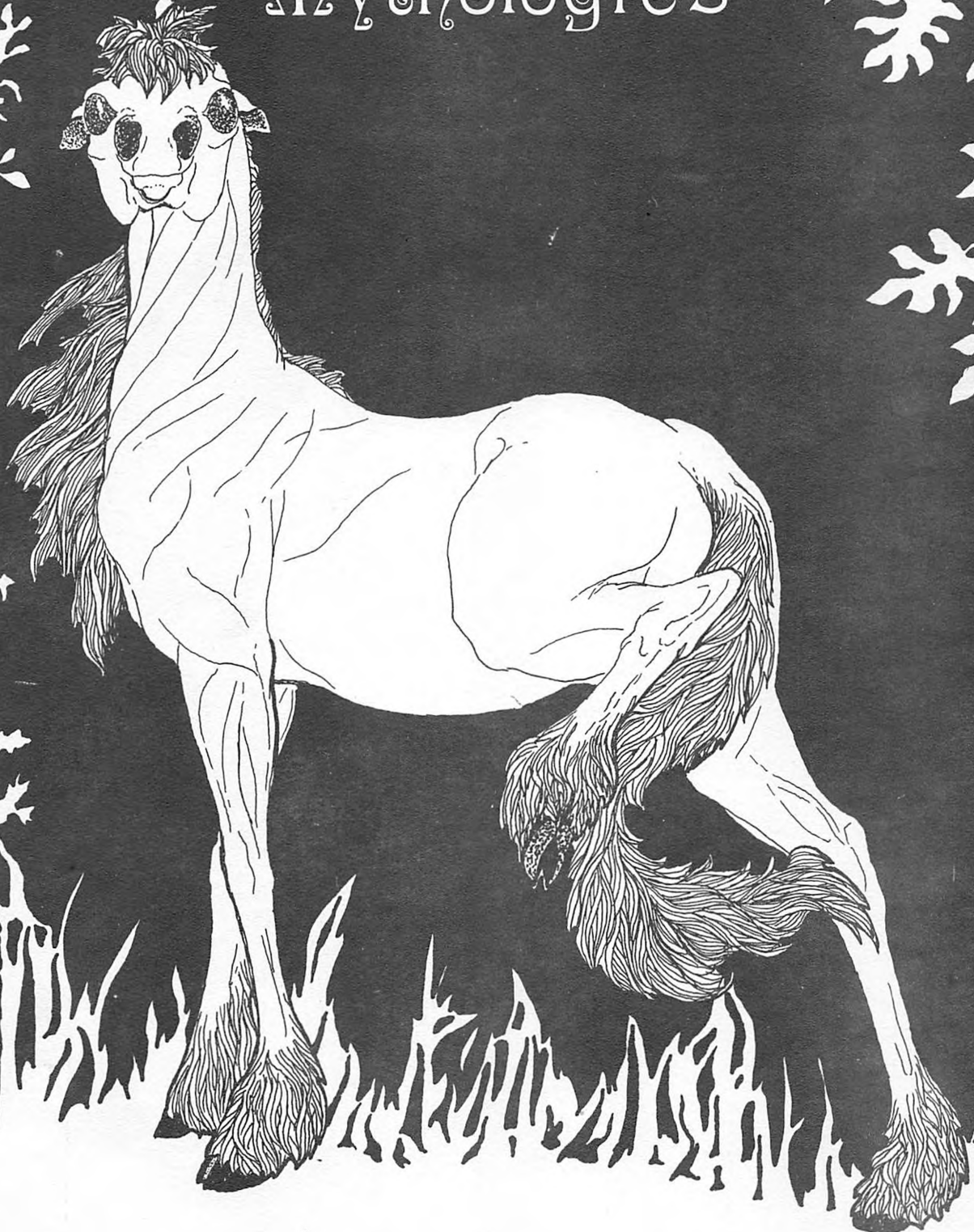


# Mythologies



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S. DALLER

# MYTHOLOGIES

#8

EDITOR: Don D'Ammassa  
PRODUCTION: Sheila D'Ammassa

19 Angell Drive  
East Providence  
Rhode Island 02914  
401-438-3296

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"Then let us compare  
mythologies,  
I have learned my elaborate  
lie."

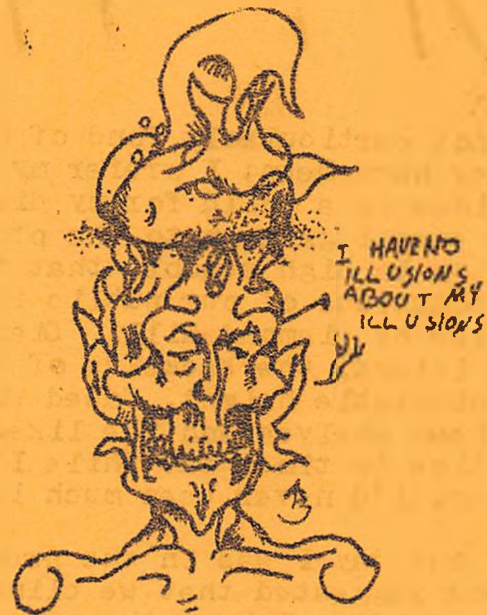
---Leonard Cohen

MYTHOLOGIES is a personally  
oriented fanzine whose credo is  
that everything is relative.

MYTHOLOGIES is available for loc,  
accepted contribution, editorial  
whim, or divine intervention.  
Sample copies are available on a  
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copies. All uncredited material  
should be blamed on the editor.

Special thanks this issue to  
Sue Anderson for service above and  
beyond and around and over and  
within and...



COVER: "Not One Step Closer"

by BONNIE DALZELL

INTERIOR ART:

Sheryl Birkhead, Pg 20

Bruce Townley, Pg 1

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"...the truth is what one believes..."

Gene Wolfe, THE FIFTH HEAD OF CERBERUS



# MYTH

I am not particularly fond of personal adventure of the physical sort. I never have been; I prefer my dangers to be vicarious ones. I was notorious as a child for my disinclination to take a "dare". But sometimes even I gave in to the pressures from my peers. I remember one occasion in high school, that time in our lives when we are perhaps the most conscious of our public images, when I was talked into scaling the backside of Diamond Hill. Diamond Hill is a ski slope in northern Rhode Island, the backside of which is a contorted cliff face of no inconsiderable height, faced with crags, buttresses, jagged abutments, deep hewn shelves and the like. I'd wandered about on its lower slopes from time to time, but while I knew that it was accessible to a careful climber, I'd never been much interested in trying it myself.

Well, one day I was in the area with two friends, Dave and Pete, and someone suggested that we climb Diamond Hill. I really wasn't entranced with the idea; I knew there were some pretty difficult spots, and I'm not particularly athletic in the first place. It was a windy day as well, and I wasn't looking forward to getting high enough that the gusts could reach me unhampered. But I'd refrained from similar activities in the recent past and didn't want to appear "chicken" in front of my friends, so I gave in. Up we went. The lower slopes were easy and we made good time. Dave was the most familiar with the cliff face (he lived nearby), so he led with me second and Pete trailing behind, or occasionally above or below on one or another little sidetrip.

About half way up the going got a good deal more difficult. I'd have looked pretty silly going back down by then, having committed myself, and it was rapidly reaching the point where it would be quicker to go on than back. I concentrated on keeping to the well worn path up which hundreds (if not thousands) of others before us. But I came to a dead stop at one point. Ahead of me, the face of the cliff swelled up and out like a pan of freshly risen yeast. A narrow ledge, about six inches wide, skirted the bulge like the flashing on a molded plastic toy. Dave moved out and along it without a pause, ignoring the steadily blowing wind, leaning in toward the rock face with both palms to steady himself as he crabwalked along, reaching a relatively more secure bit of footing about thirty feet away.

If I had been alone, that would have been as far as I'd have gone. I took one long look down (a mistake, obviously) and saw this small forest of stony promontories below, and said to myself, D'Annassa, you are not going out there. But then Pete followed me to the edge of the bulge. Before I knew what I was about, I was ten feet out, inching my way very carefully along in the same manner as had Dave before me. And naturally it was at just that point that a four foot section of that little collar decided that it had put up with too many intruding feet, and relinquished its hold on the cliffside. It shattered on rocks so far below us that we barely heard the impact over the wind.

I didn't fall with it, of course. As my footing disappeared from beneath me, I instinctively leaned forward against the rock face. I did not look down again. Although I had a fairly secure grip with my fingers, my groping feet found nothing, and the configuration of rock made it impossible for me to even look for further handholds. There was no



possible way for me to move to either side, forward or back. There was no ledge below for me to drop onto. Demonstrably, I did not break my stupid neck, though I probably deserved to. I managed to inch a foot or so up the cliff, which made me a bit more stable. Largely through hysterical strength, and with the aid of Pete, who was in a position to spot handholds for me, I was able to reach the far side of the bulge after only about 45 minutes. So much for adventure.

This act, then, of apparent courage, was in fact an act of cowardice.

\* \* \* \* \*

There really isn't any way you can describe adequately what it feels like to be mortared; you have to experience it. I'd been in Vietnam about six months, assigned to a small helicopter base near a tiny fishing village called Phu Hiep. My overriding impression of those long hot months was of utter boredom. Being a reader, I was one of the lucky ones. For the rest, there was alcohol, pot, a small pool room, and a movie two nights a week (usually a war movie). More than once I heard someone mutter that even an enemy attack would be welcome, just because it would be something different, something unexpected and non-routine.

About 11:00 one very hot evening, I was just falling asleep when the first mortar landed. It fell in the southwest corner of our compound, a barren section with no target worth hitting. I was wide awake before the second explosion and out of my room before the siren had started. About a hundred yards from my door was a drab, sandbagged bunker (we called it Ellsworth), and I could already see people streaming into it. A third explosion sounded, distinctly louder than the first two.

Each round was a bit louder, a bit closer, during the next several minutes. I didn't run the risk of crossing the open space, but dove into the narrow space between the wall of my hooch and an iron and sand revetment that surrounded it. The rounds continued to land; I counted numbers 7 and 8. It sounded in many ways like some gigantic creature stamping across the coastal plain toward us. It's not a situation conducive to very sane thought, and one idea kept running through my head: They're shooting at me. Me, personally, Don D'Amassa, who doesn't really care whether the totalitarian power was administered from Saigon or Hanoi. And out there somewhere was a small group of men in black silk pajamas trying to kill me. I began mentally computing the number of square feet in the compound, dividing by the standard "kill radius" of a mortar round. The facts should have been reassuring; the odds against any one individual round killing me were something over 1000 to one. It didn't help a bit. The tenth round landed in the road just beyond officers' country and blew all four tires off a jeep. Although I wasn't to learn about it until the next day, another round had landed directly outside the wall of my office, but had buried itself several inches deep into the sandy soil without exploding.

The initial shock over, some of my companions had come up out of the bunker, adopting an almost festive attitude. When the twelfth round landed between two of the officers' hooches, several of the men nearby burst into cheers and some began climbing up onto the corrugated iron roofs for a better view. Before long, I was almost the only person still under some cover, and I probably would have heard even more insults than I did had it not been for the fifteenth round. A piece of shrapnel from that struck the revetment near me with such a clang that



I was momentarily deafened. Neither was I in a position to see the effects of the last two rounds, one of which landed directly on top of an enlisted barracks, completely destroying it (no one was hurt). The eighteenth and last was the only round to actually pass over my position, exploding harmlessly in the roadway.

On the following day, and for several days afterward, I took a great deal of kidding because I had crouched so assiduously in my shelter, unwilling to expose myself in order to watch the bombardment.

This act of apparent cowardice was an act of neither courage nor cowardice.

\* \* \* \* \*

Following my return from Vietnam, I was stationed at Fort Sill in Lawton, Oklahoma. I was the juniormost clerk in a battalion headquarters, one of nine clerks serving a colonel, a major, and a captain. It was soon evident that I was the best typist in the headquarters, so I was moved out of my position as public information clerk and made one of the two typists for the colonel. I still had eighteen months left in the service, which could conceivably have included another overseas tour, possibly in Germany. Obviously I didn't want to leave the US again, since I was finally able to have Sheila with me. Unfortunately, unless I could win the direct intervention of the colonel, I would be eligible for reassignment in six months.

There was a chronic shortage of manpower in our unit, and the officers resented the need to have so many clerks. But with the clerks drawn primarily from high school drop outs, with little typing ability, no interest in their duties, the conditioned habit of making everything take as long as possible in order to always look busy, and their resentment of the officers in general, there was no other way to get the work done.

But I plotted. First, the current public information clerk left the service, and I volunteered to take over his function in addition to my regular duties. Then one of the two clerks in the message center was reassigned, and I quietly took control of the initial sorting of all incoming mail. Our legal clerk was reassigned to Vietnam, and I immediately assumed his duties. I had by now become exempt from all extra duty except fire watch, because it was necessary that I be on duty every day. This also meant I couldn't take leave time, but there was nowhere to go in Oklahoma anyway.

When the second clerk was reassigned, I assumed his duties also. All of this might seem like a horrendous workload, but I was still actually having difficulty finding work to do. There is so much wasted mantime in the service, I had only taken up a bit of the slack. I was doing five full jobs, in approximately six hours per day. But I had now passed that six months of safe time, and I was still nervous. So I extended myself further.

The adjutant's job was filled normally by a captain. The average tour was four months, because it was used primarily to get junior officers familiar with army paperwork and, I suspect, to make them cognizant of the fact that it's the clerks who really run the military. Each time we received a new adjutant, I was supposed to show him his day to day responsibilities. In fact, each time I showed them less, adopted more of their duties into my own, became the author of the actual language



of all of his reports, and eventually those of the colonel as well (the major resisted; I suspect he knew my game from the start, but did nothing about it because it was evident that we would all benefit). I made certain, in quiet, inoffensive ways, that the colonel was aware of the volume of work I was doing.

Army regulations are written to cover every conceivable combination of events. As a result, they are written in officialese, at incredible length, with a complexity that it is awesome to behold. Two of the most complex are the procedures for discharge of personnel for unusual reasons (including the famous Section 8) and the army filing system. The former is a very complex procedure which must be meticulously correct to be effective. The colonel's usual response to people in his command that he didn't like was to have them discharged under the provisions of this regulation. So I made myself an expert on the subject, studied the pertinent regs until I knew them backward and forward. Similarly, I became so much of an expert on the filing system that the colonel often traded my services to other commands in order to prepare them for their annual General Inspection, in return for various personal favors from them. So as I neared the completion of my twelfth month in the service, I was sitting pretty. As I had expected, the colonel made an exemption from transfer every month in my case, on the basis that I was too badly needed in his own command. So I had everything to lose by rocking the boat; my exemption from transfer, and my privileged position vis-a-vis extra duties. But I have a perverse streak.

Each month, several dozen reports issued from my desk to higher commands. One of these was the Savings Bond Report. Anyone in the service knows that there is a great deal of pressure to take out a bond on the payroll deduction plan. Unit commanders are under similar pressure to maintain at least a 90% level of participation. They have been known to resort to threats or actual punishments to increase their percentage. Understandably so, I might add, since their next promotion might well depend on it. A second report was the Modern Volunteer Army Report. This required the commander to personally interview five members of his command, and pass on their criticisms of present practices in the army, and their recommendations for what should be done to improve things. Remember, this was during the age of the draft, when it was becoming evident that the MVA would have to evolve shortly. A third is the material readiness report, or something of similar name, which was a report on the combat readiness of all equipment assigned to the command. This was a compilation of how many trucks, howitzers, or rifles were currently in need of repair, for example.

As part of my duties, I would compile the raw data for all these reports, and submit them to the colonel for his signature. The theory wasn't congruent to reality. Our savings bond participation was at a level of approximately 60%, due in part, I hope, to my behind the scenes pressure to get people to cancel their bonds. I was very nasty in those days, and resented the pressure tactics being used. After seeing these figures the first time, the colonel had me exclude all people who would be leaving the service within thirty days, because there was "no point" in counting them. This raised it a bit above 60%. He had me exclude those due to be transferred to other duties within thirty days; this raised it above 70%. Then he had me exclude all personnel who had joined the unit within the past thirty days, and this brought it up to 86%. "Round it off to 90%, adjust the actual numbers, and submit it." I was told. I did so.



As I mentioned, the MVA report required that the colonel personally interview five enlisted men for each report. After the first set of five, the colonel told me to conduct the interviews myself and to submit the results to him for editing. After the third month, he decided he couldn't spend the time even doing that, and that he couldn't spare five men from their duties either, so from then on, I was to fabricate the interviews, and submit them to the major for editing. Against my better judgment, but in order to protect my privileged position, I did so, but I made it a point to talk to various enlisted men and get their ideas to fill out the reports, conforming to the spirit if not the letter of the instructions. But invariably, anything which was really critical of current army procedures was edited out. The major informed me that the MVA report was not really supposed to come up with any concrete suggestions, it was just to prove to the members of Congress that the channels of communication and change were open, even if they really weren't.

I also used to bring in the collated material readiness reports from our various subordinate units for the colonel's perusal. Like the savings bond report, this was crucial to his own career. He would take the reports and call each of the unit commanders. If the reasons for listing a piece of equipment as deadlined weren't extreme, he had it deleted from the report. If the results still weren't good enough, he would order a truck or jeep listed as operational even if it were disassembled awaiting repair.

After several months of this, my anger and guilt about my own complicity were too much, and I decided to resort to filing a Congressional. A Congressional, for those of you not experienced with the military, is a direct communication (complaint) between a member of the armed forces and a member of Congress (or in rare occasions, a governor, state legislator, or other official.

I had saved several of these reports in their before and after forms, and had them all Xeroxed. Still, I was reluctant to mail them off. In addition to the obvious dangers to my privileged status, there is the fact that the army can and often does consider such communication a criminal offense, for which you can be court-martialed. But then came the deciding factor.

Fred was a reasonably close friend, our battalion mail clerk, and a member of the counter-culture. He hated the army and everything it stood for, but his basic good nature made him amiable even to the officers he professed to despise. Fred was a conscientious mail clerk, partly because of his personality, partly because it was, like my own position, an enviable job, exempting him from most other duties. But one day he came very close to being court-martialed. The sergeant from our security office told him that, per instructions of higher command, Fred was henceforth to keep a record of the return addresses of all incoming mail for those members of the unit whose personnel records indicated they were politically active. Similarly, he was to record the addressees of all mail from these individuals which passed through his hands. Fred objected, quoting the army and postal regulations which specified that this was illegal, and that the army had no right without a specific court order to do so. The sergeant countered with a confidential regulation ordering all units to do so. Fred was on his way in to yell at the colonel when I caught up with him, and convinced him that all he need do was ignore the order, since any attempt to punish him would result in precisely the kind of publicity the illegal act could not stand.



