearing. Now, there have been millions of books written about the Bermuda Triangle, paperbacks made of very absorbent paper. And since there have been shiploads of books written about it, people who live in the Bermuda Triangle want to read them, naturally enough. So all these ships full of very absorbent paper are fishing around inside the Bermuda Triangle. And when all the absorbent paper gets wet and heavy, all the ships disappear by sinking... And this leads more people to write books about the Bermuda Triangle mystery, and the whole thing keeps going on and on...

The great thing about science is that to make great scientific discoveries, you don't have to be a genius. I found this out through watching *Star Trek*... Take the case of old Albert Einstein himself. He made his mark in science, but it wasn't his great IQ that made Einstein famous and successful as a scientist; it was the fact that he had a simple child-like approach. For all I know, I might be even more simple and child-like, so I may be making even better discoveries than he did. But the one about the twins paradox I'm afraid was his greatest slip-up.

Two twins – one of them gets on a spaceship and flies way around the galaxy, on a holiday cruise... Just like in *Star Trek*... This character, he swarms around the galaxy for two or three years, having a lovely time, having drinks, watching comets go by and watching *Star Trek*. Then he comes home and lands and he gets out of the spaceship and he's younger looking than the twin that stayed behind. Well, of course he is! The other one was looking after the house; he was paying the bills. He was doing all the work. That poor twin brother was worn to a shred! He seemed much younger so Einstein misinterpreted that time had passed more slowly for the one on the spaceship. He got it all wrong...

I was promised I'd be heckled... As well as practical science that I've been talking about, I hope I'll say a little bit about pure mathematics, another field of mine that I learned from watching *Star Trek*... Probability mathematics is a great favourite of mine. It's difficult in that you cannot predict the future as any student of horse racing will tell you... One of the themes of probability mathematics is that if two people lose each other in a very large department store, there's no guarantee that they'll ever meet up again unless one of them stands still. On the face of it, that seems a useful piece of information except that if it happens to you, how do you know which one moves and which one stands around... So it's a big decision to make. You could stand there

and the store could close, and one of the assistants could come up and start taking your clothes off... And that would be all right except they would start by unscrewing your arms... So I've given up on probability mathematics altogether.

Anyway, in closing, I just want to say how pleased I am to be here tonight. And I'm just about as happy as a NASA scientist if a Mars lander had dug up definite proof of the existence of Ray Bradbury. Thank you for listening for so long. Now if anybody wants to heckle, I'll heckle back...

There's a personal postscript we can add to Bob Shaw's Rivercon speech. We'd brought some books for him to sign when we went to the convention, of course, and it turned out that one of them, a copy of *The Two-Timers*, which we'd bought from some second-hand bookstore in Chattanooga, had *already* been signed – by the book's original owner, one Vernon J. Schryver of Boulder, Colorado. It was part of the lot of books we'd acquired, many of them old collectibles from Ace and Ballantine, all signed by Schryver. When BoSh opened the book to sign it, there, staring back at him, were the words 'Vernon J. Schryver'. "Schryver?" said BoSh, "Who is Vernon J. Schryver?"

At that point we were afraid he might be too offended to sign some hand-me-down copy of one of his books, because we'd been too ~~cheap~~ frugal to buy a new one. But when he learned the story, he laughed and wrote in what you see to the right. Everyone in the room also got a laugh when they saw, and the story made the rounds of the convention during the rest of the weekend. It also inspired a letter of comment in our next issue from another great humorist, Robert Bloch, who wrote that "As for Vernon J. Schryver, I thought everybody knew who he was. He's Bob Shaw's only fan!"

Another of our favorite articles from *Mimosa* 3 was from another friend, but one who lived much closer to us than Bob Shaw did. While we lived in Tennessee we were actually part of two fan communities – the one in Chattanooga, where we lived, and also one in Knoxville, where we often went for parties and other events. That original Knoxville group didn't last very many years, but it did introduce us to many fans there, including Charlie Williams, who has supplied artwork to every issue of *Mimosa*, Lowell Cunningham, who is now better known as the creator of the *Men In Black*, and Ron Lee, the writer of this next article.

We should also mention that one of Knoxville fandom's bimonthly parties back then was held in the house described in the next article. We were there, but the cats stayed away that night.

With best wishes,
from
Vernon J.
Schryver
+
Bob Shaw

ARTIST CREDITS

Harry Bell – page 73

Sheryl Birkhead – pages 3 (top), 14

Kurt Erichsen – pages 34, 35, 37, 38, 39, 42 (top), 64, 65, 71

Brad Foster – pages 17, 63, 93, 96

Wade Gilbreath – pages 18, 19 (top)

Alexis Gilliland – page 101

Teddy Harvia – pages 3 (bottom), 33, 43, 44, 45, 47, 48, 49, 84, 86, 87, 99, 100

Alan Hutchinson – pages 5, 7, 8, 9, 23, 46, 53, 54, 55, 97

Joe Mayhew – pages 50, 51, 52 (top), 102, 104, 105, 107

Linda Michaels – page 88

Julia Morgan-Scott – pages 19 (bottom), 21, 22

Dave Rowe – page 24

Stu Shiffman – pages 56, 90, 92

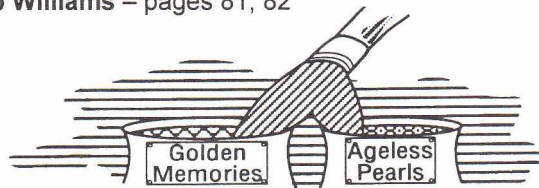
Steve Stiles – pages 26, 27, 52 (bottom), 60, 72, 74, 75, 78, 94, 95

Steve Stiles and William Rotsler – pages 59, 62, 80

B. Ware – pages 67, 69

Charlie Williams – cover; pages 4, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 31, 32, 42 (bottom), 57, 58

Kip Williams – pages 81, 82



The Wrath of Khat

by Ron Lee

It was during my last two years in college that I found myself living in the white house. The money I had put away for my education was nearly gone. I had broken my foot. There were no job offers to be found. So it was that I found myself in an exciting career with great potential: House Sitting.

As houses go, it was a “quaint house of local history.” My translation: hey, at least it has indoor plumbing. The house was nicely isolated – just past the local cemetery, over the railroad tracks, up and down a winding road and there you are. It was eighty years old. Somewhere down the line, someone had decided to torment the house by wrapping it in aluminum siding. There were places on the porch you just *didn't* step. It did have an outhouse, now covered in a decade's growth of ivy and kudzu.

As interiors go, it had no heat, no insulation, and sub-standard wiring. You could not run two outlets in the same room at the same time – you were sure to blow a fuse. Still, it was a house, and as I was house-sitting so that the fire insurance would remain, it was also rent-free. My only expenses would be food, electricity, and heating oil in the winter. But the house was a trap. Something had been left behind that no amount of preparation could be enough. After living in dorms for the past four years, I was braced for the isolation. But no one told me about... the cats.

I had been left with the custody of fifteen cats.

I know there is a long standing tradition of fandom of liking cats, but let me explain. I come from a long line of cat haters. My Uncle Bean seems to be the family example. He used to do terrible things to cats with tugboats (I refuse to give details). And now I come nose to whisker with the Legion of Cats.

These were not the “sweet kitties” that your Aunt Patty used to have. They were not the type of cats you took compassion on and brought into the house for a saucer of milk, only to watch them curl in front of a fire and purr contentedly. No. These were survivalist cats. They had seen the end of human civilization and had taken to the woods, only coming out to see how much longer they had to wait. They honed their skills on the local moles and shrews that crossed their paths at night. Once proud trees were now scratching posts. Claws had torn strange runes into the trunks of the trees. I'm sure they said something like “Spike eats it” and “Ain't gonna be no human's pussy.” Now I was moving into the house. The house at the edge of *their* territory.

They knew this was to be a challenge. And they made the first move.

All fifteen of them sprayed my car.

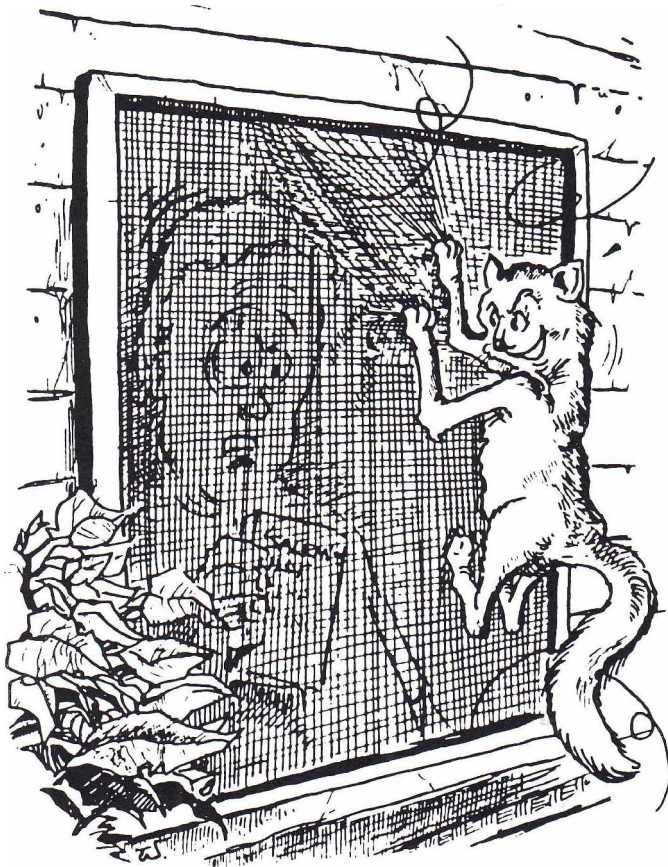
In minutes, I came to know them all. Vol was the leader, an orange tom that had weathered seven winters in the woods. There was Peanut. Jefferson. Lincoln. Tom. Cthulhu. The rest seemed to fade in and out of the trees. I would catch an occasional glimpse of strange and alien fur rushing under my car.

You wouldn't believe the things they left on the carburetor.

I braced for the first night. My belongings stayed in boxes for the most part. I unloaded a few belongings into the kitchen. A box spring and mattress had been left, along with a couch and a few chairs. Sometime past midnight, I decided to pack it in for the night so I climbed into bed, and started to read before going to sleep. It was at this point I made my most grievous mistake.

The book I was reading was *Salem's Lot* by Stephen King. Now, that novel by itself is enough to lose sleep over, but add to this I was alone in a strange house for the first time. There was none of the usual noise you





the screen, slamming into the window. Then it disengaged and fled into the woods. After that I left on the outside lights, but they showed no mercy. As soon as I tried to fall asleep, they were back.

I got no sleep that night.

The next morning, they were waiting for me. I was to feed them twice a day (the food provided by the owners). They knew. They wolfed down Purina dog chow, and were gone, back into the woods, with elk and moose to stalk. The noise would continue for months.

I was determined to outlast them, but they had yet another weapon. They went out and had kittens.

I know they did it just to spite me.

One day I went outside to find four white kittens at the door step. They all stared at me, so I shut the door. An hour later, I cautiously opened the door again. There were no longer four white kittens; there were *eight*. If fear wouldn't work, then by God, they would *breed* me out of the area.

The cats had a wonderful plan to motivate me in my studies. Whenever I had to have quiet to study for an exam, the cats would slip into the crawlspace below the house. They would find the exact spot where I was studying, and then, methodically, claw the floorboards beneath my feet. It did wonders for my GPA.

I attempted a truce of sorts once. We got back to

hear in a college dorm and come to take for granted. It was a special quiet. Country quiet. And the cats knew how to use it.

Barlow had just spoken: "I see you sleep with the dead, teacher." O-kayyy, enough fun for tonight. I shut off the light. Five minutes of quiet. Then...

The noise began. Long, inhuman howls surrounded me. From every window in that house, there came a banging. I turned on the lights ... and it stopped. I checked outside... Nothing. So I reluctantly turned the lights out again.

The terror began again. *Something* was at every window, pounding against the glass. More howls. Lights went on again. Silence all about the house. *Now* I couldn't sleep. So okay then, read something. But every book I had was still packed away in the boxes... except for *Salem's Lot*. It became the pattern. Read another chapter, turn out the lights, and wait for the attack. Lights back on, read another chapter, lights out and wait for the attack.

Somewhere past three in the morning I decided I had to find the source, so I turned out the lights and hid beneath the window. Within five minutes, IT began. I threw open the window shade... and found a cat with its claws firmly attached to the screen. It howled, and while doing so, rocked back and forth on



the house later than planned one night. I had left no outside lights on, and there was only the faint glimmer of moonlight. As I walked to the door, I noticed a furry body crouched on a table near the food tray. It didn't move when I approached, which was unusual in itself. Usually the cats fled at my approach, but this one stayed put. I went to pet it, then decided not to push my luck. I unlocked the door, turned on the light... and came face to face with a possum. It showed its teeth, hopped down, and made for the woods. They were recruiting allies. I knew it.

The cats *did* have their uses, however. I went to visit my parents during Christmas, and when I returned to Chateau Aluminum that evening there was something unusual at the front door. I found a crowbar dropped at the bottom of the steps. I'm sure someone tried a little bit of breaking and entering, and I'm just as sure that Vol took care of him.

We kept an uneasy truce.

Our standoff lasted for over a year and a half. The cats gave in to the fact that I was going to stay there for a while, and I gave into the fact that my car would always have little cat footprints on the windshield. Then, they seemed to just all go away. Their ranks were decimated, all in the space of two short weeks. I found about ten pounds of orange cat fur on the porch one morning, and never saw Vol again. The other cats simply up and went. The tribe finally dropped to two: Peanut and Patrick Henry. Maybe there was a cat coup d'etat. Maybe there was a rival cat gang, or a roving pack of dogs. Maybe a kind-hearted lady took them all in.

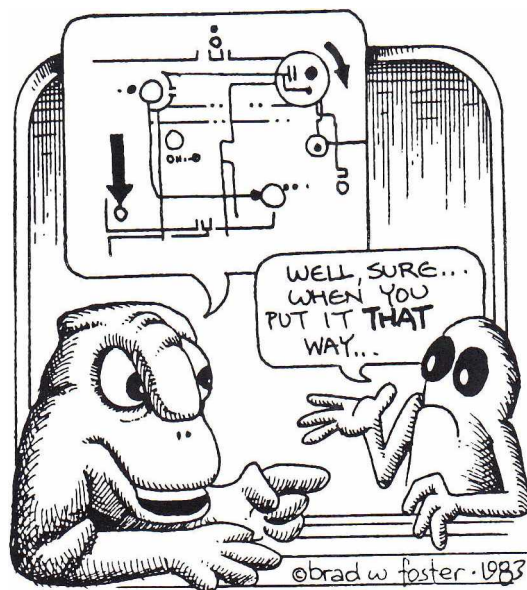
More likely, they pulled back into the woods. Someone more at home with nature could probably read something into their actions. Me? I'd like to think there's some sort of cat commune thriving there in the woods. A cat version of the lost colony in colonial Roanoke. But not one of them left a Croatoan sign.

For the record, I do get along quite well with cats now. Peanut was adopted by my mother-in-law. He lived another ten years, and went quietly in his sleep. The house was bought and sold four times. The current owners did heavy-duty reconstruction on it, and pushed the edge of the woods further back. They even got written up in the local newspaper for their efforts. A gate now keeps strangers out. I drive by it now and then, just to check. Somewhere back there, there's a group of cats, plotting, with intellects cool and detached. But they owe me for two winters. My recommendation for you? You've got a backyard? Plant catnip.

For I have seen the future. And it walks on little cat feet.

The high-water mark of Knoxville fandom during that period was probably the 1984 DeepSouthCon, which featured Stephen King as the Guest of Honor and Guy Lillian III as the Fan Guest. That era lasted about five or six good years, beginning the 1980 Satyricon convention where the legendary 100th distribution of the Southern Fandom Press Alliance was collated and distributed – at more than 1,400 pages, it is the largest Amateur Press Association mailing of all time.

Amateur Press Associations are actually good sources for fanzine material. The typical APA, such as SAPS or The Cult, has a distribution of only one or two dozen people. There have been many, many instances of good writing in APAs that go almost unnoticed except for the few people in those APAs who see it. It really *is* a service of fanzines to give some of this fine writing new life. All of the articles in this Fanthology are reprints, obviously, but some, like the next one, were reprints in their original appearance in *Mimosa*, with their original appearance being in an APA (in this case SAPS).



The Untimely Mrs. Jones

by Meg Stull

Sometimes life seems wonderfully fine, even when it's full of Life's Little Disasters. Right off the top of my head, I can't think of anything that's gone as planned recently. I'm sicker than I was three months ago. The plant where Ed works is only working a four day work week. A prolonged plague of feline distemper killed off all but one of our cats in spite of our spending a small fortune in vet bills, and we aren't even planting a garden this year. All in all, I can think of a hundred and one good solid reasons to be depressed. But somehow I'm not...

Ed and I had been planning in engaging in a little Afternoon Delight one afternoon when Mrs. Jones showed up with a tuna casserole. Now, Mrs. Jones is our closest neighbor, geographically speaking, but try as we might, we have never quite managed to make friends with her. She's as close to the stereotypical spinster schoolmarm as you can find in real life, and she always manages to catch us in our most singular moments.

There are a lot of misunderstandings between us – stuff like the times our mail lady left my fannish mail in Mrs. Jones' box by mistake. The first time it happened, the mail in question was an issue of *Holier Than Thou*; the next time it was a Cultic fractional entitled “Large Painful Turds.” (And some fannish friends still wonder why I strongly favor mail in plain brown wrappers.) When our phone was on a party line, Mrs. Jones picked up at all the wrong moments. It took a lot of explaining before she was finally convinced that a ‘Cultic Seance’ had nothing to do with a coven of witches gathering ‘round the bubbling brew. After all, she'd heard with her own ears that Steve had brought a new bubbling brew to the Cultic seance. Then there was the time I had a bathtub full of washing photos and Mrs. Jones heard Ed complain that he couldn't take a bath because the tub “was full of naked ladies and Michael in his jockey shorts.”

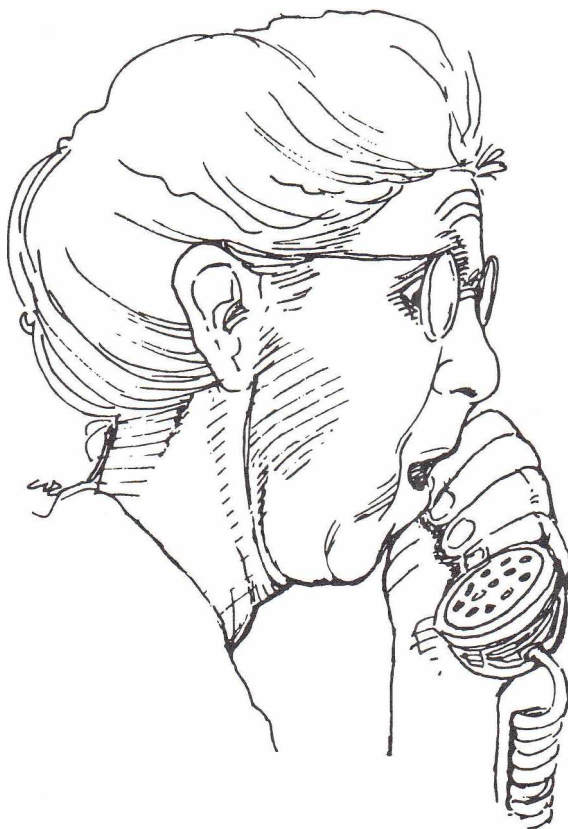
But you get the general idea. I can understand why Mrs. Jones has always looked at us with a vague sense of alarm. She's really a *very* nice lady, and even after nine years of this kind of nonsense, she still tries her best to be neighborly, by doing things like bringing us a tuna fish casserole when I'm sick and money is a bit tight.

Unfortunately, she has a lousy sense of timing...

When the doorbell rang I wasn't completely undressed yet so I quickly threw on some clothes. Since I really want to make friends with Mrs. Jones, I invited her in for some cookies and coffee. She never stays long. I said Ed was upstairs “taking a nap,” and I assumed he could hear us well enough through the open stairwell to know what was keeping me away from our eagerly anticipated entertainment. It wasn't more than two minutes after we sat down that Rufus demanded to go outside. The conversation paused while I escorted our dog to the door and Mrs. Jones perched on the edge of the sofa, politely munching an Oreo and sipping coffee.

Apparently Ed heard the back door close, and assumed Mrs. Jones had left, because, seconds later, he bounded downstairs, completely naked, arms open wide, shouting, “SURPRISE! I'm ready!” (And, believe me, he *was* ready... How embarrassing!) Unfortunately I was just coming out of the kitchen and it was Mrs. Jones who caught the full view of my husband.

Mrs. Jones fell off the sofa and choked. I mean the lady literally choked on a piece of cookie, and while we

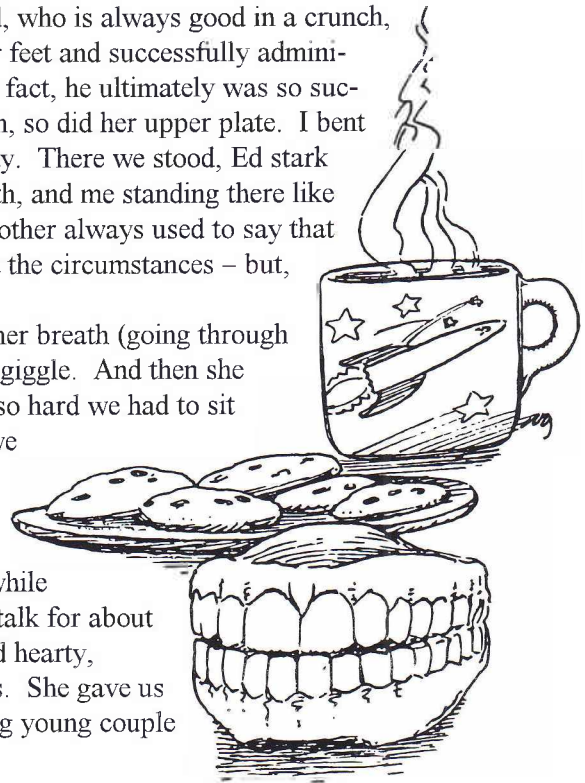


were standing there stunned, she started to slowly turn blue. Ed, who is always good in a crunch, was the first to realize what was going on. He hauled her to her feet and successfully administered the Heimlich maneuver after a few unsuccessful tries. In fact, he ultimately was so successful that not only did the cookie come flying out of her mouth, so did her upper plate. I bent down and picked up her teeth, but I sure didn't know what to say. There we stood, Ed stark naked, still supporting Mrs. Jones, Mrs. Jones gasping for breath, and me standing there like an idiot, holding a set of false teeth. In high school our dorm mother always used to say that a true lady could make anyone feel comfortable, no matter what the circumstances – but, damn it, she never saw these circumstances!

Mrs. Jones is nothing if not a lady. As soon as she caught her breath (going through some truly amazing color changes in the process) she started to giggle. And then she started to laugh. And pretty soon all three of us were laughing so hard we had to sit down. When we were done laughing, Mrs. Jones insisted that we really didn't need to take her to a hospital. If we'd let her rest while she finished her coffee and Oreos, she'd be fine.

Ed excused himself to go put on a robe, and Mrs. Jones excused herself for a second to run some water over her teeth, while I got another plate of cookies. We sat around and talked small talk for about half an hour, and when she got up to leave, Mrs. Jones, hale and hearty, without a hair out of place, put a spindly arm around each of us. She gave us a gentle hug, and said, "The two of you are the most entertaining young couple I know."

I think there's hope for a friendship there yet!



The next issue of *Mimosa* appeared in April 1988, and was the end result of something we'd tried a few months earlier at Chattacon 13 – a 'live' fanzine, recorded on videotape, then transcribed for publication in printed form. It was inspired by our trip to Corflu 4, the 1987 fanzine fans' convention, where we'd seen a similar, live production of Bill Bowers' fanzine *OutWorlds*. Nicki wrote in her opening comments to the issue that "When we got back from Corflu 4, I felt charged up about fanzines and fandom. [And] since we had been asked to do the programming for Chattacon, we were in the position to do a live fanzine."

Mimosa 4 was the one issue in the run where we didn't have much control over the content – we'd lined up the speakers/contributors, but after that it was pretty much hope-for-the-best. What we wound up with was a bit of a mixed bag, but there were some genuinely interesting and entertaining presentations, including Rebecca Lee's mini-interview of Ron Goulart, Jack Chalker's remembrance of Doc Barrett, Bob Tucker's re-telling of his first meeting with Lee Hoffman, Julius Schwartz's anecdote about meeting Don and Elsie Wollheim at an airport lounge, and the following article.

It turned out that we would never, ever try anything like this again – the expense and amount of effort required was just too much, compared to other fanzines we'd published. We were happy to just be able to join the small number of fan editors who'd done a fanzine that was 'totally live'.



Gopher Broke

by Pat Molloy

Hello, my name is Patrick Molloy, and I'd like to tell you about my addiction. I hope that by doing so I can help some young, naive fan from going down the same path I did.

I was just a young and impressionable fan, going to college full time and taking in an occasional weekend SF convention. I was on my fourth convention when someone who had seen me around at other area cons asked me if I wanted to do a little gophering... Why sure, I thought; a little gophering never hurt anyone... Besides, it might be fun!

Well, that was the beginning of my long, downward spiral. I soon began working at almost every con I went to. My name was passed around among the con chairs and other work pushers of Southern fandom as an easy mark. Soon it went beyond gophering; I just couldn't say no. I started working Registration, Con Suites, Video room, Art Shows – you name it! I'd try *anything* that was offered me...

I never thought of myself as having a problem; I told myself I could quit anytime that I wanted to... But I liked it too much to quit. I didn't realize I was mainly going to cons just for the work...

It had become the central focus of my fannish life, but it didn't stop there. I soon was into the harder stuff – I became a Department Head... Huckster Rooms, Operations, Security, Film Programs, Green Rooms – there wasn't a department I didn't think I could run. I *still* couldn't say no! And so finally, my long, downward spiral ended when I hit bottom – I became a Con Chairman...

In the course of just a few short years, that seemingly innocent experimentation with gophering had evolved into a work addiction that took me all the way to chairing conventions. But what about now? Well, I'm still an addict; the road to recovery is a long and hard one. But since I discovered the Just Say No program, I once again know what it's like to go to a con for the fun of it and not just for the work. I've been pulled from the very brink of burn-out and gafiation. I still work an occasional con; like I said, I am still an addict. But more and more, I find myself able to Just Say No when asked to work.

So, if there's a lesson that's to be learned from all this, it's that a moderate amount of con work in and of itself may be harmless. But unless you have the willpower to Just Say No, you could end up like me. Think about it...

☛ There was one other article from *Mimosa* 4 that actually gained a degree of notoriety – Anthony Scott King's "At-Home Pet Neutering" article (which, to be fair, had been done more than a bit tongue-in-cheek) had so polarized our readers that they either loved it or hated it. When King re-enacted it, in one of the breaks during the masquerade at the 1988 New Orleans Worldcon, he was booed off the stage!

The fifth issue of *Mimosa* also debuted at the 1988 Nolacon, and it was the first issue of *Mimosa* with an actual theme. It was also a transitional issue, as the theme was "Farewell to Tennessee." Rich's position at the Tennessee Valley Authority ended during the summer of 1988 in a round of massive job cutbacks, and it was not until the eve of Nolacon that we knew we would be moving north to Maryland where a new job awaited for him with an Agency of the U.S. Government. It turned out that we had just three weeks notice to pack all our belongings and get our house ready for sale – and one of those three weeks was spent at Nolacon!

Mimosa 5 featured a number of articles related to Tennessee and Southern Fandom – Robert Lichtman wrote about The Farm commune in Lewis County, Tennessee, Carolyn Doyle contributed an article about living in the South as a transplanted northerner, Sharon Farber, newly arrived in Chattanooga from the midwest, began her popular "Tales of Adventure and Medical Life" series with an article that later appeared, in part, in her Nebula-nominated story "The July Ward," and Alan Hutchinson provided a Hoax Convention Report (though much of it actually happened) with "Tales Calculated to Drive You to AWC (Atlanta World Con)."

Nicki also benefitted from the move north with a much better job; her article for *M5* (which appears next) is now only a period piece from back in the days before Starbucks conquered the coffee world. But it's also a cautionary tale, still valid even today, for anybody who's even *thought* of a career in sales.

Coffee, Tea and Me

by Nicki Lynch

I never wanted to work in retail. When I went for a degree in computer science, I had visions of working in an office, at a terminal, discussing accounting programs and such with peers. Then I looked over the job market in Chattanooga and discovered after almost three years of filling out applications, handing out résumés, talking to 'head hunters' and going to interviews that there were no entry level computer jobs to be had in Chattanooga. Not unless you knew someone I didn't know.

So when the new two story shopping mall opened in town, for fun, I dropped by and left my resume off with any store that would take it. Only one called back – a coffee and tea shop.

I was interviewed by the owner and asked to start work that day. I begged off, knowing that I didn't have the type of shoes necessary to stand around all day in, and I wasn't really sure what I was getting into. I've now been working there for six months and even survived a Christmas at the mall, a not-to-be-believed situation unless you've been in retail.

This coffee store is part of a chain that specializes in gourmet coffees and teas, as well as various appliances to go with them. The main sellers are coffee beans by the pound and half-pound, and loose and bagged teas. The biggest part of my job, apart from the constant cleaning (as grinding coffee is very dusty) is handling customers.

Chattanooga is not a major city, even though the city council and major employers would like to think that it is. For the most part, the people who shop in Chattanooga are rural people to whom traffic lights and a middle turning lane are curiosities that they don't quite understand. For something as exotic as a coffee shop, many are overwhelmed.

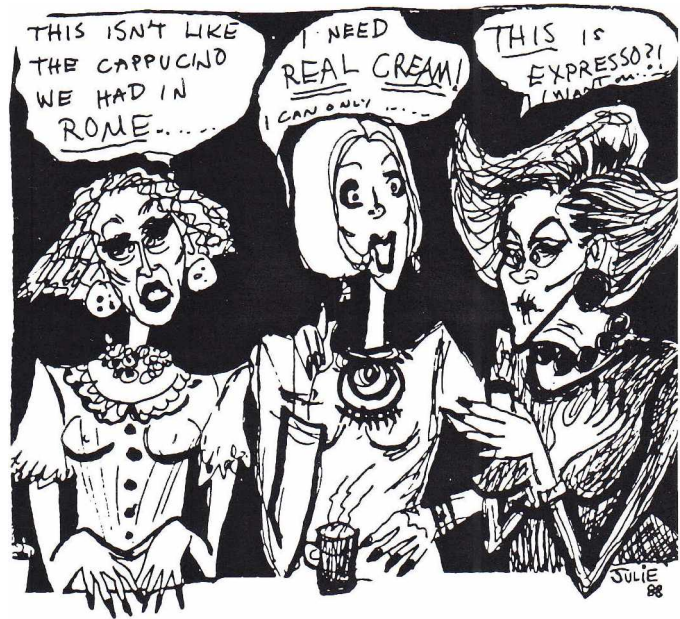
For the first few months, we had to explain what we sold to almost everyone who came in the door, although we had many who stuck their heads in and pulled them out again, unable to cope with the wonder of it all. The best example of that were two old ladies who stuck their heads in, exclaimed, "My goodness, look at all those raisins!" and ducked out again. It was also amazing how many people thought it was a candy store, with bins of small chocolate candies.

For those who *knew* what a coffee shop was, we had to explain to them that we were not the same coffee shop which had been in another mall in town and had closed about a year earlier. I was amazed how many people felt we needed to know that there had been another coffee shop in town.

Then there was the small group who knew about coffee shops and were coffee snobs. The coffee snobs were usually yuppie types who would point out the espresso coffee beans to their open-mouthed friends, exclaim how nice it was to get Jamaican Blue Mountain coffee locally, and then ask for a cappuccino, telling us how they last had one in Italy.

Heard on a daily basis in the store is someone saying, "It smells so wonderful in here! You must *love* working here!" All you can do is to smile and say yes. Actually, I no longer smell the coffee, and my co-workers say the same thing. After the second day, I could no longer smell the coffee brewing. I can smell it when I open the bins, and I do smell it when I'm pouring the coffee, but that's about it. Even when I've been off for a few days, I still can't smell the coffee the way I used to.

The first few months were the hardest in dealing with the public. Face it, when you're in sales, you can't



tell a customer what a stupid question they've just asked. Well, you can, but you won't be in sales long. The best you can do is to give a direct answer and let them make up their so-called minds. For example:

One question we got about once a day for the first three months was: "Is this the coffee you grind for instant?" Rather than say, "Only if they've repealed the laws of Physics," I would usually answer, "No. You have to brew the coffee after you grind it up. Instant coffee is not ground-up beans." Fortunately, I haven't heard that question for quite a while.

Another question is: "I don't like coffee myself, but I want to buy some for a friend. What do you think he (or she) will like?" The temptation is to tell them, "How the hell do I know? I'm not a mind reader!" but usually just ask the friend's preference, which they don't know. Since they don't like coffee themselves and refuse to sample what we're brewing, I'm stuck with describing each coffee, or picking out two or three of the best sellers and recommending them. Usually this is enough to make a sale.

We brew three coffees each day, a regular, a flavor, and a decaf which can be either a flavor or a regular coffee. This may not seem like a big choice, but to some people this is a major decision in their life, and they will agonize over it the way some people will consider buying a house, starting a business, or getting married. I suppose it is a shock, since the other coffee place in town only served one kind of coffee per day.



When a person comes up to the window, they usually lean over the counter, look at the three or four coffee pots with coffee in them and say, "What coffee are you brewing (or 'serving', or 'boiling') today?" Then we hit them with The Choice. "It's on the top line of the menu," I say. They look, and then ask if these are the coffees we are brewing today, and if they are available.

For the most part, they don't want to read a menu, opting to having the choices and prices recited to them, despite having a clearly marked sign. Considering how many people that are served each day, I'd have no voice left if I did that! Besides, we do have a sign! But most people will still ask what each coffee is. The owner also points out the sign and even had one person tell her, "You mean I've got to read?"

While most people have gotten used to us and

make their choice without fuss, we still get the occasional customer who lives in terror that we serve wildly exotic drinks and that their 64 cents will have been spent badly. I remember one lady who was almost literally dragged up by her friends, while I was waiting on a customer. She was protesting that she didn't want anything too strange and looked over at what I was doing.

She watched me pour the contents of one cup into another and exclaimed, "See, that turned from white to brown. I'll bet that was something strange!"

The lady next to her turned and said, "She's making hot chocolate for me."

That shut up the first lady until the lady with the hot chocolate left. I think she was a little disappointed that she only got coffee in the end.

Another time, a guy brought up his protesting girlfriend for some coffee. She didn't want the regular coffee of the day, which happened to be Hawaiian Kona (an excellent coffee, by the way), and asked if we had some "regular" coffee. (For some reason, people seem to think we have several exotic coffees brewing as well as a pot of Maxwell House somewhere.) So the guy turned to me, winked, and said, "Give me a cup of the Kona and give her some regular coffee." So I went over to the coffee maker and poured two cups of Kona and brought them over, giving him his Kona and her the "regular coffee." He paid and they both went away happy.

The hardest question to answer, after pointing out the three coffees of the day is when the person asks, "Which is best?" I have no idea what that question means, and usually just repeat what each coffee is. The second question is, "Is it strong?" An equally meaningless question, but it's one that most people ask, terrified

that they will get a strong cup of coffee. How we're supposed to know if they will think it is strong is beyond me. One day, about an hour apart, one person protested that the regular coffee was too strong and a second person said the same coffee was too weak. We have a lot of people who ask if the coffee is a dark roast. We never serve a dark roast, but the same people will ask, over and over. One lady has to see the beans before she contemplates buying a cup, in case we are trying to get away with serving her a dark roasted bean coffee.

There is also another problem with having such an exotic place as a coffee store; people want to try this thing they've heard about, Espresso. Since we give samples of the brewed coffee, many people ask for a sample of the espresso or cappuccino, which we can't do. The problem is that some people really don't know what they are ordering, and are disappointed when they get it. To that end, the manager wants us to ask people, tactfully, if they know what they are ordering. Many don't.

For some reason, these people with a yen to explore show up at the busiest time. I had a couple show up just as a rush started and they wanted cappuccinos. OK. As I was making them, the guy asked what I was doing, and when would I get their order. So I told him that I was making the cappuccinos that they wanted, didn't they? Well, yes, but he didn't know I had to make them up. I finally got them made and rung up, so the guy turns cute. When asked for payment, to which he seemed surprised at the amount (considering the price was clearly marked on the menu they spent ten minutes studying), he asked if we took charge cards. With the people seething behind him, I told him through my clenched teeth, yes, we did, but not at the take-out window. He tried to make light of it and then slowly took out his wallet and all but counted out the amount in change while making bad jokes all the while. He finally left, much to everyone's relief. I have no idea if they liked what they got.

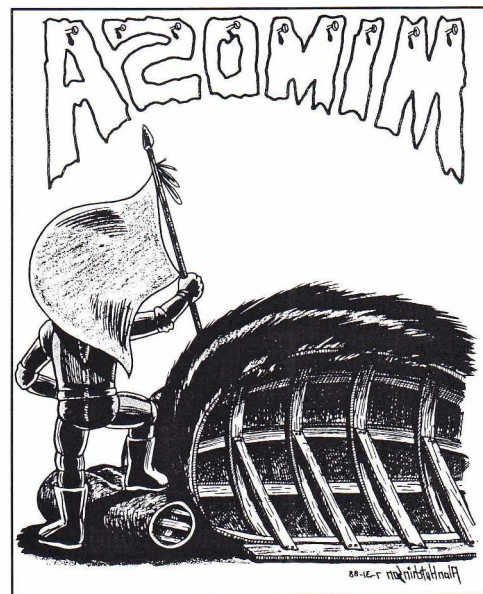
Working with the public is no picnic, but every now and then there is that one customer who is literate and knows what they want and have their money out, ready to pay. Or the customer who tells everyone in earshot how wonderful the coffee is and how he/she comes in every day to get it. Or the customer who looks forward to seeing *you*, because you make hot chocolate or cappuccino "just the way I like it."

 Nicki's article apparently struck a chord with some of our readers; it brought forth a few letters of comment from those who had been stuck in similar kinds of jobs, including one from Pat Molloy who once had a job as a sales clerk in a pet store and, like Nicki, soon could not smell his surroundings (though in his case, it was a Good Thing).

The covers for *M5* were another contribution from Alan Hutchinson, which also brought compliments from readers, like Stven Carlberg who wrote that "Alan's work is delightful, funny, clever, and deserves a big, appreciative audience."

One other article in *M5* that was both related to Tennessee and of fan historical interest was by Memphis fan Dal Coger, whose fan activity extends back to the 1940s. The subject of his article was Claude Degler, who was one of the most

legendary (or infamous, depending on how you look at it) fans of that or any fan era. Here it is again:



The Degler Legend

by Dal Coger

In the autumn of 1942, I attended my first science fiction convention, at the Otsego Hotel in Jackson, Michigan. Michicon II had about 30 fans in attendance, and boasted such luminaries as Edward Elmer "Doc" Smith, E. E. Evans, Oliver Saari (an engineer who wrote a few SF stories), and a 16-year-old Frank Robinson. Also in attendance was Claude Degler, an Indiana fan who was soon being referred to in fandom as "Clod."

Claude might have been cast as Ichabod Crane, but only in a silent movie because of his nasal Hoosier accent. He was unkempt in appearance, unwashed, and (as I found later) traveled by hitchhiking. His great dream was to unite all of fandom into a single organization which he had named "The Cosmic Circle." Why this was needed was never clear, since fandom already had, and was supporting the N3F (National Fantasy Fan Federation). In pursuit of his dream Claude traveled across the country, incidentally enjoying the hospitality of fans, all and sundry, and somehow finding the resources to produce fanzines of various titles, but all promoting cosmic consciousness.

Bob Tucker, in *Le Zombie* (November, 1943) wrote a piece, "Take to the Woods, Men, Degler's Coming!" An excerpt: "Cosmic Circle Claude they calls him – the wandering willy from some place in Indiana. He's covered most of the 48 states in the last several months, plus parts of Canada and it is rumored Mexico. He has visited (ouch) and sponged upon hundreds of fans from Quebec to Live Oak, from Rockland to Los Angeles. He is busily engaged in organizing an international fan club: The Cosmic Circle. Even if he has to borrow without permission a half dozen well-known fan names to lend prestige to the club."

My second meeting with Claude was at the Los Angeles SF gang's clubhouse on Bixel Street. I was a soldier stationed at Camp Haan, and Forry Ackerman and Morojo had made me welcome. Like all service fans, I was permitted to flop over the weekend in the clubhouse, and frequently spent Saturday nights there while on a weekend pass. Degler arrived in L.A. and stayed for some time, using the clubhouse as headquarters and, I suspect, running off his various publications on the club's mimeo machine.

At some point, Degler was the 'victim' of the great exclusion act. It isn't clear in my memory when this occurred, but it was probably after I saw him in L.A. Earlier, I believe, Claude had shown up at Slan Shack and made a pest of himself. This led Al Ashley to produce an item, *The Stefan*, a four page mimeo fanzine, "published for FAPA, March 1943." It is a parody of "The Raven" in 18 verses of 11 lines each.



"Once upon a midnight dreary,
while I slumbered, weak and weary;" etc.

"Deep into that darkness staring,
I stood rigid, glaring, swearing,
Hoping I'd succeed in scaring
That which lurked outside my door..
But my caller gave a token
That his courage was unbroken,
And the words that then were spoken,
Made a shutter-rattling roar;

Waking half the town, he shouted,
'It's just me, Al, Claude Deg-lore!'
Merely this – no need for more." etc.

"And the Stefan, never flitting,
Still is draped there, un-submitting;" etc.

"Won't some sympathetic being
Come assist me with this chore...
Scrape this damn thing off my floor?"

The next time Degler showed up at the Ashley place he was simply told to get lost. He had made of himself, Abby Lou Ashley told me while I was home on leave, an absolute nuisance, consuming vast amounts of food, which was not that easy to procure since there was food rationing. I suspect Claude simply tanked up where there was a chance. He was as thin as a rail. Degler did not take his 'exclusion' kindly, likening it to the great exclusion act at WorldCon 1939 in New York when Moskowitz and company excluded Wollheim and the Futurians. Some fans supported him. Most who had encountered him did not.

In LA, Claude had taken to referring to himself in some of his writings as "Don Rogers." Mel Brown, a Los Angeleno fan, promptly nicknamed him "Two Buck Rogers." This was a reference to the going price of a hooker, allegedly, and was probably unfair to Claude. I doubt he had time for sex.

Claude's publication for FAPA, *The Cosmic Circle Commentator*, led to a number of burlesques in one of the FAPA mailings of that winter of 1943-44. (I left California for military reasons in April or May 1944 and essentially left fandom that fall, only returning in the early 1970s.) Claude committed such howlers as describing one fan as "stolid and imaginative," and listing his membership in the Cosmic Circle as "under a thousand."

