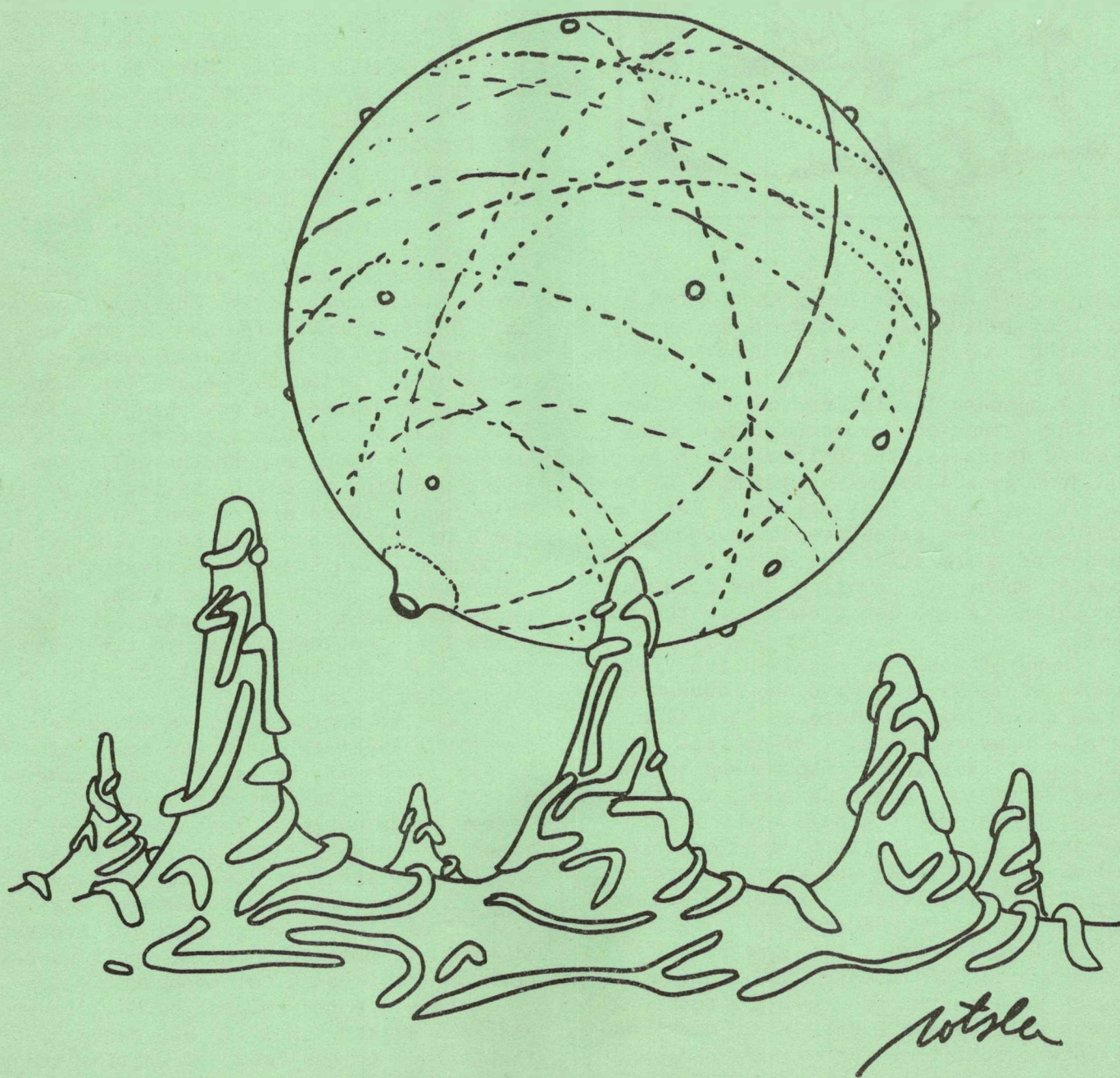


Scintillation 8

Mel Gilden · Paul Walker · Jackie Franke
Bruce Townley · Bill Rotsler · & others





Much as I tried, kids, this issue is coming out a wee bit later than I had hoped. Not that I have been too busy, or anything like that...but... Donn, I don't know how you do it.

I suppose I'm taking too much time sitting around the store reading books, reading fanzines, bullshitting with people, and just generally making the most of being my own boss. However, don't let that fool you. I've already spent a goodly number of hours after the store was closed working on stock, scouting, and doing my accounting (which was a damn mess the first week).

Many of you have received the "Illustrated Store Flyer", with the address and phone number of the store on it. Alas, despite many requests, I cannot put out a catalog at this time. Stock here in the store is of the beginning sort; in other words, there aren't enough books yet to warrant a list. I will be dealing in o.p. and mail order books within a few months, so patience, patience. (Ben, who wouldn't like a copy of SHUNNED HOUSE?)