I succeeded in calming Fred down, but not myself. The Xeroxes, with an accompanying letter that included a description of the mail-cover order was in the mail within 24 hours, addressed to Senator Claiborne Pell.

I'm not going to go into the results at any great length. There was a subsequent investigation of the savings bond reporting procedures at Fort Sill which resulted in the loss of the coveted Minute Man Flag, as they say, from the post headquarters. The mail story was denied until it was broken by PLAYBOY magazine several months later, at which time the army promised to stop immediately. (I am told that as of a few months ago, it was still going on.) What steps were taken with regard to the other reports are unknown to me. The personal results were fairly low keyed as well. I made enough of a stink that the colonel was reluctant to take any overt action against me. The official report (which I typed) said that I had been guided by my misplaced idealism, that I had misinterpreted the intent of various things. The major informed me in a private meeting that he expected me to help him write a reply which would prove me wrong in every particular, even in those cases where I was right. I respectfully declined, though I agreed to type the final document, since that was a function of my job for which I was being paid. The colonel never spoke to me again until the day I left the service, at which point he actually admitted a grudging respect.

This, then, was an act of courage.

\* \* \* \* \*

We have evolved a disproportionate respect for physical as opposed to moral courage. Ralph Waldo Emerson, who should have known better, equated physical courage with virtue, implying that all other virtues were merely facets of heroism. Our heroes reflect the same belief, as with Arlie Murphy, Douglas MacArthur, even Custer or, in some quarters, William Calley. But Mark Twain points out that "Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear -- not absence of fear." A rather independent minded cleric named Francois Fenelon, whose support of lost causes and minority views often put him in both physical and social danger, felt that physical courage is "a virtue only in proportion as it is directed by prudence." It is, at best, one of many virtues. And it is a virtue that we often use to cover up a multitude of sins. It is said of Custer that "at least he died heroically, making up for the sins of his life". If Adolf Hitler had died personally defending his bunker from the Allied soldiers, would we find room in our hearts to forgive him somewhat? Would Thomas Paine be considered any less a great man if he quaked at the thought of his own death?

I have no quarrel with physical courage. Under the proper circumstances, for the right reasons, I don't believe I would turn and run from danger. But I wouldn't enjoy it. I don't think it would in any way help ameliorate my other failings. Where Emerson considered it the prime virtue from which all the others follow, I see it as merely another aspect of our individual personalities, to be neither applauded nor condemned as such, but to be employed when needed. But an ascendancy of respect in the public opinion for courage of one sort over the wise use of courage often results in the sort of saber rattling that the Soviet Union is so often prone to. It's important that we, as a country, know the difference between a wise show of force and the reckless versions demonstrated by the Soviets in Angola, to choose a recent example. A wrong decision might be our final decision.



# PORTRAITS

OF SOME LESSER-KNOWN HEROES,

comprising a gallery of heretofore-veiled courage

by Paul Di Filippo

How arbitrary is Fame in her selection of those courageous men and women whom she would immortalize! She picks and chooses from among numerous specimens of bravery -- all of whom deserve the unqualified admiration of their contemporaries and posterity -- with as little consistency and reason as a tipsy gamester, bestowing her favors randomly, like an indiscriminate whore on a busman's holiday (or so we believe, never having met such a shameless trollop).

It is our purpose here to rectify the oversights of Fame, to light up the names of a few brave and sturdy mortals who certainly merit our praise, but who have so far escaped the public's notice.

The first such individual to fall under our ken is one Seaman Swabdeck, a sterling example of courage in the face of personal danger. Swabdeck was an ordinary tar aboard the Lawrence, under Oliver Hazard Perry, during the War of 1812. In the Battle of Lake Erie, his actions earned him a niche in the Hall of Courage.

Swabdeck, an unusually thin young chap, was summoned before Perry when the fighting raged most fiercely. He was informed by his commander that the sole ramrod for the last functioning cannon had splintered and snapped, rendering itself useless. Would Swabdeck consent to substitute for the vital plunger? He would! Great was the jubilation when he uttered his affirmative.

Swabdeck's upper torso was immediately swathed in cotton punting, and he was carried to his station, where he performed stoutly. O gallant Q-tip of Polyphemus! was the cry that resounded that day.

In spite of Swabdeck's valor, however, the Lawrence was, as we all know, damaged beyond repair and had to be abandoned. The ensuing flight was so precipitous that Swabdeck was left behind, resting in his piece's bore, his feet projecting unnoticed. When the ship tilted, he and his gun rolled off the side, into the murky depths of the lake.

Let us shed now a silent tear for this forgotten youth.

The case of Yolanda Placket shows us how one may have courage to triumph over an inner fear.

Miss Placket suffered from what psychologists term the Sword of Damocles Syndrome. She could not bear to have objects suspended above her, nor could she in turn bear to be poised over someone else. This was a most distressing ailment for Miss Placket to endure, since she had, from earliest childhood, set her heart on being a belle of the erotic cinema. One can see that many positions in the industry would therefore be unattainable by her--namely, female superior, missionary, doggy-style, sandwich-style, and the Duncan Yo-vo.

Modern technology and an intense inner strength eventually cured Miss



Placket. She nerved herself to undergo therapy in a zero-gravity chamber where, in a situation of no above or below, with the help of many assistants of both sexes, she gradually conquered her fears, and went on to score huge successes.

Albert Mowse must stand to us as an exemplar of courage in the face of absolute catastrophe.

Mowse was a sedate and thriving clerk, resident of a pleasant mid-American town. He was happily married and had sired three lovely children. One day, Mowse's wife, having just attracted his attention in her usual manner, with a smart tap of a poker alongside his head, informed him that their house was infested with vermin. Mowse promised to remedy the problem, fearing for the safety of his children, who now tugged playfully at his ears.

The next day, he filled the household sugar bowl with rat poison, to foil the depredations of the rodents. He neglected to inform his family, however, and returned home from work to find them lifeless in the kitchen.

Imagine Mowse's inner agonies at this sight! Yet he mastered himself and, gathering courage, resolved to continue living as best he could. Not wishing to bring his sorrow to others, he gave his loved ones a solitary burial in the cellar, and moved away from the scene of the tragedy, controlling his grief manfully.

We can almost imagine him exclaiming, with Othello, "My wife, my wife! what wife?"

Fanaticus Maximus, a Roman Emperor of the fourth century A.D., exhibits to us courage of religious convictions.

Fanaticus was a firm adherent of the old religion, in a time when heretics and hypocrites were omnipresent. He was fearfully persecuted for his beliefs: occasionally, when he travelled in public, a Christian would let his shadow fall on the Emperor; women of the court refused him their persons, laughing at his claim of divine ancestry; no one applauded his magic tricks, which never succeeded.

Fanaticus, mustering his courage, one day performed a splendid auto-da-fé, causing all the miscreants mentioned to be immolated in the Coliseum, as a sacrifice to the gods. And that same night, he hosted a barbecued dinner, open to the plebians, who were ever-hungry, to illustrate his pious generosity.

How often do we wish we had the courage to defy arrogant authority! Randy Punk was a man who found this trait within him.

Punk was an agent for the Irate Republican Army in Great Britain. His noble task was to defy cruel, glutted authority in whatever guise it chose to manifest itself. Noonday diners at public restaurants, editors of world-records books and daughters of famous American widows were some of the targets of his just wrath.

After a long and distinguished career, Punk died resolutely pursuing justice, when he fell from a rooftop he had been crossing and contrived to accidentally hang himself with a coil of fuse.

The courage to bear inescapable burdens cheerfully is evident in the figure of J.P. Gorman.



J.P. was doomed by a terrible inheritance, for his parents were among the wealthiest people in the world. When they died attempting a madcap hang-glider flight across the Atlantic, their son assumed the crushing weight of their wealth. He suffered it quite admirably.

Little J.P., a scant sixteen years old, was comforted in his plight by two French nursemaids, especial chums to him. Together, the three of them assumed the hateful task of managing the frightful fortune. Rather than burden others with any part of it, they let all the family retainers go, and devised how best to grapple with the monster cash themselves. They chose to meet it forthrightly, and began to spend it judiciously.

Alas, J.P. died a year later, while diving in the Caribbean, from cramps brought on by a fatal overdose of truffles and caviar. The rich food proved too strong for a system already weakened by a superfluity of pushups -- an exercise he and his maids were addicted to.

Leonardo Joyce Wagner represents to all and sundry the courage of artistic convictions.

Wagner was an ambulance driver for the US Army during the First World War. While performing his grim duties, he had revealed to him, in a flash of heavenly light, the artistic potential of corpses. Wagner was the first man to see the possibilities of what has since come to be called the tableaux morte.

Wagner, after collecting the bodies of brother and enemy soldiers, would arrange them in interesting, often amusing scenes, spending much time and effort to get costumes, expressions, locale and attitude exactly right. He would then apply several coats of varnish to his subjects, to preserve them for an extended period.

Eventually, these scenes came to dot all of France and Germany.

Wagner's avocation was one day discovered by his superiors, who enjoined him to stop. Obeying a higher imperative, Wagner persisted in his search for new esthetic nuances, and was soon court-martialed and remanded to an insane asylum, where he languished and died, a man deprived of his true status, who labored on bravely nonetheless.

Having placed before you this roll of honor, gentle readers, we close with this injunction: Live always so that you too could join this select corps, without sullyng its escutcheon.

.....

### THE MYTHOLOGIES POLL

Several times during the course of writing a MYTH or typing out the letter column, I have wondered about the backgrounds and opinions of one or another of my readers on one subject or another. Recently, I have read with much enjoyment a series of polls Paul Walker has been detailing in other fanzines. So I decided to combine my curiosity with Paul's idea and try a poll of my own. I don't know exactly what form I'll put the responses in. Some will probably be tabularized, others presented in detail. And now all of you readers who say you really don't have anything constructive to add to the various discussions going on have no excuse not to write a letter.



## THE POLL

1. If you are employed, what do you do for a living? What would you like to be doing for a living? If you are a student, what is your major, and what job are you ultimately aiming for?
2. What areas other than science fiction do you feel qualified to talk about with some degree of expertness? This doesn't have to be limited to academic subjects, but could include carpentry, hunting, or lesterizing.
3. If you could take one college course - purely for your own interest and not for a mark - what would it be?
4. Name an area of knowledge you would like to understand, but which you have great difficulty getting into.
5. Would you characterize yourself as basically optimistic or pessimistic?
6. What percentage of your reading would you estimate is science fiction?
7. Name a favorite non-sf book. Name a favorite SF book.
8. What was the last non-sf book you read? What was the last SF book you read?
9. Who are your favorite mystery writers (Please don't list more than three names)?
10. Do you prefer the segmented lettercolumn currently used in MYTHOLOGIES or would you rather see the traditional method where edited letters are published in one piece?
11. Do you believe that a different set of critical standards should be applied to SF than to other literature?
12. Who is your favorite painter? Composer?
13. Which of the following most closely approximates your personal opinion about the space program?
  - a. We should devote every resource possible to exploring space because it is man's destiny to populate the universe.
  - b. We should devote as much energy as possible to exploring space because man must spread to other worlds before we destroy ourselves.
  - c. The space program is essentially a waste of money that could have been better used for other projects.
  - d. While the space program had its uses, most of the manned projects were unnecessary and should be curtailed.
  - e. The space program is a business like any other business and should be continued for economic reasons.



QUOTED WITHOUT COMMENT

(The following is excerpted from an honest to God, real ad I received through the mail.)

OCCULT INVESTIGATOR CLAIMS AMAZING AVATAR POWER CHANTS GUARANTEED TO BRING RESULTS! Make Others Obey! Dispel Evil! Bring Amazing Prosperity! Bring Sudden Winnings! Repel Enemies! Attract Love Slaves!

Here at Last: Chant to win a legal action on page 54...Chant to rekindle a mate's interest on page 58...Chant to give secret knowledge on page 60...Chant to summon invisible slave to do your bidding on page 77...Chant to become a psychic healer on page 136-147.

Chant for Repayment of Debts. If you wish to get out of debt, try the chant on page 148 - in solemn ritual. The result should be that the person to whom you owe money calls you up and says he has decided to cancel your debt, or sudden cash becomes available to you...Chant to Find Lost Objects. Missing persons, treasure, lost wills, exact location. Page 120.

LETTERS SHOW POSITIVE PROOF! The letters reproduced here are real ones from Geof Gray-Cobb's files, shortened somewhat due to space limitations.

Dear Sir: "As I said the words (for Health), I felt a flow of raw energy rush through my body. The pain left my back, and my gnarled hands uncurled and became smooth and supple before my very eyes...and my hair is growing back!

Occult Judo Ritual Makes Rapist Attacker Beg for Mercy. Kate E., from Los Angeles, found herself trapped in the apartment of a man who - she discovered - was forcing pretty girls to do as he commanded. Terrified, she locked herself in the washroom and performed the Occult Judo Chant, while the man scratched on the door. Suddenly the noise stopped. Kate peeked out and saw the man lying helpless on his back. He mumbled something about being her slave. She made him call up the police and confess. He has never bothered her since.

Chant for a Pay Raise: Hilda F. was good at her job, but had never been given a raise. After two years, she felt she was worth more than \$75 a week as a machine operator. But each time she asked her boss, he turned her down. Then she used a CHANT FOR A RAISE. Next thing she knew, her boss was telling her "I'm going to raise your salary to \$295 and put you in charge of the assembly line." Hilda almost laughed when she heard him muttering to himself, "Now what made me say that?"

Simply by repeating the words of any specific CHANT -- in solemn ritual -- a magic power is invoked that can bring you exactly what you want! Try these amazing power chants free for 10 full days!

Tested by over 1000 people -- works time after time!

"On average, your miracles will occur within seven days of starting the ritual. Some, however, will occur almost instantaneously..."



# PIOUS MEN

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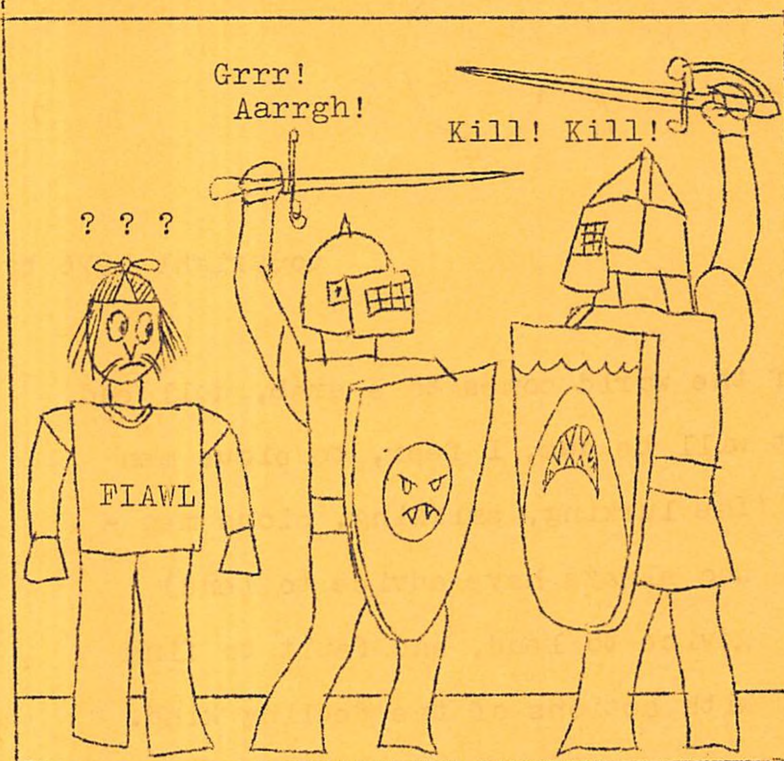
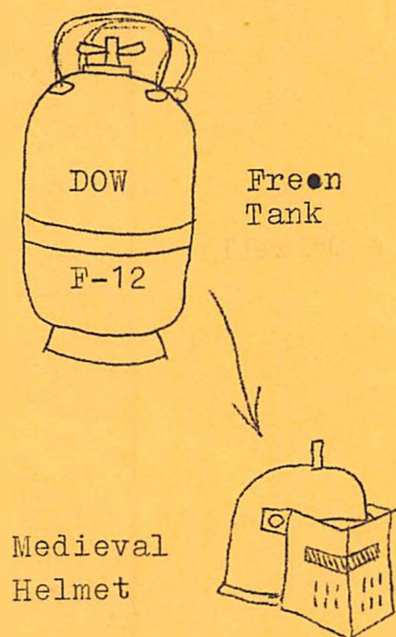
If the world comes to a drab, dull end  
It will be due, I fear, to pious men  
    (The lurking, smirking, pious men -  
    Who always have advice to lend)  
    Advice to lend, and fault to find  
    With actions of the feeling kind.

Purse lipped, pious, angelic faced  
They own the world within their view  
And have a duty to our race  
To judge that world, and me, and you  
    (And find us greatly failing, too!)

The pious men are of a kind  
Each secure within his mind  
Never erring, in any fight.  
Each pious man will face the night  
Tight lipped, tight assed  
    And always right!



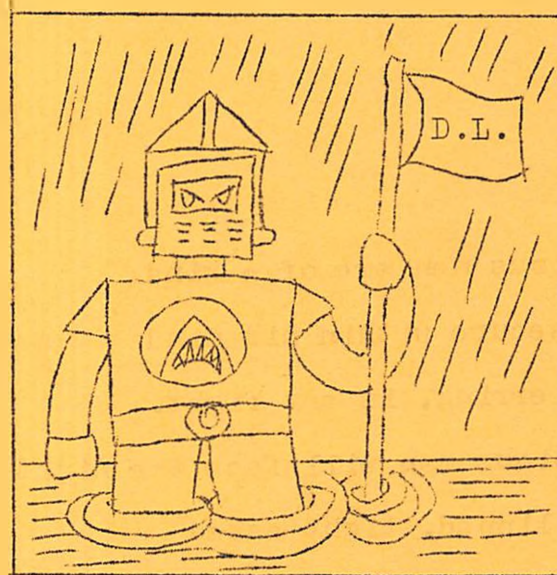
# How a Normal (?) SF Fan Joined the Society for Creative Anachronism



SWORD PRACTICE



"Come on, John. Just one little friendly fight. It's fun."



"This Field is Too Muddy!"

CARTOONS - by Aldo Malcourque  
Technical Advisor - an SCA fighter who wants to stay anonymous



THE  
SOCIETY FOR  
CREATIVE  
ANACHRONISMS.

by  
JOHN  
CURLOVICH

"Do I look very pale?" said Tweedledum, coming up to have his helmet tied on. (He called it a helmet, though it certainly looked much more like a saucepan.)"