By March 1944, Claude was back in Indiana (Newcastle, I seem to recall) and a new flood of material was coming out, some of it referring to "Don Rogers." Also at that time there was a number of suspiciously similar publications, but with improved spelling, written by "Frankfort Nelson Stein," commonly Frank N. Stein.

We left fandom about the same time, apparently. Mine was involuntary, because I went overseas in the U.S. Army and didn't return for five years. I have often wondered about Claude/Don/Frankfort since then. Several years ago Bob Tucker swore he saw him outside a convention in Indiana.

The fact is, I sort of liked Claude. He had a dream and sacrificed everything for it. Certainly, he could have bathed more often. And used a change of clothes. His writing was crude, but in that as in much else he might have benefitted by more generous treatment from the fan community. Fans in their adolescence are frequently ugly ducklings, introverted, poorly socialized, and lacking in social graces, even though Claude was not an adolescent, being at least in his twenties.

Fandom would be a poorer place without such characters.

Dal Coger's article about Degler elicited several comments, the most insightful of which was from Mike Glicksohn, who observed that, "If it were only Claude's rather naive ideas about the superiority of fans that had passed into fanhistory, I doubt he'd be the legendary fan he is today. But when his oddball ideas were coupled with his less-than-savory personal habits, the result was a figure of mythic proportions." Indeed.

It took about eight months before the next issue of *Mimosa* appeared, partly because it took us quite a while to recover from the move north. (We were in a hotel for two-and-a-half months!) *Mimosa* 6 was meant to be a "Welcome to Maryland" issue – among the contributions were an article from Dave Kyle, the Fan Guest of Honor at the 1983 Baltimore Worldcon, which was the first article in his long-running series of remembrances about past fan eras, and also an article from Croatian fan Bruno Ogorelec, which we received a few days before we left Tennessee (a kind of going-away present?).

What really made *M6* a "Welcome to Maryland" issue, though, was an article by Harry Warner, Jr. After we moved to Maryland we were so excited about the prospect of finally meeting Harry that one of our first out-of-town trips while we were getting settled in was a visit to 423 Summit Avenue in Hagerstown, which is in a nice residential neighborhood. His article for *Mimosa* 6 was about another house in that neighborhood:

The House on Summit Avenue

by Harry Warner, Jr.

Every so often, you see in newspapers pictures and stories about the incredible clutter found in the house or apartment of a recluse who has died or has been carted off to the funny farm. I used to get an uneasy feeling when I saw such items and thought about the way the clutter of books and magazines has been growing in the three upstairs rooms I use for storage purposes and in the attic. But now I feel better. Unbeknownst to me, I'd been living for many years next door to just such a genuine case of terminal clutter without realizing it, and the situation in my neighbors' home makes my accumulation seem trivial.

The elderly couple who lived on the second floor of the building next to mine were a bit of the wild side. She had been, of all things, a professional boxer in her youth. Apparently there was a profession for female boxers around the middle of this century and she was part of it. She must have been pretty good, if I may judge by the left jab I saw her land on a young man who she thought had parked too close to her car one afternoon. Her husband came up to me one day and told me in confidence that he had heard me shooting the previous night. I hadn't even been home that night and I don't own a gun, and I haven't pulled a trigger since I patronized a booth at the Hagerstown Fair in my teens, but he smiled knowingly at me. Their minister told me that they were in the habit of interposing mailing comments during his sermons in loud voices.

About five years ago, the telephone company laid a new cable up Summit Avenue, mostly under sidewalks, resulting in the laying of new sidewalks for most of us and new curbs for some of us. A concrete-splattered workman told me one day almost with tears in his eyes about the hard time my neighbors had been giving



the crew; they insisted on a flattened section of curb in front of their building to make it easier to get a wheelchair onto the sidewalk, even though neither the husband nor wife needed a wheelchair nor had ever used one; they just thought such a feature of the curb might come in handy some time in the future. The woman carried a cane most of the time but laid it aside when she was in a hurry, and I've seen her climb the steps to her door with two heavy bags of groceries in both arms without walking difficulties. They apparently used the local ambulance service the way people used to ask doctors to make house calls. The ambulance would roll up with siren screaming at least once a month, stay double-parked for ten minutes or so, and then roll away without either of the couple as occupants.

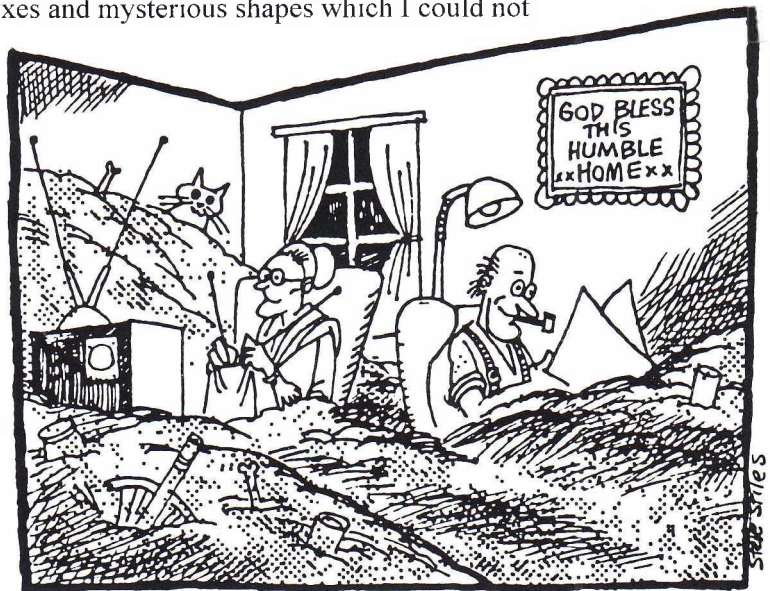
A local attorney and his wife once visited my home asking me to begin a career in espionage; this couple and my neighbors had both patronized a public auction, both couples had successfully bid on sets of dishes. Then in the attorney's version, my neighbors had walked off with the more expensive dishes which the attorney had paid for. I was supposed to pay them a visit and verify this fact by seeing the dishes in their home. I knew the two went regularly to public auctions, and once in a while I saw them at yard sales. But I didn't often see them taking acquisitions into the house, which left me unprepared for what happened early this year. The two had become less and less visible as the years passed, sometimes not moving their car for weeks at a time, so I didn't think anything of it when someone asked me where the man was. Nobody had seen him for a long while, despite catching occasional glimpses of her. We speculated that he might be in a rest home. Last yuletide, I noticed that the Christmas card from her was signed in a strange hand, and a few days later her obituary notice appeared in the local newspapers. There was no mention in it of her husband, and one of the neighbors somehow learned he had died two years earlier. It is unheard of that a Hagerstown resident should die without an obituary in the local newspapers, but it had somehow happened.

A few weeks later, people unknown to me began removing things from the apartment they had occupied. It began in a modest, unassuming way, with some battered pieces of furniture hauled away in a small pickup truck and a half-dozen or so garbage bags of unidentified contents placed at the curb for the trash collector. Then it escalated a bit. Instead of the pickup truck, there was a larger truck with greater capacity drawing up in front of the building and becoming laden with large boxes and mysterious shapes which I could not identify as anything known to civilization.

Moreover, plump garbage bags also began to be hauled away by truck.

Perhaps a week later there was a tremendous commotion outside the house. What to my wondering eyes should appear but a dumpster, one of those huge ones, wider than a big truck, half as long as a boxcar and with sides and rear wall extending perhaps five feet up. Its arrival signaled a new phase of the emptying of the apartment. Now, instead of things being carried down the steps and out the door of the building, they began to descend with resounding thumps from upstairs windows and the upstairs balcony, tossed at random to the walkway and lawn below for transfer into the dumpster. I wouldn't have believed that apartment could contain enough stuff to fill a dumpster, but it did. They piled that dumpster so high that they had great difficulty getting a canvas cover over the mountain. All the neighbors were marveling and some of them were looking at me as if there were a secret tunnel through which I was transferring a lot of my stuff to the neighboring apartment.

After the huge green dumpster had been hauled up atop a sanitary disposal truck and hauled away, the neighborhood wondered for about 24 hours what that apartment could do for an encore. Then we saw it – the dumpster was back. And again the dumpster was filled to overflowing and again it was hauled away and



behold, the dumpster returned and acquired a third load at least as high and tottering as the first two. After it left for the third time, Goodwill Industries stopped by with a large truck to pick up a good bit of stuff. A few days later, for the first time there emerged from that apartment things that appeared to be in excellent condition: a living room suite, refrigerator, stove, and so on.

I've looked at that building and I've tried to cipher out in my head the probabilities that so much stuff could have been occupying its second floor without resorting to fourth dimensional packing methods and I haven't had much luck. It occurred to me once that some of the stuff could be coming from the first floor apartment, but then I realized they wouldn't have hauled first floor stuff upstairs to throw it off the balcony or out the window. I've never been through that building so I can't be sure about its attic but from the outside, it doesn't look as if there could be a very large attic, so not too much of the stuff evacuated could have come from there.

Of course, I have no idea what may have been in the garbage bags but the workmen wore masks over their mouths on the job so I fear the worst. Visible were unbelievable quantities of empty pasteboard cartons, ranging from pizza type to large ones. There was a great deal of nondescript lumber. Vast quantities of what may have been old clothing but looked more like rags pure and simple came out.

Remember, I didn't make this spectacle my full time occupation during those weeks. I'm sure there must have been many occasions when a truck rolled up, loaded, and drove away without my knowledge because I wasn't home or wasn't looking out the window. And there seems to be a sort of nervous tension to this day in the neighborhood over that apartment. People look fearfully at it from time to time, as if they expected their credulity to be stretched to the snapping point by the sudden resumption of evacuation operations. I'm not sure if I could bear it if I suddenly saw more stuff beginning to flop out of the window or balcony because it would outrage all the laws of probability and reasonableness.

Since then, exterminators have been active in that building, and I've seen other men enter and leave with mysterious-looking instruments in their hands whose purpose I can't deduce. I can't help wishing that the apartment has been rendered uninhabitable for the next half century or so because I'm fearful of new tenants who possess a substantial quantity of small children moving in and creating territorial rights problems for my back yard. And I can't imagine how that man and woman managed to live in that apartment or how they explained the environment to those ambulance crews.

Eventually, everything will come out of 423 Summit Avenue. It will be imposing in its quantity but almost all of it will be books, records, magazines, music, and usable furniture, and the neighbors won't think it worthwhile to gossip about what a hoarder I was, because my clutter will seem quite unimportant in comparison with the things they saw emerge from next door. And I never did spy out that set of dishes for the attorney, and it's too late now.

☞ Most of the comments we received on Harry's article didn't get past the point of being croggled we actually had an article from him, in addition to his usual letter of comment. Only Patty Peters picked up on Harry's final thoughts in his article, when she pondered on what might eventually become of all our belongings after we're gone: "Who would place any value on most of the things we find important enough to house? I don't even want to consider how the moose collection will be interpreted."

Rich also had an article in *Mimosa* 6, though it perhaps more appropriately belonged in the previous "Farewell to Tennessee" issue. We'd lived in Tennessee for 15 years before finally moving north to Maryland, and found that in spite of ourselves, roots were only too easy to put down. Even though we never really considered Tennessee 'home' to us, we did miss all the friends we'd made there.

Rich's article was a 'loose end' he felt he wanted to tie down from all those years in Tennessee – for the eight years he worked for the Tennessee Valley Authority, his job frequently took him to one of TVA's coal-fueled power plants out in the wilds of rural Kentucky, to a place where the landscape had been immensely changed by strip mining long before land reclamation laws were ever thought of. The name of the power station was, ironically, The Paradise Power Plant; with all the open pits and corrosive ponds left over from strip mining, a place farther from paradise would be hard to imagine, as you will see:

Paradise

by Rich Lynch

I remember the day well. It was a warm late-summer day in 1980. I had recently taken an engineering position with a large, government-owned utility company (the Tennessee Valley Authority), and this was my first trip to the coal fields of western Kentucky. I had hopped a ride with a fellow worker, and after a long drive we had stopped by this little greasy spoon diner for lunch just outside the coal-fired electrical generating plant where we were scheduled to be that afternoon. I was still pretty green to my new job at that point; before TVA, I had worked as a process development engineer in a research laboratory where the biggest concerns were keeping whatever hazardous chemicals you were working with inside the fume hood, and making sure your monthly progress reports got to the secretary on time. Not here, though. I had always wanted a job that put me out in the field a little more, doing something a little more interesting and with a little more practical applications than developing chemical processes that nobody seemed interested in. Well, I had gotten my wish.

The little car we'd requisitioned from the TVA motor pool had been one of those no-frills Pintos that Ford had made in the last year they were built. With hard hats, overnight bags, and equipment we were bringing to the plant, it was a tight squeeze to fit just the two of us in there. It kind of reminded me of the limerick about the Young Man from Boston / Who Bought Himself an Austin; the car was a little bigger than that, but not by much.

This car was even more no-frills than most, because it lacked basic human necessities like air conditioning and a radio. The lack of air conditioning we managed to cope with; we just used the old stand-by: two-fifty-five air conditioning – two windows down at fifty-five miles an hour. Having no radio, though, presented an inconvenience we couldn't overcome; even conversation tends to peter out during a long, four-hour drive. There was one other thing a radio could have provided us – the news. Lots can happen in a four-hour stretch when you're effectively cut-off from humanity. In this particular four-hour stretch, something did happen that had we known about it, we would have probably have turned the car around and headed directly back to Chattanooga. Because there are some things in the world you just don't want to mess around with, and one of them is a coal miners' strike.

The United Mine Workers in recent years seems to be losing some of the clout that it once had. Coal prices have been on the decline worldwide for several years; mines have closed or curtailed their work forces, and miners are moving on to different, less backbreaking, and safer professions. They're no longer such a feisty lot, either; it takes a lot more nowadays to enrage them as a group where organized action takes place. One of the things that *will* set them off, though, is when a utility brings in coal produced by non-union mines. TVA had done just that, and now there I was, right in the middle of a wildcat strike that was just starting to get ugly.

The little roadside diner was called the Red Rooster; turned out that it was UMW Central, at least as far as this little disturbance was concerned. Coal miners are usually depicted as big, dumb, hulking brutes; these guys looked to be no exception. I was in favor of leaving right there and then, but Bill, the fellow engineer I was traveling with, insisted that he was hungry, and By God, he was going to have something to eat.

We had just placed an order for hamburgers, which looked to be the least disgusting thing on the menu, when Bill saw two guys near the doorway, reading what a third guy had just tacked up on a bulletin board. I'll say one thing for Bill – cats have nothing on him in the curiosity department. So before I could grab him to pull him back down in his chair, he grabbed me by the arm and as he was pulling me over toward the bulletin board said, "C'mon, Rich, let's go see what's going on."

With a great sense of dread I followed him, if only to be a little closer to the door. Bill, though, knew no fear. The object of interest on the bulletin board turned out to be some newspaper clipping that was sympathetic to the UMW, which had previously lodged complaints about importing coal from non-union mines into an area where union miners were being laid off. There was a big placard, in fact, right next to the clipping that read "This Is a Union County." As Bill read the clipping, he started chuckling to himself, undoubtedly about how unbiased local reporters and editors had become lately. He didn't seem to realize that all the while, his

antics were starting to draw attention from some of the miners who heretofore had been pretty much minding their own business. Finally, two of the bigger fellows seated not too far away put down whatever delicacies they were eating, looked at each other, looked at us, then started easing their chairs back from their table a bit, as if they were getting ready to get up, come over, and check us out to see just what was so funny. It was obviously time to take some drastic action, so I turned and gave them what I hoped was my broadest, friendliest smile while talking to Bill out of the side of my mouth: "Okay, Bill, let's get *ou-u-u-t-ta* he-e-e-re!"

It was very soon indeed after that we were back in the Millennium Pinto and headed for the plant. Bill grouched a little about not being able to eat his lunch, but didn't have an answer when I pointed out that two big guys almost had us for lunch. As we approached the plant, signs of labor unrest were more obvious – groups of people, some carrying 'On Strike' placards hanging around the plant entrance highway, a state police car or two watching the situation, and a big coal-haul truck by the side of the highway without a windshield (the cop said it had been shot out). Somewhere, about halfway down the plant entrance highway, we decided we didn't *really* need to stay overnight in the area, after all, so we just dropped off the equipment we had brought with us, turned around, and headed for home. It wasn't until we had gotten all the way to the county line that Bill laughed, turned to me and said, "Well, Richard, you've just been to Paradise."

And you know, we never *did* get anything to eat that afternoon.

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But wait! There's more...

I had originally intended to end this article here, but I find that I can't yet. I've lost count, but after that first trip to the Paradise Power Plant, I must have returned there maybe a hundred times more. And each time I returned, I found out there was something new and interesting about the place I'd previously missed. There's lots more to tell about it. For instance, there's how it got its name...

Old-timers at the plant told me that once, maybe thirty or forty years ago, this part of Kentucky was indeed a wonderful place, with hills and valleys, beautiful forests everywhere, and the Green River as a source of water and transportation. It was off the beaten path, and relatively undisturbed. Right on the Green River there was a town named Paradise that had been settled by the deliberate, slow-talking kind of people that still live in that neck of the woods. There's still enough wilderness around there that I can imagine what it must have been like; the original settlers must have thought they'd found their equivalent of the Promised Land. Then, back when the nation was in a period where new energy reserves were needed for the war effort and ensuing population explosion afterward, some mining geologists from the Peabody Coal Company discovered there were large coal reserves in that part of the state. So the coal company moved in and bought up all the land, then moved everybody out, razed the town, and strip mined the land for the coal. A songwriter named John Prine even wrote a song about it:

**And the coal company came with the world's largest shovel;
And they tortured the timber and stripped all the land.
Well, they dug for their coal till the land was forsaken;
Then they wrote it all down as the progress of man.**

**And daddy, won't you take me back to Muhlenberg County;
Down by the Green River where Paradise lay.
Well, I'm sorry, my son, but you're too late in asking;
Mister Peabody's coal train has hauled it away.**

Once, I was in the right place at the right time to be invited to visit the world's largest shovel referred to above. It was used to remove the 170-or-so feet of what is euphemistically called 'overburden' so that the eight foot thick seam of coal could be mined. The result was one of the largest holes in the ground I've ever seen. It was so large, in fact, that the first time I went to the mine, I didn't grasp the scale of the place until I saw a tiny section of rock at the lip of the mine fall lazily in slow motion to the bottom. Only it wasn't *really* in slow motion; the depth of the mine and the distance of the fall only made it seem so. Once the true perspective snapped in, I could see little toy vehicles down on the floor of the mine that were actually bulldozers the size of a bus.

The shovel itself had to be one of the mechanized wonders of the world; it was taller than a 20-story building, as wide as an eight-lane highway, and could remove 115 cubic yards in one scoop. One gulp from that monster, and your whole front yard is gone. Another, and your house disappears, too. When I got inside, I was astonished to find that it was controlled by a single operator, located in a cupola about five stories up. When we got to the 'roof' of the cab, at about the ten-story level, it was like being on a ship in a storm from the constant back-and-forth motion of the shovel while it continued to remove dirt and rock. I was told that if I had been crazy enough to climb all the way out to the end of the shovel boom, I would have experienced about one-and-a-half gravity centrifugal force as the boom swung round.

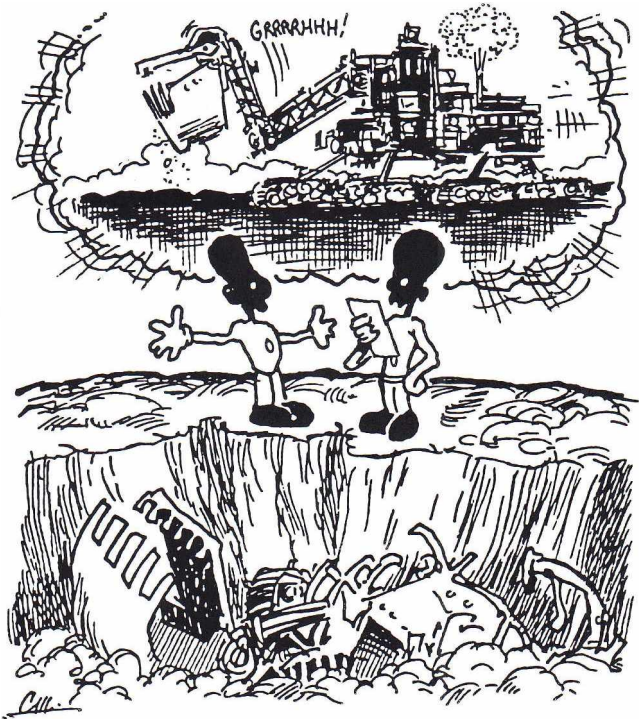
It was the mightiest machine – the largest self-powered mobile land machine ever built. And it doesn't exist any more. About three years ago, the strip mine finally ran out of a usable coal supply, after some 30 years of production. The big shovel was such a dinosaur that it was cost prohibitive to move it to another mine. So they just salvaged all the electrical parts that were of any value, lowered the big boom one last time, and covered the whole thing over when they filled in the pit. I can imagine that some far-future paleontologist will think that metal monsters once roamed the earth, when the metal bones of this behemoth are uncovered again someday.

There was also an underground coal mine in addition to the strip mine in the vicinity around Paradise; the place is *very* rich with coal. And, with some trepidation, I and a couple of co-workers took a trip down there. I don't think I could ever be a miner. I wasn't particularly scared up on top of the big shovel; just awe-struck from its immense scale. Down underground, I couldn't help wonder in that particular section of rock ceiling was just about ready to come down, right on top of me. And the miners seemed to take particular pains to point out parts of the ceiling where there had been rock falls. I guess they found it an instant cure for visitor cockiness.

The trip down there was pretty eventful in itself. I guess I had expected something safe and boring like an elevator, or at least a walkway. Instead, we got the tram ride from *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*. I kid you not; there were enough twists and turns, low ceilings, and stomach-churning drops to put any amusement park to shame; they should have sold tickets for that thing. When we got down there, we found that the depth of the coal seam being mined was only five feet.

This meant that six-foot people like me had to adopt to a new way of walking around – like Groucho Marx in *Duck Soup*, we grasped our hands behind our back, bent over forward slightly with our chins jutting out, and did a sort-of bent-knee waddle. The only things missing were bushy eyebrows, horn-rimmed glasses, and cigars. Dave, one of my co-workers, later asked me if he looked as foolish down there as I did to him.

And speaking of foolish, it always seemed that whenever something bizarre or surreal happened while I was at Paradise, Dave, Bill, or Dave *and* Bill were somehow also involved. Like the time we were snowed in



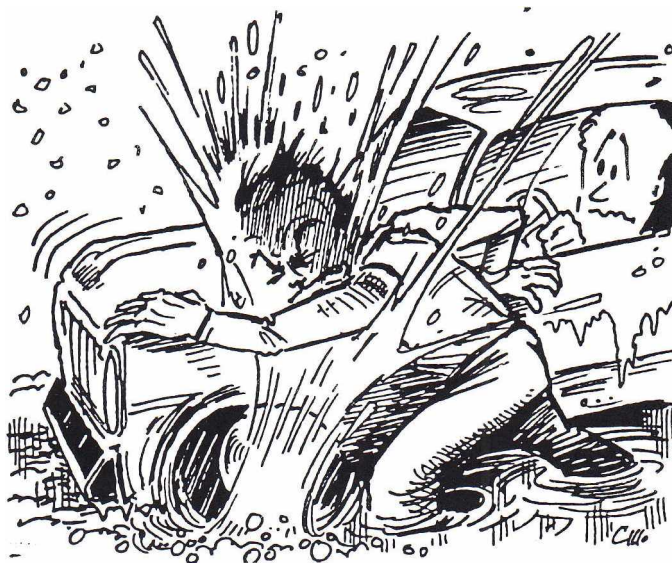
there one weekend. Dave was driving around a rental front-wheel drive Toyota, and was surprised at how easily it got through even the deep, packed snow that snowplows throw into the front of driveways. The car was making it look so easy that Dave was losing all fear of getting stuck. So of course, we did.

Bill was staying at a place a few miles from our hotel, and we were to meet him for dinner, since his place had a kitchenette and ours didn't. By the time we reached the parking area in front of Bill's motel room, Dave was of the impression that there was *nothing* this car couldn't do. I guess we should have been suspicious of the lack of tire tracks in the white snowy expanse of the parking lot, but we weren't, and Dave blithely pulled the car straight in. Or tried to, that is. We got within about 15 feet of what looked to be the curb when the car suddenly sunk about six inches, followed by a noisy crunching sound. And it wouldn't go any farther. When we got out, we discovered that there was at least one thing that car couldn't do – it couldn't swim. The parking area turned out to have such poor drainage (Bill had forgotten to tell us) that it wasn't unusual for several inches of water to accumulate. Dave's car had just broken through the icy crust under the snow, and had sunk down to where its bottom was flush against the ice. We had to wade through five-inch-deep icy slush to make it to shore.

Getting the car free was just as exciting. We wanted to call for a tow truck right then and there, but Dave wanted to give it one good try to free it by muscle-power before we gave it up. So, with much apprehension and fortified with three new pairs of tall rubber boots, we waded out to the car to give it our best shot. Bill claimed the driver's spot, since he had played no active part in getting us into this mess. Dave and I stationed ourselves at the front of the car at each headlamp; we would do our best to push the car out, while Bill kept a steady foot on the accelerator with the car in reverse gear. It was probably one of the most hopeless plans we had ever come up with, seeing as how the car was completely bottomed-out; yet it just might have worked except for one thing we didn't know about.

After being immersed in icy water in sub-freezing temperature for an hour or so, the right front wheel – the one I was stationed in front of – was frozen solid. All the engine's torque was going to the other front wheel, where Dave was. The result was predictable: when Dave gave Bill the signal to press down on the accelerator *e-e-easy now*, Bill naturally stood on it with both feet. And as Dave bent his shoulder to the front of the car in one last valiant attempt to push it free, all that torque applied to the one free drive wheel spun it so fast that it shot a geyser of ice-cold water twenty feet in the air.

And Dave, poor Dave, was standing right in the middle of it. It was quite a while before he in good humor again.



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But wait! There's *still* more...

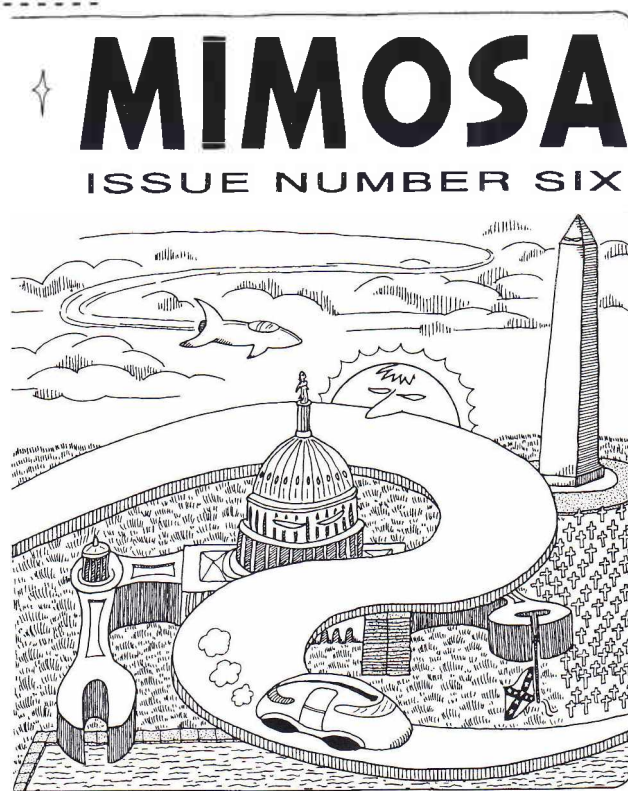
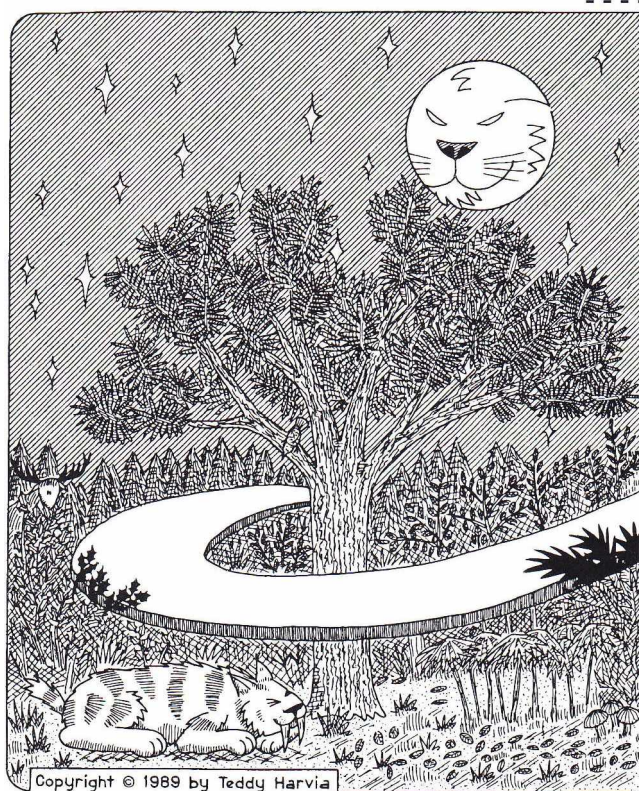
After eight years of working in the area, the sights and sounds of the place don't want to go away very quickly. A co-worker once told me as we passed the county line on the way home that one of the greatest sights in the world was seeing the Muhlenberg County sign in your car's rear-view mirror; the dirt and filth from coal mining and the obvious signs of poverty in the area just tend to wear you down after a while. Even poverty itself seemed to fit the paradoxical nature of the area; whole families lived in shacks so run down and decrepit you'd feel guilty about keeping livestock in them, yet they would have a satellite dish antenna in their yard and a bright new four-by-four pickup truck in the driveway.

There were the trips to little beer and liquor package stores just across the county line (Muhlenberg County was dry) – on one of them we had an Indian visitor with us; when we ran into what looked to be a group of backwoods redneck woodsmen at a beer store I had a terrible sinking feeling that one of them would say some-

thing about the visitor that would lead to a complex series of events that could only end with someone beating the crap out of *me* (luckily, they didn't). There was the Noah's Ark of hardware stores in a nearby village, that had in its cluttered aisles just two of practically anything you might need. There was a parade of all sorts of memorable characters, places, and events. In fact, one reason why this article has been kicking around inside me for about five years is that I couldn't decide what things were memorable enough to write about.

Like the Polish visitor we had not long after the Solidarity union had been outlawed. He was here to learn about new advances in coal technology; I hosted him for a day in Kentucky, then drove him back to the TVA Office of Power headquarters in Chattanooga. He was outspoken about his concerns for his family and friends, some of which were union supporters, but he was still interested in the rolling hills of the countryside that were passing by in front of him. Not far from the plant, we passed through the one remaining grove of trees that somehow had escaped the strip mining from years before. It was where part of the town once stood. I explained to him that here it was still possible to see hawks hunting rodents, and even catch an occasional glimpse of a deer. He turned to me in wonderment and asked, "What is this place called?"

And I just smiled. "This place here?" I said. "This is Paradise."



The covers for *Mimosa* 6 were by Teddy Harvia, his first for us since the time of *Chat*. The saber-tooth tiger in the lower left of the back cover was a reminder of our own fannish past, in a fanzine that was devoted to preservation of the past – and perhaps a foreshadow of the return of the feline beast a few issues later.

Several people asked us if there were any fannish references in the covers, among them Dave Kyle, who wrote, "I've puzzled over the wrap-around cover artwork because it seems to be loaded with symbols I only half understand," and Jeanne Mealy, who asked, "Do I detect brooding presences in the cover?" Well, the biggest symbolism to us seemed to be that the difference between the Maryland suburbs of Washington, D.C., and the wilds of Tennessee was like the difference between day (front cover) and night (back cover). But the reference to our previous fanzine *Chat* was enough of an inspiration so that when *Mimosa* 7 was published, in December 1989, the featured article was a 15-page history of that fanzine, complete with reprinted featurettes such as interviews of writers and fans. Here's one of those interviews from that article:

The Two Bobs

An Interview with Bob Bloch and Bob Tucker

Chat: Let's talk about old-time fandom.

Tucker: All right.

Chat: When did you meet Bob Bloch?

Tucker: In 1946. The 4th World Convention was in Los Angeles in 1946. Pacificon it was called. And one day I was out on this lake; it was in a little park across the street from the convention hall, and I was out there boating, taking a break from the convention. So I was out there in a little electric boat, and lo and behold, here comes Bob in *his* little electric boat. When I tell this story, I exaggerate for effect; he really didn't ram into me, he didn't capsize me and knock me over, but I *tell* that he did. That's how we met. We went back and he told a story on the program about his typewriter, which introduced me to the humor of Robert Bloch. He underwent a harrowing experience not too much before then, and he was a poor struggling writer at the time. And if you remember the story, Robert, you did something with your typewriter that you talked about in 1946.

Bloch: No. I don't even *remember* 1946.

Tucker: (Laughs) Well, he hocked his typewriter to buy groceries, and then when he had the idea for a story he no longer had the typewriter. He couldn't get it out of hock because he'd consumed the groceries and they wouldn't take the wrappers.

Chat: Were you living in California at the time?

Bloch: No. I went to California for the first time in 1937; I stayed with Hank Kuttner five weeks. It was at that occasion I met Fritz Leiber, Forry Ackerman, and C.L. Moore. I fell in love with California; it was a different world, an ideal place to be. So when 1946 came around with Pacificon, I went out there again. Tucker and I did meet on the lake, we were in boats, and we did bump into one another. We switched chicks or something of that sort and we spent the rest of the weekend together, and from that time on it's been downhill all the way. I went back again in '47; I didn't move out there until the end of 1959.

Chat: When did you become a professional writer?

Bloch: I was a professional in 1934, I'm afraid to say, but it's true. I've known this gentleman, and I use the term ill-advisedly, for 32 years. It's been quite an experience.

Chat: What was your first published story?

Bloch: "The Feast in the Abbey," in *Weird Tales*, in the January, 1935 issue which actually came out the first of November in 1934. They always issued them two months in advance in those days.

Tucker: Robert has seniority on me. He sold that story, although it appeared in the January '35 issue, about June or July in 1934 as I recall. Magazines have a long lead time. So he became a dirty old pro, underline the word dirty, in June or July of '34 and he has a terrific seniority on me because I did not sell my first story until about January of '41, something like that. It was called...

Bloch: "Slan."

Tucker: (Laughs) "Slan!" I used the pen name A.E. Van Vogt! No, it was called "Interstellar Way Station." Fred Pohl bought it and published it in *Super Science Novels*. So anyway, Bob has seven years seniority on me, and be-lieve me, on him it shows.



Bloch: (Laughs) I've always wondered about Bob's first story, you know. I wonder why he didn't quit when he was ahead.

Tucker: (Laughs) Robert and I discovered something at Pacificon; we discovered that we could have more fun milking an audience by pretending to stab one another, heckle one another, than we could by playing buddy-buddy. We get up on stage together and play buddy-buddy and they doze, they nod, they fall asleep. We heckle one another and they're wide awake and alert awaiting the next sharply pointed knife.

Chat: Bob, how did you get involved with Hollywood?

Bloch: I got involved with Hollywood when I was about 3 years old, by going to silent movies. I'll never forget it. There was one silent film where a train would rush toward the audience and everyone would cower in their seats. I went *under* my seat, and when I lifted my head again there was a picture on with a very funny comedian in it; it was a two-reel comedy with Buster Keaton. And it took me until 1960 to meet Bus, when I went out to Hollywood and I found myself on a baseball team with Buster. He was the pitcher and the late Dan Blocker was the catcher. That was quite a game!

Tucker: What position did you play?

Bloch: I was, um, *way* out in left field! (Everybody laughs) From that moment we became fast friends. But the point, if any, was that I became a movie fan, a real movie buff. And I was very, very enamored of screen work. I never thought I'd get into it. But finally in 1959, I got an opportunity to do a television show. I went out and did it, and at the same time my novel *Psycho* was bought, which was then screened and released in 1960. So I've been involved more or less ever since.

Chat: What are your thoughts on *Psycho*? It's made you famous, if nothing else, but has it made you famous in a way you desire?

Bloch: Believe me, I have nothing but gratitude for all the things that have happened to me in my life. Look at the wonderful things that science fiction has done. By picking up a magazine when I was 10 years old, I didn't realize I was opening the door to a world that was going to give me a whole lifetime of pleasure and enable me to meet hundreds of people that I would not otherwise have met. I'm very grateful to all it has given me, in spite of Tucker.

Chat: You won your Hugo in 1959 for the short story, "That Hell-Bound Train." How many times have you been nominated?

Bloch: That's the only time. You know, I didn't even know I was up for it. I really didn't know that the story had been nominated. In 1959, I was at the Detroit Worldcon; Isaac Asimov was the Toastmaster and he asked me to help him out because, you know, he's pretty inarticulate. (Tucker laughs at this) I was to hand out the Hugos. I was opening the envelope and I saw my name on the list of nominations. I didn't even know of it. When the story won, I was flabbergasted.

Chat: Bob, you won your Hugo for Best Fan Writer, I believe. When was that?

Tucker: The award was granted in 1970 for the year 1969. But do not accept that at face value. I've been writing for fanzines since my first fanzine appearance in 1932. When they got around to nominating me in 1969 for the 1970 award, it was for those 30 or 40 years of fan writing rather than the previous year. They were simply giving me a grandfather award, and it was understood as such.

Chat: Have you felt disappointment never having won for fiction?

Tucker: I've had two books nominated. The first Hugo awards were given out in 1953 in Philadelphia. They weren't called Hugos then; they were merely Achievement Awards. My book *The Long Loud Silence*, published in 1952, was one of the nominees for that year, but lost to Alfred Bester's *The Demolished Man*, which truly deserved to win. In 1970, *The Year of the Quiet Sun* was nominated along with Silverberg's *Tower of Glass* and Niven's *Ringworld*. And *Ringworld* won. My book came in number four of the five finalists. So I've been nominated twice, and quite honestly, I've been beaten by better books both times.



Chat: Thinking back over your years as a writer and a fan, can you think of anything especially significant or noteworthy?

Tucker: Go back to 1943, the first time you were Guest of Honor.

Bloch: Oh, yes, Toronto! I was Guest of Honor at the Worldcon in Toronto because this character over here made that suggestion. He's the guy who said "Make him Guest of Honor," so they did. We went up there; things were a little bit different. There were about 200 people at this affair and they had a small banquet. We paid for our own banquet tickets; I mean, the Guests of Honor and Toastmaster paid for their own banquet tickets!

Tucker: No freebies in those days. The cons were too small and too poor. They couldn't afford to pay for it. At that Worldcon he was Pro Guest of Honor and I was Fan Guest of Honor. This was the first time we appeared on a program together. That's how we discovered we could play straight man or jab at each other.

Bloch: What happened was that Tucker had gotten together a very elaborate survey on fandom; an anthropological study complete with charts and diagrams. He'd done considerable serious and intensive research through correspondence, questionnaire, and documentation. He presented this thing as part of the formal program. As luck would have it, they had to have something to do at the banquet; it was a matter of whoever was there would contribute something. So, I turned up the next day at the banquet, and I, too, had a survey of fandom with some charts which I had done in my room the previous night. It was a deliberate contradiction of Tucker's findings.

Tucker: (Laughing) Bloch did the most beautiful job imaginable. Now, picture me with this solidly researched and backgrounded survey; I actually sent out hundreds of questionnaires, and my charts were accurate as of that day. Imagine Bloch getting up there with his fake charts and very neatly in a few words, a few quick slits of that knife, he cut the ground from under me and I fell through the stage. He sabotaged me wonderfully well.

Bloch: What was the situation when you laid down on the streetcar tracks?

Tucker: Ah! In 1948, the United States was abandoning streetcars in favor of buses. Canada, being more enlightened, kept their trains and trolley cars. And Toronto, on a Sunday in 1948, was the deadest thing next to Jacksonville, Illinois in 1978. I live in Jacksonville. {{ed. note: at that time, anyway}} In Jacksonville now, during the week the good citizens go out in their backyards, sit on the patio and watch the grass grow. That's excitement! On that Saturday night in Toronto in 1948, the whole con goes down to the intersection and watches the red light blink. So the next day, Sunday, we left the hotel and went to the restaurant and it was closed, we got to the bar and it was closed; the only thing to do was go down the street to where the convention was in the process of closing. And it happened that we had to cross the street where there was tramway tracks in the middle. We looked up and down the street and there wasn't a damn thing to be seen, so to show these backward Canadians how forward-looking we Americans were, I laid down on the streetcar tracks and *dared* one to run over me! And nothing happened! All the streetcars were in the garage!

Bloch: But there *was* a streetcar on Sunday. That morning I took one to a park to see the elephants. I'm very big on elephants.

Tucker: Well, Robert has always followed the elephants. Usually with a shovel. (And everybody laughs)

Chat: You two are amazing. Have either of you any last comments? Or rebuttals?

Bloch: I'm so glad you did this on Friday night while we're still alive.

Tucker: And reasonably sober.

There was much mail in response to the *Chat* mini-history. Harry Warner, Jr., wrote that "Your overview of Chat is the kind of article that should be written about every fanzine that had a substantial life and some success." Teddy Harvia amused us with his letter: "I had forgotten about my nonsensical explanation of the origin of that Chat character. For all these years I've thought that I stole the idea from somebody else (a tradition among cartoonists). A cartoonist having an original thought is scarier than any image of a saber-toothed tiger."

Mimosa 8 was next, and was published in August 1990, just before we had the biggest adventure of our lives to that point — our first trip ever outside North America, to Europe for the 1990 Worldcon. Perhaps appropriately, one of the articles in *M8* was about another adventure-filled trip to a Worldcon, fifty years earlier:



The Chicon of 1940 always reminds me of Jerome K. Jerome's very amusing century-old book, *Three Men in a Boat*, about a holiday trip up the Thames River. My adventure was an epic automobile ride to Chicago. The occasion was the second World Science Fiction Convention in Chicago over the 1940 Labor Day weekend. This remembrance could be entitled *Four Youths in a Car, Westward Ho!*, and its sequel, *Five Youths in a Car, Back to the Future!*

I've told this story, on request, from time to time at sf gatherings. Ad libbing, without notes, though, results in the recalled details fading in and out of my mind. There may have been minor inconsistencies in the telling, but the spirit was always there.