--- Lewis Carroll

I have always been enchanted with the past. Though my major in college was English, my deepest sympathies lie with the scholars of the classical world. The Greeks, I suspect, knew everything; their poleis constituted the finest way to live that man has known. The Romans, in their blustering way, are even more fascinating, if only for the ways they corrupted the Greek ideal. After these, it is the Middle Ages that have caught my imagination most fully. The medieval world was one of wildest contradictions: abundant fleshly pleasures and deep religious sentiment; flagrant violence but a deepset and genuine gentility; entrenched illiteracy, yet an effloration of the arts and sciences that rivals the Golden Age of Athens. Never since Greece has man been so fully Man, nor has there been a time for lusty and exciting. Enchanted, I say, with the heady atmosphere of the Middle Ages, I tried to find a group of medievalists among whom my interests could develop and my halting knowledge take root and grow. Instead, alas, I found the Society for Creative Anachronism, Inc., a "non-profit, educational corporation" devoted to the Middle Ages. I belonged to this group for a bit over a year; when I quit, it was in sheer disillusionment. Hear, reader, the story of my woe.

From the outset, I must assert what must seem obvious to people quicker on the uptake than myself, that the SCA's connections with the Middle Ages are fleeting and tenuous at best. No medievalists' organization, it is at its most typical simply a group of people who enjoy having costume parties and beating each other with clubs. There is a quasi-medieval structure, it is true. The society's headquarters, called the Imperium, is located in California. The Imperium has arbitrarily divided the continental U.S. into four "kingdoms", each an autonomous and self-sustaining unit. These are further divided into "shires" and "baronies" (a barony is larger than a shire but smaller than a principality) which in turn may be comprised of "cantons" and "households". All of this serves to define who beats whom with his various blunt instruments but is otherwise largely meaningless; moreover, serious attempts to make the society appear medieval seldom go beyond a passive observance of this "feudal" structure. Everyone wears costumes, it is true, and everyone goes under medieval-ish names (I was "Iann ap Gwynnedd"), but someone who is fascinated by medieval art, say, or who would like to determine the precise nature of Chaucer's achievement is strongly advised to seek other company than this.



My first contact with the society came about when a friend of mine, knowing of my potential interest, gave me the telephone number of the local Knight Marshall. Now a Knight Marshall is a very important man; only the baron himself wears a bigger wig than the old K.M. He is in charge of warfare, which is the basis of intra-kingdom power, which is what most SCA activity concerns. I felt like I was right there where the action was, talking to the Knight Marshall. But I quickly got the notion that he and I weren't quite on the same beam. I was interested in medieval culture. He was telling me about how to make a helmet out of a freon tank, and how to make a sword out of a stick with a toilet paper roll on the end of it, and things like that. He got all kinds of carried away with it, too, explaining that if he were to beat me over the head with a club while I was wearing a freon tank, why I'd hardly even feel it, et cetera. So much for culture. I finally managed to persuade him I don't have much taste for being beaten...but surely there are other things to do in the SCA? --Oh, yes; we have guilds. Shortly after that he ended the conversation; I was clearly not his sort of man.

I must pause here to tell you a bit more about what is politely called "combat", that being the Knight Marshall's bailiwick. In concept, it is a rather complicated affair. There are all sorts of rules about when and where you're allowed to hit somebody, when and where you're not, what constitutes a "kill", what a "wound" (severed arms and legs are popular), et cetera. In execution, combat could not be simpler: Two men with freon tanks on their heads beat each other with clubs until one of them falls to the ground. Now this is hardly an activity that commends itself to the thoughtful, but it is a fact that this sort of thing constitutes the principal--for most purposes the only--activity in this "educational" group. They get wrapped up in it, they get carried away with it; SCA warriors are capable of talking for hours on end about things like whether one long stick with a toilet paper roll on the end of it is better than two short sticks with toilet paper rolls on the end of them. There is a big show made of safety; everyone must wear a groin cup, et cetera. But these rules are not always enforced, and injuries are not uncommon. One member of my barony sustained a severe head injury; to worsen matters, being a student he was unable to afford proper medical attention. When this fellow quit the group some of the other warriors, brawling he-men every one of course, were puzzled, and they actually tried to talk him into rejoining. (In the wake of this affair, the Knight Marshall continued to insist that a freon tank lined with foam rubber is full and ample protection for one's head, a policy that remains in force to this day.) For there is considerable pride attached to being a warrior, you see. I never took part in combat, and was numerous times called a "coward" and a "Woman"; this is part of the reason I finally quit. Yes, there is a lot of pride to it. Even though the rules are often ignored, the warriors pride themselves on their chivalry. The less a man fights by the rules, the more he wins; thus he becomes even more chivalrous as a result of being even less so. Whether there is really anything at all chivalrous about having a blatant penchant for flagellation, I never inquired.

Periodically, two of the SCA's kingdoms, like Tweedledum and Tweedledee, agree to have a battle. These "wars" are by far the most extravagant affairs sponsored by the society. Hundreds of people attend, their imaginations fired by the prospect of massive bludgeoning. Shires and baronies, inspired by their barons and knights marshall, spend months on end preparing elaborate battle strategies and drilling "armies" in them. People become even more worked up than is usual; strong



rivalries develop. A "duke"\* from another kingdom, for example, once threatened to commit physical violence--the real thing, not SCA's brand--on several teenaged boys from my barony because they had the temerity to defeat him in combat, thereby unmanning him or something. Threats of this sort, imbecilic as they are, are not rare things among the nobles of the new Middle Ages, nor are these latter-day Lancelots apt to stick at carrying them out. Many warriors carry steel weapons, and these have been drawn and brandished with alarming frequency at society functions--often enough to compel at least one of the four kingdoms to order that all metal weapons be "peace strapped". The inefficacy of this order can best be conveyed by relating that at the last baronial event I attended the Knight Marshall, stalwart defender of the king's law, waved an axe, at times quite excitedly, and pooh-poohed the suggestion that he ought not to be quite so liberal with it. ("Don't you think I know how to handle it?", etc.)

All this must sound ludicrous and may be hard to believe; it is difficult to convey properly the intense manner in which some of these people become involved in their fantasy world. Perhaps this will demonstrate with due graphicness: At the war I attended, a group of boys, aged fourteen to sixteen, determined to smoke large quantities of hashish before the main battle. This would insure that they wouldn't feel the blows administered by their opponents, and thus enable them to fight all the more fiercely for their barony and kingdom. Without wishing to provoke argument on the merits of drug use, particularly drug use by children, I must insist that it is downright stupid to numb and derange the senses in a situation where there exists a real danger of physical injury. Now these kids were not stupid; in fact they were a pretty bright group, largely with their feet on the ground. But the society's leaders willfully create an atmosphere (one is reminded of the "war psychosis" Hearst generated in the 1890's) in which people become lost in the fantasy, lose sight of who and what they really are, become enmeshed in a make-believe world of excess and violence. It is impossible to see this as anything but irresponsible, to say the least.

Several of us, in the face of a number of threats of the sort described above and of the potential they might be realized, grew alarmed at what might come to pass at the war. It seemed that nearly everyone had heard different rumors about possible violence, and there was a good deal of tension in the air. The baronial Chancellor (a woman, surprisingly enough) and I attempted to convene a meeting of the council in order to try to clear the air of unfounded rumors, and to try as well as we could to foresee potential trouble spots and prepare to meet them. According to "law" we were entitled to such a meeting; but the baron, a short, garrulous man fond of saying things like, "There is a direct relationship between work and glory in this barony", and the Knight Marshall, by now a familiar figure to you, suddenly decided we had no such right at all. (The barony claims to be democratic.) We decided to be persistent, and tempers flared. Council remained unconvened, and at one point the Chancellor was subjected to a spate of verbal abuse that brought her almost to tears. So much for chivalry. Sadly, we resigned ourselves to attend the war, try to keep cool heads ourselves, and do what we could in case of trouble. Council was clearly just a rubber stamp anyway, and it was quite clear that our noble leaders weren't about to let us hamper their fun. Our fears weren't unjustified (read on), but when the war came to pass it turned out much more farcical than grand or bloody.

.....  
\* A man who has been king once is a count; after his second time he becomes a duke. A new king is chosen every 6 months, by combat of course.



Among the stout hearts of my barony, preparations for war were elaborate. A "war council" was created by the regular baronial council to prepare the army. Monies were spent from the treasury to buy weapons. (I found this particularly upsetting. Members of the various guilds in the barony--seamstresses, musicians, cooks, and the like--were expected to pay for their materials out of their own pockets. But there was no compunction at all about using the common treasury, filled with the dues of guild members as well as warriors, to buy toy implements of destruction. To point out the unfairness of this policy, though, was to be a spoiler.) The Knight Marshall, who enjoys to think of himself as a general, held several private councils of war, presumably to plan strategy. A great show was made of excluding non-fighters, like my wretched self, from participation in these--a safeguard lest we smuggle the secret plans to a rival power, as in Duck Soup--so I can't report on what happened in them; no doubt it was of great moment. The baronial guilds, populated by women (who otherwise would have little to do in the society) and occasional non-combatant men, were asked to prepare shows of their wares for the war, so that our barony might dazzle the people of two kingdoms. Except for the cooks when the warriors want feeding, though, we were used to being ignored and contented ourselves to show up at the war site and drink.

And so the big weekend arrived. Its organizers had rented a huge L-shaped field, with a swamp conveniently located at the corner. It was further contrived to place the portable toilets (rented from a company called "Dear John") in the middle of this fen. There were all sorts of "educational" activities for one to take part in. A bunch of people showed up with a catapult, for example, and shot water balloons from it all day Saturday. A group of people who think themselves barbarians (not altogether inaccurately) began shooting arrows at each other and trying to catch them. After dark there was lots of off-key singing (I confess I did my share) and several people from neighboring farms complained to the police. I'd love to have seen the looks on their faces when they arrived to investigate. People got around in the night with the aid of handy medieval devices like Everready flashlights and Zippo lighters. The king, a slack-jawed nineteen-year-old, ran away and hid in somebody's tent because he couldn't think of anything to say to his assembled generals. A bunch of drunken kids started running around in their underwear; one of them went into the woods to throw up and lost his eyeglasses, so everybody got to crawl around on the ground to help find them. But as much fun as all this was, it was nothing compared to Sunday. At 5:30 AM sharp, two people started playing bagpipes to rouse us. Here I must confess to a prejudice: it is my firm belief that if you shaved the back of a tomcat, strapped it to a block of dry ice, then set fire to its testicles, the resultant caterwauling would be several degrees pleasanter than any noise that ever came from a bagpipe. These characters continued playing all morning; while we dressed, while we ate, while we lined up in the swamp to wait for a crack at the toilets, we knew the bliss of their piping. And they didn't confine themselves to the usual flings and jigs and so on, but they played everything imaginable, even Beethoven's "Ode to Joy", an outright sacrilege. Then came the war itself. It was to consist of three battles. The first was to be a fight for possession of a bridge, represented by some bales of hay on the ground. The second, in sharp contrast, was to be a fight over a castle, represented by some bales of hay on the ground. In each each instance, the warriors stood around for long periods of time trying to impress one another with their strategies; then they all ran at each other waving their clubs and what-not until one side got tired and fell down. "But



what of their strategy?" you ask, "their order? their military discipline?" Of these I saw no trace. The warriors resembled nothing so much as a bunch of crotchety women rampaging through a bargain basement. I forget what the bales of hay were supposed to represent in the third battle, because the war never proceeded to it. One kingdom simply declared itself the winner and walked off the field. Their reason for doing so was that tempers were flaring high and they were afraid of violence (sound familiar?). And so this stirring tale of modern-day chivalry, this glorious war of the Society for Creative Anachronism, Inc., came to a close. Lots of people were angry at the loss of a chance to be chivalrous in combat, and everyone was tired and hot. All those months of drill and practice had gone down the drain, or more accurately, down the swamp. My nerves were worn to a frazzle and I had a ferocious headache. I went home, crawled into bed, and thanked Ghu none of my neighbors owns a bagpipe.

It would surely be redundant at this point to list the reasons why I finally quit. But aside from all the specific complaints I accumulated in my year as an anachronist, I came very much to resent the thoroughgoing pretensions that surround the whole organization. Take "chivalry", for instance. If these fellows really want to run around beating each other's heads in, I don't guess there's any reason why they shouldn't. But it really rankles that they take such pains, go to such elaborate lengths to persuade themselves (I doubt if anyone else is fooled) that there's something noble or admirable about it. Hell, it's barely even respectable. As I have said, the dominant tone in the SCA is of excess and violence. These were certainly a part of medieval life, as they are part of life in our own time. But they were not all of it. The arts and sciences--guilds, publications (there is a zine called Tournaments Illuminated)--play only the most minor role in these "Current Middle Ages". The medieval mythos within which these people operate is a bubble, a large but flimsy fabrication designed to create an illusion of legitimacy. But why on earth do they need it? I confess I don't know. Hundreds of military and martial arts groups flourish around the country unencumbered by specious fantasy. SCA combat, considered as a serious athletic endeavor, ranks somewhere below roller derby and professional wrestling; this may account for it in part. I only know that there is not any place in the SCA's world for anyone not willing to lose himself in the dream. The last time I had any contact with the group, the Knight Marshall once again tried to get me to fight. I declined, and someone called me a coward. A while later, I watched, a bit shocked and repulsed, as the Knight Marshall repeatedly thwacked a sixteen year old boy across the buttocks with his "sword"; they both seemed to find this edifying. I turned and walked away, and have never returned nor regretted quitting, not even a bit. I suppose, despite my former hopes, that history belongs in books.

.....  
(EDITOR's Afterword: from Kipling's "If---")

"If you can keep your head when all about you  
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,  
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,  
But make allowance for their doubting too;  
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,  
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies;  
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,  
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream--and not make dreams your master;  
If you can think--and not make thoughts your aim..."



# SO MUCH FOR CHIVALRY

by Sue Anderson

(to the tune of the Trio from Act III of PATIENCE, by Gilbert & Sullivan)

It's clear that medieval fandom is the coming craze:  
To dress and act almost exactly like in olden days.  
We're not sure of the skills required in getting to be King,  
But as far as we can judge it's something like this sort of thing:

You hold your sword like this:  
You hold your shield like that:

You smash and bash and try to mash your poor opponent flat.  
It takes a lot of pluck,  
Some skill, a bit of luck,  
Good aim, and force, and then of course there's knowing when to  
duck!

If we don't dance exactly right the Ladies may get sore:  
In armor plate we're doing great just getting off the floor.  
True courtly medievalism Time alone can bring,  
But as far as we can judge it's something like this sort of thing:  
    You hold your arms like this:  
    You hold your legs like that:  
You creep and leap and try to keep yourself from falling flat.  
    You learn to run in place  
    With unrelenting grace--  
The hardest part of all this Art is keeping a straight face!





# ELABORATE LIES

....LOCS

## COMPETITION

[MIKE BLAKE]

Personally, I have never been comfortable with those people who view their lives as one big competition; i.e. they either win or lose at all endeavors they undertake. I prefer to be a passive competitor than an active one. That is, taking the achievements of others as points of comparison against my own accomplishment, but not to use them as absolute standards which I must equal or beat at all costs. To set my own goals so that ultimately, I am competing against myself, at my own rate. One aspect of the subject you do not go into is that in some ways the obsession with competition is a peculiarly American one. Winning, whether it be wars, new customers, bridge, or Little League baseball games approaches mania with many Americans. It is a system I have never been happy with. I dislike competing in this sense intensely.

[SUE ANDERSON]

Ah, competition. Free Enterprise. Down with Government Interference. So on last night's news we're told that Ford wants to deregulate the trucking industry, which will promote competition, lower rates, and benefit the customer, right? Yet the Teamsters and the owners, according to NBC, oppose this, predicting ruinous price wars which will drive small firms out of business and establish a monopoly.

[ROBERT WHITAKER]

I think the spirit of competition as practiced in America today should be revised - it really cannot have a place in an overcrowded world facing shortages. The idea of hustling and getting money no matter what you do to obtain it has gotten out of hand. I do not mind intellectual or physical competition, but the competition for money has gotten out of hand. Education in the school where I went stressed the idea of success in terms of how much you made despite the way in which you wanted to make it. I realized that the school I attended fitted a large number of students wrongly - the majority of them do not and will not have the jobs they desire - what schools should be doing is teaching the young how to cope with situations you do not enjoy, yet are required of you. A lot of people do not know how to



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handle "failure" - a very broad term which means not doing what you want, and feeling guilty about it (my definition). Competition is too fierce - very few people get the jobs they have looked for - did you Don?

((No, I wanted to be the spoiled son of a multi-millionaire. Failing that, I'd like to have been editor of Ballantine Books or F&SF, and no one's offered me those either. Which doesn't mean I'm entirely dissatisfied with my job. I'm pretty much my own boss. If I don't like the system I'm working with, I can change it pretty substantially to my own specifications. But if I could retire tomorrow, I'd clean out my desk today.

It isn't business competition per se that bothers me. What does bother me is that the direction of competition is not how to make a better product more cheaply, but how to sneak a shoddier product by the consumer, or how to get around trade restrictions without technically breaking the law.)))

[PAUL DI FILIPPO]

There is a special term for the type of destructive competition rampant in America (and most of the world as well) today: a zero-sum game. A zero-sum game is defined as a competitive situation that does not allow anyone to win except at the expense of someone else, and where the total assets of the social group are merely redistributed, not increased. A zero-sum game has some really nasty facets. It dictates that a person must tear down others, besides building up himself, in order to raise his status and achieve satisfaction. It insures that there will be a constant scramble for the limited goods available, instead of a concerted search for new resources. It conditions a person to constant hypertension, since he is always aware that others are gunning for him, and, consequently, can never afford to relax his vigilance.

Here is what Alvin Gouldner, a sociologist, has to say about zero-sum games: "...defeat will be more difficult to accept the more that social interaction approximates a zero-sum game...The zero-sum game will engender more bitterness and greater inclination to win at any cost, even if this requires violation of the rules." Is this beginning to sound like any society we're all familiar with? Nobody really wins in a zero-sum game, because it is ultimately destructive to society, no matter how beneficial it is to isolated individuals. To break the pattern, a majority of people must refuse to play. I am not denying Man's competitive urges, I am merely pleading for a rechanneling of them. I am advocating intrapersonal competition.

I know from personal experience and observation that everyone possesses within themselves the tendencies to backslide, do wrong, and generally be content with being less than they are capable of being. I contend that the constant struggle to vanquish and triumph over these tendencies - a struggle lasting a lifetime - is enough competition for anyone.

((Of course some interpersonal competition is necessary, in order to find who is best qualified for some jobs, i.e. medicine, don't you think?)))



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/LAURIE TRASK/

I found your comments on competition very interesting. I go to a very competitive school (Carnegie-Mellon University), and have gained several insights into an almost unique situation. Only one of every twelve applicants to the Department of Drama is accepted. And what do these highly sought dramas do? Yoga is required. Books are not. While some members of the alumni of CMU's Drama Department have gone on to bigger and better things, too many are out of touch with the harsh reality of the "real world". And then there are the architects. I heard a "conservative" estimate that half of the freshman architects would drop out by the end of the first semester.

((I suspect that the phenomenon you describe might not be a result of competition so much as a product of our educational system. When I was teaching high school English, I was handed a class of college bound seniors, most of whom should have flunked my course. But for political reasons, they were passed. Standards have dropped enormously in our educational institutions (see the current movement back to the basics). It's possible that CMU is still enforcing reasonably high standards, in which case a fifty percent dropout rate is probably reasonable.)))

/JIM LANG/

MYTH was interesting. I think, however, that you've got it slightly wrong. Your point that cooperation, and not competition, is the force that elevated man to his present position is only partly correct. The kind of cooperation that has helped man is cooperation in order to more effectively compete. Thus we have, instead of man vs man, man vs tribe; instead of tribe vs tribe, nations vs tribe. It should be noted that the space race caused more advance than the detente era cooperation of today. It was the imagined time pressure that got us to the moon.

((Yes, but was the advance in the right direction? I have said on several occasions that my fear is that man's premature venturings into space may actually delay on expansion into space, because there will be an inevitable strong reaction against it. I never said that cooperation alone advances man; I said that a combination of competition and cooperation were important, and that I thought the mix was shifting too far in one direction just at the moment.)))

/JIM MANN/

Unfortunately, the world is not yet ready for cooperation. It seems that way anyhow. You mention that we could have done much more in space had we cooperated with the Russians all along. A nice thought but it wouldn't have worked. Just look at the pressure against the Apollo-Soyuz flight. Space in the public mind is similar to a football game. You don't work together; you just go out there and win.

((I said we should have cooperated from the start; I didn't say it was probable. I should also point out that much of the opposition to the joint flight was because Soviet docking procedures were considered far inferior and possibly dangerous. Had we pooled resources from the start, they would have had access to our more sophisticated procedures and things would have been safer all around. Note also that I don't specifically advocate that the US cooperate with the Soviets. Altho I believe that our two countries have more common interests than points



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of difference, I don't believe the Soviet government yet realizes this.  
Time will tell.)))

[LESLEIGH LUTTRELL]

You mention the theory of evolution, and use it as a springboard for some very interesting comments on competitiveness vs cooperation in our society. But you can't mention evolution in front of a biologist, even a human biologist (which is what we are calling physical anthropology these days) without risking being attacked for your misinterpretations.

I don't think most people really understood the theory of evolution and what it implies. (I'm not sure even Alfred Russell Wallace really understood it, or was willing to admit that he did.) I suspect that most of us learned about "Social Darwinism" somewhere along the line in our social sciences courses, and were taught that it was a philosophy which twisted Darwin's theory more or less for its own ends. But I still think most people believe that the social Darwinist interpretation is the correct one, even if it doesn't or shouldn't apply to human society. The social Darwinists, and others, have popularized the "nature red in tooth and claw" image of what evolution is about; that it involves perpetual, physical competition between members of the same species (and generally of the same sex) for all the most desirable resources in their environment.

This is, at best, a pretty simplistic picture. Natural selection isn't usually based so directly on intraspecies competition. Malformed or sickly individuals can be carried off rather quietly by pathogens or predators, as part of the "weeding out" function of natural selection. Many people seem to feel that this function or aspect of evolution has been completely eliminated as regards modern man, which is not at all true. Despite our modern medicine, a large amount of natural selection still goes on in our species, most of it quietly and barely noticeable. For example, some rather carefully controlled studies in the fifties demonstrated that close to 90% of the ova released by fertile women who are engaging in regular intercourse never make it to the delivery room. Defects in sperm, ova, or the resulting zygote cause a tremendous amount of natural abortion to occur, much of it unnoticed by the possible mothers. And, despite the best efforts of modern medicine, infant mortality rates remain high compared with other groups in the same population. More "weeding out".

Differential reproduction is the real key to evolution. It doesn't make the least bit of difference if an individual is always first to the best food sources, or can defend the largest territories if they are sterile. They are genetic deaths, even though they appear to the outside observer to be the most "successful" member of the group. No, the winners in the evolutionary sweepstakes are those individuals who, for whatever reasons, have the most offspring.

Certainly leaving the most offspring is often due to abilities such as defending large territories, being able to get to the food first, attracting the healthiest and most able members of the opposite sex, or other aspects of behavior that we could consider "competition". But evolution is not the direct result of competition; it is the result of differential reproduction, and that may be achieved by a number of



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different processes besides outright physical competition. In fact, behavior which we would consider altruistic, the opposite of competitive can sometimes be seen as contributing to the desired goal of leaving the most genes to the succeeding generation. Suppose an infant is threatened by a predator, and there is a one fourth chance that any adult going to rescue it will be killed in the attempt, even though the infant is saved. Well, it won't do a non-relative much good, in evolutionary terms, to take that chance, but it's a good risk for a parent, since that infant is carrying  $\frac{1}{2}$  of their genes, and they only have a  $\frac{1}{4}$  chance of losing their life in the rescue attempt. Of course, no animal is going to stop and think something like that out, but the effect is the same, and some evolutionary theorists attribute the appearance of altruistic behavior in some species to such a cause.

Of course, as far as our society is concerned, an emphasis on the importance of differential reproduction is every bit as dangerous as an emphasis on competitive aspects of the evolutionary process. Who wants to be a genetic death, after all? (We sometimes call each other that around the Anthropology department as a joke, and it seems to make most people, even those who have decided not to have children for a multitude of reasons, uncomfortable.)

Of course, none of this abrogates your arguments in favor of more cooperation and less competition in human societies. In fact, it might give you more ammunition to use against people who insist that competition is "natural" for man.

Fortunately, I don't feel like taking my experience from one course in economics and turning it into an essay on free enterprise and competition in the market place. But I wouldn't be surprised to see something like that in the letter column of the next MYTHOLOGIES. That's what makes your fanzine so interesting; you manage to introduce interesting topics each issue and the readers manage to take them off on a great variety of tangents in the letter columns of the succeeding issues.

((Thanks. Some of my MYTHS have been criticized because I don't tie everything up, explore all of the ramifications. They are intentionally vague at times. I see ELABORATE LIES as an ongoing symposium, and the MYTHS are designed to spur each round.)))

[ROY TACKETT]

Competition and cooperation it seems are simply two sides of the same coin. We speak of "free enterprise" and the competition of private industry, for example, but there is damned little of that any more. Some, yes, on the lowest local levels where individual store owners are still holding out but they seem to grow less and less every year. Albuquerque has representatives of four or five big chains dominating the food business. They all sell the same products for the same prices so where is the competition? On a more national level there is obviously no competition between the big manufacturers who learned long ago that the name of the game is cartel. When was the last time that a "competing" steel company announced it was cutting prices on a product on which the rest of the producers announced a raise? "Free enterprise" has passed into the realm of the American myth.

((Right. Take, for example, Lenox China. Lenox controls slightly



more than fifty percent of the fine china market. Due to the natural gas shortage, the state of Pennsylvania won't allow them to build more kilns, or increase the running time of the kilns already operative. Now Lenox has a policy of say, increasing profit by 5% per year. So they raise their prices enough to allow themselves that much additional profit, on the volume of business they know they are going to be allowed to do.)))

[STEPHEN H. DORNEMAN]

While in general agreement on your views re competition/cooperation, poor old Mr Darwin has been given the blame for too long. It was Spencer who, publishing about the same time as Darwin and drawing from Lamarck and Malthus, coined the phrase "survival of the fittest" and applied the idea of natural selection to human society, thus fueling such men as Sumner, Nietzsche, and indirectly, Hitler. Darwin's theory of evolution defined success in evolutionary terms as merely leaving more offspring to the next generation than your competitors. While this includes direct competition such as that for food, mates, etc., it also means that high birth rates, maternal care, cooperation as in herd protection, and even, some evolutionists argue, altruism are selected for.

((I was aware of the role of Spencer but made a mental leapfrog over his existence. Mea culpa.)))

[PAUL WALKER]

The cut-throat competition for space in your zine is so aggressive that I thought it wise to comment on the editorial before reading the rest of the zine. I would like to agree with you completely, and I do in sentiment, but you do not mention some worthy aspects of competition.

Competition is primarily a motivational force. To view it, in business or academe, as simply a race for higher grades or prestige is a bit narrow. The exercise of one's skills is not only one of life's great pleasures, but commonly a justification for one's existence. A source of one's self-respect. But the product of one's labors may be insufficient to satisfy one's appetites. How does a person measure his skills? Against other's skills. This introduces some challenge, some adventure, even, as you point out by the existence of your "Cover-Your-Ass" file, some dangers into an otherwise routine existence.

Although everyone is a competitor to some extent, in some field, in every job I've worked, there were usually no more than two aggressive competitors to a department, the remainder of us envying and admiring them, or hating their guts, depending on their personal style. Aggressive competitors do tend to set the pace of a department, and the quality of the product or office procedure. But it would be wrong to ignore the amount of cooperation people are capable of. I remember a scene from a William Bendix movie in which he is studying to be an umpire. He comes on a group of boys playing baseball in an empty lot. They complain that they fight so much they can never manage to finish a game. He referees the game and they all applaud his authority. But it wasn't that way. As a kid, I remember we played many baseball, football, basketball, and other complex games through one after another without a single dispute. No one cheated, no one disputed the consensus ruling of fair and foul. What disagreements there were were always settled swiftly. If one could not cooperate, he was excluded from the game.



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It was no fun if one did not play by the rules. The introduction of an authority figure into a game, an umpire, a referee, or boss, was more often a cause for dispute, as it is for conflict in an office. And one might cite the office of editor in the world of the arts. Once you have an authority figure in charge, cooperation often becomes meaningless. "Do it my way" becomes the general rule. Cooperation works best when it is allowed to grow naturally from a particular situation. One person says to another, "Will you give me a hand?" and so forth. In such a spontaneous situation, people sort themselves out into a leader and led very readily. Competition is subordinated to the goal of getting the job done. Not so when there is an authority figure present whose sanction is required to exert leadership. One then competes for his or her approval, their "okay" or "go-ahead", and people compete against each other.

But to me the most shallow and contemptible kind of competition is intellectual competition. The "I-know-more-than-you" attitude. "I've-read-more-books-than-you-have". "You-are-not-on-my-level." Judging from the academicians I've spoken to this is common practice in every department. And it is common even in fandom, or among friends. Everyone who reads has undergone a "test" from a new friend or acquaintance to determine their literary accomplishments. "Have you read \_\_\_ and \_\_\_ and \_\_\_? You haven't read \_\_\_? How extraordinary." One grits one's teeth and responds: "Have you read \_\_\_ and \_\_\_ and \_\_\_? You haven't read \_\_\_? You really should, you know. Most people don't appreciate him. He requires a close reading." And so on and so forth. If one discovers that you do not like his or her favorite, they are likely to immediately conclude that you are not very bright. You lack the insight or sensitivity to appreciate what they, having the insight and sensitivity appreciate so much. A friend once told me, "I judge the level of a person's intelligence by their appreciation of Stapledon's THE STAR MAKER." Another damned a friend by saying, "How can he possibly teach English? He's only read THE GREAT GATSBY."

During the sixties I had the reputation among my friends as a right-wing supporter of the Vietnam War. A reputation I encouraged for personal reasons. Among them were remarks like: "I am against the war because every intelligent person I know is against it." That, to me, is not a good reason. Another told me, "I used to be for the war until I read about it in THE VILLAGE VOICE. That made me see how evil it really was." But the occasional reading of THE VILLAGE VOICE was the only journalism he ever read. "If you are for the war, you're stupid." I cited a number of newspapers and news magazines that I read regularly. "There is another point of view," I suggested. "And they're all stupid too!"

There are fashions in politics and ideology and it alarms me how many intelligent people adopt them as quickly as they come out without question. Once I thought "liberal" was synonymous with "broad-minded". No longer. They have become as predictable as conservatives. And as quick to condemn opposing opinions. This is a form of competition, too. Why I find competition preferable to collective cooperation is that competition is the opposition of individuals. Or at least of groups with some individual personality of their own.

((You have some strange friends. I don't entirely agree with your characterizations. For example, I am intensely interested in what my friends have or haven't read, because I want to compare common interests.



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If I know what books a friend enjoyed, I can recognize others he might enjoy as well. I have read more SF than most people, and if I can make use of that experience to help others find pleasure, I'd be selfish not to. Similarly, there are writers who require very close readings. I've disagreed with many people about writers like Ballard and Ellison for this very reason. I don't feel that my wish to convey an enthusiasm to someone else is a flaunting of my intellect. As most readers probably know, I've written extensively about SF these past couple of years. It has been pointed out (by Mike Glicksohn among others) that most of my articles don't really present any new insights or deep explorations, that they attempt to set particular works or authors into a context, to explore repetitive themes, to show the development of individual writers. It's not an egotrip (though I enjoy the incidental egoboo) but an attempt to share an experience that most people don't have the time to search out.)))

/MIKE GLICKSOHN/

The most recently MYTHOLOGIES has arriven here, courtesy of your strongly competitive urge to communicate better than the rest of fandom, and I'll now reply to it despite the 42 day mail strike which is actually rumored to be concluding today. This is because my competitive instincts drive me to try and upset Harry Warner as Best Letterhack at the FAAN awards next year, if there are any.

I am, like you, I gather, competitive by nature. I once volunteered for and took part in an experiment at the psychology department of Carlton University. (I was unemployed at the time, not eligible for welfare, almost broke, and desperate to publish a fanzine: the \$10 they offered was irresistible.) The experiment was a board game at which points were amassed for certain moves involving colored pegs and their relationship to the play of your fellow gamester. Once I saw the strategy of the "game", I easily "won" each round. Afterward, because I approached the professor involved and asked some questions, I discovered that the idea of the experiment was to test the relative degree of competitiveness versus cooperation in humans. Had we cooperated in our moves, we each would have scored higher, although there would have been no "winner". I never even considered that possibility at the time of the experiment.

However, while being competitive -- I enjoy many board games, play badminton, a little football, like bowling, etc. -- the urge is primarily one of satisfying myself that I've done my best. I compete because I wouldn't feel content with myself if I gave less than my best. I was really shocked this past weekend to discover that Sheryl Birkhead really thought I wouldn't want to bowl with her brother-in-law because he bowls in a league and has an average score fifty points above my own. So what? I suspect that far too many people confuse the competitive urge with the desire to win, and the two are most definitely different ballgames! Sure, winning is great. But doing one's best, being satisfied at the end of your effort, that's just as satisfying a feeling.

Where would Bowers be today if he weren't competing against me all the time? Probably editing a singles' magazine in Butte, Montana, so here, too, competition can be a good thing!



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((I'm a board game enthusiast myself. RISFA meetings generally include either RISK, double RISK, an occasional cardgame, or SPACE MONOPOLY. So many people wanted to play Monopoly that I designed a larger game, one that includes as many as fifteen players without being too crowded. And I've lately been the focus of some humorous comments in local apas because I mentioned that I keep notes on the playing strategies of the habitual players.)))

[SAM LONG]

MYTH was, as usual, provocative. You've made assertions that are open to debate. But your thesis is, more or less correct, but as much "less" as "more". Competition is a leavening force, and cooperation a stultifying one, just as much as competition is a savage force and cooperation a mild one. Competition breeds invention in the arts of peace as well as in the arts of war, and cooperation between tyrants (as between Hitler and Stalin in 1939) can have none but evil effects on mankind. Rigorously determined lines have a way of leading over cliffs, you know, and there is no line more rigorously determined than the edge of a guillotine. I find fandom a good outlet for my competitive instincts. I can try to put out a better fanzine than the next chap, or maybe win a prize at an SF guessing game, or try to become a BNF, all without let or hindrance, and in both a socially and fannishly acceptable way. But if I should win these goals, that doesn't mean someone else has lost. Fandom's an open society: you don't have to compete if you don't want to.

((Sorry, Sam, but you can't be a Big Name Fan unless you change it. Jessica Amanda Salmonson, yes, or even Alyson Abramowitz. But "Sam Long"? Although I suppose since "long" is a synonym for "big" in some contexts, we might make an exception in your case.)))

[BRETT COX]

I was glad that you mentioned board games and the like as "neutral" ways of channeling competitiveness. It always irritates me to hear people complain about such things being "barbaric" or "harmful" when in fact they're just the opposite in that they serve as harmless outlets for aggressiveness that might otherwise be expressed in a more dangerous fashion. The same goes for children playing with war toys, or watching violent cartoons on TV, and reading comic books.

((Although I don't entirely accept your expansion into violence in media, I do agree about board games. My aversion to physical combat and professed pacifism is in no way compromised by my fascination with war gaming.)))

[JOHN BERRY]

Competitiveness is the kind of topic that modern Americans can't seem to leave alone; we keep worrying at it, not finishing it off, and coming back to it. As you have done here, and as I'm sure a lot of your readers will do in next issue's lettercolumn. And I think you've given the subject rather limited context, in talking about it only within the limits of a middleclass American upbringing, with its continuum of school to elite training to an executive job and some form of suburban living. I grew up in the same way you seem to have, in a suburban upper-middle class family; both of my brothers "went into business" and became "young executives". But I wouldn't for a moment think that I could get away with generalizing about humanity from that limited base -



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especially because it's such a dominant point of view in this culture, and the people within it are so often unable to imagine that anybody else could really be very different.