The four science fiction fans who made that glorious 1940 pilgrimage to that shifting sf temple of worship – the Worldcon – were Dick Wilson, Jack Gillespie, Chester Cohen, and myself. We were all bound together by the intimate brotherhood of 'The Ivory Tower', a Brooklyn apartment and haven for the ex-pubescent metropolitan fannish band of young sf men. The Ivory Tower in September 1939 was the successor to 'Futurian House' – a short-lived communal project of a month earlier which established the famous/infamous Futurian Society – and the forerunner of the Futurians' 'Prime Base' and other such exotic locales. *The Three Men* of 1889 had an extra companion, *Montmorency*, a dog. *The Four Youths* of 1940 also had a companion, *Jenny*, a big-square-box of a car. Montmorency was a rather pleasant contributor to the excitement of the boat trip; Jenny was very much the vexatious contributor to the excitement of our auto trip.

Although a Chicon appearance had always been in our minds, who-when-and-how (the 'how' meaning \$\$) had not been settled. Dick had bought a rather old but substantial car, a four-door sedan which he named *Jenny*, and had been practicing driving it. He and I hoped, somehow, to be there in Chicago on Sunday morning, the official opening, for the two days. He was working in NYC and I was back in Monticello (90 miles northwest of New York), at work at the new daily paper there. We were, nevertheless, in close touch. On Friday night, August 30th, Dick and I were at the Ivory Tower to check up on the plans of others who were bound for Chicago. We were determined to go, but we needed passengers. The Ivory Tower was virtually deserted, as I recall. Undoubtedly Jack and Chester were there. (The wall newspaper informed all that only Don Wollheim and his affianced Elsie were making the trip, with a couple of passengers in Elsie's car.) "Who will go with us and share expenses?" we asked. Jack had only a few bucks, but that made him eligible; he'd go. Chester? Chester had no money; Chester *never* had any money. But a fourth in the party would keep one driver awake, either Dick or me, so we agreed that Chester should go. Thus was the con delegate team of four youths created.

On Saturday morning, August 31st, we assembled in Dick Wilson's family home at Richmond Hill, Long Island. The launch pad was well chosen: Jenny lived there, and furthermore that was where, before departure, we would get a substantial breakfast prepared by Felicitas K. Wilson, Dick's concerned mother – the only real

meal we might have until our return after Labor Day. We studied the maps closely, for in those days there were no Interstate superhighways. We decided to strike out due west across New Jersey towards Stroudsburg where we would pick up U.S. Route 6 for a direct run to Chicago. We figured, 800 maybe 900 miles one way. And so we ate, gassed up, kicked the four good tires, and left late in the morning. Chicon or Bust! And bust we did -- time and time again!

We expected the drive to take twenty-four hours at most. That figured to a modest pace of 45 miles per hour for less than a thousand miles, sleeping in the car and eating Mrs. Wilson's food. Our arrival, therefore, would be at the hotel early Sunday morning in plenty of time for the festivities.

The trouble began in western Pennsylvania that Saturday afternoon with our first flat tire. We had a spare wheel which rode in the well over a front fender. The spare looked to have a dubious future, but we were confident that in an emergency it would get us to the nearest gas station. And it did. We picked a few nails out of the tire's carcass, assuming one of them to be the culprit. The airless tube, already much battle-scarred with patches, was patched again and we were once more on our way.

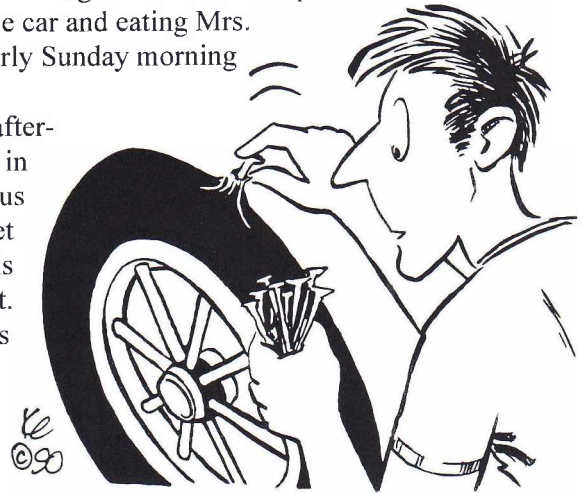
An hour later, we had another flat. We changed to the spare. A short while later, that went half-flat. We hand pumped it up. Later, another half-flat to be pumped up again. This happened many times.

During one of those stops, some place in Pennsylvania or Ohio, we stocked up on dozens of ears of corn. I remember being parked at the side of the road with cornfields stretching out on both sides as far as the eye could see -- lush green stalks loaded with plump ears. While repairs were going on, Chester ran into the fields, disappearing into the waving greenery. We could hear him fade into the distance. And then we could hear him running back to us, accompanied by *Snap! Snap! Snap-snap!* He burst into sight with an armful of corn, threw the load onto the rear floor, and dashed back down between the rows. Again he disappeared and, with more *snap-snapping*, reappeared with more corn. When we left, two pairs of feet rested on a stock of fresh produce guaranteed to protect us from starvation.

When we reached a garage near Cleveland, we had the regular tire fixed. By then we were experiencing the same trouble with that 'good' tire -- loss of air. Several times we stopped to pump it up and finally, late that evening in or around Cleveland, we found a garage where a helpful mechanic identified our problem. We learned that the tire contained a 'boot', which is a pad inserted in the tire casing to cover a slash or break in the casing; this boot would protect the tire tube from stress against the cut inner wall of the casing. It was apparent to him that the boot was moving slowly away from the area it was supposed to protect, exposing the tube to damage. Additionally, the boot was dislodging old tube patches and causing them to leak. The obvious remedy was to buy a new tire. He could sell us one, but he had no used tires in our size. He did the best he could do -- he glued the boot in place and wished us luck.

Well, yes, come to think of it, said Dick, the week before he had hit a curb rather hard and caused a flat. The repairman had told him not to worry about the tire cut because he had fixed it up almost as good as new. To begin with, the tire already was "almost as good as new," which should have given pause for thought, but Dick hadn't questioned the evaluation. Not that it would have mattered to us, anyway.

By now it was after midnight and I was driving. The suburbs of Cleveland thinned out, and the highway became lonely flat country. We felt more confident than we had all evening that our problem was solved. In fact, we traveled for several hours before the exasperating trouble reappeared. The boot had slipped and a patch had loosened -- another flat. The spare went back on, and we repaired the regular tire while traveling. The spare lasted a while before we had to make a switch, but soon after that the regular tire was again developing a slow leak. So in the darkness, we simply stopped every so often, resigned to pumping it up the rest of the night. By now we were approaching two dozen tire failures, and we were frustrated and exhausted. Our deci-



sion was to buy another tire, second hand, of course, and as soon as possible. But it was night, and we would have to bear up the best we could until morning.

While driving sometime about dawn, near Bowling Green, Ohio (a name which will always haunt me), I spotted a used tire lot. There was a shack of an office in front of a wire-fenced enclosure, and inside were hundreds of tires. It was a treasure trove! I parked the car and dozed off, awaiting the fulfilling of a sign's promise: "Open Sunday 7 A.M."

When I was finally in the back lot, surrounded by all those tires, I felt the miracle had happened to give us good fortune at last. A number of tires were the proper size. One tire was particularly good looking, with a fine tread and a famous name. I eagerly poured the water out of the casing and confirmed that it was as cheap in price as the others; it was something like three bucks (a bargain, I thought). Also, we did the right thing and bought an almost new tube for another dollar (a bit of an extravagance, I felt, but necessary). We mounted the tire, fixed up the old one as a spare, and discarded the worthless original spare. We drove away happy, confident now that we would get to Chicago and the con by noontime. I curled up in the right rear corner of the back seat and quickly went to sleep.

I awoke, a horrible noise shattering my dreamless peace.

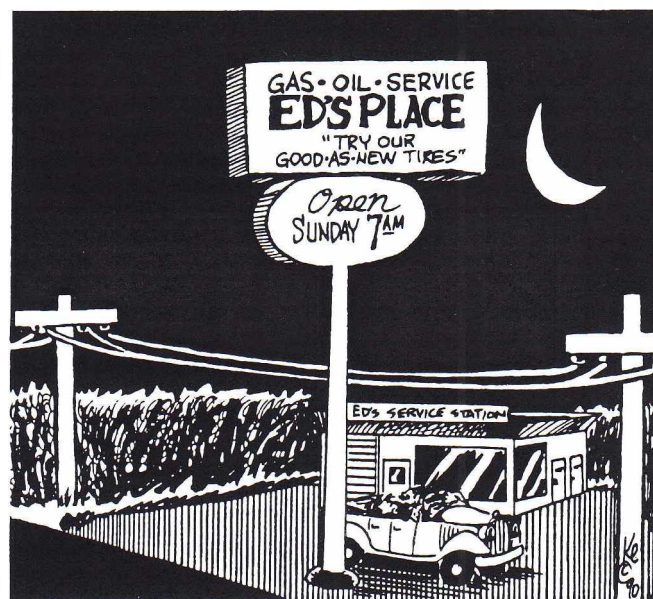
My befuddled mind registered an explosion, the noise reverberating over the otherwise quiet, peaceful countryside. A shuddering Jenny was staggering to a halt, half off the road. Seconds later, the clear sky was raining down bits of black rubber and bits of red rubber. We were on a straight stretch of road with widely spaced houses with pleasant lawns; bushes and flowers lined the rural highway. One moment, as my eyes focused, the only movement was the rubbery rain, then into the deserted scene rushed people from their houses. Mothers and fathers and many children were out on their lawns. Faces peered out of windows. All obviously expected to view some kind of catastrophe. They didn't know that...

...Our 'new' tire had blown up!

We had come to a halt, a shuddering one, of course, half on the road and half on the shoulder. Dick had successfully fought the steering wheel for control, a relatively easy task considering the practice he and I had had during the previous twelve hours.

In those days, the front fenders were really just mud guards, and the wheels were very much exposed. It made tire changing relatively easy. It also permitted a self-destructing tire to shoot out every which way. Only two-thirds of the tire was left on the wheel rim. The rubber had quite literally disintegrated around the blowout in the center of the tread. I could now easily see that the rubber had been rotten. Huge chunks of the casing lay about on the road and ground. After examining those pieces and pulling on the remnants of the still deceptively impressive tread, I marveled at the remarkable fact that we had actually traveled about thirty or forty miles before its spectacular demise. I was tired and I was mad. I *knew* that the tire dealer had known we were buying a piece of junk. Though we were practically at the Indiana state line, I decided immediately that we had to go back and fight for satisfaction. Our trip now depended on the fair play of a tire dealer. The others shrugged and agreed.

One of the men, looking as though he was dressed for church and who had come out to view our stricken Jenny, wanted very much to help. It was obvious that we wouldn't get very far on our poor, old, worn-out spare. If it also died, out on the empty highway, we would *really* be in trouble. He offered us the best help possible. He went to his flower bed in the center of his lawn and there, embracing a mass of flowers, was a discarded tire, a typical old-fashion garden improvisation. He urged us to take it: "It might help out you boys." "It's the wrong size," I said, knowing that it could even be as rotten as the one we'd bought. "Well," he said,



Somewhere between Pemberville and Bowling Green, Ohio

“take it anyhow; it might somehow help,” and before we could object more strenuously, he had pulled it up and carried it to our car. Meanwhile, our spare tire was back on the front wheel and when the man (I remember him as a farmer) put his old tire in the tire well, we were ready to go. We drove away, with pieces of the mangled tire on the back floor as evidence and the garden tire reincarnated as part of Jenny, and we had some living flowers as good luck charms waving in the bottom of that farmer’s old tire.

When we pulled up in front of the tire store, our grim faces must have been obvious. No argument was necessary. All I said was that the tire we had just bought had blown up, and the man simply told us to pick out another one. Not entirely mollified, I complained that our tire tube was also destroyed. Well, pick out a used tube too, he said. No charge. And that was that. We were on our way once more. At the scene of our earlier explosion, the farmer’s tire, having been out in the world for a brief adventure, was returned – once again, I imagine, to embrace the bed of flowers.

We had no further trouble. The saga of *Four Youths in a Car* ended at the afternoon session of Chicon. What happened there, when I met Doc Smith for the first time, and won an *Amazing Stories* cover original for wearing a “Ming the Merciless” costume (a Worldcon first), and paraded to a newspaper office as part of Forry Ackerman’s idea to get con publicity, has been told in other reports. The costume, incidentally, was made by Leslie Perri, later to become Dick Wilson’s wife. She made it for Don Wollheim, but he considered it too undignified so I wore it instead. Don and Elsie brought the costume to Chicago. And, oh yes, they had their own car troubles. En route they had an accident, but fortunately were not injured and, although delayed, pushed on.

Okay, we were in Chicago, but our budget, really insufficient to start with, could not be stretched to get us back East. We had spent a very modest amount for a flop house (definitely *not* The Chicagoan, site of the con meeting room), where the walls and doors were thin and the stairs squeaked all night with comings and goings. Our toughest question was whether or not to pay for the “banquet,” an inexpensive meal (and our only one in days), or to husband our funds for gasoline. If we had no extra expenses on the way back, we concluded, we would have enough money to get us, tired and hungry, halfway through Ohio. But halfway, obviously, wasn’t good enough. So, being logical, we decided to eat for the moment and worry later.

The money solution was easier than we could imagine – we found a mark. He was Elmer Perdue, a well-known fan from California. Elmer was going on to New York from Chicago and had a transcontinental train ticket. Oh, my, we sympathized with him, he ought to be traveling by car with us and see the country. In fact, we even had room for him! He would save lots of money by cashing in part of his train ticket because we would share the expenses. We were very persuasive, perhaps desperately persuasive, and Elmer agreed. So, when we left Chicago, Dick and I were in the front seat and Elmer was comfortably squeezed between Chester and Jack in the back seat. At our first gas stop on the outskirts of Chicago, we nonchalantly spent our entire fortune on a tank of gas, carefully noted down the statistics, and headed for Indiana.

The day was still bright, although evening was coming on, when we had to stop for more gasoline. Now came the harsh reality of the situation for us all – Elmer was about to learn the horrible truth. As the gas was being pumped, I turned to Dick and asked for some money. Dick informed me that there was none left in the kitty. Did Jack have any money? Jack pointed out that he had earlier put all his money in the kitty. I looked at Chester. Dick looked at Chester. Jack looked at Chester. “Don’t look at me, guys!” Chester objected. “You know I didn’t have any money when we started this trip!” So we all looked at Elmer. Elmer simply looked bewildered.

It took a moment for the truth to sink in – Elmer was our banker. Now that his inescapably vital role was established, we reassured him. He’d pay for all the gas and oil, and when we finally arrived we would “draw money out of the bank,” tally up the pro-rated cost, and pay him. Elmer, of course, went along with the idea – he had no other choice! Out came his pocket purse; he unsnapped it and doled out the funds. At first there was that slow, hesitant, reluctant response by our banker, but with each passing occasion, Elmer became less inhibited. Fortunately, his money supply seemed inexhaustible. Feeding Jenny, however, didn’t mean feeding us. We still had a bag of canned foods brought along for the trip, and we were still eating from that dwindling pantry (with our corn supply in reserve). We offered to share with Elmer, but Elmer preferred for us to stop and buy more traditional meals. We explained that we certainly would stop for him to get things but weren’t in a position to join him. As a result, Elmer was resigned at first to eating alone at a counter stool. After that initial

experience, he would buy a bag of things he wanted and generously offer to share his supply with us. We nobly declined at first – but not for long.

The truly devastating experience, which was the worst blow to Elmer, came when Jenny had her mechanical breakdown. We had driven through Indiana and Ohio for most of the night and had stopped when there was concern that we would run out of gas while no gas stations were open. Also, this gave us a few hours sleep. We had no more flat tires, the facts about which we hadn't wanted to trouble Elmer, and our expectation was to be home by the end of that day. Outside the crowded heart of Cleveland, Jenny began the long climb up the hill in Cleveland Heights. Jenny was really struggling upward, slowly losing power, when suddenly there was a clunk and a halt, and we started rolling backward. The brake held us in place, but the accelerator would only race the motor and the rear wheels were powerless. By now, the sun was high, perhaps eight in the morning, and traffic was light. Using gravity and muscle power, we turned Jenny around and coasted back down the hill to reach, by another minor miracle, an open garage at the bottom of the hill.

Jenny had a broken rear axle.

The part was available, the mechanic was available, the time was available and the repair could be done that day. Not available, however, was the money. The price was a bargain and Elmer would have loaned us the money, but even he wasn't that affluent. Trusting once more in Providence, we ordered the repair – then phoned for extra funds, explaining our delay.

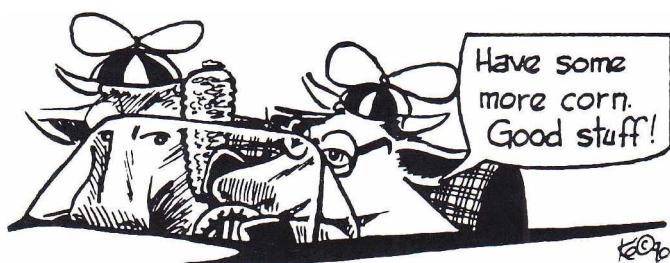
We spent a half day at a nearby CCC picnic grounds, a fine place to cook our corn. (The Depression-bred Civilian Conservation Corps had made picnic grounds in various parts of the country.) Under a fire, we attempted roasted corn. Over the flames, we heated a pot of canned spaghetti mixed with corn kernels cut from the cobs. (Two disasters! The pot of porridge became a disgusting, inedible, scorched mess. Within the charred corn husks, the ears were still raw.) Other supplies assuaged our hunger, but oh, the humiliation – plus the waste of spaghetti! However, the day, filled with trees and grass and blue skies and a stream, was beautiful and the car repairs were being made, and we were young, so the memory is a funny and pleasant one.

The money arrived with ten dollars extra, I believe, which was fortunate because it just covered the legitimate extra expense to ransom Jenny. We drove onward with optimism. Elmer, in recognition of our meager larder, bought a bag of groceries for the five of us to share. His properly frugal behavior was about to give way utterly. On the second morning, at an early breakfast time, Elmer felt compelled to have a real meal. We stopped at a roadside restaurant and all went in to sit, with dignity, at a table and be served. The four of us could have stayed in the car and eaten the rolls we had, but there was a need to be near cooked food and to enjoy the ambiance of the place. Elmer ordered a full, genuinely American breakfast, from juice to the extra cup of coffee, or whatever it was that his craving for genuine food demanded. And we pretended to be satisfied with a cold glass of water in a sensuously pleasing, thick restaurant glass. Elmer's food came and he began to eat, and we chattered among ourselves, struggling not to watch. Then Elmer cracked. "Look, fellows," he said, "order what you want. The treat's on me. You deserve at least one decent meal today before we get to New York." We half-heartedly protested, but we were really hungry. We accepted and had four orders of what Elmer was eating. And when his purse appeared, and he unclicked it, the sound was friendly.

Within the hour the bad luck returned – the 'new' tire had a blowout, and the new string of flats began. They happened, I suppose, because thin and deteriorated rubber couldn't prevent punctures. We'd had maybe two dozen deflated tires going west. By the sixth change of wheels on the return trip, we were fed up and ready for a drastic solution. Elmer suggested we buy a new tire, a really *new* tire! The cost would go into our little account book as a loan. We did so in Scranton, I believe, at a discount tire store. And that was the last of all our troubles.

Our agonies were over. A few hours later, Jenny took me to the door of my Monticello home. The ears of corn which lined the floor of the back seat, mixed with our tire changing tools and smeared with oil, were thoughtfully unloaded and put on the back porch of my house for my mother. Then I was transported to work (a day late), borrowed some money to rebuild the kitty, and said my goodbyes. Jenny got Elmer to New York with no further adventures.

That evening when I came home for supper, I expected to have fresh corn. No, it had been thrown in the



trash. I argued that the motor oil hadn't penetrated the husks, that the corn was still edible. My father, a lawyer who had been raised on a farm, explained. "You had field corn. Field corn is grown for cattle feed, not for humans." Well, nevertheless, if we'd cooked it properly I know I would have enjoyed it on our unscheduled picnic outside Cleveland.

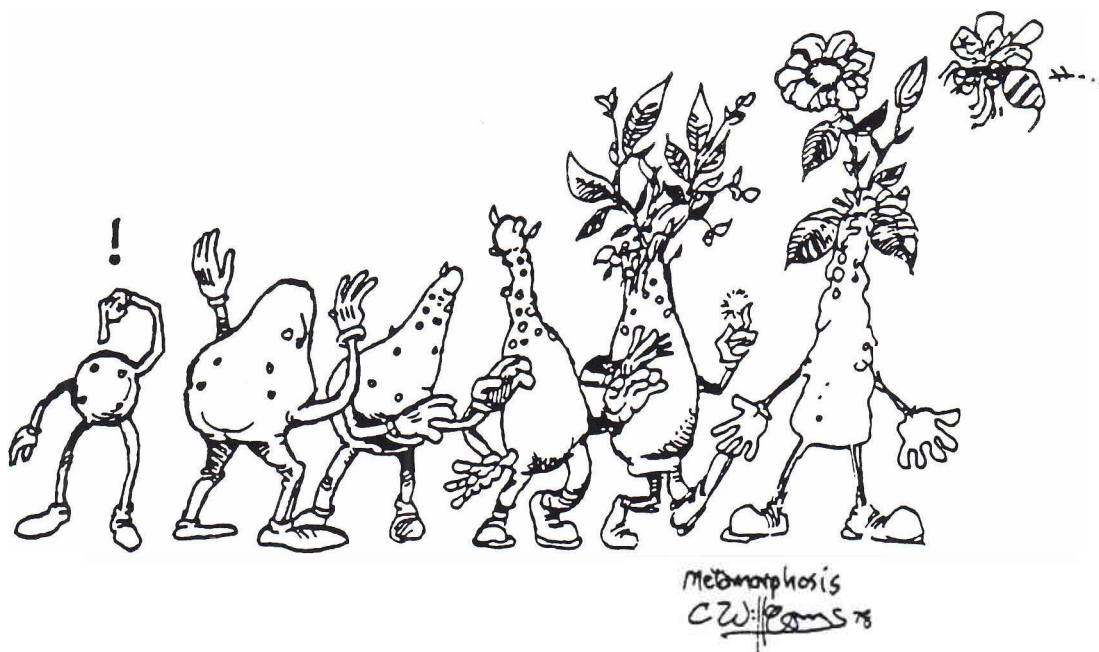
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As a postscript, I should mention that Dick Wilson went on to win a Nebula Award, and died in 1987. Jack Gillespie married my former girl friend Lois, who was 'Miss Science Fiction of 1949', and disappeared into Pennsylvania. Chester Cohen, I heard, had some tough times. About once a decade I saw Elmer, wearing his notoriously garish ties. I wish I could recall more of the details of that unique Chicago trip. I wonder if old fanzines might have had reports about it. Maybe somebody knows or remembers more than I have just told or can correct me on my dimly remembered facts. If so, I'd love to have them drag my thoughts back to that time of the Chicon a half a century ago.

 Dave Kyle's article generated many mostly appreciative comments from our readers. There were a few people, however, who were critical of Dave and his friends for taking advantage of Elmer Perdue, including Leland Sapiro, who wrote that, "I can't sympathize with these Chicon fans ... I'm sure that Elmer's income was no greater than that of his traveling companions." Mike Glicksohn, on the other hand, was happy to appreciate the article for what it was – a fascinating window on a convention fifty years previous: "I imagine most fans have experienced a less severe situation to the one Dave describes but his must certainly rate as archetypal and has the additional attraction of dealing with a time and culture most of us have no personal experience with. No interstate highways? Tires for \$3? What is this, some sort of science fiction?"

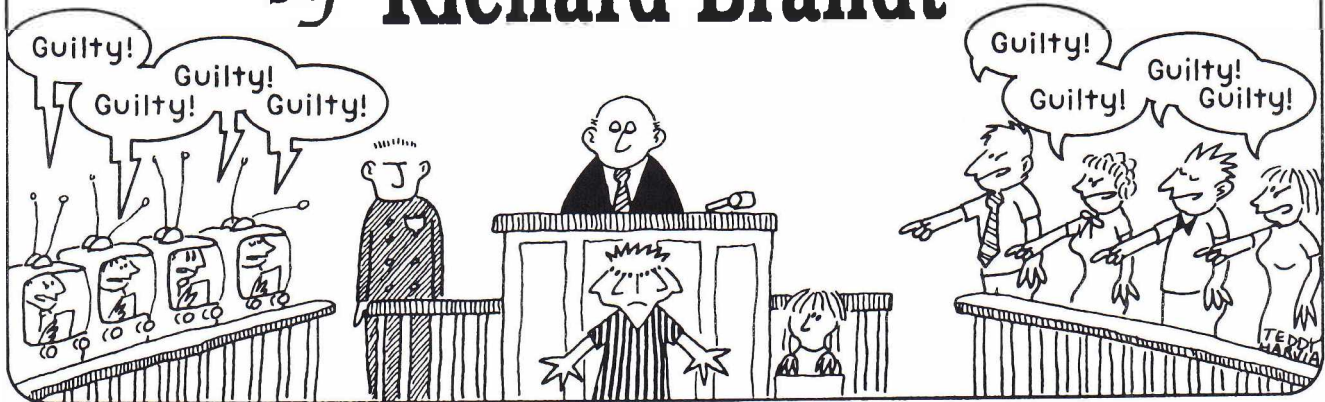
Some of the other articles in *Mimosa* 8 included a short anecdotal article by John Berry (his first for us) about an incident at his workplace; it was accompanied by two pieces of fan art by Arthur Thomson (ATom), who had died earlier in 1990 (and these were the only two illos by ATom that ever appeared in *Mimosa*). There was another article by Harry Warner, Jr., too, once again about his city of Hagerstown (and some mysterious people there who seemed be related to Mephistopheles), and the 4th installment of Sharon Farber's "Medical Life" series, this time about medical slang.

And we were pleased to finally be able to publish an article by Richard Brandt. We'd always considered Richard an excellent but overlooked fan writer; his writing is without fail entertaining to read. See for yourself:



Five Years Before the Bench

by Richard Brandt



“Have compassion!” Michelle reminded me on my way out the door.

This particular morning, I was reporting to the county courts for jury selection. This duty is one of the fringe benefits of being a registered voter, so I show up at the civic center theater at pretty regular six-month intervals.

I’ve never actually had to sit on a jury, though. There are a number of reasons for this; for one thing, I generally tell the judge in a marijuana possession case that I have problems with the law which could interfere with my rendering an impartial verdict. Besides, Lord knows, that could be any number of my friends up there in the dock...

More often, I suspect, it’s because I was a television reporter for five years at El Paso’s CBS affiliate – KDBC, Channel 4, the Big Four News Team. There’s just something about a journalist which seems to make lawyers leery of us during jury selection. In addition, I had the courthouse beat for a few years, which means I probably was chummy with the prosecutor or his adversary, or both.

I landed a job with the Big Four fresh out of college, and my facility with the equipment amazed my colleagues. Or, as they remarked, “Most of the graduates who come in here, they can’t write, they can’t shoot, they can’t edit. But, Richard, they can *drive*.”

My courthouse days began the night we had a tip phoned in that a former county judge was being booked downtown for DWI. I rushed my gear down to the courthouse, ran down to the booking desk in the basement, and got plenty of shots of His Honor, grinning and winking at the camera and generally having a whale of a time.

Several years later, when the judge passed on, our staff was frantically searching through our archives looking for file footage, and this ended up being the only tape they could find on him. Be that as it may, I found myself soon after pounding the judicial beat.

The Federal and County Courthouses are across the street from one another in El Paso; despite this wealth of jurisdictions, there’s not always anything newsworthy happening. Newsworthy, according to Channel Four, being anything involving a murder or public officials. Both, if we could swing it.

Sometimes our own colleagues were tossed into the brew. The El Paso *Times* had to fend off a couple of libel suits, and we got a lot of mileage out of each one. One was brought by John Kerr, a U.S. Attorney who had survived an assassination attempt in San Antonio, shortly after a federal judge was gunned down in the same town. Kerr, who was in hiding under the Federal Witness Protection Program (yet still managing somehow to work as a prosecutor) contended that he and the judge were shot at because they had a reputation for

being tough on drug dealers. And how did drug dealers know this? Well, they must have read about it in the paper, of course...

A jury actually decided in Kerr's favor on this one (another reason I'd hate to ever go in front of a jury), but a higher court reversed the verdict. Another libel suit was brought by a former mayor and his old buddy, a real estate developer. It seems our City Hall, which was planned to be situated next door to the federal and county buildings, somehow wound up instead on the outskirts of downtown, on land owned by the mayor's developer friend. The *Times* got to thinking out loud whether any "hanky-panky" was involved, and the resulting lawsuit dragged on for months. The reporter who had covered the story was called in to testify; he had since resigned and joined a monastery in New Mexico.

Channel Four narrowly avoided lawsuits from time to time. I was covering a child custody case, distinguished by the father's awaiting trial for murdering the mother. His in-laws were suing for custody, but it was widely recognized that the defense was indulging in a little fishing expedition to find out what the prosecution had in store. Unfortunately, I was off when the verdict was handed down, and one of our, uh, less acute reporters called the judge to find out what went down.

"Well," said the judge, "based on the preponderance of the evidence, I'm awarding custody to the in-laws."

So, on that night's newscast, our reporter stood on camera and said, "The judge said the preponderance of the evidence showed [the defendant] murdered his wife."



She lost her job over that one. She's now working in a bigger market, but that's another story.

In one murder trial, the defense tried the time-honored ploy of shifting suspicion onto a friend of the accused. For this purpose, they enlisted the services of Jay J. Armes, renowned double-amputee private eye. Jay wired another friend of the accused's for sound, sent him to the door of their pigeon, and listened in while one tried to elicit a confession from the other. Over the objections of the prosecution, the tape recording was played in the courtroom, and turned out to be totally innocuous.

Jay sneaked us an old photo of the deceased, so I should be kind to him, but truth is, he's a major flake. He lost both hands in a childhood accident, and the resulting settlement allowed him to set himself up as a self-styled James Bond. His office is set off the street by a barricade of pointed rocks – to discourage truck-bomb drivers – and the first thing one sees when the elevator doors open is a mannequin of Jay sitting on a couch, to throw off would-be assassins. His home, featuring a bronze statue of Jay on the porch, is set amidst a private menagerie, a helicopter landing pad, and an artificial lake. After years of running unsuccessfully for public office, Jay managed to get himself elected to city council, so the whole city can realize just what a flake he really is.

Murder cases were often the most interesting, of course. Our district attorney, Steve Simmons, wanted to bring a case against Henry Lee Lucas, the one-eyed drifter who confessed to hundreds of killings across the nation and later recanted. Lucas had come to El Paso to confess to the rape-murder of an elderly woman in the Lower Valley. Steve felt he could get an ironclad conviction – which wouldn't hurt his political aspirations – and subsequently the county spent a small fortune preparing the case. Unfortunately, little discrepancies began to plague the case, such as eyewitnesses who placed Lucas on the other side of Texas on the night of the crime. Blood and semen samples recovered from the victim failed to match Lucas's type. It also developed that the investigating officer was a nephew of the deceased, a clear violation of police department policy, especially since several other relatives were suspects. The Juarez police said the family gardener had admitted to the crime; the officer in charge on our side of the bridge discounted the confession, saying he saw it extracted with a cattle prod. A disgusted county judge finally threw out the case.

Simmons put on quite a show in another case, where he was questioning the father of a murder victim. He wanted the father to re-enact the discovery of the son's body, so he took on the part of the corpse.

"Now, how was he lying when you found him?"

"Uh, face down."

"Okay. Now, when you came upon his body, what did you do?"

"I ran my hands through his scalp, looking for wounds."

"Well, go on, then."

Mostly, our job consisted of running down the corridors, chasing camera-shy suspects in order to get some video for the evening newscast. At the trial I just mentioned, I asked my cameraman if he got any shots of the father entering or leaving the courtroom.

"No," he said, "but it's okay – I shot some pictures of him through the window in the door."

Naturally, I was aghast, as shooting in this particular courtroom was verboten. I thought we'd get away with it, though, until we got onto the same elevator with the judge hearing the case. Looking at no one in particular, he opined that anyone caught taking pictures of his courtroom would see his ass in stir.

As a rule, federal court didn't lend itself to theatrics; most of the cases involved drug runners apprehended at the border. U.S. Attorney Michael McDonald distinguished himself in one case, however, beginning his summation by casting a baleful eye over the defendant and declaring, "There is *evil* in this courtroom today."

I ran into Mike one night at my favorite watering hole, where he and his staff were entertaining some colleagues from Midland who were in town on a change of venue. They were also entertaining my friend Jean-Marie, who was perched atop Mike's lap.

"Richard," she inquired, "do you know who these guys are?"

"These gentlemen are prosecutors from the U.S. Attorney's office," I answered.

She threw me an exasperated look. "They told me they were gynecologists in town for a convention!"

Later, Steve Fisher, a defense attorney we know, stopped by our table. Steve was all irate that his client, an Army nurse, had just been convicted on a drug charge, while he was convinced of her innocence.

"She didn't do anything, and she's getting five years! I've defended burglars and rapists and murderers and gotten them off – and they were guilty!"

Jean-Marie turned to me and confided, "Only Steve's innocent clients go to jail."

My favorite courtroom performance came in a manslaughter case involving a drunken driver who ran into a girl on a bicycle. The prosecutor, Bill Moody, contended the defendant was driving 80 miles an hour in a residential zone. The defense's expert witness, called upon to determine the defendant's speed by examining the crime scene, was with Sandia National Laboratories. His experience consisted of crashing trucks and freight cars into cement walls, to see what impacts could be withstood by vehicles carrying radioactive materials.

At one point, the defense attorney asked his expert what could be concluded about the speed of the car judging by the distance the victim's body was thrown. Moody promptly objected, on the grounds the witness lacked sufficient expertise.

"Your Honor," the defense countered, "this witness has over fifteen years' experience judging the impact of vehicles into objects."

Moody stared at him in disbelief.

"Into *human bodies*!?"

The judge allowed as, yeah, he'd have to sustain that one.

Bill Moody is a judge himself now. As for me, I got transferred off of the courthouse beat onto a desk job,



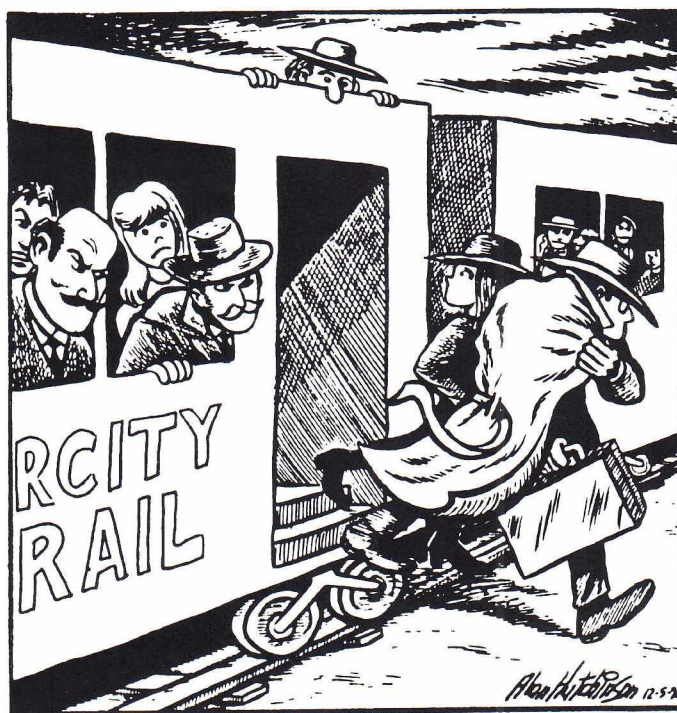
when our weekend assignments editor developed ulcers. The weekend desk is a prime location for burnout, which is precisely what happened to me after a couple of years at it. As glamorous as the news business must seem to you, I found the allure didn't necessarily compensate for the pressures, and after working my way up to weekend producer, I quit for greener pastures. (Didn't join any monasteries, though.)

Not that I don't keep up with the courts still. You never know what's going to come up – such as the case of actress Tracy Scoggins, in town to host the Miss U.S.A. Pageant, who was assailed by a would-be rapist at her hotel. The culprit was taken to night court, where he gave the magistrate a fake name, address, and place of employment. After this was discovered, it also came out that the public defender was an old buddy of his – and the magistrate on duty was the defender's law partner.

After this display of our legal system in action, an embittered Tracy Scoggins held a press conference to explain that she wasn't going to bother coming to El Paso to testify – which forced the prosecutor to drop charges. She was, however, suing the city and the Pageant for \$14 million, claiming her assailant singled her out because the Pageant had given her a car with the Miss U.S.A. logo on the side.

As long as he isn't being prosecuted, her alleged attacker is countersuing her for defaming his good name. Like I said, I still enjoy following the courts; I'm just glad it's not my job to make sense of them anymore.

Mimosa 9, when it appeared in December 1990, was proof that we survived our European Worldcon adventure. The lead article was our seven-page trip report titled "Across Europe on Rail and Plastic," a reference to the number of train rides we had during the trip (as you can tell from the illustration to the right) and how we paid most of our expenses. Our week after the convention took us from The Hague first to Brussels, then briefly to Vienna, then to Prague (just nine months after the Velvet Revolution of 1989), and then to Berlin before returning to Amsterdam for the flight home. Many other fans who went over to The Hague and Confiction did the same sort of thing – visiting places like Germany, Denmark, Spain, France, and Italy – and it was fascinating in the months following the convention to hear about their adventures. At any rate, *Mimosa 9* also featured a new 'Serious Scientific Speech' by Bob Shaw (one that he gave at Confiction, in fact), and another worldcon-related article by Dave Kyle, this time about the 1956 New York Worldcon and an incident at its banquet that was the origin of the familiar fannish catchphrase, "Dave Kyle says you can't sit here."

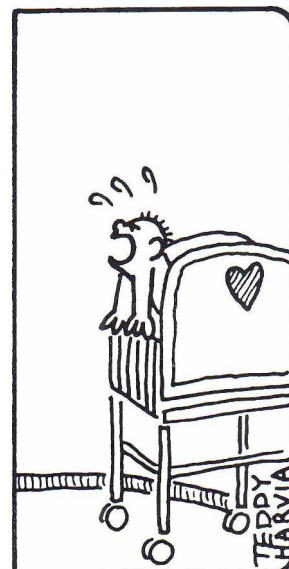


The only non-worldcon related article in the issue perhaps wasn't even an article at all – it was a collection of different forms of verse by Australian fan Dave Luckett about the antics of his (then) young son, Evan. And now, nearly twelve years later, Dave provides us this update: "It might be of interest to relate that Evan at 15 years of age is now 6' 2", built along the lines of a brick shipyard, and has just spent a week on the State Training Vessel 'Leuwin', a 600 tonne barquentine – square rig on the fore, main gaff, lovely thing – and is a suitable person for playing lock forward for the State Rugby under-17s. That would be something like the same as being selected as nose tackle for the All-state High School Football Team for a pretty decent U.S. state. Suffice it to say that I do not argue with him unless the matter is serious." Such is the passage of time.



Prose Is the Wine; Poetry the Whiner

by Dave Luckett



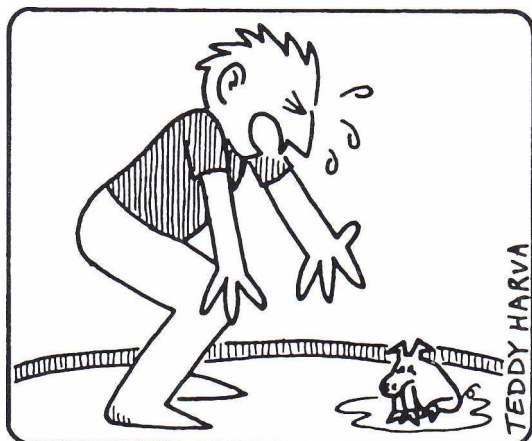
What a hospitable soul a baby is! Always happy to see you, always sorry when you go, even to the extent of loud lamentations. *Very* loud lamentations. Even at four in the morning. *Especially* at four in the morning, dammit.

The long watches of the night are said to be ideal for composing the soul to philosophical contemplation, or to poetry. Certainly the current circumstances make it unlikely that the soul can be composed to sleep. Why, he's only just getting into his full stride now, and hardly rattling the windows at all yet. I suppose, though, that I could have a go at some poetry. Philosophy is a little beyond me, I'm afraid, as well as being out of my line. And beyond philosophy (some would say, within it) lies madness. Though madness, to be sure, begins to look deuced attractive, some of these nights.

Verses, now. I should start with something simple.

A cleriheh, perhaps:

Evan John Luckett Beasley
As I'll admit, uneasyly,
Is plagued with looseness of the bowels.
He also Howels.



or a limerick:

The soldiers were greatly admirin'
Evan's voice, though it drowned out the firin'
"Just imagine!" they said.
"He could waken the dead
"From an air-raid, *and* act as the siren!"

Um. Not quite what I had in mind. Perhaps something subtle and oriental, like a haiku:

Evan sits, grunting.
Does he regress to piglet,
Or fertilise floor?

About as subtle as a brick enema, as my old mate Ian Nichols says. Well, a villanelle is supposed to be delicate and frenchified:

Just when you'd think he'd have to quit –
Your wise precautions seem quite sound –

He thinks of ways to manage it,
To fit where nothing else could fit
And pull the curtains to the ground,

Just when you'd think he'd have to quit.
You put him on the ground to sit
A moment – then he can't be found.

He thinks of ways to manage it.
The crash of glass! Another's hit!

He's teleporting, I'll be bound.

Just when you'd think he'd have to quit,
Could never reach the notes you've writ
You'll find them shredded, wadded, ground –

He thinks of ways to manage it.
And when you think, "That must be it;
"The day's foul nappies form a mound!"

Just when you'd think he'd have to quit,
He thinks of ways to manage it.

Hmm. I'd say that that particular piece is to delicacy as Attila the Hun is to court etiquette.

Have you ever noticed that the things you write seem to take on a disgusting life of their own, a Frankenstein's creation starting up from the table, to the horror of the helpless progenitor? I really didn't mean to allude to the more revolting aspects of infant care in that one, but it somehow slipped out, like (as my old mate Nichols says, again) a – no, I don't think I'd better say what my old mate Nichols says it slipped out like. You get the general idea. But what observation applies most especially to the stricter form verse that I prefer to write – which I write only, I hasten to add, out of sheer perversity and a mulish intolerance of what everyone else has been doing for the last century or so.

Nevertheless, I'll stick with it, but try for something a little more stately. Formal. Like a ballade:

The Ballade of Infant Moisture

In changing of his nappy, yesterday,
I mustn't have been watching what I'd done,
Or, more specifically, observed the way
His little pistol pointed. I'd have run,
But had no time or hope. I had but one
Swift, frozen moment, standing with teeth clenched
While staring down the barrel of the gun –
That was the way we both were slightly drenched.

And later, on my knees he liked to play
And bounce about, and writhe and bend. At one,
Just after he had had his *dejeuner*
(And half my modest meal of tea and bun)
Right in the middle of a bounce, my son
A tribute from his inmost corpus wrenched.
'Twas warm, from near the heart (a dreadful pun).
That was the way we both were slightly drenched.

His bathtime – happy closure of the day
A time of joy, and merriment, and fun.
It's not surprising that he'd wish to stay,
And make that time continue, once begun.
I sympathise with his desire to shun
The biting air, when warmly, well-entrenched –

I have to confess that I did that deliberately. It was mainly an experiment, to see if I could emulate one of the most remarkable feats of Hillaire Belloc (a poet I greatly admire, though much neglected now), and write light verse in so strict a form as that. But for my next trick, I'll try a rondeau:

But still, I wish he hadn't kicked and spun,
That was the way we both were slightly drenched.

Envoi

Prince, when holding him, as you do now, there's none
So eager that their ardour is not quenched
By varied means. Oh, dear! What has he done?
That was the way we both were slightly drenched.



He will not stop. He has two speeds, flat out
And sleeping, moving even then, to flout
The laws of physics, for he should not be
Perpetually moving. Verily
He will not stop.

He eats just like a little bird – about
Three times his weight, in food a day. No doubt

His intake slows, at times, but normally
He will not stop.

He's growing, too, in every way, without
A pause. Stronger, surer, up and out,
Forever further on. A day there'll be
When, joyful, he will run ahead, with me
Behind, and labouring. Then, "Stop!" I'll shout.
He will not stop.

Oh well, if you're going to go all serious on me, have a sonnet instead:

There's nothing reasonable about this fate:
A dancing bear attending on this – what?
This scrap of self-directed flesh, this clot
Of raw desire and shapeless will in spate.
How can I know what processes dictate
The things he wants, the things that he does not,
When he himself knows less, nor cares a jot
Who lives in that eternal-present state?

A section through eternity, indeed –
The ardent moment's set and frozen, still
As time is, in the mind of God. The need
Of that unending now, is law until
The galaxies are burned away and dead –
Or one hair turns upon his haloed head.

or, if the insanity of writing this strict-form verse has finally burst all bounds, there remains the nastiest one of all, the triolet:

Imperative, that music in the bone
A life to life must call. Unending
Sounds the call, the echoes blending.
Imperative, that music. In the bone,

The deepest core, that need is sending
Summonses to me that I must own
Imperative. That music in the bone
A life to life must call, unending.

Nope. It's no good. He's awake again. So, for that matter, am I. And the dawn, if not coming out of China, looks a lot like thunder. So, for that matter, do I.

There was a broad range of readers comments about Dave's article, ranging from indifference (with a request for a "baby alert" should we try something like that again) to amusement to outright awe at Dave's ability to construct word paintings of his son in so many different forms of verse. As an example of the latter, David Bratman wrote that "I almost caught myself thinking that it's a shame someone who can write like that has to spend time caring for infants, but then I realized that he has to; otherwise, what would he use for inspiration?"

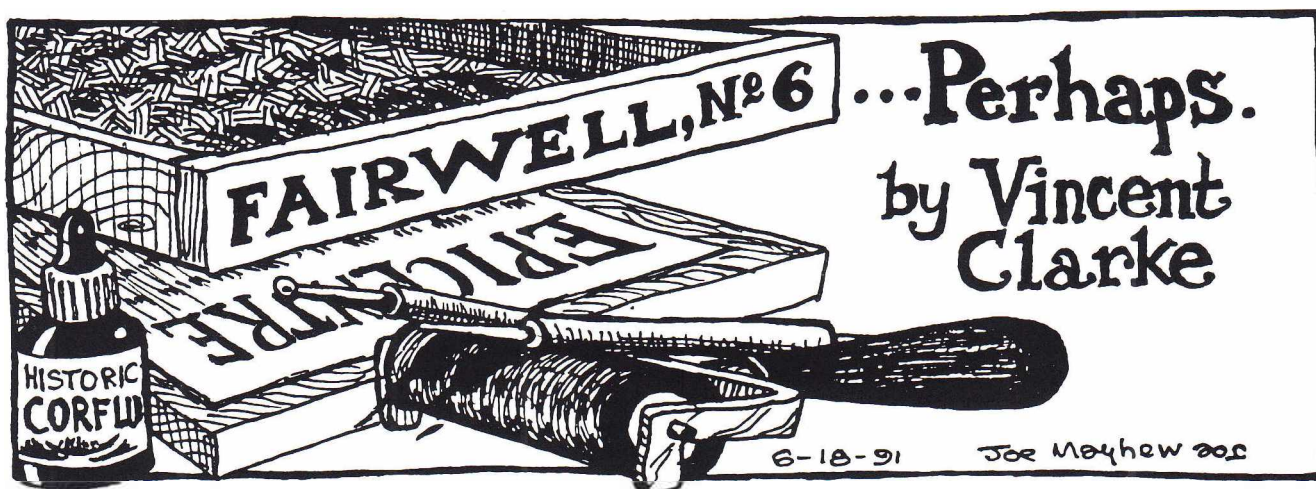
The next issue, *Mimosa* 10, appeared in July 1991, just two months before the Chicago worldcon and two months after we'd been informed of the fanzine's nomination for a Hugo Award. We took that to mean we must be doing something right. Contents included articles, by Joe Celko and Lester Boutillier, about some of Southern Fandom's more unconventional characters and notorious incidents, a group discussion with Lynn Hickman, Roger Sims and Howard Devore about some of Midwest Fandom's more unconventional characters and notorious incidents (including the Room 770 party), Dave Kyle's remembrances about "Sex in Fandom," and the return of a furry beast last seen in *Mimosa* 7.

One other article we were happy to publish in *M10* was a remembrance of 1950's British fandom by Vincent Clarke:

CHAT, THE 4TH FANNISH GHOD

By TEDDY HARVIA





Duplicate, duplicate, toil and trouble,
 The drum won't turn and the ink won't bubble,
 The self-feed's shot and the gears are worn,
 And that jagged line means the stencil's torn....

And so on. That was the start of a poem of mine that Walt Willis printed in *Hyphen* 1 in May '52, heading it "Aghast Editorial." The bit about the bubble was pure (or perhaps impure) poetic license, but those lines and the catalogue of misfortunes that followed were a more-or-less accurate statement of the facts. In those days to be a duplicator owner meant you trod a narrow and inky path between optimism and insanity.

As it happened, when I became a publishing fan I entirely skipped the primitive jelly hektograph. No purple fingers for me. I was elected editor and publisher of a club fanzine in 1948, innocent that I was, and given – by someone whose name has been expunged from my memory – an Edison Diaphragm Mimeograph, commonly known as a Flatbed Duplicator.

Have you ever seen one in action? It's very similar to a simple silkscreen printer. There's a base with a frame hinged to it, and a silkscreen stretched across the frame. You attach a stencil to the screen, put a sheet of paper on the base, close the screen down onto it, get a roller which you've previously coated with ink, roll it across the screen and, hopefully, an even spread of ink will penetrate the stencil onto the paper.

Then you lift the frame, detach the paper, put another sheet in its place, close the screen down, re-ink the roller, run it across the screen, lift up the screen... A fast operator can probably do one every half-minute, not counting the intervals when you straighten up and scream about your aching back.

There was only one small advantage. The whole caboodle could be carried in a wooden box measuring 20" x 13" x 5" (not counting a couple of reams of paper), so it was quite possible to transport it to a small meeting of suckers fellow fans and have some communal help. And of course you were inspired by the fact that most of the early British fanzines were printed in exactly the same way. Oh pioneers!

I still had the flatbed when I moved into an apartment with Ken Bulmer, which I named "The Epicentre" – I had intended this to mean that it would be the Centre of Things Happening in Brit Fandom, though Willis later rather hurtfully described it as the dead centre. The Epicentre would have been a somewhat eccentric habitation even if fans hadn't been living there and covering every flat surface with sf magazines and fanzines. It was an old Victorian block, which stretched down one side of the road. The other side was occupied by a large brick wall. On the other side of the wall, which we could quite easily see over from our top floor, was a coal yard. This was where trains deposited coal from mysterious far-off places, to be picked up later by contractor's trucks.

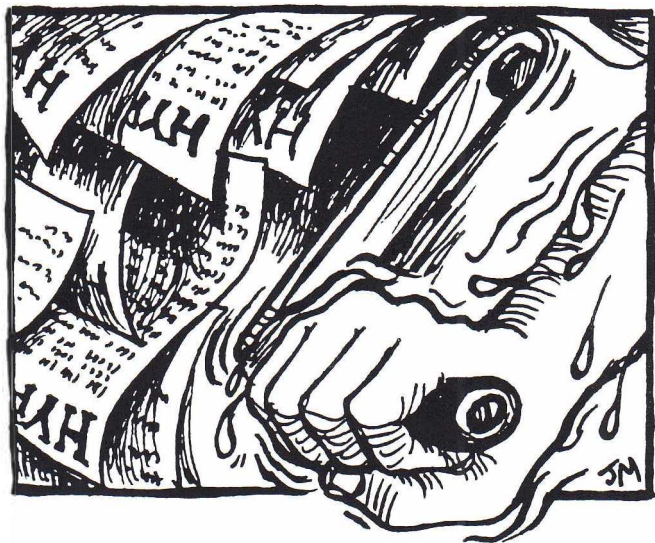
Day and night, soft winds deposited coal dust against the house and, if we'd opened the windows even an inch, inside it as well, so we rarely did so. The atmosphere was pretty distinctive – cooking smells and mimeo ink and Ken's pipe tobacco and yellowing pulp magazine pages.

Ken was only a year older than I, but he'd been an active fan in the early part of the War and I think the

experience had aged him – he always assumed (and still does) a sort of fatherly attitude towards me. There was the pipe too, of course. He obviously viewed the straining and sweating over the flatbed, and probably the depositing of freshly inked sheets over every available surface, with some distaste. When he was out one day, he spotted a rotary duplicator in a second-hand-goods store and bought it. Neither of us could have afforded a new one. It was a hefty piece of machinery and Ken always thought it peculiarly fannish that during the last few hundred yards of walking he was helped by a one-armed man.

This new technological marvel was my pride and joy. There were no instructions with it, of course, and I spent many an inky-fingered hour learning how the thing worked. It was a Gestetner No.6, which I discovered in an office machine handbook many years later was brand new in 1917, but history didn't concern me with the mighty mechanism standing on the kitchen table before me. Two drums with silkscreen wound around them, a wooden platform holding about 100 sheets of paper which you cranked up by hand every few copies (no automatic gearing), an opening to which you took a tube of ink and spread some of its contents onto one of the drums (no automatic inking)... I didn't realize how much was missing, just reveled in being able to turn the handle (three times) and produce a duplicated sheet (it was manually operated).

There were a few snags, of course. The ink flow was a bit sluggish. It really needed a warm atmosphere to spread easily, and after an attempt or two to thin it out by mixing oil with the ink – it went on OK but penetrated to the back of the paper in two seconds – we realised that we'd just have to heat the surroundings. This was easy enough. There was no central heating, but we had a gas oven in the kitchen. That summer we turned on the oven, raised the temperature to about 90° Fahrenheit, took off our shirts and turned



the handle. It seemed to work, except for the odd drops of sweat on the paper, and that soon evaporated. Visiting fans would take their cold drinks into another room and discuss fanning, shouting out at intervals to ask if we were OK. We kept the door closed to keep the heat in, of course.

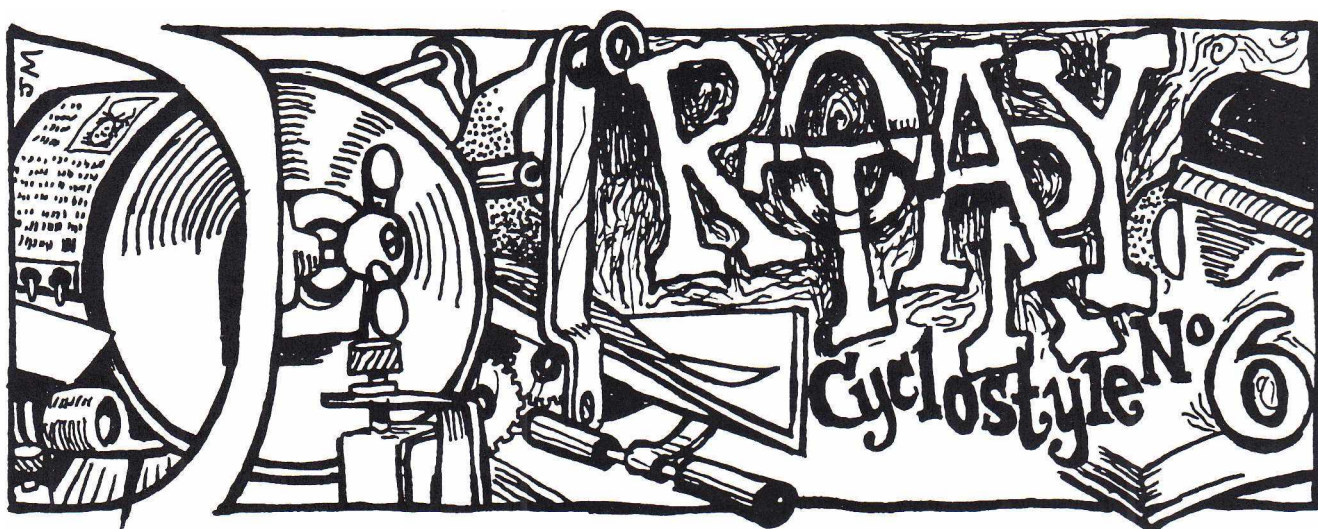
In the winter, things became awkward. The duplicator was on the table by the coal dust-darkened window, and on the side nearest the window the duplicating became faint. Bringing my knowledge of Science to bear – for I was an SF fan, wasn't I? – I deduced that on the window side the ink was cooled, and so didn't penetrate the stencil sufficiently. We turned up the oven. The kitchen shimmered in heat waves. Once when I opened the door onto the cold landing outside, clouds condensed around me. And No.6 still didn't work properly, in spite of imaginative cursing.

By the next summer, I further deduced that the impression-roller spring which pressed the paper against the stencil on that side was weak. I inserted two or three washers and the problem vanished. We turned the oven down to 90 degrees again and went back to standard cursing.

We learnt how to treat duplicating paper cruelly, flexing it and beating sheets against a flat surface so the guillotined edges wouldn't stick together. We learnt the best solvents for ink under the fingernails and on clothes. When Chuch Harris accidentally dropped a tea cup on the duplicator, we picked out the chips and repaired the gouged drums with Plaster of Paris.

No.6 repaid us. It turned out Convention programmes and Epicentre fanzines and other people's fanzines and even a couple of pages of the Willis *Slant* when his hand printing machine broke. I became quite fond of it.

It moved with me when the Epicentre broke up (literally – the ceiling started falling down) and turned out the first Quote Cards (a minor fannish obsession for some years) and the details of OMPA, the first British APA, and lots more. I even started a two-part fanzine called *Duplicating Without Tears*, the first part about stencil-cutting, the second about machines available. I never did get around to the latter – it was beginning to



dawn on me that No.6 was a little old-fashioned.

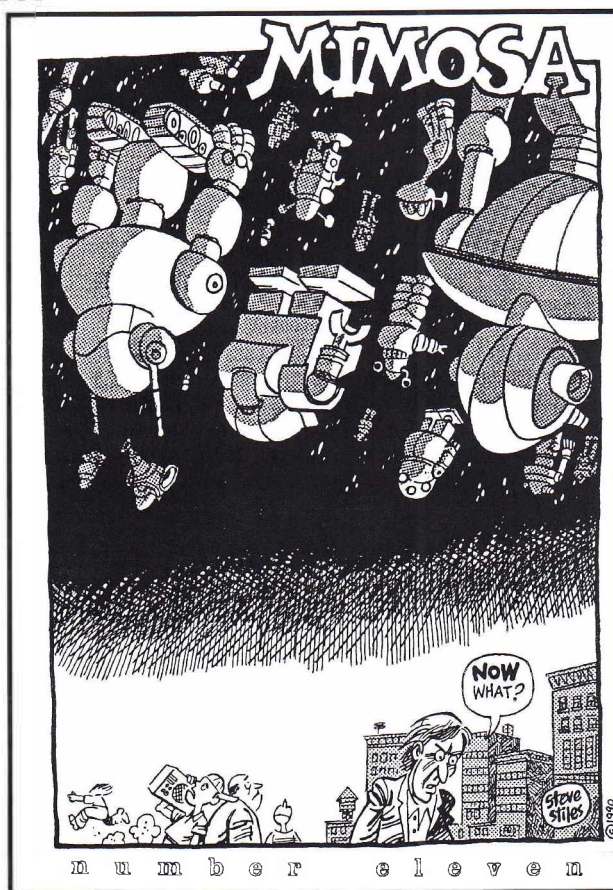
It was more or less pensioned off in the late '50s, when I acquired a later model, but it wasn't junked. In 1984 or so, Terry Hill wanted coloured illustrations for his fanzine *Microwave* and good old No.6 churned out green pictures on pages already duplicated in black. But the years had taken their toll. Last time I looked at it, the rubber impression roller was soft and spongy – 'perished'. I could, at some expense, have the roller re-cast, but now *I'm* beginning to feel my age slightly – I'm six months older than Harry Warner – and I can't honestly feel that it's worth it. Possible, at approx. 74 years old, it's time No.6 was given to the garbage man.

But I think I'll keep it a few more years – just in case.

And so it was on to *Mimosa* 11, which appeared at the end of 1991. That issue completed a full decade of existence for *Mimosa*, and so Steve Stiles' cover for the new issue, featuring a character who wonders "Now What?" pretty much reflected our own thoughts.

Our opening comments to the issue described two conventions (about as diametrically opposed as you can get) that we'd attended in the last half of the year – the Chicago Worldcon and the Ditto fanzine fans' convention. But yet, each of these conventions represented, in their own way, the fanzine that *Mimosa* had evolved into. Chicon V was a very international convention, with attendees from many different countries, while the Ditto convention was much more interested in looking back onto fandom's past eras. Both of these themes were represented in *Mimosa* 11, with articles from Australia, continental Europe, and the United Kingdom, with another article set in southeast Asia, and also articles that looked back to the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s.

The most remarkable article in the issue was Bruno Ogorelec's "Operation Dessert Storm," which was written during the first Balkans war in the early 1990s. In a letter accompanying his article, Bruno wrote that "I enjoy writing, but it's difficult to work up the elan with tanks rumbling around your house." Bruno did survive the war, though is no longer doing any fan activities. We are still cheered by the writing he did in his short stay in fandom.





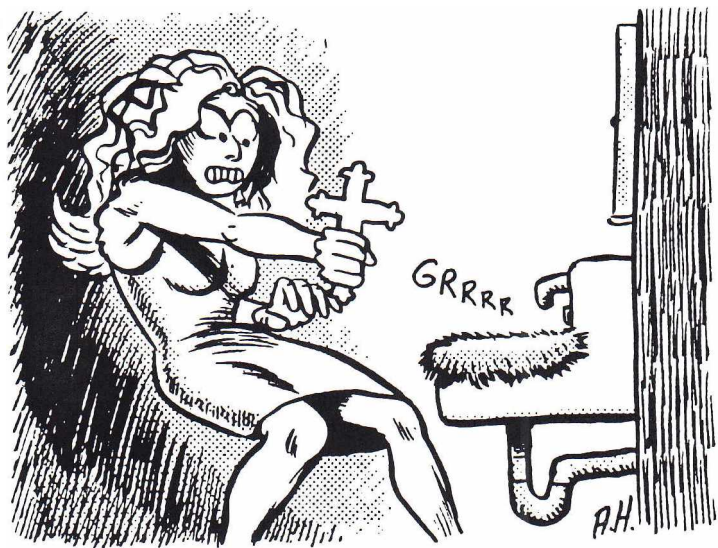
I left home at a rather late age, having to endure the usual parental pestering and recriminations till I was almost 25. The standard of living in this country means that housing is both scarcer than in the U.S. and much more expensive. It's next to impossible for a young person to accumulate enough money to strike out on his/her own. I was lucky to have a friend offer me to move in with his younger brother. Their parents had died recently, he was contemplating a move to his girlfriend's place and hated to leave his kid brother alone in their amazingly large, cavernous apartment in a very old building downtown. Needless to say, I accepted the offer with the speed of greased lightning.

It was a godsend, not only providing the long-awaited opportunity to try fashioning my life in my own way, but also promising a revival of my sex life which – due to an almost total lack of someplace private – had become rather dormant. Fashion my new life I did; it took quite a different tack then, more different in some ways but much more satisfying in others. As for the promise of a sex revival, well, it didn't work out quite as easily as I had hoped it would.

This young man I moved in with was a bit of a slob. I hate to admit it, but I soon turned into one myself, probably in reaction to the years of unrelenting home discipline. Neither of us would lift a finger in the interest of tidiness, and the place soon turned to seed. It acquired a uniform grey coating of fine dust, deep and velvet-like in appearance. The smooth surface was broken only by the narrow footpaths leading from the apartment door to the beds and connecting the beds with the kitchen, bathrooms and toilet.

Quite a few girls, oh, all right, *all* girls were a bit put off by the ambience. Luckily in those days we were both attractive enough in body and character to make some girls overcome the aversion and/or dust allergy. Having successfully passed that first hurdle, such hardy types would then be confronted with *real* challenges.

Branko, my apartment mate, and I were both bearded but kept our beards short. The trimming was done over the washbasin in the bathroom and, as we never washed the basin itself, a sediment of short, curly snippets accumulated there, adhering to the sticky surface, until the washbasin resembled a hairy ape hanging out from the wall fixtures. It would scare the bejassus out of girl visitors trying the bathroom for the first time. One of them reported it growled at her when she'd tried the hot water tap. Not that we believed her, of course, but still, it was kind of reassuring that the thing was firmly bolted to the wall. Good old-fashioned pre-war engineering, not the modern cardboard-stucco-and-parcel-string housing project crap.



As Sigourney Weaver has shown us so ably, an adaptable girl can learn to live with a hairy ape, and some of our girls did. You beat your chest with clenched fists once in a while and you're OK, apparently. (Wonder what Dolly Parton would make of that?)

Branko's aunt Ettie, however, was a much more serious threat. Her actual name was Erzsebet (Hungarian for Elizabeth) and she was as bad as her name sounded. Over the spring, summer, and fall she lived in a seaside house on the Adriatic coast, but over the winter she'd simply move in with us and take over the kitchen. She didn't cook for us – Branko, who knew her well, wouldn't touch her cooking and I prudently took his hint – no, she *lived* in the kitchen. There were some other rooms in the apartment, but they were filled with clutter to such an extent that they were uninhabitable. The fans familiar with Harry Warner's story of "The House on Summit Avenue" will know what I mean. So, the kitchen it was.

The problem with such an arrangement was that we often needed the stuff from the kitchen. Our fridge was there, for one thing, taking good care of the staples: beer, cheese, frankfurters, and Dr. Oettker's Chocolate-and-Vanilla Pudding. That's what we lived off in those days. With Erzsebet in the kitchen, a trip to the fridge was not a thing we looked forward to.

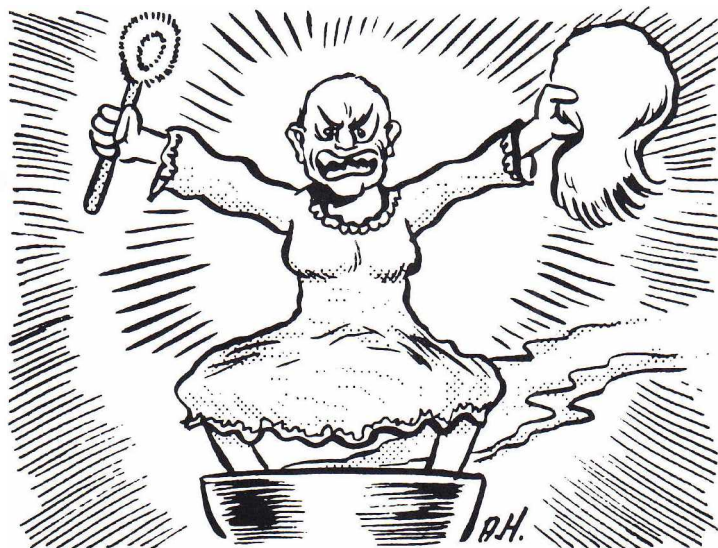
Old Ettie was a... er, a lady who had spent all her allotted lifespan of three score and ten years learning the art of the disapproving stare. Her normal life over and her skill honed to perfection, she then lived for another half-dozen years on borrowed time, putting what she'd learned into practice.

Ah, the sheer expressive *range* that that woman's stare had! If you can imagine the late Sir Ralph Richardson in drag, boiling inside with resentment, yes, that would be the close approximation of Branko's remarkable aunt.

By day, we took turns for the forays into the kitchen, and by night, we tried to do without. The wisdom of such policy was amply proved one chilly evening when a girl I was rather piqued at (she had come as *my* guest but immediately took a liking for Branko, and started emitting various coded and not-so-very-much-coded signals at him) expressed a desire for some of our Beaujolais, to get warmed up inside. (At this stage in our narrative, I trust it will not surprise you that the wine was not actually Beaujolais. The bottles and labels were genuine enough but the wine was God knows what; the point was that it worked.)

Anyway, the girl wanted wine and I wanted to get even. Without stopping to think, I told her to go help herself from the fridge. "Yeah, why don't you bring a bottle for us all?" chipped in Branko's girlfriend with a malevolent gleam in her eyes. Obviously, I wasn't the only one who saw the signs flashing. Branko looked somewhat alarmed but said nothing. The words were still hanging in the air when I felt the first twinge of conscience, but by then it was too late. The poor girl went into the hall and opened the kitchen door. We had neglected to tell her to knock.

There was a double scream, and in a split second we were all there to witness a curious spectacle: Erzsebet the Terrible, wearing an ancient lacy *peignoir*, was in the middle of the kitchen, standing ankle-deep in a shallow tin tub full of hot water. Steam was curling around her bony legs like the dry ice smoke at a rock concert, while she waved her hands around in impotent fury, a big hair brush in one hand and an elaborate wig in the other. Without her head covering she looked as bald as Kojak and twice as dangerous. The rest of the night does not bear describing.



The one and only useful thing in life that that woman did was getting rid of the kitchen growth. Her arrival at the beginning of winter sounded the death knell to the refrigerator fungus. Or was it mold? Lichen? Can't

be sure; botanics has never been my strong suit. Whatever it was, she attacked it with a potent-smelling cleaning liquid and a Brillo pad, and wiped it out in a single afternoon. Throughout the winter, the fridge gleamed antiseptically.

Even after Erzsebet was gone the fungus was reluctant to return. The white fluffy down didn't spread over the Mozzarella before May, and we were well into June when the first thin strands of green appeared in the salad drawer. Branko and I watched it grow with mixed feelings. The plant was a household fixture we had come to know well, and its reappearance signaled a return of normalcy into our lives. On the other hand, before aunt Ettie razed it to the ground, it had grown to unmanageable proportions. It was good to get rid of it for a while.

We debated the need to control it for most of the summer while it grew and developed and asserted itself over larger and larger portions of the refrigerator. In August we finally gave up. After all, it seemed to be pretty harmless and much less scary than the apelike washbasin. It didn't growl and it never actually bit anyone.

Branko did comment once that we were curiously free of insects, bar a few spiders and house flies. He had the idea that the fridge flora might have been responsible, but I doubted it. From what I could remember of my high school biology classes, the carnivorous plants liked it hot while our box of green tricks was still close to zero, dutifully cooling the beer and murmuring to itself occasionally.

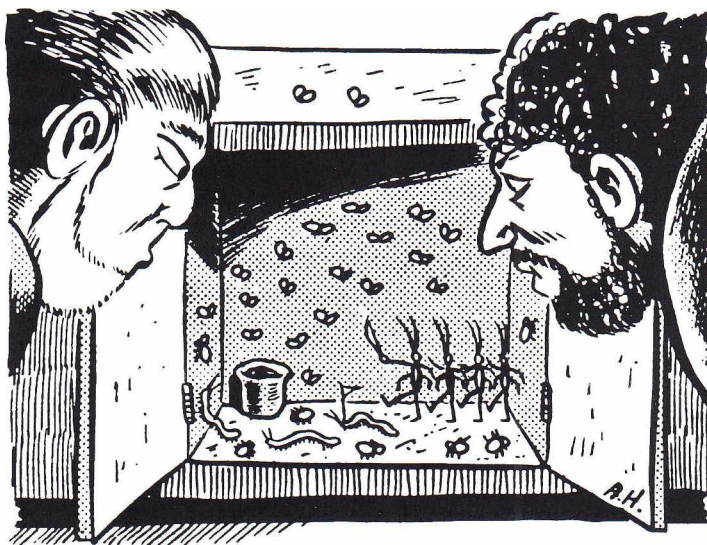
Branko's theory was soon put to test and disproved in a dramatic fashion. A curious and very unpleasant smell was beginning to be felt in the kitchen in those days. Over a couple of weeks, it gradually increased in intensity, finally reaching epic proportions, a true acme of household fetidity. At about that time the bugs started to appear, isolated at first, then in twos and threes, and finally in droves. Very unpleasant. It had all started to interfere with our sex lives again, just as we repaired the damage aunt Ettie had wrought. The girls simply refused to enter the reeking, bug-infested place.

Branko had put his hope in our fungus, but the plant failed him utterly. Instead of whooping ferociously at its prey and wreaking havoc among the insect hordes, it just stood there and watched noncommittally from the butter and cheese compartment. In the end, we had to do something ourselves. A thorough search of the kitchen nooks and crannies turned up an opened cup of (what used to be) Dr. Oettker's Chocolate-and-Vanilla Pudding with whipped cream, well hidden in the cupboard. Branko sheepishly admitted hiding it a few weeks previously and forgetting about it. He'd been loath to leave it in the fridge, afraid that the fungus would get at it.

By then the cupboard resembled a bug Worldcon. Dr. Oettker would have been proud of his product, as every insect known to inhabit Central and Southern Europe seemed to have gathered there, milling about purposefully. It was an illusion, naturally; the huge swarms feeding on vanilla were composed of perhaps four or five orders of *Tracheata* altogether. The invaders' strength lay in numbers, not diversity.

Coleoptera were out in force, of course, with the various *Staphylinidae*, *Silphidae*, and *Bruchidae* frantically busy over the last dregs of cream and chocolate. A few hundred *Blattaria* were the only representatives of *Dictyoptera* and all were of the mundane *Periplaneta orientalis* variety, a.k.a. the brown cockroach. Nothing remotely exotic, apart from sheer quantity.

The only surprise was the presence of several dozen *Forficula auricularia*, proudly crawling under *Dermaptera* banner. What they wanted was anyone's guess; they usually feed on rotten fruit, not pudding. Perhaps they were simply attracted by the commotion, the way crowds will gather at the site of a traffic accident.



Diptera made up the remainder of the insect forces. *Borboridae* (their cheese-loving *Piophilidae casei* in particular) found their natural habitat there, wallowing in the cream curdles with merry abandon, while their cousins *Muscidae*, homely flies, so drab among the shiny and scaly intruders, seemed much more reticent. They preferred to hover around, occasionally poking their hairy heads into the busy cupboard and quickly pulling back, as if resenting the whole business. Poor old *Fannia canicularis*, our regular tenant, looked downright annoyed by the bustle. So were we, baby, so were we.

Since the killer fungus proved to be a dud we contemplated chemical warfare for a while, Geneva convention or not, but it turned out to be unnecessary. Once the food source had been removed (with the proverbial ten-foot pole) the arthropodic ranks slowly dispersed and our normal fly and spider population went back to life as usual.

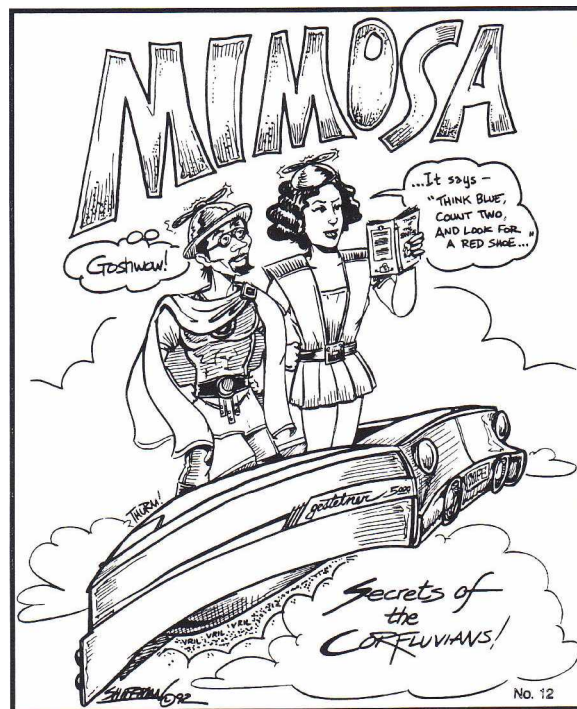
If our spiders looked relieved after the bug tide had ebbed, you can imagine our sentiments about it. Not to mention the girls'. Understandably shaken by the sexual ostracism the invasion of vanilla snatchers had brought upon us, we introduced strict apartheid and the crawlies were firmly kept in their place thereafter. Even so, several weeks of intense persuasion were to pass before the girls returned, nervously casting their glances around and sniffing the air with suspicion.

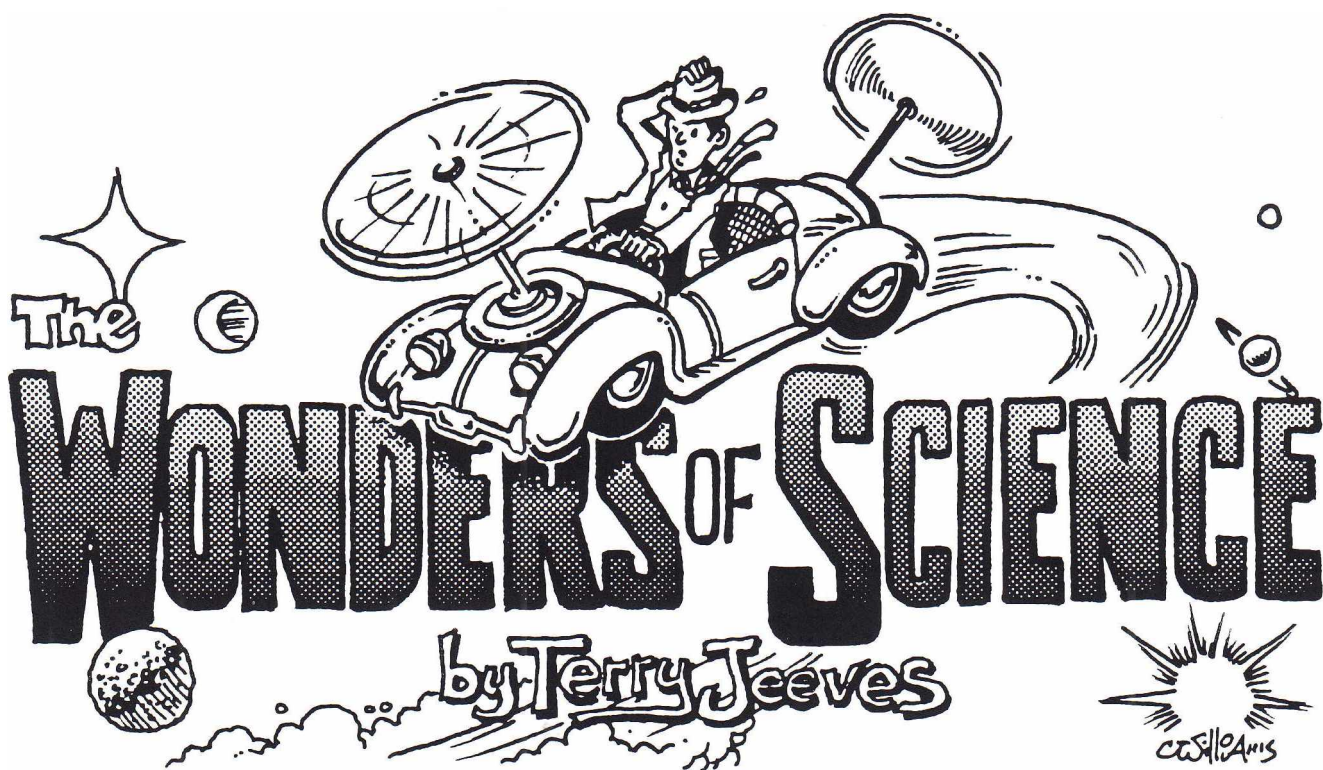
Ah, the complications of bachelorhood! Well, at least we were safe from burglars. Anyone unlucky enough to break into our apartment would certainly rue the day. How would *you* feel if somebody sicced Erzsebet or a hairy washbasin at you in the middle of the night?

 Bruno's article brought out a lot of apartment misadventure stories from our readers, of rodents and insects and cooking and disgusting stuff growing on things. (We're glad those days are long behind us!) There were also comments about the general excellence of Bruno's writing, including one from Vincent Clarke, who paid this compliment: "Bruno Ogorelec reminded me very much of the English John Berry's stuff in *Hyphen*, *Orion*, and other zines – some absurd facet of life parlayed by a vivid imagination into fannish art. Well, I suppose that holds for all humour, but it's peculiarly gratifying to read such stuff produced under such awful conditions."

At any rate, the first half of 1992 was a busy time for us. We were both involved in reevaluating our professional careers, which eventually resulted in Nicki going back to college for her Masters Degree while Rich had the first of his many job-related trips to Eastern Europe. But there were many fan events as well which also took us out of town, the longest of which was to the 1992 Corflu fanzine fans' convention in Los Angeles. It was epic and fun convention, as reported in our "Corflu Odyssey" opening comments to the issue, and left us in a good mood for the remainder of the year. It also perhaps inspired us to put together what might have been our best issue to date, with a remembrance of Isaac Asimov by Dave Kyle, a remembrance of the fannish year of 1954 by Walt Willis, a remembrance of the Vietnam War by David Thayer, plus articles by Richard Brandt, Sharon Farber, Vincent Clarke & Chuck Harris, Roger Sims, Ted White, and the following one by Terry Jeeves.

The theme of the issue was 'Past Influences', about how events from our past have influenced the way we are today. One of the biggest of these, of course, is the 'sense of wonder', characteristic of well-written science fiction, that made us readers of the stuff in the first place. From there, it was just a short step to attend a convention in hopes of meeting a favorite author, and before we could stop to catch our breath we were publishing a fanzine. But in other places and in much earlier times, such as pre-war Great Britain, fandom wasn't yet widespread enough to be easily discovered, but that original 'sense of wonder' influence still existed:





Among the earliest magazines to come my way, were copies of Gernsback's *Everyday Science and Mechanics*, which extolled the latest inventions be they real or products of Hugo's fevered brain.

There was also a speculations spot telling you just what to invent of you wanted to become a millionaire. One illustration for a money-maker showed a whole town going up in flames with just one house standing untouched amidst the inferno. It was coated with fireproof paint! Hugo pointed out such stuff didn't exist, but anyone inventing it could write their own check. Naturally, I had a bash, but I'm afraid my mixtures of water, dirt, old paint, salt, sugar, vinegar, and so on failed the trial 'houses' I made from cardboard boxes. I never did become a millionaire.

The January 1924 issue bore the headline, "\$12,000 IN GOLD OFFERED AS PRIZES!" but the small print inside, revealed that this was broken down over a year into twelve monthly installments of \$1,000 each. This sum was further subdivided into progressively smaller 'prizes' of \$100, \$50, and on down, for ideas, articles and photographs. All of which meant Hugo was simply filling his magazine for peanuts.

The cover illustration depicted a buxom female tootling merrily along on a bicycle which picked up its power from an underground cable. This was "soon to be tried in France," a typical Gernsbackian ploy whereby his more outrageous ideas were always being developed as far away as possible, usually in darkest Europe where none of his readers were likely to be spending the weekend.

Then there was a display of the winning ideas in a toy-designing competition. Believe it or not, but the first prize of \$5.00 (NOT \$12,000 in gold), was for a toy roundabout powered by cockroaches hidden in its base!

"Latest Patents" showed us what inventors had in store. This depicted a winged auto. It was claimed that this idea would not only reduce tyre ware, but allow the vehicle to leap over an oncoming car to avoid a head-on prang. I often wondered what would happen if two such cars met. Another bright idea was for a shoe-salesman's footstool equipped with a built-in air conditioner to waft away pongs from customer's feet.

Gernsback also proposed a 'loud hailer' to be mounted atop skyscrapers. Called 'The Municipal Announcer', it was to broadcast items of civic or national importance, along with details of robberies, accidents, or murder. All this fascinating information would be heard "up to five miles away." Presumably the people who were to live and work in these buildings would be recruited from the ranks of the stone deaf. Making matters

worse, Gernsback's design also called for aircraft landing platforms on the lower decks to add to the racket.

One device which foreshadowed today's Tachygraph, was a gadget "of German manufacture." Fastened to your car, it would immediately show if your chauffeur was taking illicit joy rides in your absence.

Even salvaging sunken ships was not beyond Hugo's inventiveness. This was to be done by constructing a giant floating refrigerator, moving it into place, then sinking it down to surround the wreck. Turn on the juice, freeze the derelict into a block of ice, and LO! Since ice floats on water, up would come the giant ice-cube bringing the wreck to the surface. Ah, the wonders of science.

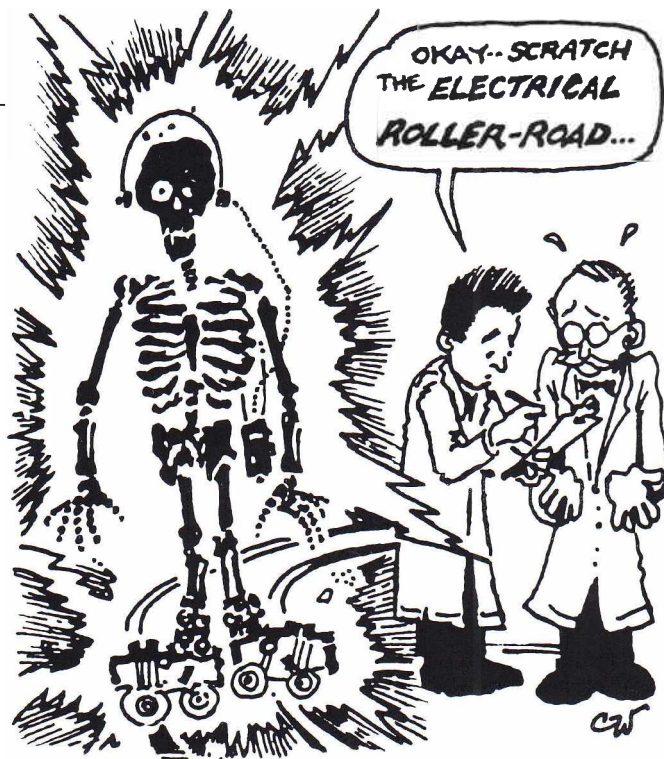
By the thirties, *Modern Mechanix* and *Mechanics Illustrated* were more sophisticated versions in the science and technology field. Covers still supplied the stimulus to buying them with such weird ideas as, "Uncle Sam's Flying Tank." We were also told to expect such wonders as... "A Mid-Ocean Aerodrome," "Hydrofoil Liners To Cross Atlantic At 100mph!" and "A Flying Car In Your Garage." Inside the mag, brief articles would waffle about the past history of such ideas (in fiction). Then came the usual phrase, "a German inventor has proposed..." I suspect whoever he proposed to must have turned him down.