You were talking about Darwin. I've never studied his theory of evolution more than the basics that every child gets taught in school, but there are two short bits I've read recently that tie in with this. I wish I could quote them to you, but I didn't copy either of them down. The first was a passing reference to the way Darwin's theory got watered down and misunderstood shortly after it was published, to the point where the so-called "social Darwinists" had used it as a basis for ignoring every part of human nature except bloodthirsty competitiveness. "Survival of the fittest" became a slogan. (I keep remembering a Ray Nelson cartoon that was published in a fanzine in the early sixties: a fat, grotesque little man in an exaggerated US Army general's uniform, with a huge hat, outsized epaulets, and miles of ribbons, sitting on a stool so high that his legs didn't reach the ground, his fingers poised over a large button on a console in front of him, and a scowl on his face, saying, "Life is a savage struggle for the survival of the fittest.") I confess that with only a junior high school idea of Darwin's theory, I hadn't had a much better understanding of it, although I had always felt that there must be more to evolution than that. The second bit I read was, I'm almost positive, an entry in either THE WHOLE EARTH EPILOG or an issue of THE CO-EVOLUTION QUARTERLY about a book either by or about another student of evolution, either a contemporary of Darwin's or an immediate successor, who spent his professional life trying to make the public aware of the other side of evolution: the numerous instances in nature--at least as numerous as those of competition--of cooperation between organisms. If I recall correctly part of this man's point was that Darwin had included these phenomena in his theory, but that popularizers had ignored it and instead emphasized ruthless competition. I may be wrong about that; he may have been contradicting Darwin (or, more accurately, complementing him). I find it fitting, and pleasing, that there should have been a counterforce to the popular idea of Darwinism; I don't feel that competition is the only important process in life, and I'm willing to trust what feels right to me, but it's nice to get some outside confirmation.

Have you ever done any investigating of Japanese society, where cooperativeness is the dominant social ethic? What little reading I've done about it makes me wonder whether cooperativeness is better than competitiveness as an attitude, or whether it's just that, from where we stand now, American society needs to move more toward the cooperative pole.

((While not familiar with Japan, I have some familiarity with Taiwan. It's somewhat similar there. We deal with a Taiwanese factory that has caused us some problems, because once you have hired an employee, you are under moral and social obligations to support him and his dependents regardless of your own economic situation. Layoffs are unheard of. Employers in effect incorporate all of their employees into extended families.

Like Jean Piaget, I think you can (under some circumstances) generalize from the specific. Piaget's extensive studies of perception, time sense, cognition, and coordination were gleaned mostly from his own children.)))



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[AL SIROIS]

I can't add much to your editorial except a fervent "amen!" I never realized it before, but what you say about students being taught to value grades over knowledge strikes me as perfectly true, and I'm really rather amazed that I didn't see that before. It explains a good deal of my general thick-headedness in regard to school. I think I've learned much more about life and people since I got out of school than I did while I was actually in it. Not that school didn't teach me to read and give me a general awareness of things like history, etc., but I would've learned to read anyway, and all things follow from that.

[CHIP HITCHCOCK]

I think you're skirting the edges of something Fritz Leiber described in A SPECTRE IS HAUNTING TEXAS:

"A nation that sought to create, simultaneously, in the same people, a glutton's greed for food, comfort, and possessions--and a puritanic morality. Merciless competition---and docile cooperation. Timid safety-mindedness--and reckless self-sacrifice. A hard-boiled but docile young. Worship of success so long as it could be thought due to luck--and hatred of outstandingness created by nature and/or hard work. Great scientist and scholars--and a contempt for same...In short, nul program. Order, counterorder, disorder."

(In terms of Transactional Analysis, the child's unbridled selfishness is intermittently clamped down upon by the parent's unmodified strictness while the adult contributes nothing---which, according to Berne, is the profile of a psychotic.)

This is one factor in the current difficulties about competition--you are supposed to compete, but it's not quite nice. Tangent to this is the notion that everybody is damned well supposed to be equal.

This leads to the next point, which I suspect is the crux of the matter. Psychologists have been talking for quite some time about the need for everyone to have some position in a group--to have an in-group to which he belongs. The rarely mentioned corollary to this is that he will also, on the slightest provocation, define an out-group. It is not a universal failing, but it is very broadly and foolishly believed that there is no point in belonging to a group (being "in") unless it is something special, and how can a group be special if it contains everybody? (A pleasanter way of stating this is that there are both advantages and disadvantages to a physically exposed location. Another reflection of the problem is that many people consider any difference, including superiority, prima facie evidence of "out-ness". In certain contexts, this is marginally forgivable.) I suppose the conclusion of this should be the difficult realization that it is possible to compete, even in important matters, without being cutthroat about it; without claiming that we're all gentlemen playing a gentleman's game, I submit that viciousness in competition is not only unnecessary but also a counterproductive waste of energies.

((If you haven't already, you should immediately go out and read William Tenn's "Null-F".)))



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[WILL NORRIS]

I'm afraid I wouldn't make a good heap big executive if the time I have to spend is in defending my moves and undermining others. The medical profession is getting a bad name because of all the stories about what some students are doing to get into a good medical school--cheating or sabotaging other's labwork, stealing, etc.

My dear old dad cannot understand my priorities along this line. He was born and grew up in a poor-semi-poor rural background and had to work hard for what he got, including his education. Fine, I respect him for it. But he cannot sit down and relax--he fidgets and squirms, making everyone else quite nervous, then jumps up and finds something to do. That would be all right if he did not either find something for everyone else to do--or make us feel guilty because we were doing something lazy...like watching TV or reading a book. I am going to avoid an ulcer if at all possible; if something is critical or important or if I simply feel like doing it or see some immediate value in doing it, then I will do it.

((I know exactly what you mean. My father was born shortly after my grandparents emigrated from Italy to the US. He never finished high school, and had to work his way up from factory laborer to his present top management position. He has the same inability to ever relax. He's up early in the morning, impatient to be at work. He doesn't leave until well after closing. His conversation is always about the situation at work. He has no hobbies other than golf. I, on the other hand, tolerate work because it enables me to pursue the important things in life, like my hobbies.)))

[LARRY CARMODY]

You seem to be bringing out a variation of the Hobbesian point of view in regard to man and society. The absolute sovereign and all that. And I agree with you. The field I am in (sportswriting) is a cutthroat one at best. Everybody is trying to scoop the other person, so to speak, even within the staff of the same paper. But there has to be a sort of cooperation. Let me elucidate. I cover the New York Cosmos in soccer as one of my regular assignments for THE LONG ISLAND PRESS. Four other papers also cover the Cosmos. Now the guy from the NEWS and I are friends, and have been for awhile. We've worked out a pool between us in regard to info. It works, this form of cooperation, because the NEWS is a morning paper, while THE PRESS is an afternoon one. We've got to write totally different things. He is usually in the position of writing a story as the game is going on in order to make editions (He'll write a sub story after the game for later editions). I've got to come up with what is known as the afternoon angle. You see, I have to write under the assumption that the person reading my story the next day already knows who won the game and who might have scored goals, etc. So I've got to come up with something different and unique. The angle. Because of this, the NEWS writer and I can share info almost all the way because there is no way we can scoop each other. But I can't share with the POST writer or the NEWSDAY writer because they are both afternoon papers and also look for angles.

((I shall staunchly avoid the temptation to make Oscar Madison jokes in your direction. Sportswriting has always struck me as more difficult because of the basic sameness of the news.)))



CENSORSHIP

[MIKE BLAKE]

I too am continually fascinated by the antics of Rhode Island's own colorful Fundamentalist preacher, the Reverend Ennio Cugini. The statement of his that I will always remember was his answer to the charge that he was, by his attempts to have "dirty" movies and books censored, forcing his own brand of Christian morality upon those who did not subscribe to his religion. His reply was, "Some people have said we're trying to shove religion down people's throats. We're doing no such thing. We simply want everyone to recognize their obligation to obey the Ten Commandments."

[HARRY WARNER JR]

I think most causes and effects of censorship are bad. Besides, the very need that some people feel to create censorship bodies seems to prove that only a minority of the public supports the pro-censor people. The margin of profit in publishing, broadcasting, and film-making is so small today that all obscenity, violence, and other qualities which the censoring is aimed at would vanish if the bulk of the people really disliked them and refused to purchase and watch and buy tickets. The producers of entertainment wouldn't film a fistfight, any more than they would produce a film treatment of page 167 in your calculus textbook, if they knew the bulk of people didn't want to see it. Since nobody has proved to my satisfaction that crime, madness, and such undesirable things are increased by what people see and hear, and since it isn't the will of the people anyway, why censor? But if I'm wrong and there is a need to censor for the good of the public, then I feel that the first censorship efforts should involve things which aren't normally attacked: particularly the emphasis on drinking in both commercials and regular program material and the overuse of reckless driving as a part of tv fare. More lives are lost and shattered by drink and by motor vehicles than by a blow to the chops from someone's fist or first degree murder.

((Or how about the commercials whose message is that it's perfectly all right to take dangerous, addictive drugs occasionally, because everyone has trouble getting to sleep once in a while.)))

[ROBERT WHITAKER]

Let me recollect a shifting image from my youth: When I was in the 11th grade, the big study in English for that year was Ernest Hemingway (and I do mean Ham) which required that we not only read the man's novels, but research his background and know his circle of friends. And it did come to pass one day that a fair innocent maiden raised her hand and inquired of the English teacher, "Why did Gertrude Stein dress up as a man?" There were a couple of giggles, and the teacher explained in stammers and stutters that Miss Stein felt that it was the way she could express herself artistically. A large whisper coming from my direction said: "Wasn't it because she was a lesbian?" I was given leave from the class to visit the principal. That took a great deal of explaining.

Now why should that be excluded from discussion? A mere mention of it in class, just once, without embarrassment, would have exiled the whole topic from the mind of the students and would have left them to think about other things about Gertrude Stein. Instead, the topic of her



sexuality seemed to pervade the students to a large degree, eclipsing the topic of her influence on Hemingway.

Censorship? In one or two areas, yes. I would always be willing to ban films which show explicit ways to kill people -- the "Snuff" flicks which rattled my mind and soul recently, convincing me that some people are pure cases for the electric chair: the films are underground flicks; they tie down a female and kill her slowly and as horribly as possible. Here is where I would gladly let someone step in and burn everything connected with it.

Another area which I would ban would be books which tell people that sex is an ugly thing and God will punish you for doing "blankety-blank". Most people have religious natures, whether they will acknowledge them or not, and might tend to look at one of these idiotic books to help them, and it will cause them more pain than they can imagine.

((Gertrude Stein is a fascinating writer as well. Enjoyed "Melantha" immensely. I did a bit of research in college at one point and traced back through Hemingway's letters and such and found that the reason all of his unflatteringly portrayed females have short hair is because Stein had short hair. Getting back at the teacher, so to speak. And, of course, the two of them eventually quarreled bitterly.

If the snuff films (don't recognize the term) are those in which the victim was actually killed, then there's no question that the material is illegal (not censorship). But in your second case, I cannot see censoring anything on the grounds that it "might" have a detrimental effect. First of all, anything might have a detrimental effect on someone. Second, you defined the effect as detrimental; others might not.)))

[PETER ROBERTS]

You seem to suffer an alarming amount of censorship in the United States (in the realms of the "arts" certainly - in politics less so) and I reckon it must be the fault of The System in one form or another. I suppose it's possible to blame some sort of innate puritanism, the result of mass migrations of religious nutters from the "decadence" of Europe; but is that really fair? Wouldn't this frigid purity have mellowed over the generations? OK, OK, I can hear you saying "no chance" already, so let's lay some of the blame for censorship of the Mrs Grundy brand on the shoulders of the surviving bigots in New England, the Bible Belt, and the Deep South, plus the neo-bigots of Deseret and California. Hmm, yes, that does add up to an impressive roll call of censors - a veritable herd of prigs. Still, let's return to my original idea of blaming your censorship troubles on The System. Obviously you know the situation better than I; however what I had in mind was the tangle of separate state laws which permits antiquated legislation to stay on the statute books, even when general, national opinion is against it. As I recall, many states - even those with large urban areas like New York - have heavy rural representation in their legislatures: an inbuilt conservative bias, in other words. Presumably this is in turn reflected in local committees and other elected bodies, including those responsible for education, libraries, and the like. You correctly linked "moral" censorship with right-wing politics; I don't think, therefore, that you have to look much further for the source of censorship in the US than the overall dominance of the rural right in state politics.



Doubtless that's too simplified. But if we look at Britain, a country less prone to censorship of the arts, we find a national (left wing) government with a national body of law (Scotland has its own law, but it's broadly similar in its guidelines and effects) and hence a national approach to censorship. Something like the British Board of Film Censors is accepted all over the country (it's an independent body, by the way, without the force of law). The result is a more equitable approach to codified censorship with rural conservatism balanced by urban liberalism. There are still exceptions, but they, happily, prove my point. The Greater London Council passes films for public performance which the national board of censors (itself a notably liberal body) has rejected or ordered to be cut. Occasionally some bastion of conservatism, usually one of the geriatric colonies on the South Coast, bans a film for local showing; it doesn't have much effect being a by-law (i.e. applicable to one town only), except to rouse the curiosity of the locals who are likely to protest at being "left out", a protest which invariably leads to a change of heart or a change of councillors.

[JIM MANN]

Mark Keller mentions the geography pamphlet that was banned because the author was a communist. Something similar happened in Pittsburgh a while back. The Pittsburgh Symphony was offered the chance for a world premier performance (outside the USSR) of a symphony by a great modern Russian composer (I believe it was Shostakovich). They refused on the grounds that the composer was a communist.

((Yes, I wonder how many of the conservatives who attempted to lionize Solzhenitsyn realized that he is still a very patriotic Russian, and not opposed to Communism per se, but to the repressive measures used by the present regime.)))

[DAVID MOYER]

In 1950 an event occurred that shocked me when I first read about it. The scientific community, a body of people whom I believed to be liberal in their views, tried to boycott MacMillan Co from publishing a book. You have probably guessed that I'm talking about Velikovsky's *WORLDS IN COLLISION*. Paul Di Filippo said that "whenever someone treads heavily on our sacred mental grounds, we react violently to get them out." What was the scientific community afraid of? Did they believe that Velikovsky's theory had some validity to it? Harlow Shapely said, "If Dr Velikovsky is right, the rest of us are crazy." I'm not trying to focus upon the validity of Velikovsky's theory, but upon the action taken by the scientific community. Their act was surely intended censorship. Ideas and concepts that challenge those ideas or assumptions we assume or acknowledge as being right, such as Velikovsky's, are "necessary for us to question every aspect of human thought. Nothing is more dangerous than complacency, for it leads to ignorance and intolerance. If for no other reason than that he has forced us to re-examine our thinking, Velikovsky has performed a vital service for us all" (Ben Pova).

((A similar case was that of Robert Shockley, who attempted to publish a book "proving" that Negroes as a race are demonstrably less intelligent than whites. Of course, his assumptions were called into question, his testing procedures and interpretations were eventually shown to be wrong, but the fact remains that in many quarters he was never



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given a fair hearing before his conclusions were rejected out of hand, often violently.)))

[DAVID TAGGART]

Don't let what goes on in New Hampshire bother you. New Hampshire is so far out of touch with the rest of the country that it isn't funny. Their crypto-Nazi governor, Mel Thompson, got elected on a platform of moving Veterans' Day back to November 11. And then they re-elected him. I, for one, am always glad to see public pleas and movements for censorship. It does my heart good to pick up the paper and read about a school board meeting that ended up in a shouting match about banning a book from the school library. Why do I like this? Because then I am sure what kind of censorship is going on, and it usually means that no censorship will take place. Because there is a much easier way to censor books by passing laws or school board resolutions. All they have to do is to quietly take the books off the shelves. And never put them back. This is very effective. And scary.

[ROY TACKETT]

On the local censorship front...the preacher at the Heights Christian Church went to the Albuquerque Obscene Board (or whatever it is called) and declared that he had personally paid his \$5 at one of the local porn theatres and had viewed "Behind the Green Door" and found it to be obscene and a public nuisance. (When interviewed on a local radio station he said he did this voluntarily...nobody stood in the street and dragged him into the theatre and forced him to watch the film). After somefootdragging seven members of the nine member obscene board got together to go to the theatre, pay their five dollars, and view the picture. (There would seem to be a violation of the state's open meeting law here because the board did not publicly announce that they were going to hold a meeting in the theatre.) The board then decided in a five to two vote that the picture was not obscene when defined by contemporary community standards. One of the members declared that she, personally, thought the movie was pornographic but that her standards were the standards of 40 years ago and she didn't think she could use them as a measurement of current community standards, so she voted with the majority. The preacher declared that he had not given up the fight and as soon as he got another five dollars together he was going to view another one of those movies so that he could make a protest to the Obscene Board.

[LAURINE WHITE]

Several months ago a group of Christian ministers and their followers decided to eliminate the adult bookstores in Sacramento by picketing in front of the places and threatening to take pictures of all people entering the stores and having the pictures published. This was after some more enthusiastic Christians had entered a store, removed some books, and burned them in the parking lot. My sister and I thought about going down just to have our picture taken. I remember reading in PLAYBOY several years ago about one couple who, in answer to their seven year old son's question about how babies were born, let him see them in action. They were arrested.

((That reminds me. The local chief of police decided that the way to crack down on prostitution wasn't to arrest the prostitutes, but their customers. But in Rhode Island there is no law by which they could be prosecuted; only the women commit a crime.)))



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[REED ANDRUS]

I tend to agree with your statement as to the cyclical or pendular motion of the issue, and share your fear that the reversal will not come about in our lifetime. I read in a recent TV GUIDE that one of my favorite programs, BARNEY MILLER, has come under attack for -- get this -- verbal mention of violence on two separate occasions. \*Sigh\*

[MIKE GLICKSOHN]

I was impressed and interested by both the factual content and the reasoned thought in the discussion of censorship. I suspect that MYTHOLOGIES is responsible for more people actually thinking carefully and putting down their arguments on paper than any other zine around. I'd like to contribute to the discussion, but I know my own thoughts on the topic are so inflammatory that you'd never print them so...

Actually, I find myself wondering whether or not there isn't a slight difference between "censorship" and the restriction of the sale of certain things to so-called minors. Pornography is the obvious example. In many areas porn isn't censored, its sale is simply restricted. In theory, a minor with an interest in the matter could approach his or her parents and request that they undertake the responsibility of purchasing and then discussing the material with him or her and there seemed to be general agreement among your letter writers that this parental guidance was acceptable. I know it never happens that way but I think it removes this situation from being out and out censorship in the strict sense of the word. The people who suggested, even in passing, that they'd like to impose censorship on banal or low quality literary works are, of course, just as wrong as those who would prohibit any other type of literature/music/art/etc that happens to go against their own particular set of standards. I assume they knew that and you did too and that's why you didn't bother getting into the discussion of the evils of "well-motivated" censorship.

((Yes, and also because I had to leave something for you and other prospective letterhacks to say. And thanks for the compliment in the first paragraph.)))