Other fascinating articles would tell you how to build a hunting cabin in your back yard, turn an oil tank into a sunken swimming pool, or make a saxophone out of an old bicycle. Such ideas were way outside the experience and lifestyle of a 12-year-old. One tempting perennial was a soap-box car powered by an old washing machine motor. Washing machines hadn't penetrated to Sheffield in those days, let alone *old* ones. Our washing was done in a galvanized iron tub with the aid of a wooden plunger, scrubbing board and blue-bag. Hot water had to be heated over the kitchen fire.

If washing machines were unheard of, then "How To Service Your Refrigerator" dealt with artifacts from another planet. We kept our food cold on a stone slab down in the unlit cellar, alongside the sticks and coal. Despite such drawbacks, the magazines had enough interest to keep me coming back for more.

I read such tasty news items as, "British Police Try Out Speed King's Invention." This told of Sir Malcolm Campbell's plan to enable police cars to catch escaping bandits by means of a long steel pole fitted to the front of the police car. On the end was a grapnel. The police driver had to catch up to the bandit, his partner would manoeuvre the grapnel on to its back bumper, whereupon gentle braking would bring both vehicles to a halt. I don't know where the pole was stored when not in use, or what happened if the pursued vehicle braked suddenly. I fancy a lariat or king-sized butterfly net might work equally well...

Other wacky inventions were dreamed up by people who must have had Rube Goldberg in their family tree. One gadget resembled an overwide and elastic-less catapult. This held your corn-on-the-cob for easy eating. Another character designed a personal air-conditioning system for people walking around on hot days. Small bellows were built into the soles of his shoes. From there, rubber pipes led up inside his clothes to finish in his hat. The simple act of walking circulated cool air inside clothes and headgear. Even crazier was the hat resembling a Mexican sombrero. If rain started, the pulling of a rip-cord would release a rain-proof shroud from inside its brim. Under development was a fireproof version to protect anyone daft enough to be caught in an inferno. For those who went around falling off ships, bridges, or into rivers, there was an inflatable rubber undervest.



“Lathe Hints and Tips” illustrated weird devices designed to help readers wreak mayhem on innocent chunks of metal. I had never seen a lathe, router, drill-press, or other such esoteric machinery, but according to the magazines, ‘my shop’ was not complete without them. In my innocence I wondered what they were on about. The only shops I knew were the local ones selling beer by the jugful as well as cheese, food, paraffin, and firewood. Years later I learned that ‘shop’ meant ‘workshop.’ One lives and learns.

Despite such cultural barriers, I drooled over the magazines and taking my inspiration from the D.I.Y. projects, I made weirdly shaped ‘ashtrays’ with lethally sharp edges, by cutting bits of tinsplate from old cans. Then there was my crossbow, scaled down in size (and considerably down in power) from the plans for a full-size deer-hunting version. Unlike Britain, in the USA citizens are allowed to hunt, shoot, fish, or pop off lethal weaponry in all directions. My crossbow shot a six-inch balsa quarrel at least two feet. Not exactly suited to hunting wild caribou or even the cat next door, but I had made it myself.

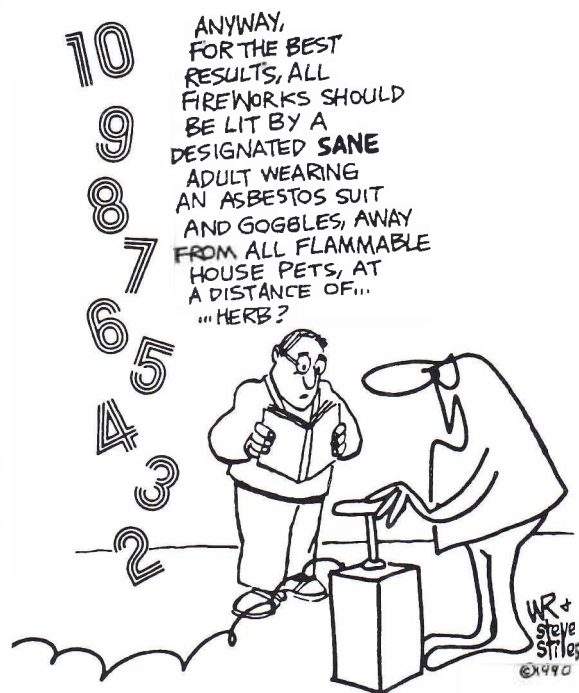
The magazines taught all sorts of strange things: re-wire your auto, re-time its ignition, or re-line its brakes. Not much use on my push-bike, I’m afraid. It was also considered *de rigueur* to convert your basement into a combined swimming pool, and recreation area, but it never explained what to do with the coal and firewood. I might have made a canoe out of the birchbark, but I couldn’t identify a birch even if I was whacked by one. On top of that, the local River Don oozed its turgid way between pollution-emitting breweries and steelworks, and wasn’t a good location for hunting trips.

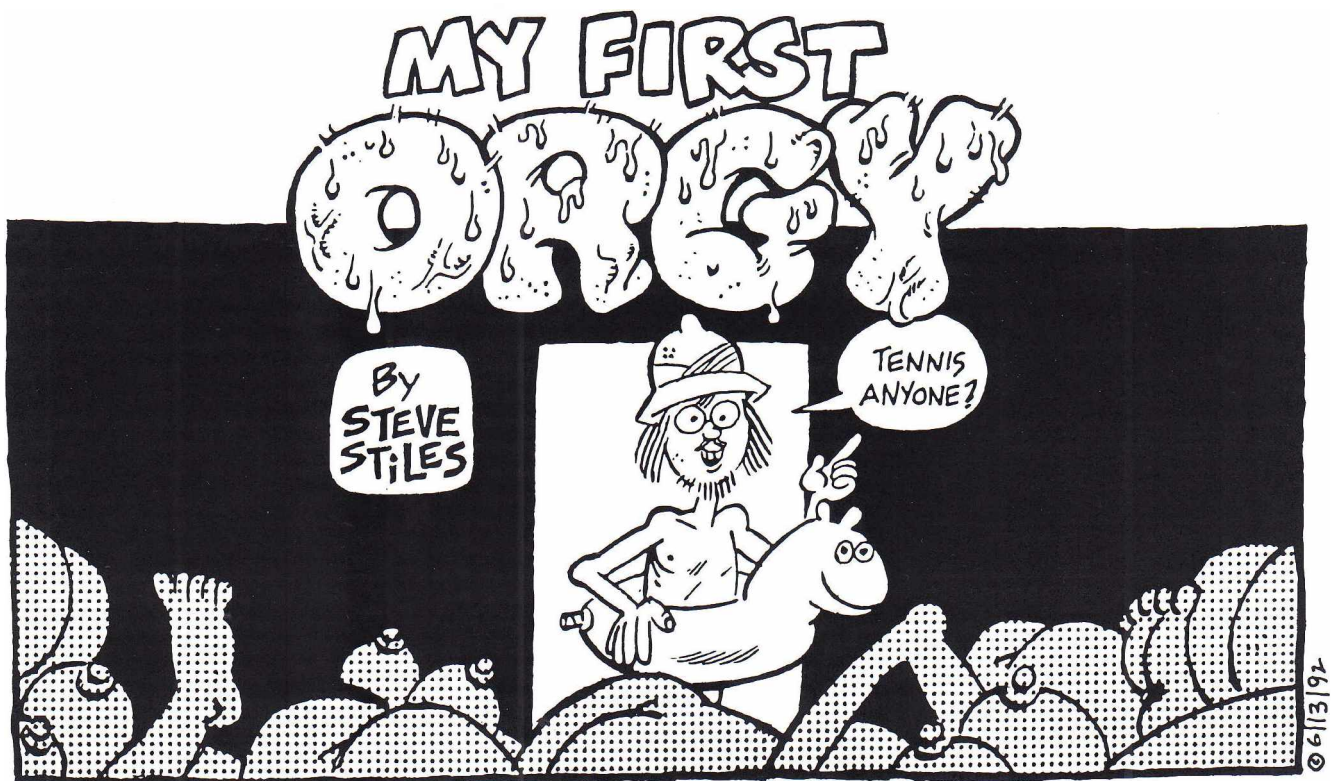
“Mount Your Own Trophies” had promise, but I decided that our next-door neighbor would have been less than delighted to see her little Tiddles staring out from atop our sideboard. “Silverplate Your Model Aircraft” looked promising until I discovered one needed a piece of silver larger than the item to be plated. “Decorate Your House With Junk” was a complete non-starter; I’d been doing that for years.

Nevertheless, I loved those magazines. They gave me a lifelong love of gadgetry, gimmicks, D.I.Y. and the finding out of what makes things work. I still read the occasional issues of their descendants, but nowadays the gosh wow hydrofoils, moon rockets and mid-ocean platforms have all gone. In their place are reams of paper extolling Detroit’s latest gas-guzzlers. A pity, but nostalgia isn’t what it used to be.

Some of the comments to Terry’s article expressed a sense of nostalgia about the gosh-wow days of the 1920s, even though none of the writers had been born back then. Gary Brown wrote that the piece was “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’?” Jeanne Mealy echoed that sentiment, writing that “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 element 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 [for him to build] when their washing was done in an iron tub with a plunger, scrubbing board, and blue-bag.” Steve Jeffery probably spoke for us all when he commented that “It is probably best that Gernsback went into science fiction magazines rather than civil engineering.”

There was one other article in *Mimosa* 12 that was ‘gosh-wow’, but for an entirely different reason – Steve Stiles’s “My First Orgy,” which was actually an illuminating autobiographical remembrance. Here it is again:





Before I get to the actual orgy part, I'd like to provide a little background material and explain that the impetus for this article came about when my wife Elaine and I attended 1991's Philcon and caught Linda Bushyager's panel on Amusing Incidents in fandom. This is not when and where the actual orgy happened, I hasten to mention; no, that was many years ago when I was younger and unwed, in the era before AIDS, in the more benevolent era of syphilis, herpes, gonorrhea, rectal warts, yeast infections, and crabs. Of course, all that is still with us, only now we have to be careful.

As for Linda's panel, for some reason or other, most of the humorous anecdotes revolved around either food or sex. (And why not? At least one of those topics can be pretty funny.) Eventually somebody mentioned an event that involved both food *and* sex; naturally I refer to the famous Disclave story, the Bathtub Full of Lime Jello Event. There are so many differing versions of this story going around that if I believed them all, you were all there... so why even mention it? But you weren't all there, and in reality there were just three sluts of differing sexes slithering around in this particular children's dessert.

But, if there were others present, and some of them were hucksters, what happened to the jello *afterwards*? Two bucks a baggie isn't unreasonable...

After the panel, we got together with a crowd of fans, including Linda and the Lynches, for an absolutely abysmal attempt at 'Chinese' cuisine – it was one of those places where you don't want to finish your fried dump-lings and you desperately yearn for some ketchup. Maybe the 'meal' was a reminder, but it brought to mind my own experience with both food and sex, my first orgy. So right away, you know you don't have anything to envy...

It happened in the early '70s, about two breakups with women who had been very important in my life; about a year after my divorce, and four months after the dissolution of a perfect union between two bodies and two minds, a time of warm sensitivity, blissful sensuality, sharing, and lava lamps. This sensitive time only ended when René split with that damned porno filmmaker. Well, at least the divorce had been a big relief! Even so, there was a time when I mourned for the lost potential of the *ideal* of our marriage rather than the grim reality itself; there was the feeling that there was something I overlooked, something more I could've done. Like maybe

submit. But as for the woman who had “replaced” my wife, I had been absolutely smitten with her to the extent of once even buying a pair of Earth Shoes. My morale had soared only later to do a sandpaper belly-flop in an arc describing the perfect bell curve from hell. Subsequently, I felt a distance from other people and my relationships with women in the following months tended to be casual to the extent of just boinking and never, ever, had a thing to do with pornographic movies – not even for pointers.

I remember the breakup moment. I had been selling off part of my comics collection at one of Phil Seuling’s comics cons in New York, trying to raise money for dental bills not covered by my insurance. I was stationed in the huckster room with a few boxes of fairly ordinary comics on the table in front of me, and a box of the truly valuable “stock” by my feet. This included the very first comic with a Spiderman story, *Amazing Fantasy* #15, which is worth over a thousand dollars today. And there I sat until the moment that my loved one made an unexpected appearance. “Uh, Steve, we, uh, have to *talk*,” she began nervously. “I love you too, my precious darling!” I interjected, beaming with yearning affection at the woman who was at the very center of my entire pitiful existence, even excluding art, money, and comic books – her sweet cute little body seemingly enveloped in a rosy, throbbing glow of metaphysical estrogen. (Whew!)

“*I want you to know that we’ll always be friends*,” she began again. Sometime after that I was enveloped in another kind of haze, more like a daze, or thick black sludge, and the next thing I knew, I was watching my friend’s back recede through the exit. I never saw her again.

I never saw *Amazing Fantasy* #15 again either, because during the stuporous few moments that this little poignant and heartbreaking trauma was taking place, some soulless pig’s bladder, realizing that this was his Big Chance, had crawled under the table and stole it. Over time, the feeling of “How could she *do* this to me?” was superseded by “Jeez, I’d sure like to beat on the thieving bastard with a baseball bat!” Maybe for that reason I should feel grateful to the swine. But I don’t.

The one consolation is that the state of his consciousness was his own best punishment. Oh yeah.

You know, just as a long aside, some comics fans are truly low scum – and perhaps the Swine Index is higher than some comparable group in ‘our’ fandom. It feels funny stating that, particularly in light of the fact that I am now a comic book illustrator and writer, making my living entertaining these people. When I was a young comics fan, my collecting urge sprang from an appreciation of the quality of a particular artist, writer, or comic, as well as the usual anal completist impulse. But for some of today’s comics collectors, that interest extends to the monetary value of a particular ‘product’ and has nothing to do with its *true* value.

Anyway, I attended my next, and last, Seuling convention for the sole purpose of seeing an old friend and comics pro, Joe Staton. It was going to be a brief meeting because I had other things to do that day, but since I hadn’t seen Joe for many months, I felt it was worth the effort. It took some time to find him and when I did, it turned out that Joe was scheduled to be on a panel in twenty minutes, a panel which I wouldn’t be able to attend. We had just barely gotten beyond saying hello when some young fan butted in with an aggressive “*Are you anybody?*” I started to explain that in the Lord’s eye we are *all* somebody, but the words were hardly out of my mouth when he noticed Joe’s namebadge and, elbowing the nonentity aside, began to suck up to Joe for some free artwork. He was Joe’s Biggest Fan, he said, and he felt Honored to be in His Presence. His life would be complete, he said, if only Joe would be kind and generous enough to bestow upon him an autographed drawing of Joe’s character E-Man, his very favorite comic book character of all time. He went on and on in this vein and, needless to say, as the clock ticked away, I was hardly able to get a word in edgewise. Finally, Joe produced the drawing just in time to leave for his panel. The kid scuttled away, and Joe and I said our good-byes. I spent fifteen minutes in the art show and then headed for the elevator. As I rode down, I noticed two other young fans – one of them was excitedly displaying a drawing to the other; “Wow, look at this!” he beamed, “Some guy just sold me an autographed original and it only cost me twenty-five bucks!”

It was Joe’s E-Man drawing.

Oh well. Back to the main topic, sex. There I was, feeling emotionally detached and not ready for any solid relationships – stewing in my own juices, in fact. And then, one Saturday night, the phone rang. It was a woman I shall call ‘Nancy’, a con fan living with her lover, ‘Sluggo’. I didn’t know Nancy and Sluggo that well; we were

in different fan clubs and Sluggo was so involved in con and club politics that it tended to exclude anything (like fanzines) beyond his obsessions. Besides, Sluggo, although a neutral in our marital break-up, had provided my wife with a place to stay after our split (she had rewarded him by providing me with a lot of hot gossip about his personal life). I didn't hold it against Sluggo, but there was a bit of awkwardness between us. And now here was Nancy inviting me to a small party at their place. I was bored, it was an opportunity to demonstrate that there were no grudges, and so I accepted. Nancy went on to say that the party was going to be on the following night, a Sunday. That was awkward; a long commute was involved and I had to get up early for work on Monday. Nancy suggested that I crash at their place and then leave for work the next morning. That made sense, so I agreed.

Then Nancy explained that five people from Canada would be attending; two men and three women. They were anxious to have an equal number of the sexes present because the main purpose of the party was to engage in communal copulation. There would be swapping as the evening went on. And how did I feel about *that*?

Uhhh... I didn't know how I felt about that; up until then I had never even entertained the possibility of participating in an orgy. I thought that only happened to other people, mostly in sweaty paperbacks, or in California. And if Nancy had brought the subject up at the beginning of the conversation, I would've probably weaseled out of it. I was never one for group sports, always the last chosen in baseball. Perhaps the last chosen in an orgy. In a long pause, I considered the cons and pros of group fucking with strangers.

The Cons:

- (1) I'm shy. I didn't even know these people.
- (2) I didn't even know these people; suppose they were physically repulsive?
- (3) Suppose *I* was physically repulsive?
- (4) I wasn't sure if orgies were Politically Correct. As King of the Feminists, I have to be aware of these things at all times.
- (5) I'm shy. Suppose I couldn't get it up? That would be embarrassing!
- (6) Nancy and Sluggo had a tiny bedroom in a tiny apartment. They were lousy housekeepers and it had probably been ages since the rug had been cleaned.

The Pros:

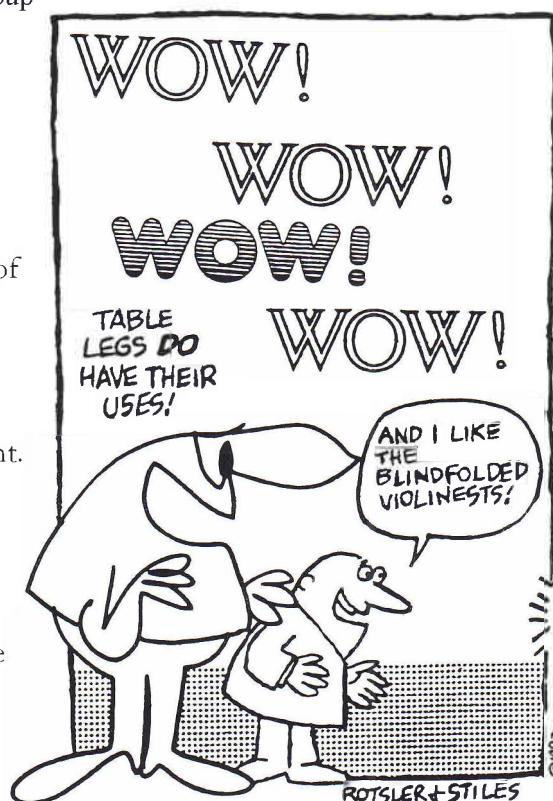
- (1) As an Artist, it was my Artistic Duty to explore all aspects of the Human Condition. (This was years before the NEA and Jesse Helms.)
- (2) It might be **fun**!

The pros had it.

The Night of the Orgy

The night of the orgy arrived and so did the people from Canada. The unknown was ready but I wasn't; my hands were sweating and icy. We were all a little nervous, unsure of ourselves and how to proceed. I *was* happy to note that none of us could be properly described as repulsive, with the possible exception of Sluggo. In fact, the one unpaired woman in our group was rather attractive. And I noticed that the living room floor was as cramped and dust-bunny ridden as I had expected. If the orgy was going to be simultaneous, as orgies are supposed to be, then our activities might have to be choreographed, a regular Busby Berkley number: "Okay, now on the count of three, we all roll to the left - people on top mind the table legs!"

But it might be fun. Even table legs can have their uses.



We were still a bit nervous. To break the ice it was decided that we all have dinner together at a local restaurant around the corner. And when we got there, seven of us ordered oysters – nudge, nudge, wink, wink. But I didn't like seafood then, and had a steak. Conversation flowed, and it all began to feel more relaxed. The unattached woman, Jane, looked cuter and cuter, and we began to hit it off. I began looking forward to our adventure back at the apartment. I began to feel that this would truly be a night to remember...

It was. Shortly after getting back, one of the men paled and then dashed for Nancy's bathroom. Unpleasant sounds reached us. Before long, six other people became violently ill. *I* felt fine, but then *I* didn't have ptomaine poisoning. It was the oysters, of course.

Dawn saw me still in the local emergency room, surrounded by greenishly-tinged people, and holding hands with a weeping Jane. Periodically, one or more of our group would make a dash for the restrooms. It was going to be a *long* day at work. So much for radical sexual experimentation!

All in all, I'd say that my first orgy was a definite anticlimax.

All the comments we received on Steve's article thought it entertaining. One response was from an old friend, Gary Deindorfer, who seemed not entirely surprised at the outcome: "Things happen to Steve that could only happen to him and seemingly not to anybody else. He wears well because of that inimitable Stiles personality [but] I swear, who else could [something like] that happen to but Steve?"

The next issue of *Mimosa* wasn't published until January 1993, and sported an imaginative Brad Foster cover set. Much had happened to us in that time period, the most significant being the events of September 5, 1992, when we received a Hugo Award for 'Best Fanzine' at Magicon in Orlando, Florida, after it had first been mistakenly awarded, ten minutes earlier, to George Laskowski. (The correction was made at the worst possible moment, too, but that's another story.)

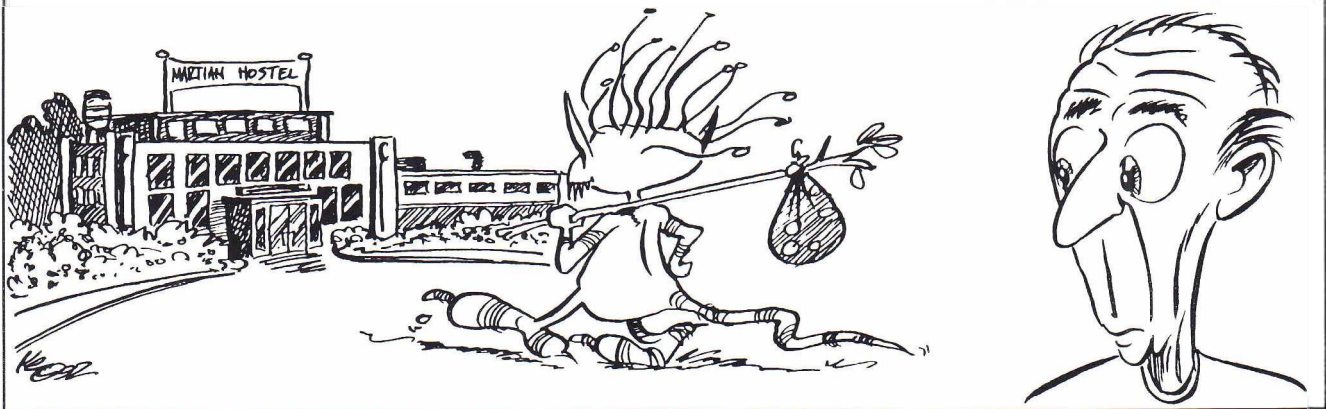
At any rate, *Mimosa* 13 was also one of our best issues, and included articles by Harry Warner, Jr., Sharon Farber, Charlotte Proctor, Buck Coulson, Dave Rowe, Dave Kyle, and Walt Willis. Willis had attended Magicon as its Fan Guest of Honor, and the convention had been filled with the tales of the fabulous Irish Fandom of the 1950s and 1960s. So it seemed natural that we'd want to feature an article about one of the members of Irish Fandom in the new issue. Here it is again:



Magna Charters

by John Berry

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



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. Syril's* might be categorised as science fiction!

His interest in science fiction was stimulated to such an extent that he describes traveling 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, *Astounding* 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 "Hiawatha." 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 trademark,
 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 scenario, 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.

Comments received on John's article were as complimentary about the topic as they were about the writer. Bill Bodden wrote that "In the past, I've often been less than charitable towards fanzine fandom's attitude of treasuring the past writers while ignoring those of the present. This piece fairly clearly illustrates the value of the former. There are no shortage of stories recounting the exploits of Walter Willis, Chuck Harris, Arthur Thomson, Vince Clarke, and James White; indeed, their exploits seem to form the basis for many of fandom's most cherished traditions. However, a piece like this one reminds us that there are a good many fans out there who aren't such big names, but still deserve tribute." Harry Warner, Jr., agreed, adding that "It's nice to have George immortalized in print in this manner, since he must be one of the lesser-known stars in the Irish Fandom constellation of mid-century."

Mimosa 13 was actually a rather sorrowful issue to assemble, as we'd lost a long-time correspondent, Roger Weddall, in December 1992 to lymphoma. Roger was one of the more prominent Australian fans, and had been at Magicon as the representative of the Down Under Fan Fund. He'd intended to spend six months in North America, visiting most of the fan communities, but returned home soon after the convention for treatment. His condition deteriorated rapidly after that, and in early December, we received the news of his death. We remember Roger for his often unpredictable sense of humor, and as someone who would gladly go out of his way to do a kindness. He had the ability to brighten your day whenever he wrote or called. He was our friend.

Another friend, who thankfully is still around, also has the ability to brighten our day whenever we hear from him. In his fanartist persona of Teddy Harvia, he's been responsible for many of the illustrations in *Mimosa*; in his real-life persona of David Thayer, he was author of a series of articles for *Mimosa* about his experiences in the Vietnam War. The installment that appeared in *Mimosa* 13, in our opinion, was the best in the series.

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 peanut 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.

MAN, I NEED TO
TAKE A WHIZ!



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.

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 authoritative 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?"

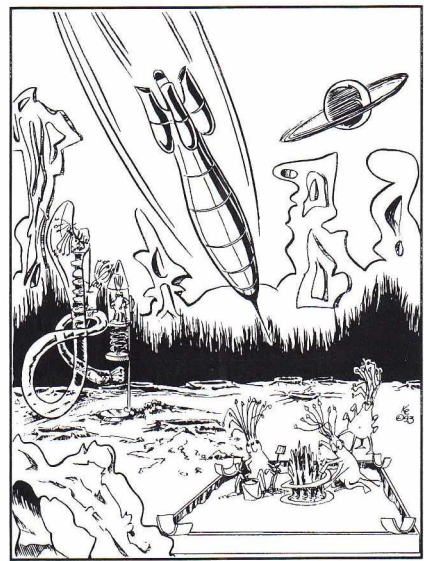
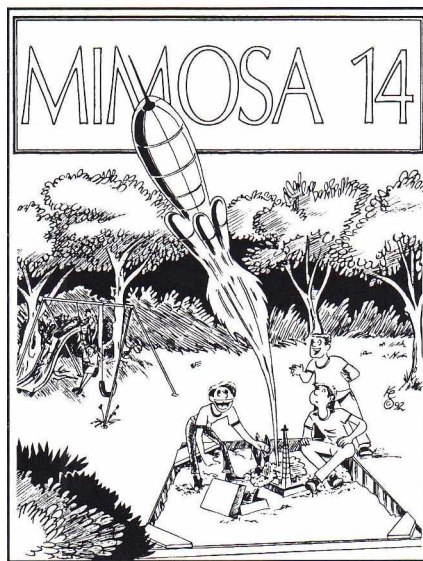
"Hell if I know. I couldn't tell in the dark."

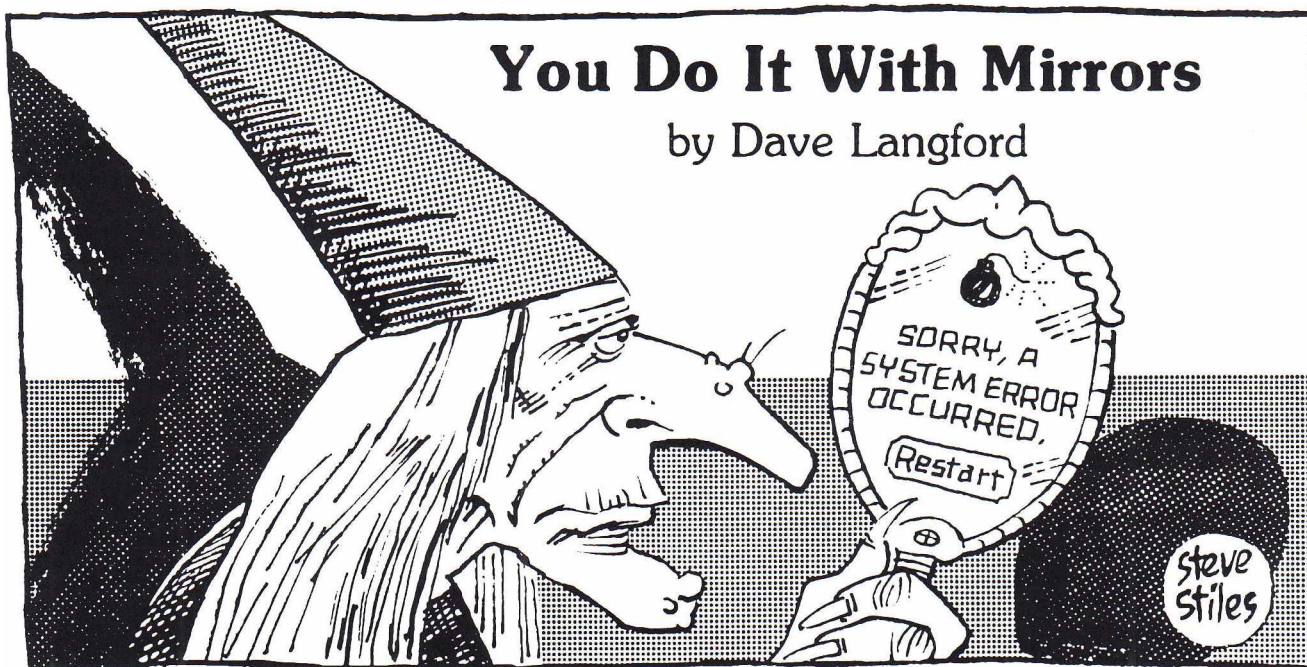
Back at my tent later that night, I fell into a deep sleep, the blanks and play ambushes having inspired no fear. I feared the unknown, but it was still weeks and half a world away. If I dreamed, I dreamed of the past, of home and childhood. I could not yet even imagine the nightmares of the real world.

Andy Hooper wrote of David's article that "[it] appealed to me, as it put me in mind of organized hikes and orienteering exercises of my own youth, where no one knew what they were doing and did their best to hide the fact." Harry Warner, Jr., commented that "I'm immensely impressed by David Thayer's writing when he does it at length. We associate him mostly with postcards of comment and captions to cartoons as a writer, and I wish he would do more extended pieces like [these] military reminiscences." And Mike Glicksohn wrote that "when I read or hear of people's activities in the armed forces, I am reminded of what a wonderful

decision my father made when he chose to come to Canada [from Great Britain] instead of the United States!"

Mimosa 14 appeared in August 1993, with covers by Kurt Erichsen depicting what *really* happened to all those model rockets we launched way back when and could never find again. The lead-off article in the issue was a very entertaining behind-the-scenes peek at the 1993 British Eastercon by Dave Langford:





Fourteen Months Before. It was one of those incautious moments. I was at Boskone 29, enjoying the heady sensation of being a guest and looking forward to liberal supplies of bourbon, groupies, contracts, and coffee. "We can get them all for you," Ben Yalow explained, "except perhaps for the bourbon, groupies and contracts."

The Boskone newsletter (*Helmuth ... Speaking for Boskone*) had just been impressing me with its deeply professional policy of printing anything I submitted. After a few too many beers in the hotel bar I heard my mouth say, "British con newsletters are usually so boring and stark and functional." Interested in what I would declare next, I began to pay attention and found my lips issuing the statement, "What they need is better production, and traces of literacy, and more funny bits so fans will read the whole thing including the tedious programme changes." My tongue went madly on to utter, "In fact I could..."

Suddenly I found that even here in kindly America I was surrounded by committee members of Helicon, the 1993 British Eastercon, all wearing wide, fanged smiles. "You're on, Dave," someone cried.

"Gllmmmmmpf," said my nostril as I choked on the beer.

#

The Langford theory of newsletters was no more than a few vague prejudices at the time. Keeping it simple seemed a cunning plan: no elaborate DTP systems that encouraged the priests of the inner mystery to spend hours at a time laying out perfect paragraphs like exquisite corpses in satin-lined caskets. An independent survey of what I was already using for *Ansible* favoured WordPerfect, into which any fool can type text.

(*Technical Bit Which May Be Skipped:* a non-Windows WordPerfect 5.1 with Bitstream FaceLift fonts, if you really must know. The committee's weird idea that we could move stuff between the computers using Laplink was rapidly superseded by my own high-tech solution known as Hurling Floppy Disks Across The Table.)

What was the thing going to be called? Helicon was named for its site, St Helier in Jersey, and the last con newsletter there had been called *Jersey Yarns*, which made me gently puke. Helicon used a 'sun' logo. Sun ... writing ... *Heliograph*. "I am not afraid," I wrote to the con committee, "of the totally bleeding obvious." Harry Bell drew a newsletter logo and we were in business.

Some months in advance I started writing news items. Editorial policy regarded any white space as a tacit admission of failure. And no matter how boring the lists of programme changes, I wanted the whole thing larded with funny bits to ensure it got read from end to end.

Strange anniversaries were ruthlessly researched (with help from Andy Porter's *SF Chronicle* birthday list,

to remind the revelling fans that time's wingèd chariot was parked outside the door and blowing the horn). Besides the complete new edition of the *Encyclopaedia of SF*, which I luckily had on disk, I consulted that useful reference *The Perpetual Pessimist: an Everlasting Calendar of Gloom and Almanac of Woe* (by Daniel George) ... so the first issue on 8 April 1993 not only had birthday messages for E.J. Carnell, S.P. Meek and Ralph Milne Farley but also revealed that Helicon was auspiciously beginning on the anniversary of a failed prediction of worldwide deluge in 1524.

Thus, helped by the fact that the convention was also a noted fictional birthplace, we were ready for the traditional First Issue of Newsletter problem (i.e., no news)...

WELCOME TO HELICON. And welcome to *Heliograph*—the newsletter which we understand is pronounced something like “Helio-grrraph.” As noted by Helicon’s most famous native, “I have the Heliconian stress on the letter ‘r’.” (Harri Seldon, in *Forrrward the Foundation* by Isaac Asimov.)

BICENTENNIAL: in April 1793, the New England inventor Eli Whitney did a huge service to all sf professionals by inventing gin. (*A Pedant Writes*: That was the cotton gin, you fool. *Heliograph*: There’s no pleasing some fans.)

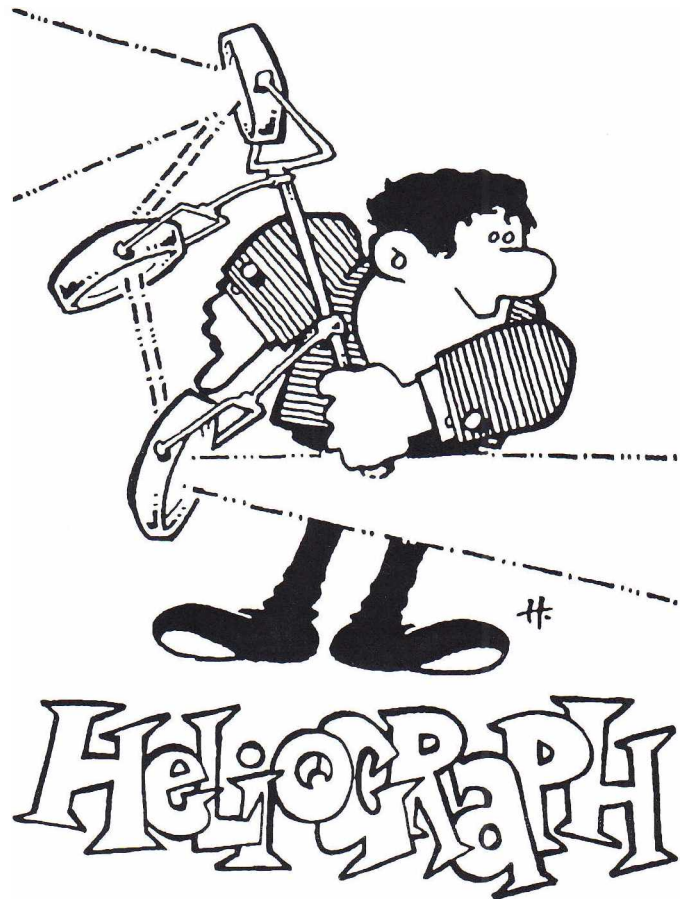
The first item duly provoked an outraged response in #2, for the benefit of esoterica fans:

COMPLAINT: “What’s this in issue #1 about some parvenu called Seldon being the most famous person from Helicon? What about us, then?” *Signed*: Calliope, Clio, Erato, Euterpe, Melpomene, Polyhymnia, Terpsichore, Thalia and Urania.

But I’m getting ahead of events. All too many thrills and spills lay between the hapless editor and the first printed copy of *Heliograph* 1. I flew to Jersey days early, leaving Hazel to enjoy herself at home ... our different attitudes can be detected from the phone call when I got there. *Me*: “It was great fun, I had a window by the landing gear and the plane stopped at Guernsey on the way so I got to go up and down twice for one fare!” *Hazel*: “Oh! Oh, that must have been so *horrible* for you...” Being paranoid about electromagnetic damage to disks, I had one set in my pocket, another in my suitcase and a third traveling with Martin Hoare on a Channel ferry. *Martin*: “It’s great fun, the crossing lasts hours and hours, and you can drink yourself silly all the way over and watch other fans get seasick and vomit all over the bar!” *Me*: “What a pity that I foolishly booked a plane.”

After the usual adventures I was introduced to my newsroom, which in the interests of total security had a combination lock on the door. Fortunately this didn’t block traffic too much, since vast numbers of British fans remembered the unchanged code from previous conventions. (Later remark by Chris O’Shea, quoted in a post-final *Heliograph*: “The secure store isn’t, Ops doesn’t, and the newsletter hasn’t.”)

As it finally took shape, the awesome newsletter production equipment consisted of a couple of IBMs as I’d



requested, a late-arriving laser printer (with an interesting scar on its drum that led to exciting black marks in every left margin and regular hotel-wide searches for Liquid Paper), and the Chris Suslowicz Museum of Industrial Archaeology. Yes, after each master sheet slid smoothly from the 1990s DTP system it was carried across the room and backwards through yawning gulfs of time to an ancient, rickety electrostencil cutter and a Gestetner mimeograph that had seen service with the Panzer corps.

While I first stared in awe, the committee broke it to me that Chris Suslowicz, the owner and understander of all this heavy-metal hardware, wouldn't be arriving until – according to my timetable – about half-way through issue three. I retreated to the bar and don't remember any more that day.

Next morning, with large tracts of the newsroom still commandeered for dynamic, last-minute badge production, I and all-round technical supremo John Dallman cut two dozen electrostencils of a dum-my front page I'd brought with me. Or, to be precise, we cut or failed to cut the same one two dozen times, fiddling with all the controls (and wincing at the tactless comments of badge-makers who evidently hadn't enough work to do) until in a blazing burst of Null-A insight John noticed that the stylus was bent and changed it. Sparks flew and the characteristic atmosphere of the *Heliograph* newsroom immediately made itself felt: a billowing mix of ozone and random carcinogens as the cutter burned its way through acres of vinyl. The fine black dust that rapidly accumulated on the computer screens was a useful index of the state of one's lungs, and to conjure up a Lovecraftian vision of nameless, blasphemous ichor you had only to blow your nose.

Then came the mimeograph, which after an hour or two I decided had not after all seen service with Rommel but with Torquemada. Let us draw a veil over this, mentioning only the anguished cries of "Can we fucking ink it from side to side, not up and down?" ... the discovery that, Roneo men all, we none of us knew where you put ink in a Gestetner ... the ransacking of countless hotel rooms for complimentary packs of tissues after agreeing that we certainly knew how to make ink come *out* of a Gestetner.

(By happy chance we'd picked the right electrostenciller. Con chairman Tim Illingworth had provided a second machine out of the goodness of his heart, having bought it in a junk shop and being sublimely unaware of whether it worked – he thought we could have fun finding out. To add to the 'Lady or the Tiger' excitement there was also a second mimeo which, days later, proved to be utterly unusable owing to damage in transit...)

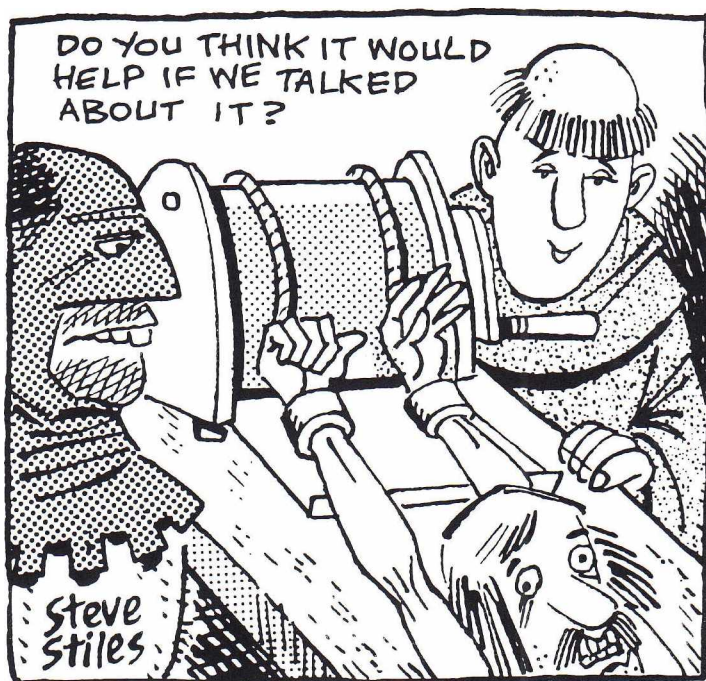
As the first interestingly tilted and blotchy issue hit the stands, a part-blind fan labelled as 'Blind Pew' popped in with a request that all issues of *Heliograph* be clearly printed in black ink for the benefit of those with dodgy vision. "Gladly," I cried, and as an afterthought went to check the huge pile of ink-tubes thoughtfully provided with the hardware. One was red and the rest were green.

#

IAIN BANKS perpetuated a noble sf tradition by breaking his bed on the first night of Helicon. (As Bob Shaw discovered after Brian Aldiss broke a bed during a party there, Tynecon '74 was "a five-bed convention." Go for it, Iain!)