[C.L. GRANT]

Re John Curlovich's remarks on Elwood and censorship: I really am getting fed up seeing Elwood's name pop up in every zine I come across; unfortunately, he is a fact of sf life nowadays, and I suppose I should expect that he'll be the focus of a great deal of argumentation, pro AND con. Let it be said now, by the way, that Roger and I are not the best of friends, have had our troubles in the past and--sort of--resolved them to the extent that he doesn't bother me any longer and I don't bother him. However, no matter how much anyone doesn't like it, Elwood is WITHIN HIS RIGHTS to reject a story if it doesn't meet with his so-called philosophical requirements. He is an editor, and if he doesn't want an anti- or even lukewarm fundamentalist Christian story in his anthologies or magazines, then he doesn't have to have them; just as Ben Bova doesn't have to have "experimental sf" in ANALOG if he doesn't want it (and he doesn't), just as Damon Knight doesn't have to have stories about nebbishes in ORBIT if he doesn't want them (and he doesn't). It's a simple matter of taking your story elsewhere. There aren't many other places left, true, but every magazine has its "kind" of story, and that is a form of censorship based upon what the readership of the magazine will or will not tolerate. Elwood has his



"kind" of story; whether or not they're good is beside the point--he can, as editor, choose what he wants, reject what he wants, and if the readers don't like it they don't have to buy the book.

/ANN McCUTCHEN/

When I was in high school, I was happily devouring the science fiction section of the public library. One time I brought home, among other works, THE SYNDIC, and my father read it. He then told me, mildly, that he didn't think that I was old enough to read it. I took this as a prohibition and acquiesced, mildly. (Unlike yourself.) A year later, I took the book out again, read it, and was surprised at the mildness of the content. I realized that what had bothered my father was his fear that perhaps I was not so innocent that parts of the book would be incomprehensible to me, and he didn't want to find out. He didn't want to know that I was growing up that fast.

Such censorship is understandable, and can easily be sympathized with. I cooperated with it; I kept the "grown up" books I was reading away from my parents - I didn't want to sadden them with overt signs that I was, indeed, growing up and away from them. However, my father showed restraint and, I believe, an awareness of his motives that are not found in everyone. All too often it progresses from "It makes me unhappy to know that my kid is reading this" to "It is bad to know that my kid is reading this" to "It is bad that my kid is reading this" to "It is bad that kids are reading this" to "Such evil must be stopped". (A member of the school board went through this process in my senior year of high school. He cried out for the removal of several books from an optional reading list. It's always the optional reading list, isn't it? The head of the English Department refused to do it, and that was that. I'm glad he never read the books on the required reading list.

Then there are the busybodies of wide-reaching interests, fears, and paternalisms. Children, books, their own community, are but the broad, flat steppingstone for their vaunting paranoia. Such is the foundation of censorship. It is saddening and very understandable, which makes it all that more difficult; even this simple, parental impulse must be frowned upon. It is not safe to draw the line anywhere except at the source.

((It is a common phenomenon for children to attempt to project the image which the parent indicates through subliminal clues is the proper one. Parental trauma is more likely to occur with the inevitable sudden wrenching as the child leaves home than if the parent has watched and been forced to recognize the gradual independence and competence of the child. It is bad for both to do otherwise. The child doubts his or her own ability to function independent of the parent. Even outside the home, it is easy to suppress our own personality and inclinations for the sake of amity and to please one's spouse, friends, employer, etc., but it is ultimately damaging to the individual, who often can no longer differentiate among various roles.)))

/GEORGE FLYNN/

The Poul Anderson "column" Roy Tackett mentions was actually a letter in SFR 13. If there is a Puritan reaction, he says, "I'd rather it took the form of old-fashioned prudery than of present-day ideological conformity. If we must yield some ground, let us give up pictures of



naked ladies and long accounts of copulations, but draw the line and try to hold it in those areas which concerned the Founding Fathers. As long as we can, without fear of personal consequences, damn the government, we haven't lost hope. If we can't, then we have - and it's quite possible that our owners will give us license in our sex lives and biologically-oriented language as a pacifier." His main point is that freedom of content is more important than the use of explicit language, which is at best a "convenience" anyway.

((If only it were true. Unfortunately, it is far more common for the two areas to be suppressed equally, and to give in on one front is only to encourage further attacks. Anderson should remember Neville Chamberlain et al. Second, it is not know totally free of personal fear to criticize the government, particularly if it is at all effective. There are so many examples of late (FBI illegal harassment, IRS directed audits, military intelligence snooping on private citizens, illegal drug raids on the wrong home for political purposes, etc., not to mention my own personal experience with "mail covers") that this point would seem to need no refuting.)))

[ERIC LINDSAY]

I noticed, on the subject of neutral text books, that history texts seem to disregard or even deny incidents that reflect less than total credit on the nation that published the text - UK ones don't say much about the Chinese opium wars, or the Australian ones don't mention the Tasmanian aborigines and how they were totally wiped out. I guess you could find US examples.

Despite your examples of US courts suppressing publication, for various reasons, which are at least nominally not for censorship reasons, the US still permits more to be published than almost any country of which I know, and this applies particularly to material damaging to the US (which makes it so much easier for critics of the US - after all, if you can't find out anything, it is much harder to make nasty comments.) Here I can think of numerous examples of newspaper reports that have been cut or completely changed by the owners of the papers because of the material they obtained (I only happen to know about these because I subscribe to a whole bunch of radical newsletters, including the ones put out by the journalists themselves.) The effect of the changes has been to present a more favorable report of the policies of the government of the time.

((Yes, US history books rarely mention the Army's habit of donating disease-infected blankets to Indians in order to exterminate them, or of Fremont's provocation of the war with Mexico as a pretext for the seizure of California, or Andrew Jackson's flaunting of the Constitution, or the activities of the early KKK, or the exploitation of coolie labor building railways, etc.)))

[WILL NORRIS]

To Dave Jenrette: The first paragraph appears to just be the old love-it-or-move-on ploy from a different tack. The point should be that as long as I'm not hurting anyone, I should be able to do my thing where I am. So should anyone else. Why should anyone have to move simply because there are some narrow minded bigots who rule that "contemporary community standards" are such and such?



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[WAYNE MARTIN]

About Doug Barbour's letter -- he says "We haven't had any hard core porn films in any province yet..." and "I know of no place in Canada where SCREW magazine would be sold." Then he says he's intrigued that the campaign to clean up smut seems to be more effective in the states than in Canada. Huh? Was there a typing error in your rendering of that?

((No. I assume Doug means that since there is little "smut" in Canada in the first place, it hasn't attracted as much organized opposition as it has in the US.)))

[DARROLL PARDOE]

Ireland is a good example of a censoring country. They've had official state censorship since 1929, and at one time many thousands of books were banned, including the entire output of Sartre, Tennessee Williams, Hemingway, etc. The last few years it's got a bit better, since instead of being permanent the ban now only lasts twelve years at a time (then has to be renewed; and usually isn't). But what has their censorship achieved? Nothing, I suspect, since banned publications could easily be bought in Northern Ireland and smuggled across the border. The censorship legislation that set up the system included all publications advocating "the unnatural prevention of conception" among its prohibitions: in other words, any discussion of birth control was prohibited. For many years this was rigorously enforced in Eire, but it's interesting to note that discussion of the subject is quite common in the country now, both by Catholics and others, and although the legislation still prohibits it, nothing is ever done to ban a book or periodical on those grounds. I suppose every newspaper in Ireland must have broken the law by now. So censorship can be bent when sufficient people want it to be.

Probably the reason for this situation is the rise of TV as an influential medium of communication. The Eire TV service, RTE, only began in 1962, but they were able to receive the British TV programmes in most of Ireland for many years before that. Now one thing a programme on any subject on TV needs (a serious examination type of programme) is controversy. A one-sided discussion of a subject may be all right in print: most newspapers get away with biased reporting for years without anyone even noticing. But on TV a one-sided presentation comes out intensely boring, while opposing two opinions which conflict drastically makes for lively viewing, and is more likely to entice people to watch the programme. So the TV programmes of RTE on birth control had two choices: (1) Don't make such programmes at all (which would be ridiculous, because the British TV channels were discussing the topic quite freely), or (2) present a programme on the subject with both the pro and anti views represented. This is what happened. And since the TV channels were making free with the topic, people saw no reason why the same subject should not be raised in print. So it was discussed in spite of the censorship laws, which became a dead letter in this area.

((And so, for the time being, I am bringing the discussion of censorship to a close. Unless someone has something really original to add to the discussion, I'm terminating the subject with this issue. See, all you letterhacks, how I save you time and bother by telling you in advance what won't be covered in next issue's letter column.))



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COVER FOR ISSUE #7

[MIKE BLAKE] The cover of MYTHOLOGIES 7 is undoubtedly the best thus far, both in regards to Bonnie's excellent piece of art and Tim Marion's well-done lettering. Both are to be complimented.

[JIM LANG] I particularly liked the cover. Simply beautiful.

[DAVID MOYER] Truly a lovely cover.

[DAVID TAGGART] Absolutely beautiful cover by Bonnie Dalzell.

[ROY TACKETT] Consider the cover illo by Dalzell. By gadfrey, he said, wouldn't that be a conversation piece cast in bronze on the front lawn beside an iron deer? I suspect, though, from the position of the tail between the legs that the old high priest has just been kicked out in disgrace for predicting that it would be fair and warm for the king's swearing in ceremony (the newest thing with kings, you know, they are sworn in rather than crowned...do you care?) whereas the king actually found himself up to his cojones in snow which wasn't fair, so he made it warm for the high priest.

[STEPHEN H. DORNEMAN] It was first struck by, am now inordinately pleased by and just simply impressed by Ms Dalzell's cover. The problem is that some fugghead of a postman took it upon himself to make sure the issue fit in my small mailbox and put an ineradicable crease across the front of the zine (causing the backcover to fall off in the process. I'd be grateful if you could send me another copy of the cover, so I'll have one suitable for framing.

[REED ANDRUS] Bonnie Dalzell's cover for #7 exceeds her previous achievements by approximately 100%. Totally beautiful, yet chilling, threatening. And Tim Marion's lettering complements her mood very nicely. A striking cover.

[MIKE GLICKSOHN] Once again you've got an absolutely stunning cover, easily one of the very best to appear on a fanzine this year. (Your choice of paper appeals to me too: back in the days when NERG used to have the best covers in fandom -- he said with typical Canadian modesty -- I used the same sort of stock for as many covers as I could. And the quality of both the artwork and the reproduction you've achieved with this cover matches anything I ever did. I'm very glad I'm not currently competing with you.

[SAM LONG] Say, that's a nice Dalzell cover.

[BRETT COX] Fine cover from Dalzell, although I think I prefer her dragons.

[TARAL WAYNE MACDONALD] How is it that MYTHOLOGIES preens under one exquisite Dalzell cover after another? Each one better than the last? What I generally like about Bonnie's work is her ability to create a living breathing creature from a stylized parameter. Her previous two covers, my first exposure to Bonnie, are built up entirely by line. She gave texture to those drawings by line also (not to be confused with hatching or cross-hatching) making the wings of the pegasoid leathery and the hide of the dragon scaly with circular and radiating



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patterns. The new cover is different from the previous ones by being less stylized. Textures are produced by realism rather than representation. Overall I think this cover her best. This would be my recommendation for something to be included in Bruce Arthurs' proposed FANTHOLOGY.

[AL SIROIS] Bonnie's covers get better and better.

[CHIP HITCHCOCK] Magnificent cover.

[BUD WEBSTER] The cover is beautiful, the best cover I've seen on a zine in a long time, and also one of Bonnie's best. I am tempted to frame it, but I don't want to mess up an issue.

[VICTORIA VAYNE] Simply beautiful cover by Dalzell, and beautifully printed too.

[LARRY CARMODY] Bonnie Dalzell's cover is fabulous, a fine and detailed work which seems to be in the vein of what Alicia Austin attempted a few years ago in an issue of GRANFALLOON. In any event, it's an excellent cover.

[WAYNE MARTIN] MYTHOLOGIES #7 had the most striking cover I've seen on a fanzine in a long time. It was well worth the cover stock you used.

#### COVER FOR ISSUE #6

[LAURINE WHITE] Al Sirois' cover was cute. It reminded me of a wizard's magic mirror in THE FACE IN THE FROST by John Bellairs. "The wizard peered deep into the fathomless depths of the murky mirror, and when the swirling mists cleared, he found himself watching a 1943 game between the Chicago Cubs and the New York Giants. The Cubs were behind 16-0 in the eighth inning."

[PETER ROBERTS] I liked the cover - even though the exact nature of the words escaped me. Fout on Americans for not playing cricket like civilized people.

[HARRY WARNER JR] If the fanzine needed anything to complete its conquest of my heart as well as my head, it attained it in the form of the cover on this issue. I'm really a more ardent baseball fan than science fiction fan and I can think of Al Sirois' cover as practically a portrait of me, because I looked much like that when I was younger and listened to Arch MacDonald, Red Barber, Rosie Powswell, Bill Dyer, and the other play by play men over the radio during the 1930's and 1940's.

((Arch MacDonald is now the Boston Channel Five newsman. I'd heard he had an illustrious career as a younger man but hadn't known in what capacity.)))

[AL SIROIS] To Frank Denton: Yes, I know of THE FACE IN THE FROST, but have never read it, and it never entered my mind while I was doing the cover drawing. And to Chris Eblis, I am prolix. And I think someone mentioned the wizard as being Gandalf. But it wasn't. I don't know who it was.



((Perhaps it was Fandalf?)))

### IMPRESSIONS OF THE EAST

#### /CHIP HITCHCOCK/

Eastern cities do not have odd street layouts; they have complicated paved cowpaths. In addition, ugly buildings are not simply mandatory, they are status symbols whose quantities determine the standings of various cities; I have noticed, in fact, that this insidious competition is creeping westward, although to demonstrate their utter non-functionality the buildings are magically transformed into skyscrapers rising lonesomely out of the sprawling plains.

#### /BRUCE TOWNLEY/

There's a very good reason for the street systems of Eastern cities to be complex. Aside from the apparently obvious fact that they all grew up from narrow horse tracks and trails. The good reason is that they are that way to confuse outsiders. After all, the East is the seat of American civilization (and we all know what goes on in the seat).

### PULP ART

#### /SUE ANDERSON/

Apropos of Sadoul's opinion that Paul is better than Brown because less realistic, I have here a letter from little Morris S. Dollens, in the November 1936 ASTOUNDING: "...I want to thank you more than ever for letting Wesso illustrate seventy-five per cent of the issue. He used to draw silly tight pants on his men, but now I can't tell any difference between his characters' clothes and real, everyday ones..."

#### /MIKE GLICKSOHN/

There seem to be at least three illustrated histories of SF or histories of illustrated sf available nowadays and I can't say any of them really impress me. The strongest impression I get from an examination of the visual aspects of these various volumes is that a large percentage of the art that (dis)graced early sf was abysmal. Finlay alone seems to really stand out. These are the sort of books I'd never buy for myself, and I wonder if those who do get them buy them for primarily nostalgic reasons or if they honestly think the artwork is worth looking at.

((I agree pretty much. As you know, I share your taste for Paul Lehr. We recently acquired a Tom Barber painting that I look forward to one day showing off to you. Barber walked into the World Fantasy Con in Providence in October with a couple dozen paintings, sold over \$1000 worth, and attracted the attention of Don Wollheim (for whom he's now doing covers) and Zebra books (ditto).)))

#### /GEORGE FLYNN/

The translation of 2000 A.D. is even worse than you thought. I checked the French edition, and about 95% of the story titles are quoted in English. So obviously the translator went wrong just about everywhere it was possible to do so. (No way it could be Sadoul, who knows the field). It's clear they did pick someone who was quite unfamiliar with the field...and maybe thought the stories in question appeared originally in French. I think that thing on the last page is a glorified credit list, not an "index by publisher".



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[TARAL WAYNE MACDONALD]

I think the main shortcoming of all exhibits of the recent spate of pulp art is that the motivation for them has been nostalgia. Why is it that a book on science fiction art from all magazines and from all years hasn't been published? Who actually cares that much about covers from old ASTOUNDINGS? Most of them were rather poor anyway. Why not a book with the best covers of ANALOG, F&SF, FANTASTIC & AMAZING, GALAXY & IF; black and whites from the interior of the same magazines; paperback book covers; fanart; and perhaps also some of the better, more artistic stills from some movies. With accurate text, of course. And not published in enormous, clumsy, ostentatious coffee table size. 8½ by 11 would be more than sufficient.

((I particularly agree about paperback art. Some artists whose work for paperback houses is often exceptionally good would include Freas, Krenkel, Frazetta, Bob Pepper, Gene Szafran, Richard Powers, Paul Lehr, Dean Ellis, and Gervasio Gallardo.)))

[ELST WEINSTEIN]

The trouble with the artfield today is that a lot of really original artists go unknown and unseen just because they never got into the establishment. I remember walking through the LA County Art Museum's modern art section a few years ago where the items range from mutilated inkblots to Campbell's Tomato Soup by (yuch!) Warhol. I would like to see something by Varos, but where can anybody see something unheard of? At USC about two years ago, there was a small art exhibit of young SF Bay area artists, many of whom could very well have been fannish artists of high calibre. The subject matter was often fantasy or bizarre or SF nature.

#### DE CAMP & LOVECRAFT

[L. SPRAGUE DE CAMP]

Thanks for MYTHOLOGIES #7. I am flattered by the space given to COLLINS ON DE CAMP. As Barnum said in effect, for a public entertainer, it is better to be execrated than ignored.

Mr. Di Filippo is mistaken in thinking me hostile to fandom. After all, fans are the people who enable me to live without working, and I am enough of a fan myself to attend conventions and write letters like this. The irritation which Mr. Di Filippo detected (and which, I suppose, a more skillful biographer would have kept better hidden) was directed, not at fandom or at amateur journalism, but at Lovecraft's astounding waste of his time, talents, and opportunities. Nobody would begrudge him a reasonable amount of time off for recreation, whether in the form of fan activity or otherwise; but the time he devoted to letter-writing and amateur journalism was not reasonable. He spent most of his available time (when not sleeping, eating, &c.) in these pursuits. Then, when he discovered that he could not make a living in the few hours remaining, he complained that something must be wrong with the world that this should be so. In this way he not only condemned himself to poverty (which he did not enjoy) and obscurity; but he also deprived future readers of many stories, some of which might have been excellent, that he could have written in the time thus frittered.

Mr. Chauvin to the contrary, I think HPL was a good pulp writer and at times even excellent, despite some unfortunate literary mannerisms.



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His work is uneven; but so was Poe's. He was also a very complicated and interesting personality, all of which gave me a good reason to write about him.

It is not surprising that my book should have outraged some of HPL's more ardent admirers. That happens whenever someone states facts, however well-attested, about a beloved cult figure, which present that figure in a discreditable or unattractive light. I have had plenty of flak from followers of Mary Baker Eddy and L. Ron Hubbard over things I have written about them, although I believe my statements to be as truthful as the evidence permits.