After cruel treatment by the Style Police, the *Read-Me* authors promise never again to write about 'medias' (see *But What Can Replace a Fanzine*, 1100 Monday). "We have now been told correct datas and rethought our criterias," said a spokesman. "There will be no more such erratas."

ARCTOPHILES "are warned that the note on an exhibit in the Art Show *means* it. Do Not Open The



Box if you *care* about cuddlies!” (Chris Bell)

BREAKFAST NOTES. Q: What’s red and invisible? A: No tomatoes... The Action Committee for Mushrooms At All Con Breakfasts wishes to thank Helicon for ... sorry, *what* was the message?

HOW TO WRITE GOOD. Jane Barnett (aged 15¼), when told by her father that her writing showed poor control of nuance: “I wouldn’t recognize nuance if it came up and gently brushed my leg.”

... But most attempts to give the flavour of *Heliograph* as it turned out run slap into the ‘You had to be there’ syndrome. Famous author Iain Banks is a reliable source of eccentric news at British conventions, and later provided us with another fascinating snippet by crawling around underneath the carpet in the hotel bar. The ‘arctophiles’ item heralded a running gag about Tom Abba’s bear-in-the-box in the Helicon art show, which was shielded from unwary eyes because this unfortunate teddy-bear had been strung up with ghastly torture-hooks inspired by *Hellraiser*. (“BEAR HORROR SHOCK,” began a later item. “A copy of *Eon* was sold...”) Jane Barnett’s father Paul writes as John Grant and under this name was technical editor of the new *SF Encyclopaedia*: he realized what a paltry and trivial job that had been when he came to work more or less full-time on *Heliograph*.

JOHN JARROLD becomes President of the World! Well, of World SF. Interviewed by *Heliograph*, the new President prised a beerglass momentarily from his mouth and said, “I didn’t know what was happening, I wasn’t even there, don’t blame *me*.”

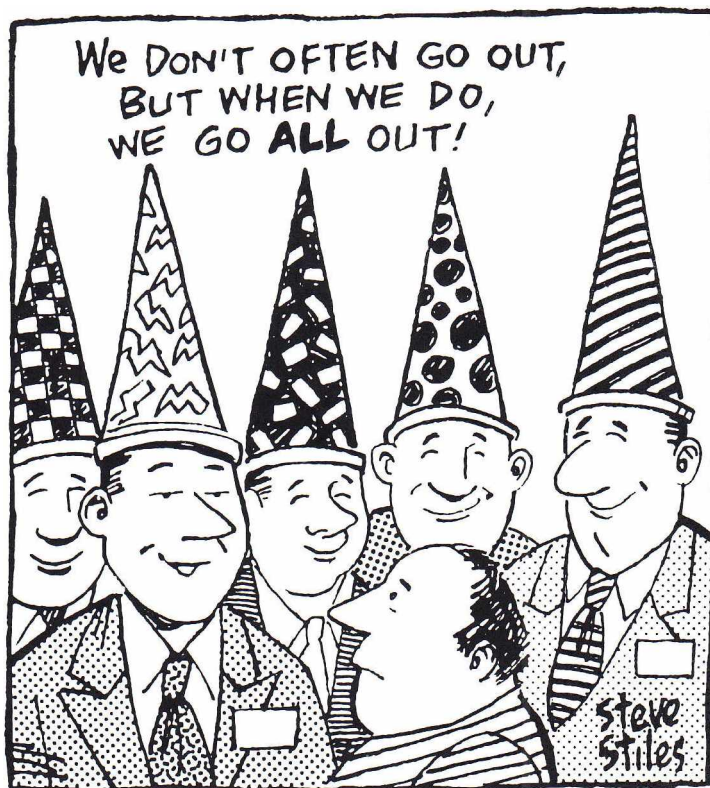
BRIAN ALDISS demonstrated his mature technique for persuading one of Jenny and Ramsey Campbell’s offspring to go to bed, culminating in a stentorian cry of “FUCK OFF!” (It worked.)

STOP PRESS UPDATE: Matt Campbell wishes to announce *Very Loudly Indeed* that Brian Aldiss’s amazing Getting-the-Little-Swine-to-Bed technique (*Heliograph* #2) **DIDN’T ACTUALLY WORK**.

This was our first taste of controversy, when Mr Aldiss put a mildly stropky note under the newsroom door complaining of ‘anti-Aldiss material’ and asserting that “I told no kiddies, not even Brian Burgess, to ‘Fuck Off.’” Assured by witnesses that the first report was accurate, our protagonist having been a trifle off-sober at the time, we contented ourselves by printing his rebuttal prefaced by “BRIAN ALDISS, Sci Fi author, corrects...” Meanwhile he’d given the newsroom a new euphemism, heavily used for the rest of Helicon whenever alleged abuse was to be recorded: “Go to bed!”

QUESTION. Why exactly did *Lawrence Watt-Evans* think that he was Brian Aldiss and that John Brunner should go to bed?

Trying to make every item at least a bit amusing was a continuing policy. One slight hitch was noted... Helicon had an influx of 52 Romanians, who all arrived in suits and strange tall pointy hats, like a delegation of heavily politicized garden gnomes. My idle fingers recorded the figure and on impulse (the line looked as if it could do with a bit more text) made it ‘52.02’. Well, at least I didn’t add ‘plus or minus 0.06’, but the newsroom had a procession of puzzled visitors. “We have bad trouble with newsletter. Here it says [*etc, etc*]. Is special meaning or” (in tones of deepening menace) “your Western sense of humour?”



Strange tongues were heard everywhere at Helicon, and to aid translation a complex system of colour-coded ribbons and little spots on con badges was supposed to indicate who could interpret between what. Fan-dom soon reduced the system to chaos. The 'I speak Romanian' ribbons ran out within 52.02 nanoseconds, and others lasted only a bit longer; soon the committee was running round trying to clip bits from the over-long and generous ribbons issued on the first day. Meanwhile one heard explanations like: "And that one-quarter of a tartan spot on my badge stands for how much Gaelic I know..." Your reporter confirmed himself to be deaf in seventeen languages.

My biggest linguistic mistake on *Heliograph* was in allowing my eyes to glaze over each time I tried to read a contribution from Colin Fine which appeared to be an essay on the artificial language Lojban. "Too long," I kept saying. "Maybe *next* issue." Colin had neglected to hint in his headline that, just after the point at which I invariably fell asleep, this piece announced a new and imminent programme item in which Lojban would be discussed. Oops.

Besides Romanians there were Russians, who were doing a roaring trade in obsolete KGB credentials at their dealers' room table...

RED SALES IN THE SUNSET: 30 people had joined the KGB at last count. Beware the midnight knock on the door from *Brian Aldiss*, the entire *Family Harrison* and *Anne McCaffrey* (who will be carrying a small, monogrammed flame-thrower).

TRICENTENNIAL CYBERPUNK. In 1693 Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz of calculus fame invented the first mechanical calculator that could multiply and divide, thus heralding an exciting new era of arguments over the restaurant bill. ("Fie on you and your Engine, fir, I had only a fmall falad and a Pepfi.")

JOHN CLUTE tergiversates: "Text is terrifying!"

OVERHEARD: "If this were a normal con all you'd have to do would be to find someone..." [*And then you'd know where they were—Ed.*] • In Ops: "We printed out all the programme participant letters and A.N.Other's was three pages long..." • Programming subcommittee irregular verbs: "I reschedule, you slip, he runs late."

TRUTH SHALL BE TOLD. The spellcheck on the mighty *Heliograph* computer, confronted by 'committees', suggests 'comatose'...

TEN DAY WONDER TANDOORI. The *Taj Mahal* appears to work on the Lovecraftian approach to cuisine: "I am excited not so much by the actual *presence* of mysterious Bengali dishes before me as I am by the eldritch *rumour and suggestion* that these exotic apparitions might one day appear." Be warned... (*Ramsey Campbell*)

EROTIC SF panel: "The French are suggesting installing teledildonic machines in hotel rooms..." *Mike Cule*: "I'm not sure I would want to put anything of mine into any such orifices." *Dave Clements*: "What about your credit card?" *Mike Abbott*: "By barcoding suitable portions of anatomy you could pay at the same time." *Brian Ameringen*: "Surely, when you cross a teledildonics machine with a cash-point you get someone coming into money?"

DISCRETION. We are not allowed to reveal the number of the room in which GoH *Karel Thole* and *Jean Owen* broke the bed.

In a more serious and scientific vein, the Hotel de France venue has a built-in chocolate factory and shop, leading to a blitz of useful information:

HELICON STATISTICS! We have filled 7 Jersey hotels and drunk 1,600 pints of real ale, as at 1300 Saturday. Chocolate sales: 2,500 champagne truffles, 55* of the 5kg blocks, 7 large rabbits, 82 Easter eggs, 1 lifesize Tim Illingworth, and 20 people have taken the behind-the-scenes tour. (Still 3,000 truffles and 8,500 other chocs to go. Must Try Harder.) * By the end of Helicon, it was 238.

Quite a respectable team of *Heliograph* newsroom regulars had somehow coalesced out of all this insanity. I dutifully credited them all, one of my own favourite ideas being to end each issue with a credits box using linked literary 'job titles'. It was sheer luck that, having picked *The Hunting of the Snark* for the first such theme, I needed to credit Amanda Baker:

.....
Heliograph 1, 8/4/93. Bellman: Dave Langford. Baker: Amanda. Boots: Dave Clements. Boojum: Caroline Mullan. Snark: John Dallman. Ocean Chart: Harry Bell. Strange Creepy Creatures: John Stewart, Mark Young
.....

I hugely enjoyed watching fans in the bar turn straight to the end of each newsletter to find what daft link the credits had this time. The sequence went on through Niven (Thrint: Dave Langford. Grog: Paul Barnett. Speaker-to-Duplicators ...), Asimov (First Speaker: Dave Langford. Emperor: John Dallman. Mayor: Bob Webber. Mule: Chris Suslowicz. Encyclopaedists: John Grant, John Clute. Prime Radiants: Amanda Baker, Pam Wells. Second Foundation: sshh!), Dick (Glimmung, Kipple, Conapt, Pink Beam, Vugs), Wolfe (Autarch, Hierodules ... the large person who got to be the Group of Seventeen was unamused), Ballard (Drained swimming pool, Spinal landscape, Marilyn Monroe, Traven, Talbot, Travers, Talbert, Travis etc) and more. The real mind-burster that no-one could guess was based on an obscure passage of Aldiss's *Report on Probability A*: Impaler of Distortions, Impersonator of Sorrows, Suppressor of the Archives, Wandering Virgin – "Thank you for making me a virgin again!" cried Lynne Ann Morse with mixed feelings, and was duly quoted out of context in the upcoming issue.

Incidentally, *The Hunting of the Snark* also gave us Rule 42: 'No one shall speak to the Man at the Helm'. This, alas, was not rigorously applied despite all my efforts, and urgent stints of *Heliograph* typing were apt to be interrupted by arcane queries in strange international accents. Once, overwhelmed by too many satirical birthday congratulations (I was 40 on the Saturday of Helicon), I must admit that the editor rose up and told all the chatterers present to "Go to bed."

CLOSING CREDITS. *Heliograph* could not have been brought into existence without the help of very many people, but nevertheless it was. (*Chorus*: "Start again, Langford!")

#

Newsroom madness grew more and more uncontrollable. Short quotations aside, I'd resolved to rewrite every single story until it was maximally terse, funny and comprehensible, or at least the first two. Meanwhile Paul toiled over increasingly excruciating headlines... Helicon had a crowd of weird emaciated punk Finns with nose-rings and things ("Differently intelligenced ... or differently nostrilled?" I mused) who claimed to be zombies and sent in countless bulletins on their rotted state: at one point I found Paul unable to decide between ZOMBIE FACTOID —IT'S DEAD TRUE! and DEATH IS NOT THE FINNISH, and could only break the impasse by using them both.

And then there was Thog the Mighty.

Although we dutifully recorded programme changes, *Heliograph* production was more or less incompatible with seeing any of Helicon's programme. (The exception in my case was the banquet, which I had to attend because I was giving a speech, on particularly revolting meals in sf. Later in *Heliograph*: MARY CELESTE MYSTERY SOLVED BY IAN SORENSEN! "Dave Langford did the after-dinner speech.") One item, however, spread all over the convention and newsletter like some rampant fungal growth: the scabrous 'If I Ruled the Universe' election campaign.

This featured various mighty beings attempting to sway an ultimate audience vote and thus become Universal Ruler. The candidates were Sir Edmund Blackadder (Neale Mittenshaw-Hodge), Boadicea/Boudicca (KIM Campbell), Genghis Khan (Mike Cule, whose cheerleaders' chant of "Yak Fat! Yak Fat!" still haunts me), Tim Illingworth (Chris O'Shea), Ming the Merciless (Alison Scott) and Stupendous Man of *Calvin and Hobbes* fame (John Richards with mask, cape and of course Hobbes – a battery-powered growly tiger which remorselessly crept along tables and fell off the end). Helicon was duly plastered with campaign posters, mostly vile lies from Blackadder ("ILLINGWORTH plays with Barbie dolls!") illustrated with grossly libellous Sue Mason cartoons. In the end the audience vote for Universal Ruler went to a last-minute write-in ... Hobbes.

My favourite silly moment in all this came when, after talking to a press photographer and coming away muttering that the bastard wasn't interested in sf but just wanted pictures of weirdly dressed fans, John Richards found a particularly insulting Blackadder poster in the hotel foyer. He faded into the secure store and,

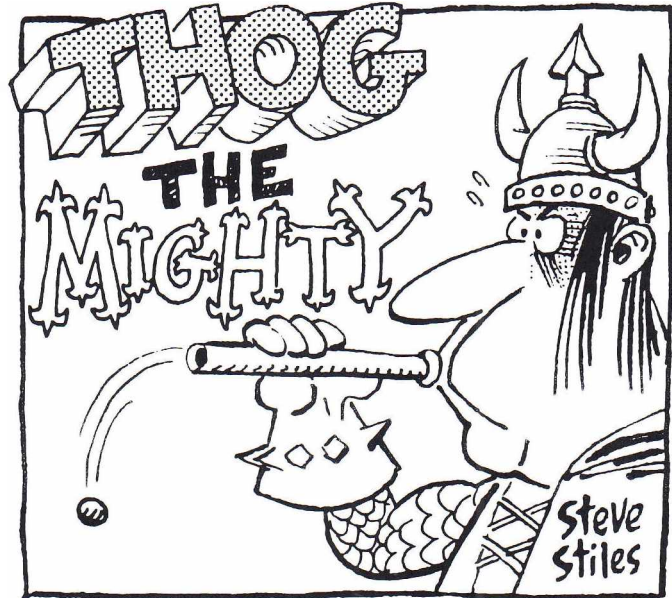
seconds later, the awesome masked figure of Stupendous Man lumbered along the corridors. With heroic and theatrical gestures the offending poster was wrenched from the wall; our superhero turned majestically away to discover that same pressman with mouth hanging open, fumbling frantically for his camera. After one ghastly frozen moment, Stupendous Man demonstrated super-speed.

This is where Thog came in. Idly filling out a paragraph in which potential world rulers abused each other, Paul remembered a bit-part character from his own fantasy novels and typed: "*Thog the Mighty* doesn't want to rule the world." This could have been a mistake.

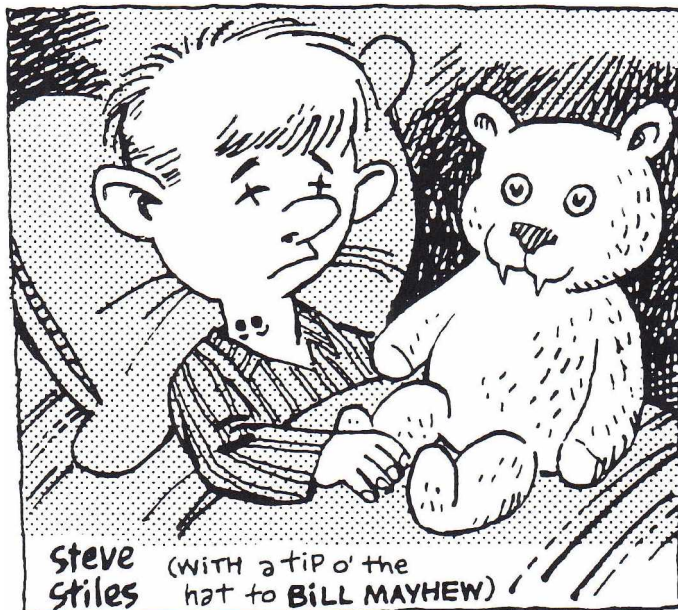
From commenting on the hustings ("*Thog the Mighty* spells universe 'gllb'."), this brutish entity swiftly overran the whole newsletter with fire and the sword. Even my carefully re-

searched birthday lists sprouted addenda like: "*Every day my birthday – Thog.*" If towards the end of Helicon there was a *Heliograph* gestalt, a newsroom group mind, it was undoubtedly named Thog the Mighty. Wrestling wildly over the semicolons, grown men found themselves talking in Thog. "Stop nit-picking and let's print the thing." "Hah! When Thog the Mighty nitpick, nit *know it have been picked.*"

Somewhere out there the convention was reeling along out of control: "Oh God," cried a passing commit-tee member, "the organization's a shambles, we're just about managing to paper over the cracks, and that's *not for the newsletter.*" There were fewer and fewer programme changes to record, and the news items that filtered in grew sillier. When soft toys start sending in contributions, you know it's time to stop:



LEWIS P. BEAR complains formally about the anti-bear and bearist artworks in the Art Show. Arnold Schwarzenbear ... [*aw, go to bed — Ed.*]



One can even be reduced to raiding the newspapers:

THE INDEPENDENT's article on Helicon today catches the subtle, elusive flavour of fandom: "*Otherwise it is unclear who these people are. They could be someone's neighbour or relative...*"

But the manic *Heliograph* staff made the dangerous discovery that news items from 'outside' were hardly necessary. Desperately witty things – well, they seemed witty at the time – were constantly being said in our own fume-filled room, and could instantly be quoted. If Helicon had lasted a few more days the newsroom might have become a self-perpetuating news vortex, feeding madly on itself and generating endless one-liners to be listed in our ever-longer sections titled OVERHEARD, VOX POP and the like.

“You mean I’m – wow! – a CROSS REFERENCE in the *SF Encyclopaedia*?” ● “Are *you* claiming to be nubile?” ● “Someone bit me last night and I don’t know whom....” ● “Isn’t it sad when the snappiest dressers in fandom are the soft toys?” ● “Even Iain Banks doesn’t know why he crawled under that carpet...” ● “If I turn the Gestetner up to full speed I can make it to the Banq – oh dear” ● “I want to complain! You didn’t credit my comment!” (*Anon*) ● “A *draft* of artists?” “An *acquisition* of publishers?” “A *whinge* of writers.” “A *spittoon* of *Heliograph* staffers.” ● “Why Thog not in *Heliograph* credits?” ● “I have a Complaint. Too much *chit-chat*; not enough news.”

I actually sought out the one aged fan who complained, in the hope of making soothing noises. The conversation went something like this... *Aged Fan*: “Yes, your newsletter is full of in-jokes and I’m not an ‘in’ person.” *Me*: “But that ‘bear’ stuff is about the Helicon art show...” *AF*: “Never go to art shows.” *Me*: “And *this* is all to do with the *Read-Me* booklet...” *AF*: “’Couldn’t be bothered with that.” *Me*: “And ‘Tim Illingworth’ is the convention chairman...” *AF*: “Never heard of him.” *Me*: “And this credits line is actually an sf reference to *The Book of the New Sun*...” *AF*: “Like I said: all *in-crowd* jokes.”

Suddenly it was Monday evening. Helicon was miraculously over. I could start eating again, and perhaps even sleeping! To hammer home the message, I changed the subtitle box of the ninth issue from *Helicon's Newspaper* to *The Last Dangerous Heliograph* and made sure that all subsection titles referred to sf stories about entropy or the closing down of universes (‘Travelers in Black’, ‘The Voices of Time’, ‘Running Down’). The final, post-closing-ceremony item was typed ... since nothing hugely newsworthy had happened, this merely offered an “AT-A-GLANCE SUMMARY OF THE CLOSING CEREMONY. See pages 94-146.” It was all over.

(Actually there was no room to write up the full horror of the closing multi-channel slide show based on 1,000 embarrassing snaps taken at Helicon itself. Forty-five minutes after the ceremony was due to start, Martin Hoare and his team of ace technocrats carried in the projectors and began to set them up. The audience thrilled as the very first slide that actually appeared read: “That’s All Folks!” Every possible permutation of the guests’ pictures and names was shown, with John Brunner labeled as George R.R. Martin and artist Karel Thole as fan guest Larry van der Putte ... then Brunner as Martin and Thole as Brunner ... and so endlessly on, to a stream of esoteric technical remarks like “Now John Brunner’s head’s in the way of the *side* screen.” Afterwards Mr. Hoare exulted that the committee had confessed they’d never believed he could put on the slide show at all.)

It was, as I said, all over. Unfortunately several people said interesting or appalling things at Monday night’s final party, and on Tuesday, as the convention was being dismantled around me, I found myself typing up a supplementary *Dead Dog Memorandum*. Our mimeo experts were not in evidence; the laser printer glowed white-hot as hundreds of copies churned out to meet the delirious demand. Then I went home.

But *Heliograph* was the newsletter that would not die. Chris Suslowicz and Cathryn Easthope had a hotel room full of computer gear, and two more ersatz issues rolled out of my fax machine, the *Undead Dog Memorandum* and *Embalmed Dog Missive*. Excerpts follow, as rewritten by me for the unbelievably rare *Heliograph Souvenir Edition*:

IT IS TUESDAY, the newsletter office is deserted and the equipment has been packed for its eventual return to the mainland. *Thog the Mighty* has discovered that his transportation (Horde, one, for the use of) has been misbooked for the previous day and is sharpening his sword. (*Alex Stewart*: “Thog say, plane for wimps. Thog swim.”) Langford has departed for the mainland to avoid the likely bloodshed, pausing briefly to Blu-Tack™ 5,271,009 copies of the *Dead Dog Memorandum* to various walls. “Stop that man and nail his feet to the floor,” screamed an enraged *Martin Easterbrook*, engaged in convention poster removal. Too late – the denuded corridors had been fetchingly redecorated...

FOOD CORNER. There are no restaurant reports because with typical selfishness all the reporters are still in the restaurants. There is also an absence of newsroom – the final wording on the door was “go away in a huff and never return,” so copy is not arriving, and the Alternative Newsroom is making it all up from a secret location. Stay tuned.

.....
Heliograph 10-ish, 13/4/93. Wook: Dave Langford. Clattuc: Chris Suslowicz. Chilke: Thog the Mighty. Tamm: Cathryn Easthope. LPFers: BSFA Council. Yips: Ops.
.....

And then it was really over. The egoboo was tremendous (as editor I probably got an altogether unfair share, but that's life). The physical and mental debilitation lasted three weeks. I wonder what it would have been like to attend Helicon?

#

Three Weeks After. It was one of those incautious moments. I was at Jean Owen's and Martin Hoare's wedding party, reduced to a slithering moral jelly by heady speech-making and champagne cocktails, and Caroline Mullan was telling me what she thought of *Heliograph*. "All right for a mere Eastercon," she allowed grudgingly, "but your approach just wouldn't work for a Worldcon newsletter like ours at ConFiction."

"Oh, I don't agree.." my mouth began to say, until I suddenly noticed we were surrounded by a horde of feral, red-eyed 1995 Worldcon committee members, licking their lips and closing slowly in. For once my brain managed to insert a few words of its own. "Er, I mean, you're *absolutely right*, Caroline."

Comments received about Dave's article ranged from bemused to near-horrified. Tracy Benton wrote that the piece "was a great con-runner's microcosm: the inadvertent volunteer, the late-arriving equipment that fails to work, dealing with offending (and offensive) people, exhaustion, horror, mass-hysteria, and total collapse. Not to mention immediately being asked to do it all again. Quite a nice little cautionary tale, all in all." Hans Persson commented that the article "was very entertaining, and managed to convince me that I should never get involved in such an undertaking." And Henry Welch wrote that "[after this] I don't think I'll ever be able to tell my son to 'go to bed' with a straight face."

Besides Dave's article, the contents of *Mimosa* 14 included Dave Kyle's mini-history of the old Science Fiction League, Ahrvid Engholm's look at Swedish fan hoaxes, an installment in Walt Willis's continuing series about 1950s Irish Fandom, David Thayer's look back at old war movies, Terry Jeeves' look back at even older science fiction movies, and Shelby Vick's remembrance of an old non-fan mentor. There was no real theme to the issue, but we did have a few more articles about contemporary fandom and its history than usual, including the following one by Mike Glyer:



A Child's Garden of Rockets

by Mike Glycer



KW 93

Aristocratic in white tie and black tails, Aussiecon 2 toastmaster Marc Ortlieb introduced the 1985 Hugos: "They are democratic awards – anyone who has enough money can vote..." Next morning, the hoax daily newszine said of his performance, "We applaud Comrade M.A. Ortlieb for his sterling courage in the teeth of capitalist-inspired adversity by exposing the fundamentally anti-democratic nature of the little silver rocket ships while he was forced to adopt the garb of a running dog wine steward (who failed to deliver the services repeatedly demanded of him)."

The 'capitalist-inspired adversity' that plagued Aussiecon 2's Hugo ceremony came from a disastrous attempt to make it into a multimedia extravaganza. Five carousel slide projectors flashed nominees' names and related photos on a cinemascope screen at center stage while Ortlieb repeated the names aloud. Or that was the plan. The slides never came up in the order written in Ortlieb's cue cards. Then came the ghastly moment that the John W. Campbell award winner was exposed before all the nominees had been completely announced. But I admired Ortlieb's coolness amid disaster: for the nominees' benefit he preserved the dignity of the occasion to whatever extent that was still possible.

That was the worst mistake I had ever seen at a Hugo Awards ceremony, until Saturday, September 5, 1992: while Spider Robinson handed Magicon's Best Fanzine Hugo to George Laskowski, a slide flashed behind them that the winner was *Mimosa*, edited by Dick and Nicki Lynch.

The mistake was reminiscent of the year (1970) that Isaac Asimov, apparently unable to believe 'No Award' had finished first in a Nebula category, accidentally announced Gene Wolfe's "The Island of Dr. Death" had won, and had to correct himself while Gene was on his way to the dais. Legend holds that Gene's friends told him everyone felt so awful that all he needed to do was write another story, call it "The Death of Doctor Island," and SFWAns would surely vote him a Nebula. It's true that Gene won a Nebula for that story...

Justice was not delayed at Magicon. Within minutes, a shaken Spider Robinson revealed *Mimosa* was the correct Hugo-winning fanzine. Laskowski graciously joined him to turn over the trophy to Dick and Nicki Lynch.

And do you know, that incredible mistake made the Magicon Hugo Awards Ceremony a legend. Hugo night gaffes inevitably fix an occasion in the forefront of memory, unlike showmanlike, smooth performances that soon fade into the mind's background noise. Indeed, I can hardly remember any of Chicon V's perfect 100-minute ceremony of two years ago.

If it's true that we forget the technically perfect Hugo ceremonies, is that merely due to fannish perversity? I don't think so. Magicon and Chicon show that the difference between what we remember and what we forget lies in the emotional, humanizing moments that penetrate the coolness of people engaged in a performance. These moments wrench us with empathy, as during last year's Best Fanzine miscue, or evoke our admiration for grace displayed in the face of adversity as with Marc Ortlieb, George Laskowski, or, long ago, Terry Carr.

We often remember that Terry Carr made us laugh, and laugh again without forgetting how graciously he transformed an awkward moment at the 1973 ceremony. That year, Terry won the Best Fanwriter Hugo. To the chagrin of Torcon II chairman John Millard, the rockets had not arrived in time for the ceremony: winners just got the bases. Terry brandished his empty base and joked that he once previously shared a Hugo with *Fanac* co-editor Ron Ellik. Yes, between his half-Hugo for *Fanac* and his Best Fanwriter Hugo base, he'd won one complete Hugo.

Laughter is that interrupted defense mechanism Niven's Puppeteers consider madness...for why would anyone interrupt a defense mechanism? Maybe because any other reaction is more painful. And for every story you know that illustrates this point about the Hugo Awards, there's at least one you don't know because it never happened on stage to a Carr or a Lynch.

And I'll begin by showing you what it's like when a victim of one of these gaffes cannot laugh it off.

Imagine you have just earned the highest honor in science fiction, but think the trophy is made like junk jewelry. How sad you would feel, and how ungracious you would sound berating the committee about your disappointment! In 1990, Lois McMaster Bujold won ConFiction's Best Novella Hugo and the next morning she complained bitterly to Jo Thomas (who I was working with in Program Oops) that her Hugo rocket spun loosely on its base, allowing the chrome fins to score the marble. Fuming, Bujold devised a cardboard pad to keep the pieces from grinding together until someone with the proper tool could tighten the assembly.

Of course, considering what some conventions pay for Hugos, it raises a person's expectations. Nolacon II paid \$750 a copy for the base alone, and it looked like it dropped out of a tall cow. And there's nothing anyone can do about it. But back when a wooden base was standard, Bujold's disappointment was foreshadowed by Kelly Freas, except that Kelly had a grin-and-bear-it attitude. He said the shoddy base on the Best Professional Artist Hugo he won at Heidelberg, Germany, in 1970, "...looked like scraps from someone's barn door..." – unexplainably bad woodwork from the country known for Black Forest cuckoo clocks. When Freas got home, he tore off the committee's base and made his own. (Freas told me this story in 1989, and I wonder if he knows that – according to Bruce Pelz – Heicon chairman Mario Bosnyak really *did* make the 1970 bases from an old barn door, when those he'd ordered failed to arrive!)

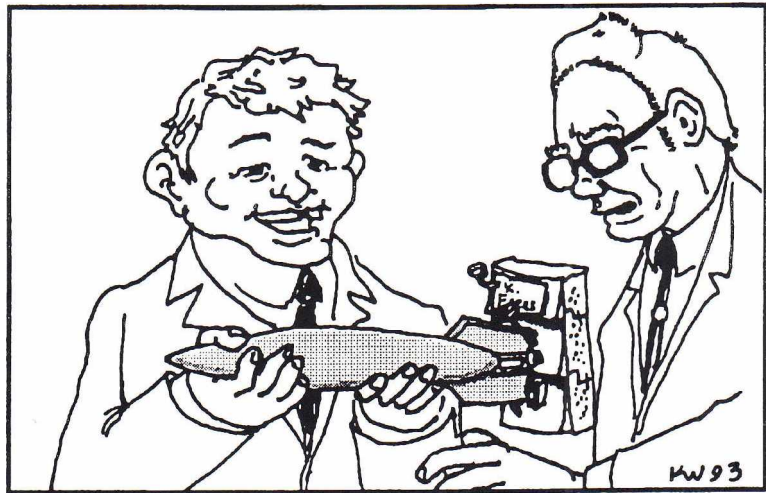
If someone regards the Hugo Award as the epitome of their career in science fiction, it is best he separate the idea of the Hugo from the physical Hugo, which is often a leaky Grail, at best.

Back when I thought Robert Silverberg's best-known book was *Lost Cities and Vanished Civilizations*, a fourth-grader reading about ancient mysteries never to be solved, I learned frustration over the fiery destruction of the Library of Alexandria and delivered this childlike criticism: if only people had been more careful! As an adult, I know differently: I understand the fragility of everything manmade. How can we expect to receive the Library of Alexandria intact when we can't even design Hugo trophies that survive awards night?

Remember the Noreascon 3 Hugo base and all its conic cross-sections, including the green 'toilet seat' shape that appeared to revolve around the rocket and was decorated with brass studs and glass marbles? Several winners discovered decorative bits falling off their Hugos; Connie Willis loved telling everyone how Charlie Brown lost one of his balls. Laughter was a much better answer than irritation.

But the best of the broken Hugo stories is told by the man who explained laughter to Puppeteers, Niven himself.

Larry Niven was up for three Hugos at MidAmeriCon in 1976, and he won Best Novelette for "The Borderland of Sol." They held the ceremony in a Kansas City auditorium where the winners, after coming onstage to receive their rockets, returned to their seats by a circuitous backstage route. Clutching his Hugo with the Tim



Kirk dragon ceramic base, Niven hurried through the dim corridors trying to get back to his seat before they announced the winner for Best Novel, possibly *Inferno*, co-authored with Jerry Pournelle. Niven stumbled, his Hugo hit the floor and broke its sculpted base. "Oh, shit!" he cursed, at the very moment the MC was announcing Joe Haldeman had won the Best Novel Hugo for *The Forever War*. Niven was sure he had been heard by everyone...and had forever confirmed his reputation as 'Mister Tact'.

Someone who seems to have done an excellent job of separating the Hugo ideal from the Hugo trophy was Chesley Bonestell. Rumors persist that a Special Hugo Award given to Chesley Bonestell in 1974 was relegated to his bathroom, and sat on the lid of his toilet tank.

Bonestell showed that if the meaning of the Hugo transcends imperfect physical representations, its meaningfulness to the winner depends entirely on his relationship with the audience that gives it. This was never more brilliantly proven than in Larry Niven's reaction to Harlan Ellison's guest of honor speech at the 1975 NASFiC, held two weeks after the first Australian worldcon. Though in many other years he had actively courted fandom for Hugo Awards, at the 1975 NASFiC, Ellison declared from a lectern surrounded by his Hugos and Nebulas, that he no longer wanted to be defined as a science fiction writer or limit his audience to sf readers.

Half an hour after Ellison's speech, Larry Niven was going up in a hotel elevator, proudly carrying the Hugo he received for "The Hole Man" which friends had just brought him from Australia. Two teenaged boys popped into the elevator next to him and recognized the award, but not the owner.

"Gee, mister, where did you get the Hugo?" one asked.

Without hesitation, Niven cynically answered, "I got it from Harlan. He's quitting science fiction and is giving away his awards. I think he still has a couple left."

The two excited kids jumped off the elevator at the next floor and went pounding away down the hall in search of Ellison. Niven hopes they found him.

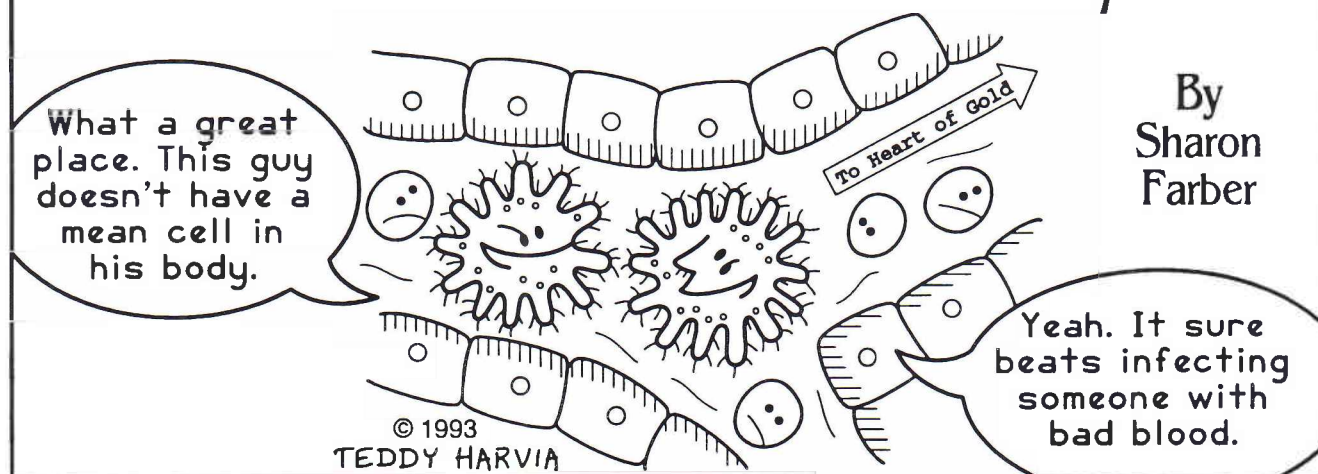
On stage or behind the scenes, all these stories reveal character under stress, which the personality may express graciously or angrily, bitterly or humorously. People understandably remember best the moments that teach us something new about the winners' humanity. But we fans who give Hugos hope that, even when the execution is flawed, the winners will endure good-naturedly because Hugos represent our admiration and affection for them – and that ought to be worth a smile.

Mike's article generated quite a bit of comment, including one from George Flynn, who added his own contribution to the collection of Hugo ceremony mishaps: "When I was Hugo Administrator in 1980, we had the last official presentation of the Gandalf Award for Grand Master of Fantasy. At the last minute, a final ballot arrived by sea mail from England and gave it to Ray Bradbury by one vote [so] I sent the results off to Lin Carter, who sponsored the award and was responsible for showing up with the plaque. [On the night of the Awards ceremony] things went fine until emcee Bob Silverberg called on Carter to present the Gandalf – and it turned out that he wasn't there! (Apparently he didn't come to the con at all.) There followed general consternation, sarcastic cracks by Silverberg, and a horrified realization on my part that I was the only person in the building who knew the result. I rushed a note to the stage and Silverberg announced the winner. But I never did hear whether Bradbury got his plaque." Mark Olson perhaps best summed up what everyone seems to want from the Hugo ceremony: "It's a pity that there seems to be so little overlap between the set of adventurous and creative Hugo ceremonies and the set of successful ones. Some day some Worldcons will do a complex, creative Hugo ceremony with no technical glitches, which starts on time, with no one unable to get seating, that isn't too long, and with no mistakes. And overhead, one by one, the stars will go out."

Another article from *Mimosa* 14 deserving of reprint is Sharon Farber's 9th installment in her "Tales of Adventure and Medical Life" series. In one of life's little ironies, Sharon had moved to Chattanooga only about a year before we left there to move to Maryland. We crossed paths only infrequently with her after that, but new installments of the series kept showing up in our mailbox. They all deserve reprint; this one is one of the best of the series.

Tales of Adventure and Medical Life, Part IX

By
Sharon
Farber



Nice people get bad diseases.

That is one of the primary superstitions of medical students and housestaff, and often debated by them. Do nice people really suffer more, or is just that the doctor cares? But it seems true: if a drunk stumbles off a curb he'll spring back up, but a kindly granny will get a blood clot in the brain and die. The scuzbucket who smokes three packs a day and stole your stereo is fine; the dedicated teacher who started his pack-a-day habit in the Army will get lung cancer for sure.

The problem with nice people is that you like them. And if you care too much for someone, you lose your clinical judgement – you hesitate, you equivocate, you worry too much, you pretend there's no problem. That's why doctors aren't supposed to take care of family members.

One of my medical school roommates had a patient who was young, attractive yet modest, intelligent, an upstanding member of society. He never failed to be polite, even when suffering. He commiserated with the housestaff when they seemed fatigued, thanked them for their concern, and insisted they help themselves to the candy and fruit. He was NICE.

So when his tests came back negative, the doctors knew that had to be wrong. He was so nice, he had to have something bad. *Really* bad. Probably disfiguring and terminal. So they ordered more tests, and when those were fine too, they didn't give up. They ordered still more arcane studies, looking for even more obscure diseases... Finally the attending caught on, and said, "Look, the guy's fine," and sent him home before they suggested exploratory surgery.

Of course, there are many levels of clinical detachment.

Recently, the Lynchi were kind enough to show me a letter of comment that called me "a callous quack." Now, I certainly take exception with *quack*. If I were promising to cure your cancer with spinal manipulation, then I'd be a quack. *Callous* though – well, yeah. Readers of previous installments will have realized that, without a fair modicum of callousness (self-preservation, if you will), a doctor in training will wind up either ineffectual or an alcoholic. To paraphrase that medical school bible, *The House of God* by Samuel Shem, "Remember that the patient has the disease."

Think about it – do you really want a doctor who, upon witnessing disaster, says, "Oh, this is too awful, I'm going to go vomit and then cry. And I'm so upset, I think I'll take the rest of the day off." No, I suspect you'd prefer the cold clinician who will gently push aside the shrieking relatives and then *do something*.

I have stories where I saw tragedy and suffering, and it affected me. But do you really want to read stuff like this:

The young man's chest wound has burst open and he's covered with pus and blood; the odor is enough to knock you flat. He's screaming. I'm running beside the stretcher as we try to get him to the surgeons, holding his hand and saying, "You're going to be fine." The medical student on surgery is a classmate. "See?" I tell the patient. "This is my friend. He's going to take good care of you." He should have done fine. Before I even have a chance to get back to my ward, they announce a code, and I know that he's died.

Loads o' laughs, eh? Or how about:

The bald, emaciated little boy in pajamas, an IV attached to his arm, sits proudly in his huge black Knight Rider toy car. He's back in the hospital to check on the progress of his soon-to-be-terminal brain tumor. Two equally tiny children, also with pajamas and IVs, stand in front of the car, pretending to check under the hood. It is unbelievably cute and unbelievably tragic. I go into the staffing room so I can wipe my eyes.

These stories aren't callous but they also aren't especially entertaining. And I'm being paid here to be entertaining.

Hey waittaminute – I'm not being paid here!

#

The last couple episodes have been about people who fake diseases, usually to manipulate family or the medical system. But not all fakers are faking. I learned this important lesson in my fourth year of medical school, on my emergency room rotation. I didn't learn a heck of a lot in the ER, but it was 8 to 5 and no weekend or night call – in other words, heaven. I spent most of the off time moonlighting in Labor and Delivery at a suburban hospital.

The main problem with the rotation was the pair of surgical interns who alternated 24-hour shifts. The male intern thought I should see a patient, jump to a conclusion, and then support it with tests. The woman thought I should gather all the data before deciding on the diagnosis. I had to alter my mindset 180° every day, something that's not particularly easy for a student, especially one who's been up all night with pregnant women. My main memory of the rotation is of the *intern du jour* yelling at me for doing things the way the other intern preferred.

I did learn to suture after the fashion, but as people went to surgery clinic for follow-up care, I only once saw the fruits of my labor. A workman I'd sewed up my first day returned to the ER with a new injury six weeks later. Seeing me walk by, he held up the arm I'd repaired and shouted, "Hey Doc! Looks great!" I was intensely relieved. I'd been a bit worried that my patients were all having their wounds fly open once they got home.

One day a neurology resident I knew came down to the ER to consult on a teenager who claimed to be completely paralyzed. I wandered over to watch the exam. Her muscle tone and reflexes seemed okay and she wasn't lying in the floppy manner one would expect with extreme weakness. (Or death. I sometimes don't realize when someone on TV is supposed to have passed on to the Great Beyond, as they clearly retain tone. Or are still breathing. It really helps when someone says, "He's dead, Jim.")

The girl didn't look paralyzed. But she still refused to move.

"Raise your arm," the neurologist said.

She whimpered. "I can't."

So he lifted her arm and let it drop. It fell back onto her chest, but not as quickly as a paralyzed arm should have. Very suspicious. My friend looked at me and raised an eyebrow. Then he lifted her arm, suspended it over the gurney railing, and dropped it. *Thunk!* He did it again. The arm struck metal again.