It is true that I have made some changes in the Ballantine edition of LOVECRAFT: A BIOGRAPHY to meet certain criticisms that I thought justified. I am sure, however, that the hardcore inner circle of Lovecraftians will be no more pleased with this edition than with the previous ones, because the book still plainly sets forth the man's shortcomings as well as his virtues.

The one thing that really puzzles me about Mr. Collins's review is his remark about my "grotesque" errors in grammar. I thought I had a pretty good command of the language. If I have deceived myself in this regard, I ought to be told about it.

((Although personally fond of Lovecraft's fiction, I confess to more than a niggling antipathy toward the man himself. Not least of my reasons is the fact that I'm one of those swarthy types that were "destroying" his Providence. Last year I was helping with some research at the Hay Library here in Providence and discovered an apparently previously unknown letter from Lovecraft in an amateur literary journal from New Hampshire, which contained a particularly vicious attack on the Mormon Church. This doesn't mean Lovecraft was a particularly evil man, of course, but we are none of us perfect.)))

/HARRY WARNER JR/

Tom Collins' contribution is by far the best thing I've seen up to now about the HPL biography. I don't blame L. Sprague de Camp for including in his biography all the stuff about Lovecraft's eccentricities, because it was part of his assignment to do so. But it's a shame that this biography has resurrected all the old tongue-clucking over HPL's quirks, which had died out after having been so heavily practiced during the 1940's. How many important writers can be found who couldn't become the targets of just as much scorn for their foibles? And how many of those important writers had lives as free from doing harm as HPL's life was? If we're doomed to another cycle of thinking of Lovecraft as a weirdo, how can we refrain from thinking much worse things about someone like Hemingway, with his obsession with killing which began with animals and extended to men and finally, having exhausted all other possibilities, turned its attention to himself? Or John O'Hara, who seems to have been as much of a slob as a person as some of the fictional people he created? Or H.G. Wells, with his adult fondness for playing with toy soldiers, or Scott Fitzgerald, neglecting his mentally ill wife in favor of messing around with another woman?

I haven't seen the Conover book and I don't know how far the letters or the things that the adult Conover writes make Willis seem as brash and pesky as Tom describes him as a youth. But I spent part of a day with



Willis not too long after the correspondence with HPL ended, and Willis was at that time, probably 1938 or 1939, a very level-headed, quiet, and pleasant sort of teenager.

### /LAURINE WHITE/

Tom Collins' article was a good put-down of the De Camp book. I don't remember that De Camp ever wrote any book before which had so many people attacking him for it. Being the character he is, he won't let the criticism bother him. Still, he must not have considered Lovecraft a hack, or else why spend so many hours researching Lovecraft's life?

((Even hacks can have interesting lives. Look at how much has been written about Edgar Rice Burroughs, or for that matter, William Shakespeare. I suspect that there might have been considerably more acrimony about THE GREAT MONKEY TRIAL had the people most likely to be offended read it.)))

### /ROBERT WHITAKER/

Don, is it not possible that you like Lovecraft so much that you cannot see his flaws? Do you mean to say that you cannot see how bad are the stories "Herbert West, Reanimator" or "The Lurking Fear" are?

((No, I'm perfectly objective. More seriously, you can pick out bad stories by almost anyone: Sturgeon's "Cave of History", Heinlein's "Free Men", Tiptree's "Happiness is a Warm Spaceship", Anderson's "Teucan", etc. That doesn't mean the same writer didn't also write excellent stories.

Robert also said he counted only 53, not 80, stories by Lovecraft. I get 78, including 12 actually completed by Derleth and a couple of sketches. The remaining 66 are all in paperback.)))

### /TIM MARION/

I'm really becoming very disenchanted with weird fiction fandom lately; it seems as though most people within that area of fandom are much more immature than in general sf fanzine fandom. An example of this is the thing about the biography of HPL that L. Sprague de Camp wrote. I know de Camp, and know him to be a sincere, dedicated fellow (or at least that's my impression) who is honest enough not to be afraid to tell the truth about the Great God Lovecraft.

### /RICK BROOKS/

After reading Collins' review of de Camp's Lovecraft biography, I wrote de Camp congratulating him on a good job. Collins doesn't seem to have read the same book that I did. I probably overrate HPL the writer. I rate DREAM QUEST ahead of all but 15 or 20 books. Like you, I prefer his Dunsanian stories. I also have the later Arkham volumes and material on HPL including SELECTED LETTERS. De Camp took a balanced look at Lovecraft. Despite my love for some of his work, I'd have been harder on him. I will disagree with Paul Di Filippo. I did not see De Camp criticizing HPL's amateur press and letterhacking work so much to criticize fans as to call HPL a benighted idiot for wasting a lot of his time when he could have supported himself with more paying writing. HPL'S letters support his early bigotry. The young Lovecraft was not an admirable sort. To his credit, the Lovecraft Conover knew had outgrown most of that.



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[GEORGE FLYNN]

No, there's no contradiction between Stephen Dorneman's viewpoint and mine; we just chose different aspects of Jessica's theory for reductio ad absurdum. It's quite correct that the time of conception shouldn't make any difference either; I wanted to point out that the theory was foolish even if it did. And Keith Justice is also correct that virtually all the variation within a species has nothing to do with current mutations. (Sure, all the characteristics go back to mutations somewhere along the line, but the choice among them at conception is purely random.) It's embarrassing how many independent arguments can be brought against that "theory".

[MARK M. KELLER]

The most vulnerable stage of cell division, as far as radiation is concerned, seems to be the actual separation of the chromosomes. So many things can go wrong. Many plants have evolved methods to reduce their sensitivity to radiation-induced mutations, generally by having multiple sets of chromosomes, and lots of little chromosomes rather than a few big ones. But few animals have done this. So if the stars do cause personality change by radiation ("the Salmonson Theory"), then the geraniums in the flowerpot are much less susceptible than the humans or dogs or cats in the house. This may be why there are horoscope guides for people, dogs, and cats, but none that I have seen for plants. (Horoscopes for plants??)

Somebody may ask, "how could plants evolve resistance to radiation if nuclear weapons are only thirty years old?" What the plants are immune to is general mutagenic agents, such as UV radiation from sunlight, or high temperatures from sandy soil in mid-summer. Gamma rays aren't the only things that cause mutations. When I worked at Brookhaven Labs, I was fascinated by the section of forest that had been exposed to the radio-cesium gamma source. The pines were killed at 100 meters from the source, the oaks at 60 meters, the broadleaf weeds at 20, some of the tougher grasses at 10 meters. (That ten meters = dose of 20,000 roentgens.) Exactly the same species that survived harsh, dry, hot environments - they also survived best in the gamma radiation field.

What the test showed is that even a small nuclear war would have disastrous effects on the forest ecosystems of North America. Conifers (spruce, fir, pine) proved about as sensitive as people, with 500 roentgens being a lethal dose. This meant that air detonations over the Rockies (say from an ABM) would kill most of the forests, leading to massive fires and even more massive erosion the following year. The wheat of Kansas might survive the blast, but not the cold rains produced by smoke from burning forests upwind; the floods produced by denuded slopes would destroy riverside lands and cripple recovery transport.

The gamma forest tests, done in the early sixties, put the lie to Herman Kahn's cheerful post-atomic scenario. They made many military scientists realize that the cities and factories were not the only targets to protect. They possibly made the prospect of nuclear war a bit more scary to the planners of war. If they did, then they were worth the loss of a few acres of oak-pine scrublands on Long Island.

Meanwhile, I had the rare privilege, for a science-fiction reader, of being able to say that I knew in detail what part of the US would



look like after a nuclear attack. Stubs of dead trees, twisted abnormal leaves on the newly sprouted twigs of the oaks that survived, fungus growth only on the side of the trunks shaded from the gamma source, and quiet - very quiet - no crawling insects on the plants, infrequent columns of ants crossing the dry exposed soil between sheltered underground tunnels, no cricket song, no grasshopper song, no birdsong at all.

Note to Keith Justice: Natural selection and mutation work together to generate new species. They don't oppose each other as you suggest.

/SUE ANDERSON/

I'll leap in and defend Keith Justice's statements on evolution a little bit. Remember, natural selection can't operate on an isolated characteristic, only on combinations of many characteristics: the organisms themselves. A mutation -- sudden change in some trait caused by alteration of a particular gene -- can't be so radical as to go beyond the support capabilities of the already existing features, and give any advantage whatever. (Imagine Irish Elk horns growing on an otherwise unaltered deer. He wouldn't last a week.) So, most mutations that stay in the gene pool must be small ones. Considering a particular feature of a population, what you see is a frequency distribution: bell shaped curve, say, for size, length of legs, whatever; percentages of the population with various eye colors, number of spots, etc. And the genes affecting these various characteristics are carried on different chromosomes, so sexual reproduction recombines them, acting to increase the variety of individuals. (That's its big advantage.) Thus, if there's a change in the environment, unfavorable to the species as it is, pressure of natural selection forces the decrease of some traits and the increase of others, statistically speaking, over a number of generations. The animals become different, as a population, than their ancestors were. A different species. Now suppose this environmental change only affected a portion of the original species' range, and elsewhere they haven't changed much. We see two species; but there never was any great mutation that caused the divergence; only this selection pressure, acting gradually. If the environment hadn't changed, and the species was well adapted in the first place, then mutations would have had little effect.

/SAM LONG/

Evolution by mutation is a differential process, and the possible number of mutations is practically infinite. Even in the billions of humans that have lived since man first began there can only have been a small portion of the possible mutations. And most of them are dead. (not to mention the fact that the mutation may be invisible or too small to be noticed) But I agree with him that changes in the genes at conception are likely to be very few compared to those at other times. Evolution by mutation or natural selection is a differential process, I should have written. Between them, Stephen and George make much better sense than Keith or Jessica. But really, this isn't my area of competence either, so what am I doing going on about it? Miscellaneous matters: all knowledge is contained in fanzines.

((Or at least most. I have, in the course of typing this lettercolumn, learned a great deal more about evolution than I ever learned in school. I am tempted to say that I learned more than I actually cared to know, but that really isn't true. That's one reason I do all this work.)))



[/C.L. GRANT/

If you can't write "hard" science, then you write "soft" science? Garbage. You ascribe to the story the type of science which best supports the plot, theme, or whatever the hell you're writing about. To make the incredible and utterly defenseless claim that the writer of a "soft" science fiction story has little more intelligence than one who doesn't know how to refill a gas tank is not only a form of slander reserved for the immature and the idiot, it's a vast disservice to DYING INSIDE, PSTALEMATE, THE DISPOSSESSED, and dozens of other sf titles which are easily the equal of "hard" science fiction material. I agree with you entirely, Don: the content is not a measure of the author's intelligence limitations, but rather where the speculation will produce the most effective story. Taste, as you said.

((If anything, I'd expect the converse to be true. Anyone with reasonable intelligence can, if he really wants to, get a good grounding in physics, chemistry, and the like. But the ability to draw well defined characters, write in a clear, interesting style, plot a story intelligently, all of these are often independent of intelligence, and, I suspect, cannot be learned in the way that a science can be.)))

[/AL SIROIS/

I feel a little slighted by Terry Jeeves' remarks about hard science vs soft science. I like both, but why try to make me feel ashamed for liking soft science stories (sounds like the name of a pulpzine)? A lot of fans think technology is running more than a little rampant, and explore the software behind this. And that's only one explanation. I don't write much hard sf because my interests are in people rather than machines, though of course the machines play a large part some times. Sometimes. Only sometimes. I have all of Hal Clement in print, but I also have all of Delany and a hell of a lot of Cordwainer Smith. So sue me. Damn. Don't knock my sf. It's yours too.

[/ROBERT WHITAKER/

Brian Earl Brown walked into a long rambling discussion which Sheryl and I were partaking - Heinlein's recent works will not stand the test of time. I mean, who is going to be reading I WILL FEAR NO EVIL or TIME ENOUGH FOR LOVE over his delightful THE STAR BEAST or THE ROLLING STONES or about twenty other titles which I found entertaining and mindfilling?

[/SUE ANDERSON/

You WAHF'd Tucker!! Cosmic gall. Speaking of letters, looking for the Dollens I ran into one from Harry Warner Jr., October 1936 ASTOUNDING. He does a fair job of tearing apart a rather awful story, "Return of the Murians" (see, they just happened to land on the front lawn of the world's greatest expert on Atlantis and Lemuria...), and finishes with: "I'm thirteen and would like to correspond with someone of my own age or a little older. I remain a faithful booster."

[/TARAL WAYNE MACDONALD/

Well, there's no question that your personal zine has cancerously grown to a genzine. What are you going to do now? Become layout conscious I hope. All MYTHOLOGIES needs is a bit of graphic sense and letraset (and also a good deal more art) and MYTHOLOGIES becomes one of about three or four big genzines currently published.



((I imagine this is going to disappoint you, but I really don't want to be the editor of one of the top genzines around. I don't have any particular interest in the Hugo, and I'd like a FAAN sometime chiefly because I think it's a nifty Randy Bathurst sculpture. I have no interest in producing a graphically oriented zine, am not interested in more than the rudiments of layout. I use interior art to fill spaces at the ends of articles, to illustrate points in some of the pieces, and occasionally to break the monotony of massive pages of type. If I had the wherewithal, I'd publish MYTHOLOGIES as a paperback book, with little or no interior art. I don't want to publish GRAN-FALLOON, or OUTWORLDS, or REG, or ENERGUMEN. I want to publish MYTHOLOGIES, and I intend to continue to do so. My way. It's accomplishing what I want; why should I change?)))

### / ELST WEINSTEIN /

"Throttled Voices" by Di Filippo was great. Unfortunately, it seems almost like such things can and might happen in the US, with not many recourses on the part of the few people who are interested in "more than 2000 words".

### / PETER ROBERTS /

Somehow I doubt whether "The Great Sidewalk War of 1975" will qualify for a Hugo next year, though it's not a bad idea, albeit somewhat whimsical and farfetched. You should have chosen something less fantastical, something more genuinely frightening - like the recent topic of high-level discussion: weather-control warfare. I was reading a piece recently which graphically illustrated the horrors that this could bring to a meteorologically-minded state like Britain. The Russians would start it, of course; probably with a decisive blow - "sleet, turning to snow on higher ground". If the government survived, we'd retaliate with that vicious British invention: "cloudy, with scattered showers in some areas, brightening later". That should throw the Kremlin into confusion and, with luck, we should withstand the counter-attack: a simultaneous strike of "mist, with fog in low-lying areas, possibly persisting until lunchtime". All being well, we'd finish them off then with a pincer movement of "cold for the time of year with some frost in sheltered areas" and "sunny, with occasional cloud, and the odd thunderstorm developing towards evening".

### / VICTORIA VAYNE /

Paul Di Filippo's piece of exaggerated extrapolation was funny, and enjoyable as his MYTHOLOGIES articles have always been.

### / JIM MANN /

"An Artist's Life" was a nice look at trends and how people's opinions are influenced by critics. If the critic says it's good, people will go out and buy it. If the next week the critics hate it, everyone will suddenly quit buying and no longer like it. Much of this is due to the fact that most people don't want to make up their own minds. That would require thinking, a process they try to avoid whenever possible. It's much easier to let someone else make up their minds for them. When such things happen with books, paintings, or movies, it is harmless. Unfortunately, the same thing happens in politics quite often. Most dictatorships happen because people have allowed themselves to be led and to have their opinions set by popular fads rather than by themselves.



/ GENE WOLFE /

It seems to me that your "Rules of Engagement for Motor Pool Combat" bears quite directly on the questions Mary Martin posed in her letter. The individual who knows he is unarmed, but that the person opposing him may well have a concealed knife or pistol, is likely to be timid.

Still, the most important reason for the kind of behavior MM is asking about -- or so it seems to me -- is our shift from a nation of free farmers to a nation of employees. Most employers regularly (for obvious reasons) punish their workers for any form of un-docile behavior. Recently, for example, a bus driver here in Chicago killed a man who had highjacked his bus and repeatedly threatened to murder him. He lost his job with the city bus company, even though the city police lodged no criminal charges against him.

((A common army phenomenon bears this out. If a young officer is too heroic, too competent, too devoted, he receives a few quick promotions, and is then dead-ended because his superiors distrust him, fear that he is after their job, is likely to rock the boat, is too moral and not willing to accept the corruption that is pandemic in the higher ranks.)))

/ PAUL DI FILIPPO /

I'm constantly pleased with MYTHOLOGIES,  
But yet (with some prior apologies)  
I'd like to make clear  
There's one thing I can't bear ---  
An unthinking reader's tautologies.

((It's quite pleasant to read your short verses,  
They're far more rewarding than curses;  
But most of the time  
Your meter and rhyme  
Progress from quite badders to worses.)))

/ JIM LANG /

Paul Di Filippo's column was good, with an added touch of humor if read directly after "Myth".

/ ROY TACKETT /

I disagree with your statement that parents assume that discipline is part of the teacher's responsibility. The assumption among the majority would seem to be that discipline is nobody's responsibility. Parents won't and they object if teachers try to.

/ REED ANDRUS /

Have you read of the livestock mutilations occurring throughout this area? At first devil worshippers were blamed, then predators became the villains, and now we have located the true perpetrators. It's the resident Democrats, still searching for the perfect asshole to run for the Presidency in 1976.

((The latest we heard here about the mutilations was that indentations had been found near many of the carcasses, indicating that something massive, supported by struts, had rested close by. Helicopters were ruled out for some reason, so that left the only possible solution -- the Ancient Astronauts return. Keep us posted.)))



.....

[STEPHEN DORNEMAN]

Di Filippo was great, as usual. But I think your policy of no puns will result in the slipping in of very, very subtle ones among an otherwise innocuous loc. In fact, I'm trying to think of one right now...

((You'll sneak it in by circumlocution no doubt.)))

[PAUL DI FILIPPO]

I am forced to protest against a false statement you made in MYTHOLOGIES #7. Nowhere in that issue (and believe me, I searched diligently through it) do we learn the truth about Paul Revere and condoms. You raised an intriguing question and then left us unsatisfied. Was the hunt for condoms what motivated his famous ride? Did his skills as an artificer extend to the making of condoms? Was his well known cry, "The redcoats are coming", an enigmatic reference to the arrival of tinted condoms?

((The truth is that Paul Chugglesworth (that's his real name, you know) was actually warning the people that -- like most invading armies -- the British were engaging in rapine as they swept through the colonies. His timely warning enabled the patriots to spirit away the more attractive young women before their arrival, a service for which Paul Chugglesworth was subsequently much Revered.)))