The third time, she pulled her supposedly dead arm away. My friend nodded sagely, the fakery confirmed. She was bundled into a wheelchair – still refusing to walk – and taken to a suburban psychiatry ward.

A couple of weeks later I left the ER to become the student on the neuro consult service. Before we began, the attending said, "I'd like to read you this letter from a local neurologist. 'Dear Doctor, please remind your residents that the diagnosis for Guillain-Barré exists.'"

It seemed that the girl had been suffering from early acute demyelinating neuropathy, a sudden rapid weakness that often follows an immunization or viral infection. She had become progressively weaker while on the psych ward, and wound up on a ventilator.

Now, had she come into the ER saying, "I feel funny, kind of weak. I'm having trouble walking and it's

getting worse,” the proper diagnosis would have been suspected immediately. Instead, perhaps worrying that doctors would not be impressed by minor weakness, she exaggerated. And since you obviously can’t detect a subtle weakness in someone faking total paralysis, she was misdiagnosed and nearly died.

I’ve kept this paranoia-inducing lesson in my mind ever since; it’s caused me to give the benefit of the doubt to many people with clearly functional (fake, psychogenic) problems for longer than most neurologists would. Sometimes you can find a real problem underneath all the functional overlay (i.e., bullshit). Sometimes you just have to sit back and watch and wait.

It’s just not a good idea to exaggerate to your doctor. You’ll either have *all* your problems disbelieved or, what may be worse, believed.

A fellow medical student with unfortunate histrionic tendencies forgot this principle. She went to the ER with a migraine. She should have told the doctor: “It’s one of my usual headaches, but it isn’t responding to medicine; I need a shot.” But no, she had to say, “It’s the worst headache of my life.” Now, at the Barnes ER the phrase *worst headache of my life* was properly interpreted as meaning *I may have a sub-arachnoid hemorrhage. I want a lumbar puncture*. So she got a spinal tap she didn’t really need or enjoy. She blamed me for it, too, because neurologists invented the spinal tap, and I was planning to be a neurologist.

(Lumbar punctures are called LPs. I knew I’d been a doctor too long when I heard the radio announcement ‘Win a free LP or cassette’, and found myself wondering why the hell anyone would want to win a spinal tap.)

Cases in the ER were usually either boring, sad, annoying, or gruesome. They could also be messy.

Nowadays, people wear goggles, gowns, and gloves just to draw blood; in those pre-AIDS days, blood was considered a relatively clean bodily fluid. If it got all over your hands, hair, clothes, shoes, eyes...well, that was an inconvenience, or maybe a fashion statement.

The ER was in the distant corner of the hospital. The only way to get anywhere was down the busy main corridor in front of the cafeteria. I have vivid memories of pushing bloody accident victims past unfortunate visitors who had just enjoyed lunch. Then there was the time we got a woman with a gunshot wound in her breastbone. Every time I compressed her chest, blood oozed out onto my hands and I’d start to slide off. She was so young that the surgery resident got a little desperate – he sliced into her chest and began open heart massage. I last saw her being rolled off to surgery – down the corridor in front of the cafeteria, the surgeon’s hand inside her. No wonder, when they remodeled, they added a back route out of the ER.

I mostly kept a low profile. The other student was busy chasing after the guy who was later to win the Nursing Service Award, for the intern who slept with the most nurses. My main goals were to get out in time to go moonlight, and to avoid annoying the surgeons. I wasn’t out for a rep.

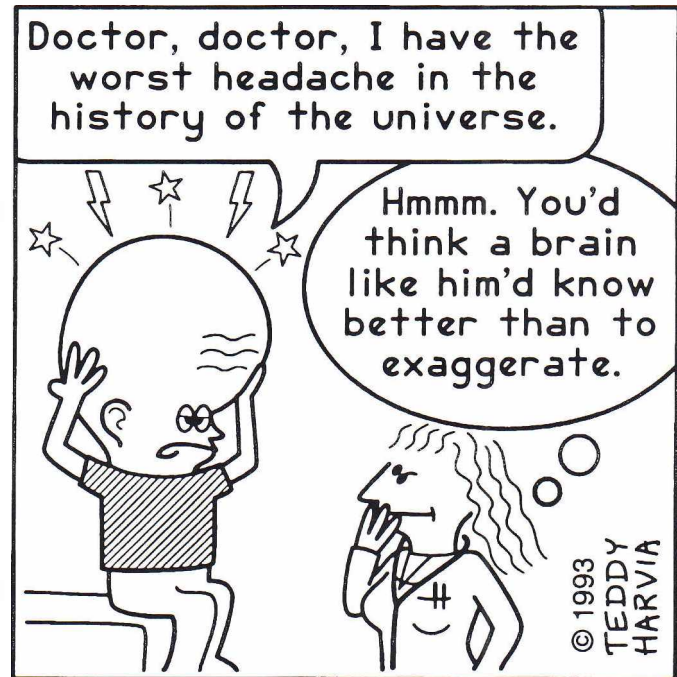
There were three trauma beds in a row by the ambulance entrance. One day a schizophrenic man came in after swallowing half a bottle of aspirin. We wanted him to take an emetic and vomit up the pills. He sat on the middle trauma bed, crossed his arms, and refused.

“You know,” said the medicine resident, “you can drink this now, or you can get your stomach pumped.”

The patient just grinned.

“Get the nasogastric tube,” ordered the doctor, hoping the threat would be enough. Then all hell broke loose – two cardiac arrests rolled in simultaneously.

The resident shoved the ipecac into my hand. “Get it down him, or put down an NG,” he snapped, and



went to one of the codes.

There I was, surrounded by chaos. Bed number one was occupied by a dead man, a dozen shouting nurses, doctors, and medics crowded around him doing CPR, putting in lines and tubes, and giving drugs. The same in Bed 3. And Bed 2 has me and a guy who was refusing to swallow ipecac.

"Take this!" I shouted. It was too noisy to communicate any other way.

He shook his head.

I tried reason. "If you don't, you'll wind up dead, or on a machine with a bunch of tubes. That's real uncomfortable." I waved the cup invitingly.

He grinned with lips tight. I think he was enjoying it.

I tried threats. "Drink it, or I'll shove this tube down your nose." Yeah, sure. Like I could pump his stomach without five orderlies to hold him down – all the orderlies were at the codes. Where I would much rather have been, the drama of life and death being a bit more exciting than too much aspirin.

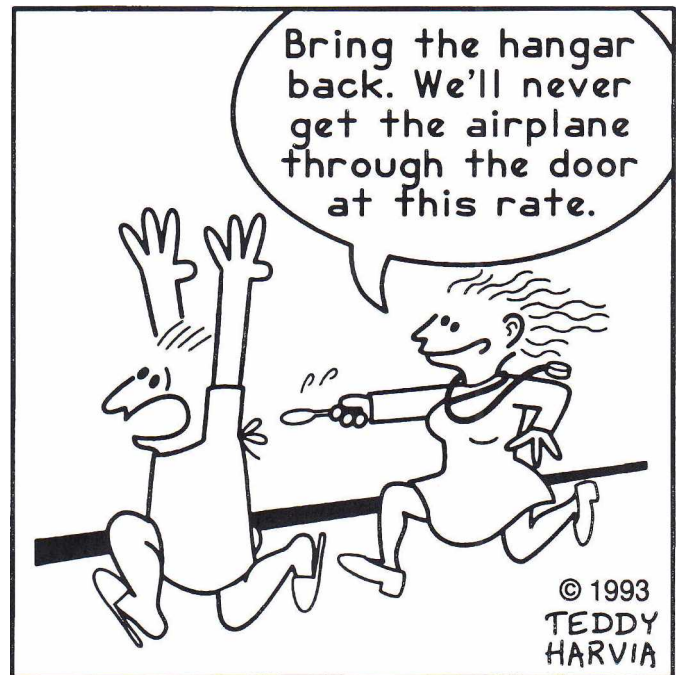
I tried begging. The patient showed me clenched teeth.

I was getting desperate. The codes would end eventually, and the resident would be furious if I hadn't done anything. Not to mention the fact that this guy was in danger every minute the aspirin stayed in his stomach.

So I held the cup in front of him and shouted, "Open the hangar door, here comes the airplane!"

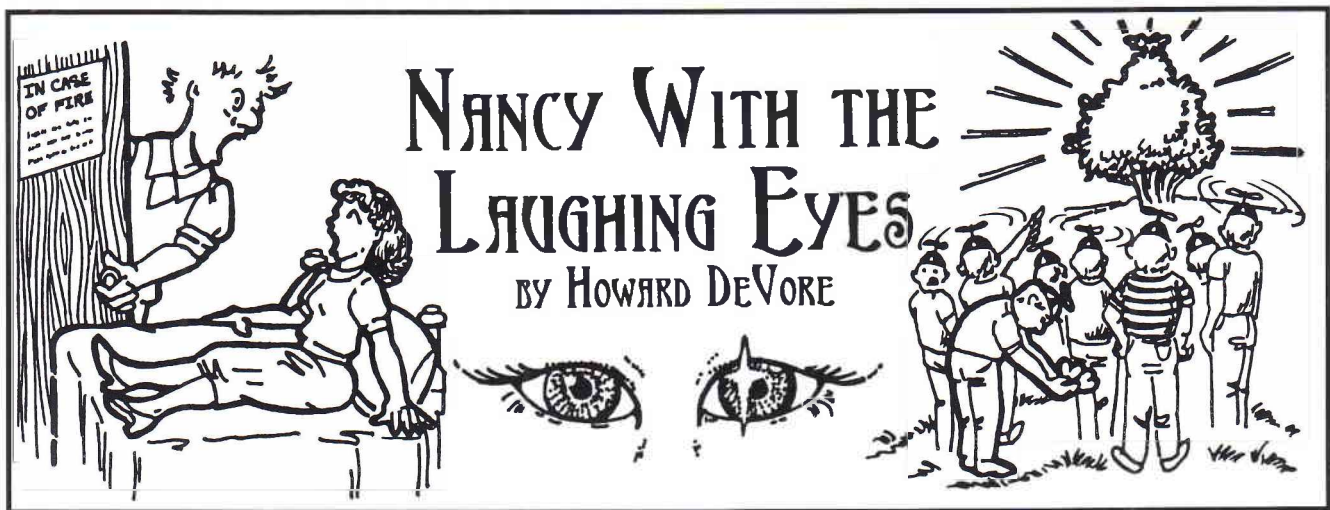
His mouth dropped open in utter astonishment, and I threw the ipecac in... And suddenly realized that everything had gone silent. The two codes had stopped, completely. Everyone who seconds before had been busily resuscitating the dead were now paused to stare at me, aghast, unable to believe what they had heard.

But hey, it worked.



Over the course of her series, the responses we got to Sharon's articles usually fell into two categories: praise for her ability to write entertainingly for the reader, and (as she referred to in the article) a very few who were a bit critical of her for being callous toward her patients. Responses to this article was no different; David Clark, for instance, wrote that Sharon Farber's name on the *Mimosa* contents page "makes me jump to her article first. I even jumped over the Langford article last time!" Tracy Benton commented that "I freely admit that I dread the day Sharon Farber gives up either writing or medicine. Not that her articles have much to do with fannish history, but who the heck cares when they are as fascinating and entertaining as these are."

And speaking of fannish history, its preservation has always been a driving force for us as fan publishers, even back when we published *Chat*. In every issue, always tried to have at least one article related to the history of fandom, whether it was recording the events of some fan club or convention, or just warmly remembering one of the people who, in their own way, help shape what fandom has evolved into today. The final article in *Mimosa* 14 was an example of that latter kind of remembrance, and we're happy to be able to publish it again here.



Nancy Moore Shapiro Raney died of lung cancer in April. She was 59. I do miss her.

Nancy had large dark eyes and was a woman full grown when the 1949 World SF Convention opened in Cincinnati, Ohio. If not the most beautiful woman there, she was certainly in the running, and attracted the attention of George O. Smith immediately. George O. managed to crowd into the circle surrounding Nancy and, at some point, suggested that she join him for dinner at one of the fine restaurants over in Kentucky.

Nancy was delighted. She was always happy when she was the center of attention, and here was the famous *Astounding* writer taking her to dinner. They caught a cab to Kentucky, entered one of the best restaurants there, and ordered dinner. The waiter suggested cocktails and as they were ordering drinks, almost as an afterthought, the waiter asked Nancy how old she was.

"Fifteen," Nancy replied proudly.

George O. choked and gasped, then declared, "And I just took you across a state line! Waiter, cancel her order. The young lady is going home in a cab – right now – ALONE!" It seemed probable that George O. ordered several extra drinks to celebrate his narrow escape.

###

A year later the Worldcon was in Portland, Oregon. Nancy's father had worked for a railroad before his death, and the family had a lifetime pass. Nancy had ridden the trains for three days and was disheveled and exhausted when she arrived at the Hotel Multnomah, only to learn that her room wouldn't be ready for a few hours. George Young from Detroit ran into her in the lobby and, learning of the situation, offered her the use of his room to take a nap. He explained that he was sharing a room with another Detroit fan, Ed Kuss, but Ed had gone downtown and wasn't expected back for several hours.

Ed returned early, however, and when he unlocked the door to his room and stepped inside, he found a young woman, fully dressed, lying on one of the beds. She raised up and screamed, "No! No! I'm only sixteen!"

Ed almost broke the door down getting out of what he assumed was the wrong room.

Nancy later confessed that she had done it to see his reaction. In later years, lots of Detroit fans would pay attention to Nancy, but Ed Kuss always maintained his distance.

###

The first Midwestcon was held in May in that same year of 1950, perhaps as a partial compensation for the midwest fans who couldn't attend the Worldcon in Portland, and has been a yearly event ever since. In 1952, Detroit's very own Benjamin Donald Singer, founder of the Misfits fan club, arranged for a ride with Martin Alger to attend that year's Midwestcon. Martin had a huge Packard, which could be stuffed with up to eight fans for trips like that.

Nancy was a regular attendee of the early Midwestcons, and the meeting of Nancy and Ben at beginning of the 1952 convention had the intensity of the sun going nova. They were together almost constantly the next two

days. Perhaps there were kisses and adolescent fumbling, but the Misfits certainly implied that more was happening. Both Nancy and Ben, so happy to be real 'grown-ups', encouraged this. A few months later Nancy moved to Detroit, sharing an apartment with a local fan, Agnes Harook, and found a job. Nancy and Ben became a couple.

With my encouragement and help, Martin Alger prepared a memorial plaque for the 1953 Midwestcon. On apparent bronze it bore raised letters, showing two hearts bearing Nancy's and Ben's initials and the legend 'Under This Bush a Great Love Was Born – May 1952'. Both the 1952 and 1953 conventions were held at Beatley's on the Lake (later immortalized by Randall Garrett as "Beastley's on the Bayou"), a large resort hotel with extensive grounds. On Sunday morning we gathered a crowd of 100 people, including Ben and Nancy, and searched the grounds – hunting for the proper bush so that we might dedicate that hallowed ground. Ben and Nancy were delighted to be the center of attention.

Sometime during the next year after that, Ben and Nancy had a fight and she returned home to Cincinnati, but they didn't forget each other. Ben didn't attend the 1954 Midwestcon but Nancy did, and at the last moment she asked Martin Alger if she could ride back to Detroit with him so she could see Ben again. There was no problem about luggage, since all Nancy had was the clothes she was wearing and her purse.

Halfway back, Nancy asked Marty if he would stop at a restroom somewhere. Moments later we came to a roadside restaurant situated midway between two towns. Nancy left her purse in the car and went inside. Then, at someone's suggestion, Marty pulled around behind the restaurant and parked. We sat there for about ten minutes, then, when Nancy had still not appeared, Marty started the car and pulled back in front of the restaurant.

Nancy was standing there, gazing down the road, perhaps hoping that we would change our minds and come back for her. She didn't even have a nickel to make a phone call, and would presumably have had to hitchhike the 100 miles back to Cincinnati.

#

There were many other incidents over the years, but most of them have faded in my memory. Life was never dull when Nancy was around. Later, Nancy and Ben would break up again, and Ben would marry a girl named Eleanor who barely tolerated fandom. Within a week or two after that, Nancy married Hal Shapiro, one of Ben's friends. This might have been a way of evening things out, but I suspect it was more a case of Hal, seeing that the competition was eliminated, simply overwhelming Nancy. Marriage was one of the things she hadn't tried yet.

That marriage lasted a couple of years, then Nancy divorced Hal and went into the Army; it probably seemed a welcome relief after being married to Shapiro. After the Army stint, she returned to Cincinnati and (at some point) married Dave Raney and spent the next thirty years with him.

Dave was a non-fan and Nancy seemed happy with that. She would show up at a Midwestcon every five years or so to see old friends, and she may have attended a few Cincinnati Fantasy Group meetings or parties. Her last public appearance was at Roger Sims' New Years Eve party in 1991. She explained that she came only because she knew what fine parties Roger had always thrown.

Like I said earlier, I'm going to miss Nancy. There were never many like her. Now there's one less.

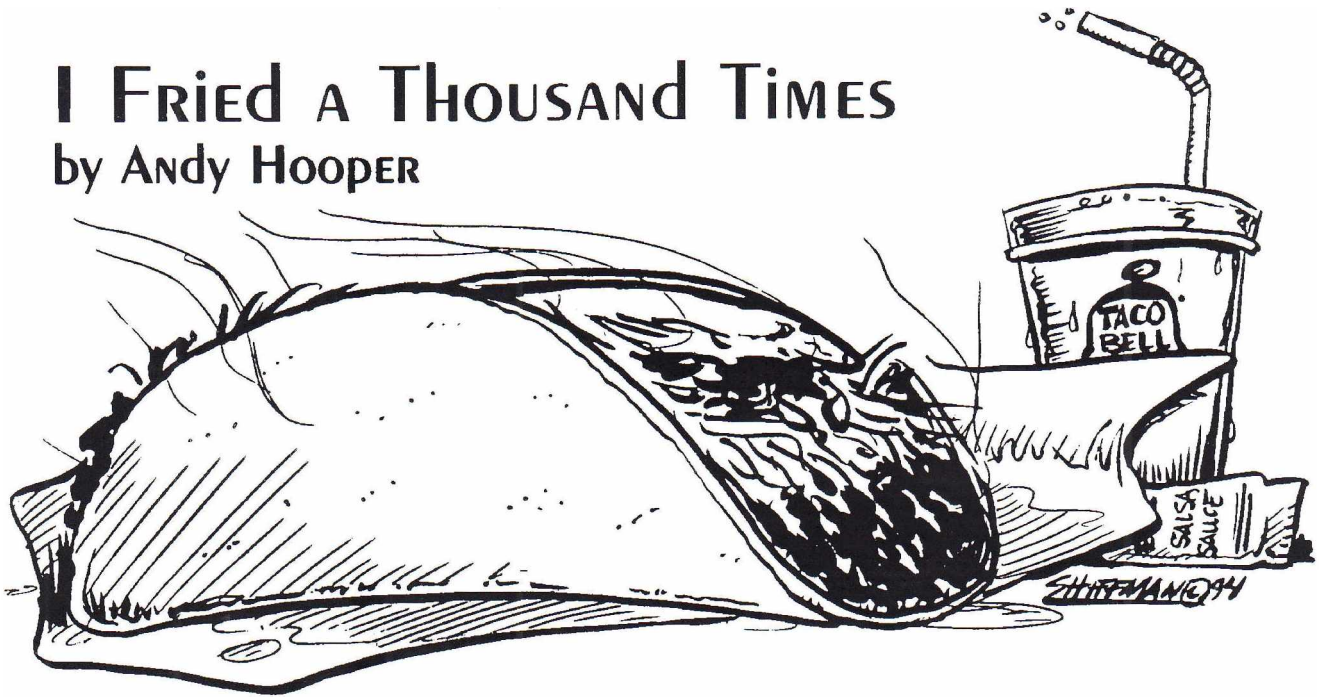
Roger Waddington wrote of Howard's article that "Not having known her, not even knowing she existed, Nancy Moore Shapiro Raney still came alive for me. I could see the person she was; if anything could be truly described as true to life, Howard's article must surely be in the running."

Mimosa 15, which appeared in April 1994, had a 'food' theme, but unlike any previous themed issues, we had made that known in advance and actually invited articles and essays dealing with the topic of food. In response, we got enough material to make *M15* our largest issue in page count to that time – fans and food, after all, are two things that are pretty much inseparable.

One of the more entertaining articles in *Mimosa* 15 was from Andy Hooper, who presented us a cautionary tale for all prospective authors. Here it is again:

I FRIED A THOUSAND TIMES

by ANDY HOOPER



My mistake was this: I made the error that all writers and editors warn against, and I quit my day job. At the end of 1990, I was restive. I wanted to write professionally, and I was itching to apply myself to it full time. And so I left my comfortable job at the hobby store, where I had been entertainingly, if not gainfully, employed for almost six years, and sat down to write.

Six months and no submissions later, our cash reserve was depleted. My wife and I sat down to plot our financial course, and it was clear that I had to get another job. Carrie is well-paid in her capacity as a programmer, and we might well have been able to get by. But worldcon was coming, and our mutual passion for Cajun take-out was a difficult addiction to break. And it certainly didn't seem fair that she went off to work each day while I sat around, not writing.

I made a number of applications. Things were pretty tough right then, and there were a lot of people doing graduate studies in Madison who wanted to work at Kinko's copies on the side. There might have been some other possibilities if I held out longer, but essentially, my only choice was to take a job in food service, which I had not done since the year I had graduated from high school.

And the food I ended up servicing was at Taco Bell.

Now, you may well turn up your nose at Taco Bell, but you have no idea how much worse it is than you imagine. Taco Bell is part of the vast Pepsi-Cola restaurant empire, which also includes Pizza Hut and Kentucky Fried Chicken, and this network has been designed to get as much as possible out of each facet of the fast-food buying population. Pizza Hut is meant to cater to the middle and upper-middle class family, an inexpensive way to feed a family, but still receive sit-down service. Kentucky Fried Chicken is focused on the lower-middle class, a long-standing American institution, and a cheap way to get a lot of food fast, with at least the impression of wholesomeness. And then there is Taco Bell, food so cheap that the under-class can afford to fill up there – grease, salt and carbohydrates for under two dollars.

How can Taco Bell provide this service for so little? They save money in a lot of areas. One is employee wages; Taco Bell has the lowest starting wages of any major fast-food chain. And since employees last less than 60 days on the average, very seldom do employees have to be paid anything more than starting wages. In addition, there are a lot of corners they can cut in the production and presentation of the food, but we'll consider more of that later.

My first concern was that other money-saving measure, wages. When I applied for the job, the manager

told me that the only shifts he had available for line service were from 7 p.m. to 3 a.m. In addition, the hourly wage offered for those positions was pitifully low. When I blanched at this information, Dan (the manager) was quick to point out that he had another job that I might consider, one that was somewhat more challenging, and which paid a higher wage. The position was that of morning fry monkey.

The fry monkey was the guy who came in at six in the morning, fired up the deep fat fryer, and cooked all of the taco shells, nacho chips, salad bowls, tostada shells, Mexican pizza crusts, and cinnamon twists that the restaurant would go through in an entire day. There were some other maintenance and cleaning responsibilities attached to the job as well, but they were secondary to turning out a sufficient volume of 'product' in a timely fashion. The job was hot, repetitive, and messy, but the benefits included working at your own pace, and not having to communicate with the rest of the workers under most conditions. There was also the higher wage to consider, which was more than I had made in the hobby store after six years. I accepted the job, and went home to shave my beard for the first time since 1986.

It rapidly became clear why it had been difficult to find someone to do the job. Every other day, the fryer had to be drained, and the oil filtered. Then the fryer had to be scrubbed with hot water and solvent, flushed repeatedly, and the oil returned to the machine. Every two weeks, the oil was dumped, and new oil melted from a fifty-pound block of shortening.

After cleaning, the oil was brought to something like 370 degrees Fahrenheit, and I began the frying. I was instructed in this procedure by a senior employee named Chuck. Chuck had been working at Taco Bell for over three years, an unheard-of duration. Had he been a professional soldier, instead of just a reservist in the Guard, he would surely have been a lifer.

Chuck's first object lesson was that the oil was dangerously hot. I started to tell him that I had dealt with a deep frier at another Mexican restaurant some ten years before, but before I could finish, he said, "Look, I'll show you." He picked up the steel nacho basket that had been in the hot oil some 45 seconds before and pressed one of its bars against the underside of his left forearm. When he took it away, there was a line of dead-white flesh where it had touched him, and this would later turn into an angry red scar.

"That's very impressive, Mr. Liddy," I said. He didn't get the joke. We moved on to the taco shell racks.

Chuck had performed my job for over six months, so he had very definite ideas about how it should be done. The racks had to be loaded by hand in a certain fashion, dropped into the hot oil for a certain period, removed and drained, and shaken in the same fashion every time. There was a particularly difficult trick to tilting the hot shells out of the rack so that they could be stacked and not broken, and I was hopelessly slow to pick this up. But Chuck's meticulous nature was matched by his stolidity, and when I smashed a whole rack of shells, he would simply take another and show me the proper way to tip them out.

The most challenging part of the job physically was learning to work with my right hand encased in a thick rubber glove. The demands of production were such that there was no question of waiting for the shells to cool enough to handle them bare-handed. In fact, going from fryer to warming cabinet to line, the shell was never supposed to fall below 120 degrees. So in order to handle them safely, I had to wear a very heavy insulated glove. After a few months, I got good enough that I could button my shirt while wearing the gloves. I have quite an appreciation of how hard it is for astronauts to perform delicate operations during space-walks!

Beyond the physical demands of being a fry monkey, there were also challenges in adjusting to the social milieu of Taco Bell. The low wages, lack of benefits, and punishing demand for speed and efficiency in line servers create an incredible rate of turnover in the staff. Those who lasted for more than a month acquired a kind of hard-bitten cynicism, and the ability to perform tasks as prescribed, while still holding the entire process in extreme contempt. New employees came on line, failed to meet this standard, and were fired or quit in disgust. After a while, those of us who had been there more than a month began to regard them as a rifle company in a combat zone would replacements. Best not to learn their names; they'll be dead soon enough.

The people who did last for any period of time were pretty strong personalities. Amanda and Tony were teen lovers who used to regularly slash each other with razor blades as a part of foreplay. Steve shared a house with them, and in his role of assistant manager, used to regularly get so disgusted with the night crew that he would send them all home and did the cleaning himself. Often, we would find him mopping up from the

previous night when we came in for the morning. He eventually quit to move to New Orleans and attend Ninja school.

And then there were employees remarkable for their level of dysfunction. A girl named Jennica was fired after she came in an hour-and-a-half late and claimed it was because she had to wrap a birthday present. Jim was a dish washer who suffered from grand mal seizures, but insisted we ignore them; twice a day I would hear a thump from the sink area, and look over to see Jim's feet protruding around the corner, twitching and knocking against the tile. The other employees just stepped over him.

As I became more adept at frying, it took me less and less time to do the daily allotment. Dan set me to doing other things that had to be done for set-up.

This was when I began to grasp just how unpleasant the food served at Taco Bell really is. The condiments, fresh vegetables and cheeses, weren't so bad. They were delivered by local produce and dairy jobbers. But the things we got from Pepsi food service made army rations look good. The ground beef and chicken arrived frozen in large plastic bags, and were plunged into boiling water for half an hour before serving. The chicken had a viscous beige sauce poured over it before it was served, which was especially repellent.

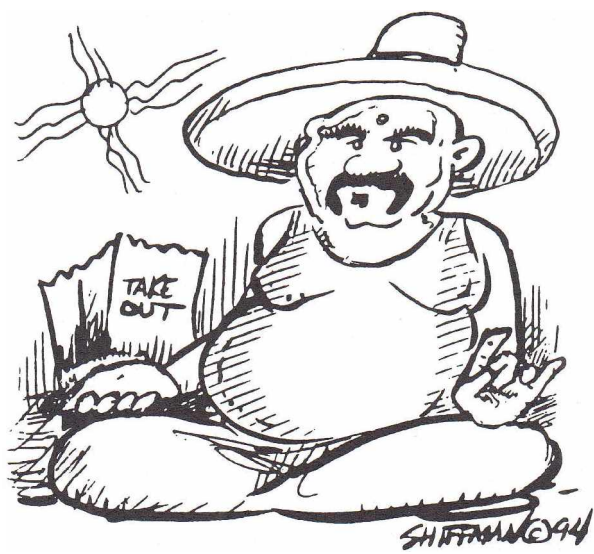
Beans came dried, and were also steeped in boiling water to make them palatable. Nacho sauce came out of a huge can, and often sat for many hours in the warmer before being served. All meat and bean products were too expensive to discard if not served by the end of the evening, so if excessive amounts were made, we would add them to fresh product an unknown number of days later. But by far the worst component was the pico de gallo sauce, used on fajitas. Squeezed from a pouch and thinned with water, I would not have been surprised to learn it was embalming fluid mixed with slivered gherkins.

And despite our knowledge of just how ghastly the food was, we ate the stuff! It was free; we could have a meal every time we worked a four hour shift or more. Given what we were paid, it was inevitable that we be selective about what we remembered once we passed to the other side of the counter.

Everybody had different ways of dealing with the stress and humiliation of the job. Tony liked to play hardcore tapes at thunderous levels during the prep shift. Chuck used to hold dripping bags of garbage over the windshields of the manager's cars. I began putting little satiric posters on the bulletin board in the break room, entitled 'The Fry Monkey Informational Series'. These included things like 'Jobs even worse than yours', 'Ten ways to accessorize with flour tortillas', and 'Taco Bell Zen Koans'.

One thing that united all the workers was our contempt for the general manager of the Madison-area stores, Mark. We chronically fell below the level of rush-hour production that corporate standards called for, and Mark's response was to stand in the kitchen and shower abuse on the line crew. When we heard that the company was going to sell the stores, and Mark would be replaced, we rejoiced.

We were singing a different tune shortly thereafter, when it was revealed that the franchises had been sold back



to the Taco Bell corporation. Taco Bell is currently in the third year of a five-year plan to eventually outstrip McDonalds in number of wholly-owned restaurants in the continental United States. One way they are doing this is by re-acquiring the franchises they sold ten years ago, and bringing them back into the corporate system. So we all came to work one day and found that many things had changed. Our radio had been spirited away, never to return, and the dining room Muzak was now piped into the kitchen as well. We were no longer allowed to eat in the dining room in uniform. Weights of all food items, a key to maximizing profit, were monitored fanatically. And because the long-standing employees were infected with non-corporate procedures, a new manager arrived to ease us out of the schedule.

This was pretty easy in my case, since, for several years, corporate procedure had been to use pre-fried products; I was perhaps the last manual fry monkey at any Taco Bell in the upper midwest. I had been superseded by a delivery truck. And before I could decide if I would make the step to line crew, it turned out we were infected with something else.

I was at home struggling with another unsuccessful short story, when my dad called. "So," he said, "have you had your shot yet?" He had been watching television, and saw a story on how a patient in University Hospital with hepatitis had been traced to our store. It turned out that the new manager brought in to reorganize us had brought some little friends with him as well. It got even more bizarre; he turned out to be wanted by police in Florida for robbery and check fraud, and he slipped from sight in short order.

We all trooped over to the health service and had Gamma Globulin shots. I never heard of any other illness traced back to us, but understandably, business suffered. Two thousand dollars worth of refrigerated product was discarded, and so was most of the crew.

By then it felt like a blessing. I had lasted long past the point when most employees either became management or flame out. Every now and then, I fondly recall the trance-like state I would enter while frying, and bring myself out of it by considering how close I came to staying on as a manager. When the idea of that mindless work seems attractive, I recall my favorite Taco Bell Koan:

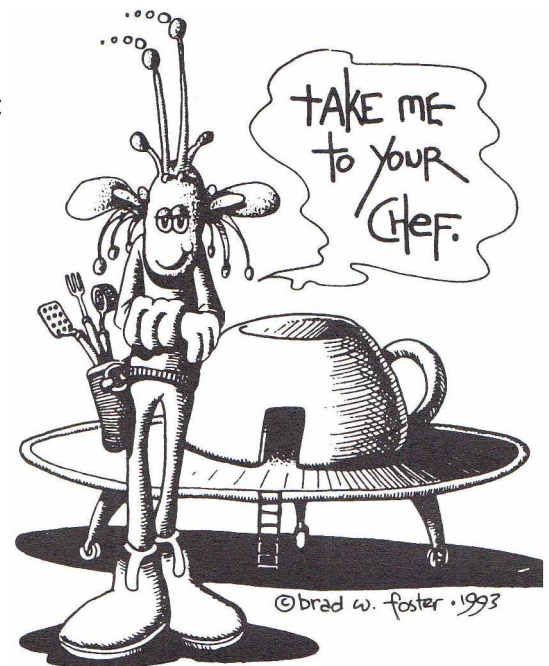
The Manager asked Amanda, "Why do you wear combat boots and a ring in your nose; why do you dye your hair black? Don't you want to become part of management?"

And Amanda replied, "Kill me."

David Thayer wrote us that "Andy's article about hot and fast food left me in a cold sweat. I partially paid my way through college working one summer in a hotdog chain. Had the minimum wage labor not been mind-deadening enough, at the end of August a teenager, his eyes dilated by drugs, appeared at the take-out window with a nickel-plated revolver. The district manager missed the point when he offered me a raise the next day not to quit."

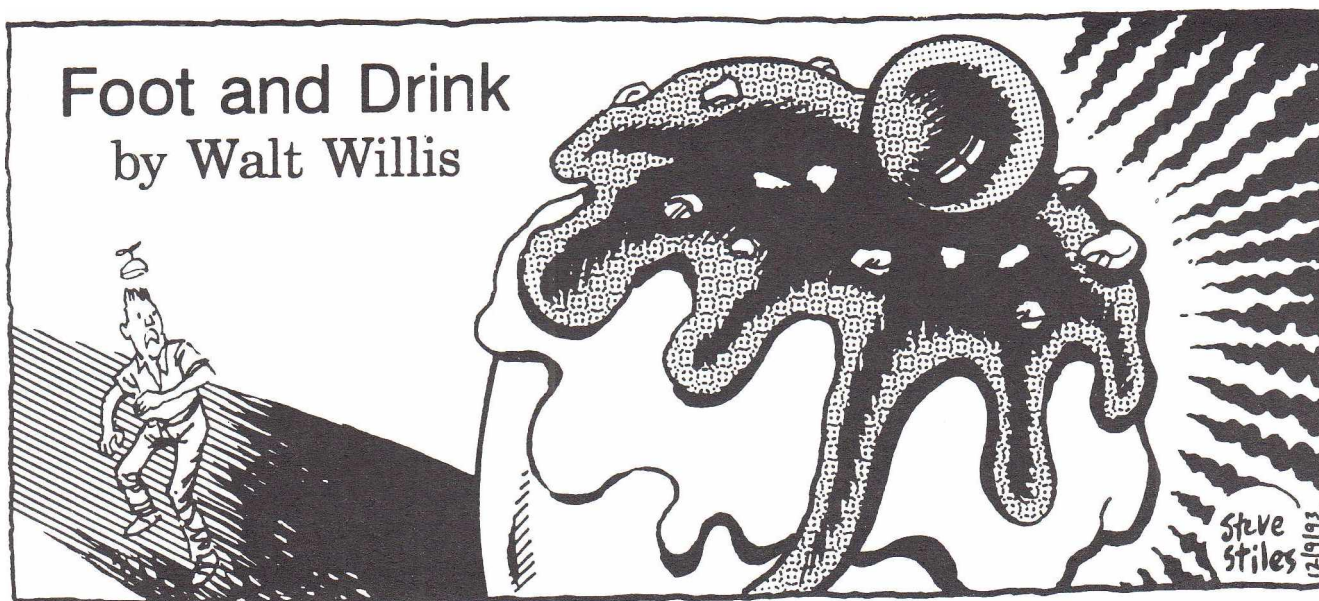
Some of the other articles in *M15* included articles involving army food and hospital food, by David Thayer and Sharon Farber, respectively, articles of fan historical interest (involving food) by Dave Kyle, Dave Rike, and Roger Sims, articles about contemporary fandom (involving food) by Ahrvid Engholm, Ian Gunn, and Alan Stewart, and articles that are a bit more difficult to categorize (but still involving food) by Bruno Ogorelec, Allyson Dyar, and Ted White.

The lead-off article in the issue was actually a reprint - Walt Willis gave us permission to republish an excerpt from his monumental trip report from 1952, "The Harp Stateside." The segment we chose was at the westernmost point of the trip, where Walt had to contend with shoes that were swimming toward Hawaii, a hot nut fudge sundae of transcendental malevolence, and a hamburger topped with *everything*.



Foot and Drink

by Walt Willis



Friends, I should like to warn you all here and now about the hot nut fudge sundae served in The Melody Lane, Los Angeles. It's a wonder that the LASFS, the Insurgents, and the Outlanders do not parade before this restaurant in shifts, or some other striking garment, bearing placards inscribed 'Beware the Hot Nut Fudge Sundae!!' The fact that this was no ordinary hot nut fudge sundae, but a hot nut fudge sundae of transcendental malevolence, was brought home to me when I realized it was making me feel ill even before I saw it. The miasmic aura of the thing (say, this is pretty highclass writing, isn't it? First transcendental malevolence and now miasmic aura) extruded round me from the catacombs of The Melody Lane where it was even now being awakened to its hideous pseudo-life. Cold shivers ran up and down my back as I realised it was crawling to me from the vaults. By the time it reached me I knew the best I could hope for was that I could get home to South Sherbourne Drive before I was physically sick in the presence of the elite of West Coast fandom. The sheer horror of that thought, of being ever afterwards known in Los Angeles fan circles as the guy who was sick in The Melody Lane made me summon up my last reserves. Calling on Roscoe for aid, I struggled desperately against the hypnotic lure of that hot nut fudge sundae. Ghod knows what would have happened if I had succumbed and actually tasted the thing, but I finally overcame it. Driving a sharp spoon through its heart, I staggered out into the night. It had been a grim fight but I had won. I should be known in Los Angeles as nothing worse than a guy who bought hot nut fudge sundaes just to look at. (They might think I belonged to a Sundae Observance Society.)

Next morning we set out for the Pacific Ocean. This ranked up with the Insurgents on my private list of the sights of the West Coast, and since as far as I knew it had never carried on a vendetta against Forry Ackerman, I expressed a wish to see it. I had quite a clear picture of what it would be like. There would be this spectacular cliff road and beside it a beautiful golden strand, deserted except for an occasional beautiful film star committing suicide or playing immersion heaters with Burt Lancaster. You can imagine my surprise then, when after a drive of about half an hour – I'd always thought Los Angeles was on the coast – we pulled up at a sort of fun-fair. Hot dog stands, ice cream vendors, shooting galleries, the lot. One of the sideshows turned out to be the Pacific Ocean. It had a concession of a few square yards of rather dirty sand, and looked depressingly like the Atlantic. I valiantly tried to feel like stout Cortez, silent upon a hot dog stand in Darien (I am now equally valiantly trying not to attempt a joke about a Peke) and sat down at the water's edge to take off my shoes and socks.

It was my intention to wade out a short distance, thinking appropriately solemn thoughts – such that I had now reached the furthestmost point in my journey westwards and this was the turning point – and feeling as poetic as I could in bare feet with my trousers rolled up, I stalked rapidly into the Pacific Ocean. Only to slow down abruptly with an aching sense of injustice. It was COLD. My Ghod, the Pacific was cold! It was intol-

erable. However, I suppressed my indignation and continued on to where the water got deep. I paused, savouring the solemnity of the occasion. Here I was in the Pacific Ocean... My romantic reflections were shattered by a shout from Forry. I looked round. He pointed. I looked down. There, sailing past in line ahead at a good fifteen knots, were my only pair of shoes in 7,000 miles. With a strangled cry I leaped after them, letting go my rolled-up trouser legs, which immediately fell down into the water. I overtook my shoes halfway to Hawaii and struggled back to dry land. I regret to have to tell you that Forrest J Ackerman, a fine man in many ways, failed to show the quiet sympathy which would have been appropriate at this tragic moment. He was rolling on the sand, *laughing*. And as I trudged up to him, he said, "A slow boot to China."

I wrung out my trousers, put on my shoes and squelched back to the hot dog stand for a chocolate malt to restore my faith in life. Feeling hungry after the afternoon's surf sports, I also ordered a hamburger. Then I took my shoes off again and began to drip quietly on the floor. I realised the hamburger man was speaking to me.

"What?" I said.

"With?" asked the man.

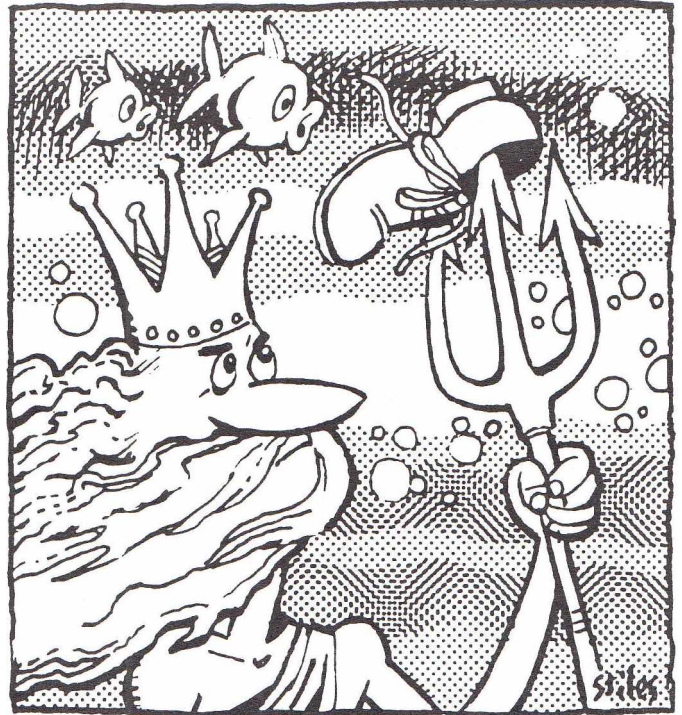
"With," I said. Whatever it was, it was evidently free and I wasn't going to pass it up.

"With onions?" asked the man.

"With everything," I said recklessly. Forry looked at me.

"Everything?" asked the man, with an air of incredulous hope.

"Everything," I said. I was beginning to have vague premonitions, but since I didn't know what he was going to put in, I didn't know what to tell him to leave out.



A wild gleam came into the fellow's eye, and he momentarily disappeared in a blur of motion. He was leaping about his booth like a mad thing, collecting samples of every organic substance within a radius of ten feet and piling them onto the foundation stone of my hamburger. I stared aghast. Obviously this man had dedicated his life to thinking up things which could be incorporated in a hamburger. I could see him waking in the middle of the night and noting down the name of some edible Peruvian root he had overlooked. But then as the years went by, his simple faith in his mission in life must have been disturbed: was it, he must have asked himself during the long frustrating years of preparing commonplace six-ply hamburgers, was it all worthwhile? Would his genius ever be recognized? And then, at last, I had come along, his soul mate, the Perfect Customer, the Man Who Wanted Everything. This was his destiny, the culmination of his career.