[ERIC LINDSAY]

Mike Glicksohn says some very sensible things (that means I agree) about self-knowledge and adjustment, and they do indeed relate to the grasping-for-straws approach of some people toward the newly popular religions from the east.

One thing for Bruce Arthurs to remember, in characterizing fans as B beings, is that it is well known among psychologists that students, when first learning of any group description of a recognizable pattern of human behavior, find that because they share some of those characteristics, then they must be a member of that particular group. The important thing is whether the degree that you partake of a group characteristic is significantly greater than the average.

I have to get this posted before it goes back to the bottom of the pile of unanswered but deserving mail. I finally found RI on my wall map of the USA, so I might see you in 1976 when I visit the US for three months.

((By all means come visit us. We'll hold a special RISFA meeting in your honor.)))

[RICK BROOKS]

Fable brought back memories. During the Cuban Crisis, I stood guard duty. None of us was very political, but after rainy weather turned to sleet, then to snow, we'd have killed Castro on sight. Yes, my favorite "war story" is how I helped guard Bangor, Maine, from a Cuban invasion. One young lady whom I've otherwise forgotten had the mental picture of Bangor Harbor being invaded by fishing boats full of Cubans. I treasure that.

You take Brett Cox to task for faulty logic, then do the same thing.



I've heard a dozen times about the oil "we" lost with Vietnam, but so far, like the North Slope of Alaska, we don't know if there was enough there to matter. And we didn't really lose that as the oil companies instead of the more generalized we would have gotten it.

((OK, amend my statement to the oil we theoretically lost. But it hardly affects the point of my statements.)))

/WILL NORRIS/

How about putting your address on the title page so I don't have to look it up all the time?

((My address has been on the title page of every single issue, Will. And I did, incidentally, send your poem back. Didn't you receive it?)))

/GEORGE FLYNN/

The "Indiana bill to fix pi at exactly 3.000" that Mark mentions is a persistent myth. What it actually purported to do was, in effect, to endorse a new way of squaring the circle. But it was so totally incoherent (I've read it) that it can't be said to give any specific value of pi. You see, the author went to the legislature and said, "If you pass a resolution endorsing my theory, I'll give the Indiana schools the right to use it free." So the legislature thought, "I don't understand this stuff, but if this guy is offering us something for nothing, why not?" It only got through one house, though, before a math teacher came along, read the bill, and said, "WAIT A MINUTE!"

You chose a rather poor example in your reply to Jill Eastlake. If someone accused you of plagiarism, that would be clearly actionable (as damaging your reputation), even if you had no out-of-pocket loss. It is of course your privilege not to sue if you don't want to, but you certainly would have the right to do so. Criticizing people for exercising their rights is just as dangerous on this side of the issue as the other.

((Come on now, George, you know better than that. There are very definitely times when it is unwise to exercise one's rights in a particular manner, and if you enjoin us from criticizing people for exercising their rights, you enjoin us from criticizing just about everything they do. And I never implied the lack of legality in suing people purely out of spite, only the morality of it. The US public is far too conscious of the fine art of suing, and you and I pay for it every time we deal with a real estate agent, a lawyer, a doctor, or any other businessman. What your philosophy (inferred) would amount to is, if you don't like your neighbor and can provoke him into criticizing you unwisely, you can sue him, a nice offensive method masquerading as defense. I don't buy it.)))

#### LATE LETTERS

/ALEXANDER DONIPHAN WALLACE/

In Ed Conner's SF ECHO you record a curious position. Writing of a novel that is scientifically defective, i.e., in which the author goofed about some extrapolated science, you advise ignoring this and reading on anyway, "consider them as fantasies and read on anyway". Is this consequent to a casual and momentary particularization, or is it a conclusion from some undifferentiated principle? In the latter



instance your position has some bearing on what an SF&F novel is, the old problem of defining SF&F.

Implicit in your editorial is Today's Big Word, "altruism". Cooperation is now "reciprocal altruism", and your salary is "quantified reciprocal altruism". With regret I must disagree -- competition is the essence of education, but one must employ differential grading. Though I have never tested this, I believe that the normal class would grade its members in roughly the same fashion that the instructors did.

I would vote -- if I had a vote -- for more reviews, critiques, and essays on SF&F, and less consideration of the Great Moral Problems of the Day. The tone of your zine is calmer and more sedate and reasoned than, for example, that of REG (which does not really say too much), so let me say than most zines I read (about 12).

((My comments in SF ECHO referred to RINGS OF ICE. Sam Long objected to the scientific explanation of the disaster. My point was that if this explanation took a primary role, was the crux of the story, was the problem to be solved, then it would be a valid major criticism of the novel. Since in fact the novel dealt entirely with the efforts of a group of people to survive among the upheavals, it is a valid minor criticism. This, I think, is a fairly general rule. For example, I have been told that the Ringworld, as described by Niven, is not possible mathematically. This does not make the story any less enjoyable than does my recent learning that sandworms are apparently a violation of the mass-energy laws.

While most issues of MYTHOLOGIES run at least one critical article, I should point out that this is not a science fiction fanzine, it is a personalzine edited by a science fiction fan.)))

/FOGER BRYANT/

I notice that you carefully add "theoretically" to the idea that "lower quality commodities are driven off the market in favor of cheaper, higher quality goods". Actually, it seems that quality has little to do with the principle that cheaper goods drive out more expensive ones. People seem content to eat more and more MacDonald's food -- to take an example -- even though they know that it has little real nutritional value and that its high proportion of calories, carbohydrates, and fats may make it detrimental. But it's cheap, and it tastes good enough. So it goes.

((Actually, I just read recently - much to my surprise - that they've found that a MacDonald's hamburger, fries, and shake actually have more nutritional value than one might think. Consider there's good quality hamburg, potatoes, pickle, milk, ketchup, bread, etc. But I agree in general with what you say.)))

/CHESTER D. CUTHBERT/

I think your plea for cooperation will be granted. The energy shortages, dwindling natural resources, disenchantment with the old work ethic and with growth economies, and other factors, will force a re-appraisal of our priorities. I retired from the insurance business nine years ago, and have not entered paid employment since my retirement. I have had time to do some thinking, and have been able to confirm the opinion I had before I retired that at least 90% of the



work done in this world is unnecessary. I think much of the energy shortage is due to waste, and that a common-sense acceptance of the fact that the machine's prime purpose is to eliminate or reduce human labor will ultimately force politicians to realize that 10% or so unemployment is no real problem when we may expect only 2% or so to have jobs at the end of this century. The real urgency is not to cure unemployment, but to train people to make constructive use of leisure time. Any economic problem is unreal: the fact is that we live in an economy of abundance; there is no need to have full employment in order that everyone should have all the necessities and some of the luxuries of life; our technology is far enough advanced already to allow many industries to go on a three-day work week in spite of more holidays, lengthier vacations, earlier retirements, longer periods of schooling before entering industry, on the job training, etc., in spite of high unemployment. You and I would not have difficulty doing things of interest, even if we didn't do a tap of productive work.

((Except produce fanzine articles.)))

/JACKIE HILLES/

Somehow, when I looked at the letters on censorship and government, I became very sad and asked myself why you were tormenting yourself. Don't you know how futile it is? How could you possibly change the government? Money = government. We are ruled by an aristocracy of currency. Whoever has the most, governs the most. In secret little paranoid ways, the rich manage to collect their homage from us. So just settle down and accept it. There's nothing any of us can do. Isn't it cute when an infant waves his fist in anger? Don't you imagine we look as cute and harmless to the wealthy/powerful when we go into our little rages? And we're handed a rattle and we're satisfied for the moment.

((First, I'm not tormented. Second, if there is any truth to what you said, it is precisely because too many people believe in their own futility. I don't. Third, the statement you made sounds rather paranoid in itself. There is influence in government by the monied interests, but shifting the blame for mismanagement to the rich is similar to the The-Devil-made-me-do-it way of looking at things. Even if everything you said weretrue, it would be more demeaning to give in than to resist.)))

/MICHAEL CARLSON/

To Sheryl Smith: Recommending Melville to me is carrying ego to Mailer; but Melville is so far above either Faulkner or Gardner, in terms of dealing with the mythology of America, of all of it, in terms of Space, that it's silly to compare. I'm thinking particularly of MOBY DICK, THE CONFIDENCE MAN, "Benito Cereno", "Bartleby the Scrivener", PIERRE, and "Clarel". I have to agree with Sheryl about BILLY BUDD, however, nothing particularly wrong with it, but it's the weakest by far of HM's romances. Sheryl should try Cooper, Hawthorne, Poe, Twain, James (for the mix of US & Europe), Hemingway, Hammett (who actually got to where Hemingway was going first), Chandler, Faulkner, and others.

((This discussion seems to have degenerated to throwing names back and forth at one another. Suffice it that I close with an observation: While it may be true that a universal view of America, a full



grasp of whatever the hell the American dream is, can help to make a writer great, it does not do so by fiat. The converse is also true. A lack of this insight, or even a warped and inaccurate insight, does not necessarily make an author not-great. In other words, a male chauvinist pig can write a great novel, so could a Nazi, an atheist, or a psychopath.)))

[MARK KELLER]

Victory in Nature goes not to the most aggressive or most vicious, but to the most successful. And there is a difference. It is incredible that there are still people around trying to quote "Nature Red in Tooth and Claw" as an excuse for stealing the goods of their fellow humans. It may make them less uneasy, but it's not true.

A key concept is "co-evolution". Success is not by direct combat, but by adjusting self and environment to get the most return for the least effort. If two groups each evolve in a way that they help each other while becoming more likely to survive - hence "co-evolution" - then they will prosper as a group, better than they might have done as individuals. Look at bees pollinating flowers in exchange for nectar, small birds picking insects out of cattle fur in return for protection from cats or foxes. Sometimes, of course, the cooperation is only one way. The Milkweeds produce a poisonous substance in their leaves, which discourages most of the insects that might eat them. One kind of butterfly, the Monarch, has developed resistance to the poison - Monarch caterpillars really dig into those milkweed leaves. One way cooperation so far, right?

It goes further. The poisons accumulate, harmlessly, in the Monarchs, and are carried on into the adult butterfly. Birds that try to eat adults of this species suffer convulsive vomiting within minutes. They learn to avoid them quickly, and go pick on some other butterflies for food. So the Monarch is competing with all those other butterflies, not by attacking them, not by pushing them off leaves...but by eating something they won't eat, and by tasting nauseating. This is competition, and it does work. But it's not the kind of competition recognized by your average football coach. "I want you larvae to go out there, and I want you to smell so obnoxious that none of the predators will want to touch your reeking flesh. I want to see the opposing team double over vomiting when you get near them."

Cooperation is simply competition on a team basis, rather than an individual basis. Every nation is a minority, banded against the outside world. The members will cooperate because they trust their neighbors more than they trust the foreign strangers. If this breaks down, the society falls apart.

To Darroll Pardoe: Yes, the expansion of Europe's population did take place in two phases. I simplified a bit. But the real problem is, what happened to the first phase? From 1100 to 1350 numbers in Europe increased, and the economy expanded. Then came a collapse, usually associated with the Black Plague. After two centuries hiatus, the expansion started again, building this time into the world-economy of the trans-oceanic empires from 1550 onward (Spain, Portugal, Holland, England, France). The second time there was no collapse, but rather the joining of all the coasts of the world into one great ekumene, the start of the modern era.



Since my interest in history turns to uchronian speculation, I have to ask, why the second but not the first? Could Europe have discovered America in 1292, instead of in 1492? Or rather, since the Northmen did cross to Labrador in 980 - 1020, could the discovery have been widely known, and successful? Imagine North America visited by sailors from little feudal states rather than massive nations, with much fewer resources, in other words. The invaders would have less effective firearms, and probably no gunships. They would meet, in the south, rising confederations rather than settled empires. The technological gap would not be unbridgably great; the local armies would be "barbarian auxiliaries" rather than feeble opponents. Ha, I see a network of coastal baronies and enclaves, in uneasy truce with a network of native federations and chiefdoms further inland, who have assimilated the horse and the gun, and who work iron for their own use.

This looks like an interesting background for a story. Have I stumbled upon a justification for a world in which the SCA mirrors actual fact?

[DAVE SZUREK]

Enjoyed reading about Sarban, a writer I've never sampled, and before now, knew next to nothing about. I do know that THE SOUND OF HIS HORN was purchased for filming about ten or twelve years ago (or maybe longer) but apparently dropped. I don't know who was supposed to make it, nor if a cast or crew had been selected. I didn't even know who wrote it. But I do know it was described as set in a "Nazified world" so that seems to prove it was Sarban's story. I also have a vague memory of THE DOLL MAKER being purchased about the same time, as well, but my memory isn't very clear about this.

((I hadn't heard that, though it's unsurprising. A lot of movies seem to not quite ever get filmed. I vaguely recall such novels as MORE THAN HUMAN, CHILDHOOD'S END, CAVES OF STEEL, and others being optioned for films, but never made. On the other hand, I saw a movie version of the first Perry Rhodan novel the other day, and movie versions of Millard's THE GODS HATE KANSAS, Laumer's THE MONITORS, Lymington's NIGHT OF THE BIG HEAT, and Leiber's CONJURE WIFE, and only the Laumer appeared under the book title.)))

This has been a longer lettercolumn than I had expected, although I'm still not complaining, mind you. But I did have to cut it off here. Dave Szurek wrote much more I'd like to have printed, and I also received other interesting letters. I also heard from such nice people as D.F. Drake, Sheryl Birkhead, Vic Kostrikin, Lee Carson (twice), Michael Bishop, Terry Jeeves, Celeste Erendrea, Doug Barbour, Stuart Gilson, Jim Cooper, Lester Boutillier, Gerard Houarner, Will Norris again, John Carl, Mike Bracken, Dirk Mosig, and Hank Heath, and possibly a few people I've forgotten to list. Thank you all.

"Any race which justifies its slaughter of all strangers on the grounds that strangers suffer from wanderlust, and that wanderlust is a form of demonic possession, must be spiritually interesting."



CREDIT FOR SOME PORTION OF THIS ISSUE RESIDES WITH THE FOLLOWING  
MARVELOUS PEOPLE. THANKS TO ALL.

SUE ANDERSON, 12 Summit St, E. Prov., RI 02914  
REED ANDRUS, 1717 Blaine Ave, Salt Lake City, Utah 84108  
JOHN BERRY, c/o Paul Novitski, 1690 E. 26th Ave, Eugene, OR 97403  
SHERYL BIRKHEAD, 23629 Woodfield Rd, Gaithersburg, MD 20760  
MICHAEL BLAKE, 2799 Pawtucket Ave, E. Prov., RI 02914  
ROGER BRYANT, 1019 Cordova Ave, Akron, OH 44320  
MICHAEL CARLSON, 3577 Lorne Ave #9, Montreal, Quebec, Canada  
LARRY CARMODY, 118 Lincoln Ave, Mineola, NY 11501  
BRETT COX, Box 542, Tabor City, NC 28463  
JOHN CURLOVICH, 108 Montville St, Pittsburgh, PA 15214  
CHESTER CUTHBERT, 1104 Mulvey Ave, Winnipeg, Manitoba S3M 1J5, Canada  
BONNIE DALZELL, Massachusetts  
L. SPRAGUE DE CAMP, Pennsylvania  
PAUL DI FILIPPO, 124 Old River Road, Lincoln, RI 02865  
STEPHEN DORNEMAN, 221 S. Gill St, State College, PA 16801  
GEORGE FLYNN, 27 Sowamsett Ave, Warren, RI 02885  
MICHAEL GLICKSOHN, 141 High Park Ave, Toronto, Ontario M6P 2S3, Can.  
C.L. GRANT, New Jersey  
JACKIE HILLES, 6731 Meadowburn Drive, Richmond, VA 23234  
CHIP HITCHCOCK, 16 Trowbridge St, Apt 37, Cambridge, MA 02138  
MARK M. KELLER, 101 S. Angell, Providence, RI 02906  
JIM LANG, 162 Fifth St, Hicksville, NY 11801  
ERIC LINDSAY, 6 Hillcrest, Faulconbridge, NSW 2776, Australia  
SAM LONG, Box 4946, Patrick AFB, FL 32925  
LESLIE LUTTRELL, 525 W. Main, Madison, Wisc 53703  
TARAL WAYNE MACDONALD, 1284 York Mills Rd, Apt 410, Don Mills, Ontario  
M3A 1Z2, Canada  
ALDO MALARQUE, New York  
JIM MANN, 10-D Denver Drive, McKeesRocks, PA 15136  
TIM MARION, 614-72nd St, Newport News, VA 23605  
WAYNE MARTIN, 4623 E. Inyo, Apt 3, Fresno, CA 93702  
ANN McCUTCHEN, Box 146, Maynard, MA 01754  
DAVID MOYER, 510 Packer Hall, University Park, PA 16802  
WILL NORRIS, 1073 Shave Rd, Schenectady, NY 12303  
DARROLL PARDOE, 24 Othello Close, Hartford, Huntingdon, PE18 7SU, UK  
PETER ROBERTS, 6 Westbourne Park Villas, London W2, England  
AL SIROIS, 45 South St, East Haven, CT 06512  
DAVE SZUREK, 4417 Second, Apt B-2, Detroit, MI 48201  
ROY TACKETT, 915 Green Valley Rd NW, Albuquerque, NM 87107  
DAVID TAGGART, 215 Austin Hall, U.V.M., Burlington, VT 05401  
BRUCE TOWNLEY, 2323 Sibley St, Alexandria, VA 22311  
LAURIE TRASK, 6-A-3 Morewood, 1060 Morewood, Pittsburgh, PA 15213  
VICTORIA VAYNE, PO Box 156 Stn D, Toronto, Ontario M6P 3J8, Canada  
PAUL WALKER, 128 Montgomery St, Bloomfield, NJ 07003  
DR. A.D. WALLACE, 306 E. Gatehouse Dr, Apt H, Metairie, LA 70001  
HARRY WARNER JR, 423 Summit Ave, Hagerstown, MD 21740  
BUD WEBSTER, PO Box 5519, Richmond, VA 23220  
ELST WEINSTEIN, APDO 6-869, Guadalajara 6, Jalisco, Mexico  
LAURINE WHITE, 5408 Leader Ave, Sacramento, CA 95841  
GENE WOLFE, Illinois

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Since typing the WAHFs on the previous page, a few more letters have  
arrived, parts of which will appear next time, from Neal Wilgus, Mary  
Martin, Harry Warner Jr, Doug Barbour, Rod Snyder, Ben Indick, Laurine  
White, and A.D. Wallace. If this \_\_\_\_\_ is checked, this is your last  
issue unless you write. If this   X   has an "X" in it, I'd really  
like to hear from you.