The hamburger rose to the sky like an edible Tower of Babel, an awesome monument to the ambition and ingenuity of Man. And still it grew, tier after tier, higher and higher. Until finally the human whirlwind subsided and looked about distractedly at his depleted shelves. I kicked my shoes out of his reach. After a few more moments of ... meditation, he sighed and delicately added the roof to the hamburger, like a great artist signing his masterpiece. He stepped back and gazed at it, tears of pride in his eyes.

Cowering in the shade of the edifice, I looked helplessly at Forry. He pretended he wasn't with me, and went to make a phone call. Looking round the hamburger, I could see the fierce eyes of its creator on me. I nibbled guiltily at the fringes of the thing for a while, and then desperately lifted it in both hands and began to gnaw at it. A shower of mustard, onions, beetroot, pickles, lettuce, and countless other foodstuffs began to descend over me and the immediate neighbourhood. I hoped Forry was warning the Fortean Society.

After some time, I had absorbed, either internally or externally, enough of The Hamburger to give me courage to make a break for it. I stole guiltily away, resolving to make a will leaving the remains of it to the United Nations Famine Relief Fund.

In the evening, Forry took me out for a last drive. I saw Hollywood Boulevard and Sunset Boulevard and everything, including Grauman's Chinese Theater where they have the impressions in cement of such anatomical characteristics as Joe E. Brown's mouth and Durante's nose. I noted that for some reason, Jane Russell was represented by her feet.

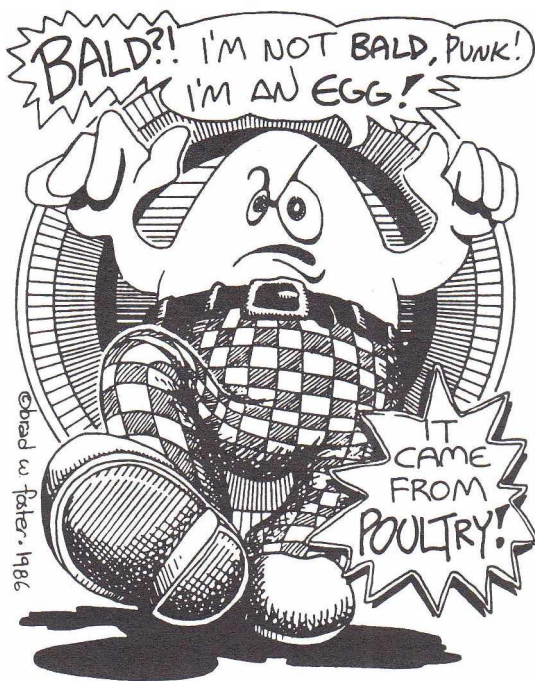
I know I didn't see much of California, but what I saw was a bit disappointing. I'd been thinking of it as a green and golden paradise, and hadn't realised it was largely reclaimed desert. The surrounding hills were unexpectedly barren and ugly, and the houses among them looked from the distance like matchboxes scattered among uncompleted excavations. Los Angeles had some fine streets and buildings, but seemed too diffuse to have an integrated personality, and the most lasting impression I took away with me was a café sign advertising 'The Original Rain On The Roof'. The notion of simulating the sound of rain as a seasonal attraction seemed to me quite startling.

One of the letters we received about our 'food' issue was from Harry Warner, Jr., who wrote that "The thing that most impressed me about this collection of food pieces plus a fake-food item or two is how far superior the Walt Willis reprint is to everything else, as far as sheer writing ability is concerned. I don't mean that other contributors in the issue aren't interesting, and amusing, and informative. But none of them lets off the verbal fireworks in a continuous barrage like these pages from 'The Harp Stateside'."

It turned out that we never tried another pre-announced theme issue again; we'd thought that a theme of 'food' would bring out some entertaining stories from just about all of our readers, but it seemed to cause some of our regular contributors to shy away, or at least postpone what they'd originally been planning to write for another issue.

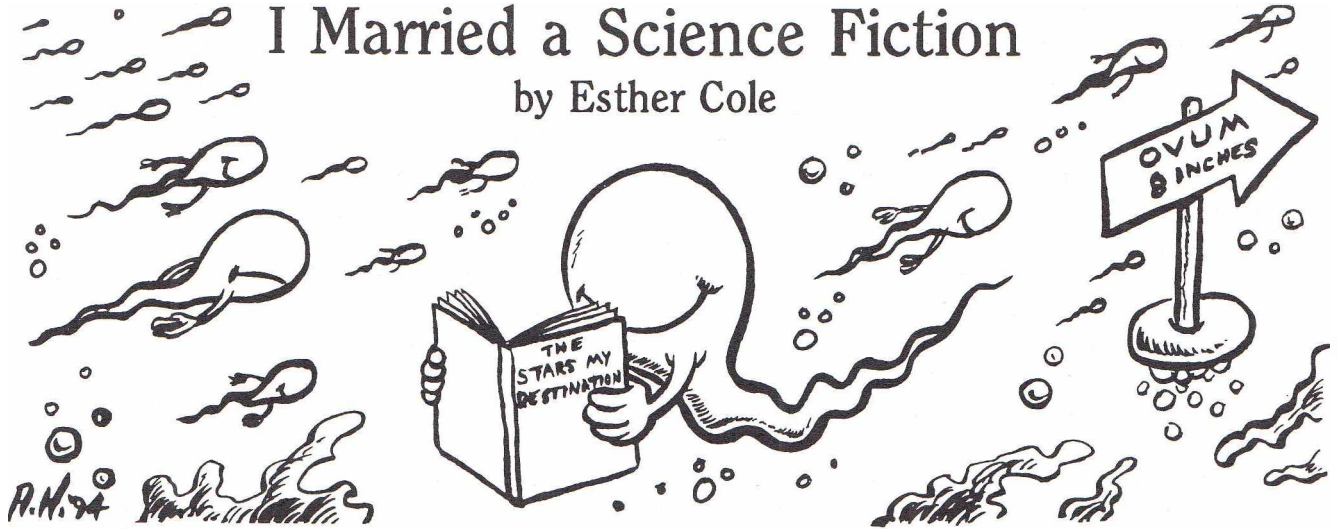
The 16th issue of *Mimosa* appeared in the final days of December 1994, and had a theme of 'WORLDcons'. We'd been to ConAdian a few months earlier (where we'd won our third Hugo Award); it was the second non-U.S. worldcon in four years, and with another non-U.S. worldcon coming in 1995, we were becoming more and more captivated by the international character of fandom.

Many of the articles in *M16* were about non-U.S. fandoms – Ahrvid Engholm wrote about Swedish fandom, Vincent Clarke provided a story about 1950s British fandom, and Dave Kyle wrote an article about the years he spent living in England. But we still had room for articles about some of the past and present eras of U.S. fandom as well, including one about *both* by Esther Cole:



I Married a Science Fiction

by Esther Cole



1944

Science fiction came to me in the form of a man – a large-sized visionary. I was interested in his mind, and Les was interested in my big b-----, er, best interests. Sf has been defined as the extrapolation of science and fact projected into time and space. This is as good a definition of Les as any.

If this projection stretches fact or exaggerates science, the result is fantasy. Frequently, the line between sf and fantasy is indistinguishable, and sometimes, too, it's difficult to know if Les is real or imaginary.

Les came a-wooing with a copy of *The Black Flame*. In it, the protagonist wears a gown of Alexandrites, so when Les told me Alexandrites sold for \$10,000 a carat and promised to drape me in them, my answer was YES YES YES YES (exactly like Sally to Harry).

For years, Les talked to me in science fiction, but football and finals jammed my receiver. But one day, an impressive mushroom filled the sky above Hiroshima, and sf became fact.

The world of sf, as you all know, is a crazy, mixed-up business. There's much that Bill Lundigan, ZIV, and *The Twilight Zoners* are keeping from the public. The conventions, for instance. These conclaves attract the entire gamut – fen, pros, publishers, editors, child geniuses, and the lunatic fringes. Where the legitimate attendees stop and the lunatic fringe begins, puts us right back to where sf ends and fantasy begins. No easy distinction.

A popular topic at conventions is 'How Old I Was When I Started Reading SF'. For a long time, the champion was Les, who claimed to have started at minus four months. He was a well-read fetus. Then, Ron Hubbard and Dianetics showed memory could travel back through the originating sperm and ova. (Thus explaining split personalities and science fiction writers.)

Les was writing sf for almost as long as he read it. He first wrote to editors. His published letters filled several scrapbooks, and he developed a certain reputation (mostly unprintable). After we married, Les generously included my name, too, and a rumor spread we were 15-year-old twin brothers.

Les's letters attracted a character named Lee Jacobs – who wouldn't drink coffee and liked macaroni/cheese casseroles made with chocolate milk. He convinced us to co-publish a fanzine, and we named it *Orgasm*. The title was symbolic, but other fanziners found it lewd and offensive. (Anyone who finds orgasms lewd and offensive, please stand up.) So we shortened it to *The Big O*. We had competition from Oasis Cigarettes. (Anybody out there remember Oasis Cigarettes?)

Having tasted fame and poverty – our entire income went into paper and postage – we decided to attend the upcoming sf convention in New Orleans (1951). We thought if we exposed ourselves, folks might see we weren't 15-year-old twin brothers. I loved New Orleans and hated the cooking. Nine months later, we knew why – Dana Cole, permanent sf convention souvenir.

In 1952, Les wanted to show the world his reputation as a crackpot was unfounded...so he claimed a hunk of the moon. He really just wanted to be an altruist; the theory went like this: Les claims a hunk of the moon, applying to the United Nations. The UN denies the claim, but in doing so establishes itself as the moon's gov-

erning body, thus making our solar system safe for democracy. Unfortunately, they didn't get it.

The 'moon claim' project was as legal and scientific as Les could make it: a graduate student of astronomy surveyed the area; an attorney wrote the legalese; an ad expert laid out the campaign; contacts in the newspaper underground were alerted to assure front-page coverage. The news releases were slanted to match each local paper's personality. The result came off as smoothly as chicken fat on chopped liver. For three days, Les answered the phone as I clipped newspapers. The 'moon claim' story was printed in every one of the Bay Area newspapers; it went out on the wire services and appeared in newspapers around the U.S., Europe, South America, and Australia. Scrap books were filling up like crazy.

Besides 'moon claim' scrapbooks, there was another one that contained rejection slips. Les was told that when he started receiving personalized notes as rejection slips, he'd be just around the corner from selling. That corner lasted six years, but the rejection slips made great reading: Boucher, Campbell, and Horace Gold – the best of the best. His first published story went to a British sf mag, and he was paid in ha'pennies. That's what Les's share came to after the agent got his fee. A first sale is portent of wondrous things to come, and we were prepared to fill another scrapbook – with checks.

In 1952, the World Science Fiction Convention was in Chicago. Sf had become a way of life with us (which we were fortunate enough to outgrow), so Les quit his job and together with four month old Dana and two friends, we drove non-stop to the convention. For three days (along with six other 'Little Men') we lived high, thirty-two floors up in the \$100-a-day penthouse suite, noshing on hot dogs and wondering what we would live on when we got back to Berkeley.

In October 1953, Lance Cole arrived, and wanted to go to an sf convention like his brother Dana. So we gave him one. Les and I got a chance to put on the SFCon in San Francisco, in 1954. We had expert help from other amateurs. For a year, we prepared publicity, brochures, and programs. We included an sf art exhibit at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor (original oil Bonestells, among others), and a chamber opera of a Bradbury story, Tony Boucher narrating. We combined the Westercon with the Worldcon to make it a four day convention, and we *doubled* the registration fee from one dollar to two dollars!

Strange things happen to sf convention committees; after the affair, members of the committee are never seen nor heard from again. It wasn't until last year (1993), again in San Francisco, that Les and I surfaced again, prodded by Dave Aronovitz and nurtured by Richard Lynch. (Incidentally, Dave Aronovitz now owns all the Cole scrapbooks and all other of our sf memorabilia.)

The crowning moment of my life with a science fiction came at two o'clock in the morning in Altadena, in 1956. The phone rang, and Alvarez of the New York *Post* wanted to talk with Lester Cole. I shook Les awake, and he started to rehearse his acceptance speech for a Pulitzer prize.

"Hello," greeted the cheerful voice long distance. "We want to know what you've been doing for the past ten years since the House Un-American Activities investigations forced you underground..."

"No, no," Les cried in frustration. "That's the *other* guy!"

"But aren't you a writer?"

"Yes."

"And aren't you Lester Cole?"

"Yes. But you're thinking of the *other* Lester Cole. I write science fiction."

We finally got back to bed. Les eventually convinced Alvarez that there was another Lester Cole – one of the Hollywood Ten – but I lay awake longer, unconvinced. I know how many other Les-es I've been living with all these years!

#

1993

Half a century has passed, and I'm still finding new Les-es: he's a 15-year-old twin brother, a novelist, a grandfather, and a sex object. I'm still not sure if he's science fact or fiction...

There were some very appreciative comments about Esther's article, including one by Janice Eisen who wrote us that it "was an absolute delight. Thanks for drawing her out of the mists of gafia." Another contributor to M16, whom we also managed to draw from the mists of gafia, at least as far as fan writing was concerned, was Forry Ackerman, who provided us his first installment of an autobiographical series:

Through Time and Space with Forry Ackerman (Part I)

by Forrest J Ackerman



If I had to pick a time when I could have declared, “I am a science fiction fan!”, it would have been in 1929. I was 14 years old. I had the first letter in the first letter column of *Science Wonder Quarterly*. That letter was seen by a young boy about my age named Linus Hogenmiller, of Farmington, Missouri. And it so happened that I was feeling a little under the weather and was staying home from high school, when I received his letter.

I was so thrilled to hear from a fellow science fiction fan! I had time on my hands, just sitting up in bed, so my mother got me some stationery, and I hand-wrote three letters to Linus that same day. As soon as I finished a six or seven page letter, I’d think of other things to tell him.

At that time, science fiction was still called ‘scientifiction’. In correspondence with Linus, he was the first one to get a little weary of writing ‘scientifiction’ all the time, so he wrote ‘stf’. In the beginning, we pronounced it ‘ess-tee-eff’, and that got a little tiresome so he cut it down to ‘stef’, and then merged it with ‘fan’; we had ‘stef-fans’ for a while, then ‘stfans’.

Well, about that time I created a correspondence club called ‘The Boys Scientifiction Club’. (I had nothing against girls, but they were as rare as a unicorn’s horn in the fandom of 1930.) I personally was writing to 116 science fiction fans around the world, and had a correspondent in Russia, as well as several in England and Canada. Well, the way the Boys Scientifiction Club operated was that you sent in a little snapshot of yourself. You also sent in either three issues, consecutive, of one of the magazines that had a serial in it, or a hard-cover book, of which there weren’t too many at the time. In return, you got to keep either three magazines or a book for a month. Pretty soon, it got to where I was staggering five or six blocks to the mailbox, just to send off the books or magazines to the members.

Anyway, this little correspondence club that I created had given me a thirst for writing. About that time, Francis Flagg, who was a well-known science fiction author of the day, was running out of ideas. I, however, had more ideas than I knew what to do with, but at age 15, I didn’t have professional ability yet. So I would send him an idea and he wrote it up. In the last issue of *Wonder Stories*, April 1936, I had my first professional story published, together with Francis Flagg, called “Earth’s Lucky Day.” And that kind of convinced me that I was going to be an author when I grew up. I *hoped* to be another H. G. Wells, Olaf Stapledon, or somebody else of considerable consequence, but when I grew up and looked around in my mind, there weren’t these great book ideas – instead, everything seemed to trend more toward the O Henry type of super-short story.

I’m getting ahead of myself a little bit, but some years later, I finally wrote I guess what must be the world’s shortest science fiction story – one letter of the alphabet, for which I got paid a hundred dollars. After its initial sale, I sold it four more times, so I got paid five hundred dollars for a single letter of the alphabet. Since a natural word, I think, is considered generally to have about five letters in it, I got paid at the rate of \$2,500 per word. Later, I sold it in eight translations, and of course, I retained the serialization rights... Then I confess that I did a very sneaky thing, I copyrighted the remaining letters of the alphabet, so nobody can use them but me for one-

letter stories... I will reveal for posterity that letter of the alphabet. The story was called "Cosmic Report Card: Earth", suggesting that flying saucer aliens were going around checking out Mars, Venus, Jupiter, and so on. I'm afraid the Earth got an 'F'.

The 1930s was the era when Hugo Gernsback started the Science Fiction League. In Los Angeles, the fourth chapter was created, and one day in 1934, in the garage of an adult fan, there was a preliminary little meeting, but nothing happened until a year later when we finally got going. I was at the charter meeting of that club, which eventually came to be known as the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society,

or LASFS. By that time, *Thrilling Wonder Stories* was sponsoring the League, I believe. A young fan named Roy Test came to the club, together with his mother Wanda Test. She became our first secretary, and the minutes were called 'Thrilling Wanda Stories'...

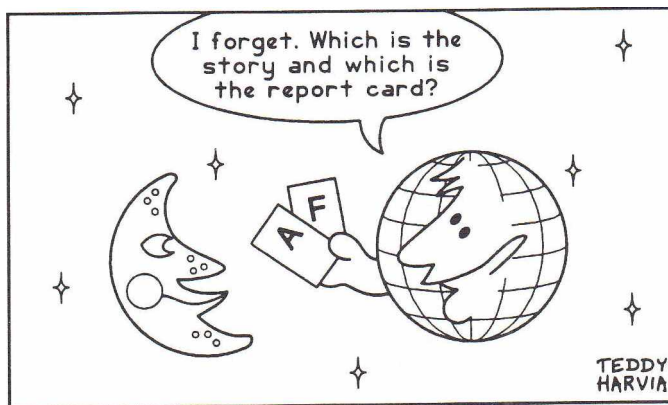
At that time, Charles D. Hornig was a young fellow who put out a very fine professional-looking printed magazine called *The Fantasy Fan*. Gernsback, who was looking around for an associate editor, saw this publication and he asked Hornig to come and see about getting the job. Well, he was staggered when a 17-year-old boy walked into his office. I still remember that letter I got from Charlie Hornig: "Forry, can you *imagine* what's happened?!? I've become the *editor* of *Wonder Stories*!!" (When he was given the offer, he had said, "I'll have to go home and ask my mother and dad whether they will let me.")

Well, in 1939 I heard, through the pages, I guess, of *Thrilling Wonder*, there was going to be the first World Science Fiction Convention. Well, boy oh boy, gosh wow, I sure intended to be there! I trembled with every clickety-clack of the railroad track, from L.A. to New York, and when I got off the train, there was Don Wollheim and five or six fans to greet me. One of them, fifteen years old with a bit of a paunch and dribbling cigarette ashes, looked me up and down disdainfully, and said, "So *you're* the Forrest Ackerman who has been writing those *ridiculous* letters to the science fiction magazines." He introduced himself to me as Cyril Kornbluth. And then he punched me in the stomach! I thought, "Well, welcome to Fun City! For this I came three thousand miles??"

Both Wollheim and Kornbluth were among the fans who were excluded from that very first Worldcon. I still have sort of a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach about it. When the gavel fell, and the first World Science Fiction Convention became reality, six fans were left standing outside. I couldn't *believe* it!

Ray Bradbury was a member of that first Worldcon; back in 1939, he was busy getting autographs rather than giving them. My recollection to this day is that I lent him fifty bucks so he could spend three and a half days and nights on a Greyhound bus to get there. I am told that every time that Ray Bradbury tells this story, the loan keeps going up and up in value in his memory – it's gotten up to ninety-five dollars now! It took him a year or two, but he finally managed to pay it back. Ray had deliberately gone to the convention carrying a portfolio of work by Hannes Bok. I remember accompanying him later to the office of *Weird Tales*, meeting Farnsworth Wright, who was a rather emaciated-looking individual. At that time he had Parkinson's Disease – he could just barely sign an autograph for us, but he took one look at Hannes Bok's work and immediately accepted it.

Ray Cummings, the legendary author, attended the convention. We had hoped that A. Merritt might attend also, but he was busy being the Sunday section editor of *The American Weekly*. So the day after the convention, a little group of us – 6 or 8 fans – got together and visited him. Someone had phoned, and he was waiting to meet us in his office. The now-deceased fan Dale Hart was so excited he was going to meet A. Merritt that he got up and he brushed his teeth with shaving cream! He was *really* foaming at the mouth! While we were in the anteroom, waiting for Merritt, along came Virgil Finlay, who was doing work for *American Weekly* and Merritt. He had a marvelous portfolio of these originals, and our eyes were popping out of our heads to see his incredible classy work. Well, about ten minutes later, we were ushered into Merritt's office – he was a little on



the deaf side, so we all clustered around. He was extremely cordial to us, and made us fans feel quite welcome.

Another event at that convention was my costume, which was based on *Things to Come* and Frank R. Paul's artwork. Many people have asked me over the years, "Forry, where did you get the nerve to wear that futuristic costume on the streets of New York?" But I think it was sort of like being mild-mannered Clark Kent, going into the telephone booth and coming out as Superman. When I wore that outfit in public, little children were running in the streets of New York crying, "It's Flash Gordon! It's Buck Rogers!" I even got the nerve to go out to the Worlds Fair in it; they had a platform with a microphone, and if you were from Spain, or from Sweden or France or Germany or wherever, you could come up and greet the world in your native language. So I got this quixotic notion to go up and speak in Esperanto to the world, and say that I was a time traveler from the future, where we all spoke this language.

One other memory I have of that first Worldcon is that the banquet was so expensive that only 29 people could afford it. It was *one dollar a plate*! I had the good fortune to sit with Willy Ley, the great rocket expert, on the left of me, and L. Sprague de Camp on the right. One hundred and eighty-five of us were at that first World Science Fiction Convention! Several years ago, my wife entertained one hundred and eighty-six science fiction personalities in our home, including two astronauts – one more than that whole first World Science Fiction Convention!

Harry Warner, Jr. wrote us that he was very happy that Forry Ackerman was "finally putting into words some of his memories of fandom past. I feel confident that he could write five hundred or more sections equaling or exceeding in length this first part without even approaching the end of his recollections." To that, Walt Willis added: "The instalment of the Ackerman biography was fine, but instilled in me a great sense of guilt. Forry sent me a first instalment of his autobiography while I was publishing *Slant*, and I never used it., partly because it was too long for *Slant* and partly because what I really wanted was the low-down on his feud with Laney. So when a glowing prospectus arrived for a great new Canadian fanzine I sent him my entire *Slant* backlog. Nothing further happened. The great new Canadian fanzine disappeared without trace, along with the *Slant* backlog. I never explained or apologised to Forry, and he never complained, which is one of the reasons I regard him as the most saintly person I know." And Vincent Clarke commented that "I've been reading bits of Ackerman's autobiography for years, but it's nice to have it put together in *Mimosa*. I also have a fanzine by him called *What's Wrong With Science Fiction?* It is, of course, blank. It's a pity he drifted (some time ago) rather into film fandom than kept to simon-pure fanzine fandom, but he has a spot in all our hearts. I remember when I met him a few years ago, all I could say was that I admired VOM. He took being congratulated for a 40-year-old fanzine in his stride."

We've saved the final

spot in this Fanthology for Mike Resnick's article from *M16*, which is not only a look back at ConAdian, it's also a story of his own personal introduction to fandom:



ROOTS and a few vines. by Mike Resnick



So I'm sitting there in Winnipeg, resplendent in my tuxedo, and morbidly wondering how many fans have called me 'Mr. Resnick' instead of 'Mike' since the worldcon began three days ago.

I don't *feel* like a Mister. I feel like a fan who is cheating by sitting here with all the pros, waiting for Bob Silverberg to announce the winner of the Best Editor Hugo. He goes through the names: Datlow, Dozois, Resnick, Rusch, Schmidt.

He opens the envelope and reads off Kris Rusch's name, and suddenly I am walking up to the stage. Bob is sure I thought he called out *my* name, and looks like he is considering clutching the Hugo to his breast and running off with it (although that is actually a response common to all pros when they are in proximity to a Hugo), but finally he sighs and hands it over to me, and I start thanking Ed Ferman and all the voters.

What am I doing here, I wonder, picking up a Hugo for a lady who is half my age and has twice my talent and is drop-dead gorgeous to boot? How in blazes did I ever get to be an Elder Statesman?

#

Well, it began in 1962, which, oddly enough, was *not* just last year, no matter how it feels. Carol and I had met at the University of Chicago in 1960. We'd gone to the theater on our first date, and wound up in the Morrison Hotel's coffee shop, where we talked science fiction until they threw us out at 5 in the morning. It was the first time either of us realized that someone else out there read that crazy Buck Rogers stuff (though we might have guessed, since they continued to print it month after month, and two sales per title would hardly seem enough to keep the publishers in business.)

Well, 1962 rolls around, and so does a future Campbell winner named Laura...but the second biggest event of the year comes when Ace Books, under the editorship of Don Wollheim, starts pirating a bunch of Edgar Rice Burroughs novels, and a whole generation gets to learn about Tarzan and Frank Frazetta and John Carter and Roy Krenkal and David Innes all at once.

But the important thing, the thing that unquestionably shaped my adult life, was that one of the books had a little blurb on the inside front cover extolling ERB's virtues, and it was signed 'Camille Cazedessus, Editor of *ERB-dom*'. Well, you didn't have to be a genius to figure out that *ERB-dom*, at least in that context, was an obvious reference to Edgar Rice Burroughs.

A whole magazine devoted to one of my favorite writers? I could barely wait until the next morning, when I took the subway downtown and entered the Post Office News, Chicago's largest magazine store. I looked for *ERB-dom* next to *Time*, *Life*, *Look*, *Newsweek*, and *Playboy*. Wasn't there. I looked for it next to *Analog*, *Galaxy*, and *F&SF*. No dice. Wasn't anywhere near *Forbes* or *Fortune* or *Business Week* either.

So I go up to the manager and tell him I'm looking for *ERB-dom*, and he checks his catalogs and tells me there ain't no such animal.

I grab him by the arm, drag him over to the paperbacks, pull out the operative Burroughs title, turn to the inside front cover, and smite him with a mighty "Aha!"

So he promises to get cracking and find out who publishes this magazine and start stocking it, and I return to our subterranean penthouse (i.e., basement apartment) to await the Good News.

Which doesn't come.

I nag Post Office News incessantly. I nag my local bookstore. I nag the public library. I even nag my mother. (This seems counter-productive, but she has been nagging *me* for 20 years and fair is fair.)

Finally, I look at my watch and it is half-past 1962 and there is still no sign of *ERB-dom*, so I write to the editor, Miss Cazedessus (so okay, until then I'd never heard of a *guy* named Camille), in care of Ace Books, and a month later the first five issues of *ERB-dom* arrive in the mail, the very first fanzines I have ever seen, along with a long, friendly letter that constantly uses the arcane word 'worldcon'.

Within two months I have written three long articles for *ERB-dom* #6 and have become its associate editor. There is a worldcon in Chicago that summer, not a 20-minute subway ride from where we live, but the future Campbell winner chooses August 17 to get herself born, and we do not go to the worldcon. When she is 8 days old I decide to forgive her and lovingly show her off to her grandparents, and she vomits down the back of my Hawaiian shirt (which, in retrospect, could well have been an editorial comment), and it is 27 years before I willingly touch her again, but that is another story.

There is one other thing that happens in 1962. We are living at the corner of North Shore and Greenview in the Rogers Park area of Chicago, and right across street of us is this old apartment building, and on the third Saturday of every month strange-looking men and women congregate there. They have unkempt hair, and most of them are either 90 pounds overweight or 50 pounds underweight, and often they are carrying books under their arms. We decide they are members of SNCC or CORE, which are pretty popular organizations at the time, and that they are meeting there to figure out how to dodge the draft, and that the books they carry are either pacifist tracts or ledgers with the names and addresses of all the left-wing groups that have contributed money to them.

We have to go all the way to Washington D.C. a year later and attend Discon I to find out that they are not draft dodgers (well, not *primarily*, anyway) but rather Chicago fandom, and that they have been meeting 80 feet from our front door for 2 years.

#

So I wend my way back through the audience, and I find my seat, and I hand Kris Rusch's Hugo to Carol, because I am also up for Best Short Story, and I think I've got a better chance at this, and when I run up to accept the award it will look tacky to already be carrying a Hugo. Besides, Charles Sheffield is sitting right next to us, and he is up for Best Novelette, and he is getting very nervous, and wants to stroke the Hugo for luck, or maybe is considering just walking out with it and changing the name plates at a future date. (In fact, I am convinced that if he does not win his own, neither Kris nor I will ever see *her* Hugo again. Charles will probably deny this, but never forget that Charles gets paid an inordinate amount of money to tell lies to the public at large.)

So Guy Gavriel Kay begins reading off the nominees, and suddenly I realize that I am not nervous at all, that this is becoming very old hat to me. I have been nominated for nine Hugos in the past six years. I have actually won a pair. Worldcons are very orderly things: you show up, you sign a million autographs, you eat each meal with a different editor and line up your next year's worth of work, and then you climb into your tux and see if you won another Hugo.

It's gotten to be such a regular annual routine, you sometimes find yourself idly wondering: was it *always* like this?

Then you think back to your first worldcon, and you realize that no, it was *not* always like this...

#

Right off the bat, we were the victims of false doctrine. Everyone we knew in fandom – all six or seven of them – told us the worldcon was held over Labor Day weekend. So we took them at their word.

The problem, of course, was the definition of 'weekend'. We took a train that pulled out of Chicago on Friday morning, and dumped us in the basement of our Washington D.C. hotel at 9:00 Saturday morning. At which time we found out that the convention was already half over.

(Things were different then. There were no times in the convention listings. In fact, there were no convention listings. Not in *Analog*, not anywhere. If you knew that worldcons even existed, you were already halfway to being a trufan.)

Caz (right: he wasn't a Miss at all) met us and showed us around. Like myself, he was dressed in a suit and tie; it was a few more worldcons before men wore shirts without jackets or ties, even during the afternoons, and every woman – they formed, at most, 10% of the attendees, and over half were writers' wives – wore a skirt. If you saw someone with a beard – a relatively rare occurrence – you knew he was either a pro writer or Bruce Pelz.

When we got to the huckster room – 20-plus dealers (and selling only books, magazines, and fanzines; none of the junk that dominates the tables today), I thought I had died and gone to heaven. The art show had work by Finlay and Freas and Emsh and even Margaret Brundage; only J. Allen St. John was missing from among the handful of artists whose work I knew and admired.

They had an auction. It even had a little booklet telling you what items would be auctioned when, so you knew which session to attend to get what you wanted. Stan Vinson, a famous Burroughs collector who had been corresponding with me for a year, bought a Frazetta cover painting for \$70. Friends told him he was crazy; paintings were supposed to appreciate, and no one would ever pay that much for a Frazetta again. I bought a Finlay sketch for \$2.00, and an autographed Sturgeon manuscript for \$3.50.

In the afternoon we decide to go to the panels. I do not know from panels; like any neo, I take along a pencil and a notebook. The panels are not what we have these days, or at least they did not seem so to my untrained and wondrous eyes and ears.

For example, there is a panel with Willy Ley and Isaac Asimov and Fritz Leiber and L. Sprague de Camp and Ed Emsh and Leigh Brackett, and the topic is "What Should a BEM Look Like?" (I have a copy of the *Discon Proceedings*, a transcript of the entire convention published by Advent, and to this day when I need a new alien race I re-read that panel and invariably I come up with one.)

There was a panel with Fred Pohl and a tyro named Budrys and a gorgeous editor (though not as gorgeous as the one I accepted a Hugo for) named Cele Goldsmith and even John Campbell Himself, on how to write stories around cover paintings, which was a common practice back then, and which remains fascinating reading today.

There was a sweet old guy in a white suit who saw that we were new to all this, and moseyed over and spent half an hour with us, making us feel at home and telling us about how we were all one big family and inviting us to come to all the parties at night. Then he wandered off to accept the first-ever Hall of Fame Award from First Fandom. When they asked if he was working on anything at present, he replied that he had just delivered the manuscript to *Skylark DuQuesne*, and received the second-biggest ovation I have ever heard at a worldcon. (The biggest came 30 years later, when Andy Porter broke a 12-year losing streak and won the semi-prozine Hugo in 1993.)

Since we didn't know anyone, and were really rather shy (over the years, I have learned to overcompensate for this tendency, as almost anyone will tell you, bitterly and at length) we ate dinner alone, then watched the masquerade, which in those days was truly a masquerade ball and not a competition. There was a band, and everyone danced, and a few people showed up in costume, and every now and then one of them would march across the stage, and at the end of the ball they announced the winners.

Then there was the Bheer Blast. In those bygone days, they didn't show movies. (I think movies turned up



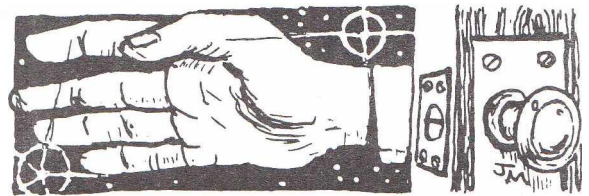
in 1969, *not* to display the Hugo nominees or give pleasure to the cinema buffs, but to give the kids a place to sleep so they'd stop cluttering up the lobby.) They didn't give out the Hugos at night, either. (An evening banquet might run \$5.00 a head, and the concom got enough grief for charging \$3.00 a head for rubber chicken served at 1:00 PM rather than six hours later.) They didn't have more than one track of programming. (Multiple tracks came along 8 years later, and evening programs even later than that.)

Well, with all the things they *didn't* have, they needed a way to amuse the congoers in the evening, so what happened was this: every bid committee (and they only bid a year in advance back then) treated the entire convention to a beer party on a different night. We could all fit in one room – I know the official tally for Discon I was 600, but I was there and I'll swear that there were no more than 400 or so in attendance; the other 200 must have been no-shows, or waiters, or bellboys – and the bidding committee would treat us to a small lakeful of beer, with or without pretzels, and then the next night a rival bid would do the same thing. (You voted – if you could drag yourself out of bed – on Sunday morning at the business meeting. A fan would speak for each bid, telling you how wonderful his committee was. Then a pro would speak for each bid, telling you about the quality of restaurants you would encounter. The better restaurants invariably carried the day.)

After the beer blast was over, everyone vanished. The Burroughs people, all of them straighter than Tarzan's arrows, went to bed. We remembered that Doc Smith had mentioned parties, so we began wandering down the empty, foreboding corridors of the hotel, wondering if the parties really did exist, and how to find them.

We walked all the way down one floor, took the stairs up a flight, repeated the procedure, then did it again. We were about to quit when a door opened, and a little bearded man and a tall bearded man, both with thick glasses, spotted our name badges and asked if we'd like to come in for a drink.

We didn't know who the hell they were, but they had badges too, so we knew they were with the con and probably not about to mug a couple of innocents from Chicago, and we decided to join them.



Turns out they were standing in the doorway to a huge suite, and that their names were del Rey and de Camp. Inside, wearing a bowtie and looking not unlike a penguin in his black suit, was Isaac Asimov. Randy Garrett was dressed in something all-satin and not of this century. Bob Silverberg looked young and incredibly dapper. Sam Moskowitz was speaking to Ed Hamilton and Leigh Brackett in a corner; this was many years before Sam's throat surgery, and it was entirely possible, though unlikely, that no one in the basement could hear him.

And every last one of them went out of their way to talk to us and make us feel at home!

Later another young fan wandered in. Much younger than me. I was 21; Jack Chalker was only 19. We sat around, and discussed various things, and then something strange happened, something totally alien to my experience.

Someone asked Jack and I what we wanted to do with our lives. (No, that's not the strange part; people were always asking that.)

We each answered that we wanted to write science fiction.

And you know what? For the first time in my life, *nobody laughed*.

That's when I knew I was going to come back to worldcons for the rest of my life.

#

So Guy Gavriel Kay reads off the list of nominees, and then he opens the envelope, and the winner is Connie Willis, and I am second to her again for the 83rd time (yeah, I know, I've only lost 76 Hugos and Nebulas to her, but it *feels* like 83), and everyone tells me I've won a moral victory because I have beat all the short stories and Connie's winner is a novelette that the Hugo administrators, in their infinite wisdom, decided to move to the short story category, and I keep thinking that moral victories and 60 cents will get you a cup of coffee anywhere west of New York and east of California, and that I wish I didn't like Connie so much so that I could hate her just a little on Labor Day weekends, and my brain is making up slogans, modified slightly from my youth, slogans like *Break Up Connie Willis*, which is certainly easier than breaking up the Yankees, and I am wonder-

ing if Tonya Harding will loan me her bodyguard for a few days, and then I am at the Hugo Losers Party, and suddenly it doesn't matter that I've lost a Hugo, because it is now 31 years since that first worldcon I went to, and it is my annual family reunion, and I am visiting with friends that I see once or twice or, on good years, five times per year, and we have a sense of continuity and community that goes back for almost two-thirds of my life. Hugos are very nice, and I am proud of the ones I've won, and I am even proud of the ones I've lost, but when all is said and done, they are metal objects and my friends are people, and people are what life is all about.

And I find, to my surprise, that almost everyone I am talking to, almost all the old friends I am hugging and already planning to see again at the next worldcon, are fans. Some, like me, write for a living; a few paint; most do other things. But we share a common fannish history, and a common fannish language, and common fannish interests, and I realize that I even enjoyed the business meeting this year, and you have to be pretty far gone into fandom to enjoy Ben Yalow making a point of order.

#

A lot of pros don't go to worldcon anymore. They prefer World Fantasy Con. It's smaller, more intimate, and it's limited to 750 members – and while this is not official, there is nonetheless a 'Fans Not Wanted' sign on the door.

That's probably why I don't go. It's true that worldcons have changed, that people who read and write science fiction are probably a minority special interest group these days, that bad movies will outdraw the Hugo ceremony...but the trufans are there. It just means you have to work a little harder to hunt them up.

One of the things I have tried to do with the new writers I have helped to bring into this field, the coming superstars like Nick DiChario and Barb Delaplace and Michelle Sagara and Jack Nimersheim and all the many others, is to not only show them how to make a good story better, or to get an editor to pick up the check for meals, but also to understand the complex and symbiotic relationship between fandom and prodom.

Some of them, like Nick, luck out and find it right away. Some, like Barb, wander into a bunch of Trekkies or Wookies or Beasties who won't read anything except novelizations, who are watchers rather than readers, whose only literary goal is to tell second-hand stories in a third-hand universe, and she wonders what the hell I'm talking about. Then I drag her to a CFG suite or a NESFA party and she meets the fandom I know, and suddenly she understands why we keep coming back.

#

So I'm sitting in the airport, waiting to board the plane from Winnipeg to Minnesota. I think there are three mundanes on the flight; everyone else is coming from worldcon. Larry Niven's there, and Connie Willis, and maybe a dozen other pros, and one of the topics of conversation as we await the plane is whose names will make the cover of *Locus* if the plane crashes, and whose names will be in small print on page 37, and how many obituary issues Charlie Brown can get out of it. Then the topic turns to who you would rescue if the plane crashed: Connie and Larry and me, because you wanted more of our stories, or Scott Edelman and me, because you wanted us to be so grateful to you that we'd buy your next twenty stories. (That goes to show you the advantages of being able to do more than one thing well.)

Now, in any other group, that would be a hell of a morbid discussion, but because they were fans, and almost by definition bright and witty, it was the most delightful conversation I'd heard all weekend, and once again I found myself wondering what my life would have been like if Ace had not forwarded that letter to Caz 32 years ago.

And then I thought back to another convention, the 1967 worldcon. I was still very young, and too cynical by half, and when Lester del Rey got up to give his Guest of Honor speech, he looked out at the tables – every worldcon until 1976 presented the GOH speech and the Hugo Awards at a banquet – and said, "Every person in the world that I care for is here tonight."

And I thought: what a feeble thing to say. What a narrow, narrow life this man has lived. What a tiny circle of friends he has.

Well, I've sold 72 books of science fiction – novels, collections, anthologies – and I've won some awards, and I've paid some dues, and I don't think it's totally unrealistic to assume that sometime before I die I will be the Guest of Honor at a worldcon.

I've done a lot with my life (all with Carol's help, to be sure). I've taken several trips to Africa. I've bred 27 champion collies. I've owned and run the second-biggest boarding kennel in the country. I've sired a daughter than any father would be proud to call his own. I've been a lot of places, done a lot of things. I don't think I've led a narrow life at all.

But when I get up to make my Guest of Honor speech, I'll look around the room just the way Lester did, and, because I'm a reasonably honest man, I won't say what he said.

But I *will* say, "With three or four exceptions, every person in the world that I care for is here tonight."



Ben Yalow wrote of Mike's article that "it speaks to what fandom means to all of us who consider ourselves part of it. I'm honored to be recognized by name, and hope I've been able to help add to his fandom, as he has to mine." Vincent Clarke also commented on Mike's article, saying that "I guess Mike Resnick's article explains why I've been a fan for 50-odd years. I don't know about other folk, but I *needed* that extended family – and got it."

And so we come to the end of first half of this Fanthology. The first 16 issues of *Mimosa* were all printed the traditional way – by mimeograph on warm-and-fuzzy mimeotone paper, except for the covers which were done commercially. We didn't know it at the time, but there would never be another *Mimosa* reproduced that way. By the end of 1994, we had thought we'd reached the point where we'd taken *Mimosa* about as far as we were going to, at least in production and appearance. We were wrong, though; something would soon take place that would not only cause a change in the appearance of *Mimosa*, it would also turn our world upside down and prevent us from publishing another issue for almost a year. It all happened on the afternoon of January 3, 1995:

Date: Tue, 3 Jan 1995 21:15:06 0500 (EST)
E-mail to: FanFriends Distribution List
From: Richard Lynch

Not sure if this is the best way of passing on some news, but it's probably one of the quickest. About six hours ago, there was a fire in the townhouse next door to us. We smelled the smoke before we saw it billowing out from under the front door of the neighbor's place (10 feet across the small courtyard, facing our front door). The fire departments (several of them) arrived pretty quickly, but the neighbor's place was a total loss. In the process of putting out the fire, our home was severely damaged. The fire brigades had to chop open roofs, break down firewalls, etc. to make sure the fire did not spread.

The Fire Marshall let me back in our home, briefly. It was pretty discouraging. Ceilings and walls were down in all rooms. We're staying in a hotel now (the Holiday Inn in Gaithersburg). We are down to the clothes on our back for tonight, at least. It will be several weeks, perhaps months, before we can return home to live.

Oh well, life goes on...

Best regards for the new year for everyone,
from Richard and Nicki Lynch

When we finally did publish another issue, in October 1995, the fanzine had changed to a more modern appearance. But for that story, and a collection of our favorite essays and articles from those ensuing issues, we invite you to read Part 2 of this Fanthology, which we hope to publish by the end of 2002. See you then!