Oh! By the way, the name of the bookstore is THE ILLUSTRATED STORE, of course named after the Bradbury book. A friend of mine and I sat up one night and mixed around titles for a store name and came up with some real losers: THE STAINLESS STEEL STORE, THE STOCHASTIC STORE,

dribblings

NINE STORES IN AMBER, BUG JACK STORE, THE BOOK MERCHANTS, THE FABULOUS STORE, I HAVE NO STOCK AND I MUST SCREAM, STORE CONCENTRATION, THE STORE OUROBOROS, WARM BOOKS AND OTHERWISE, STRANGER IN A STRANGE STORE, THE FOREVER STORE, THE STORE IT-SELF, THE STOREDROPPERS, BOOK THE STORE, THE STORE'S MY DESTINATION, CHILDHOOD'S STORE, AROUND THE STORE IN 80 DAYS, MORE THAN BOOKS, THE DOORS OF HIS STORE, READER ASK NOT, WALDO & BOOKS INC., A BOOK FOR LEIBOWITZ, THE STORE OF THE QUIET SUN (ha, ha, Bob), THE STORE OF THE PUSSYFOOT, FUTURE STORE, TIME ENOUGH FOR BOOKS, BEYOND THE GOLDEN STORE, DARKOVER BOOKSTORE, A FINE AND PRIVATE STORE, VENUS ON THE HALF-STORE, THE LAST DANGEROUS BOOKSTORE, THE DEMOLISHED STORE,..care for any more? All right, I'll spare you. (How about READ MY EYES, THE FANED SAID? Oh, okay, I'll get on with the damned editorial. Killjoys.)

The chief problem with being the sole owner (and subsequently, the sole employee) is I don't have the freedom to come and go the way I did during the six weeks of my unemployment prior to opening the shop. Getting sandwiches is now akin to a relay race; call ahead, close the store with a note on the door, run to the deli, run back, and find no one's waiting to get in. It's funny, there are so many things I could do during the shop hours, but when I think on them they're really not as important as I try and make them. It's known as trying to waste time. Then comes the question: why waste time when there's so much to do here? Er...(fidget, fidget)...uh...

Down to business. This issue is largely a Backtalk issue (by damn, if Bowers can do it, so can I) consisting mostly of opinions on John Shirley's letter to me, printed last issue. An important note: I liked doing this issue. I'd like to see more like it (nice meaty letters which are hard to extract anything from, like Jackie Franke's) because it seems to draw more out of the readers, more on the rebound, so to speak.

There are the columns by Mel Gilden and Paul Walker. Mel, in his own way, fights back on the issue of writing and writers. Paul continues his look at classic forms of music and even makes an

Scintillation

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interesting comment or two on things like music appreciation and religion along the way.

And now, down to me.

One word describes me at this point in time: numb.

All of my immediate ambitions have been realized (all of two ambitions: to publish a good zine, and to own and operate my own bookstore), and I'm left without a sense of direction. I've had to re-assess my goals, setting up new ones as I discover the obsolete.

Last Sunday (my arbitrary day off), I spent five hours lying wide-awake on my back, not getting up. I didn't take a shower when I did; I didn't wash dishes or clothes despite their needing it. I literally did nothing take day. There was no drive, no will. Perhaps this kind of mood has stuck you, but apathy of this sort is very uncomfortable. What it seemed to stem from was a guilt-feeling about not being in the store (or working on it for the first time in two months). If I had gone to the shop, there would have been nothing to do. I got upset and couldn't think the rest of the day.

Last night, I shuffled my cards and dealt a new hand. Although they are not glitter-laden, my new ambitions are feasible and practical ones. The obvious one is to publish a better zine with a little more thought and work put into it. I plan on doing more reading. For months, I've chided myself for not reading more than I do. I'm a very uninformed person subsequently; I know nearly nil about world events (my attitude has been: who gives a shit?). I do now. Lastly, I plan to do a lot more work on the store. The shop itself, and the stock. It isn't enough to have the place just going, there is work to be done to improve on what I've already got.

Now I've got new goals, so why am I numb? Why can't I feel anything?

Well...who's going to worry about it? Not me. I'll snap out of it, so long as I keep busy. Now that I think on it, I've had something to do, a deadline or stop point to meet, everyday for the last four years. Certainly there were times when I didn't do anything but I always had something dangling out in front of me

to reach for. Once you hit a dead spot ...whew. Never again, you swear.

Much as I hate to, I'm going to have to drop the publication of SCINTILLATION back to a quarterly schedule. It isn't due to lack of interest, or lack of material, but lack (or shortage) of funds.

This whole bookstore business is, of course, to blame. With living expenses running around \$300.00 a month, and store expenses running and impossible sum over that, I can't have my zine sucking a hundred out of savings a month.

As soon as it's economically feasible, I'll return to a monthly schedule; offset, same as always.

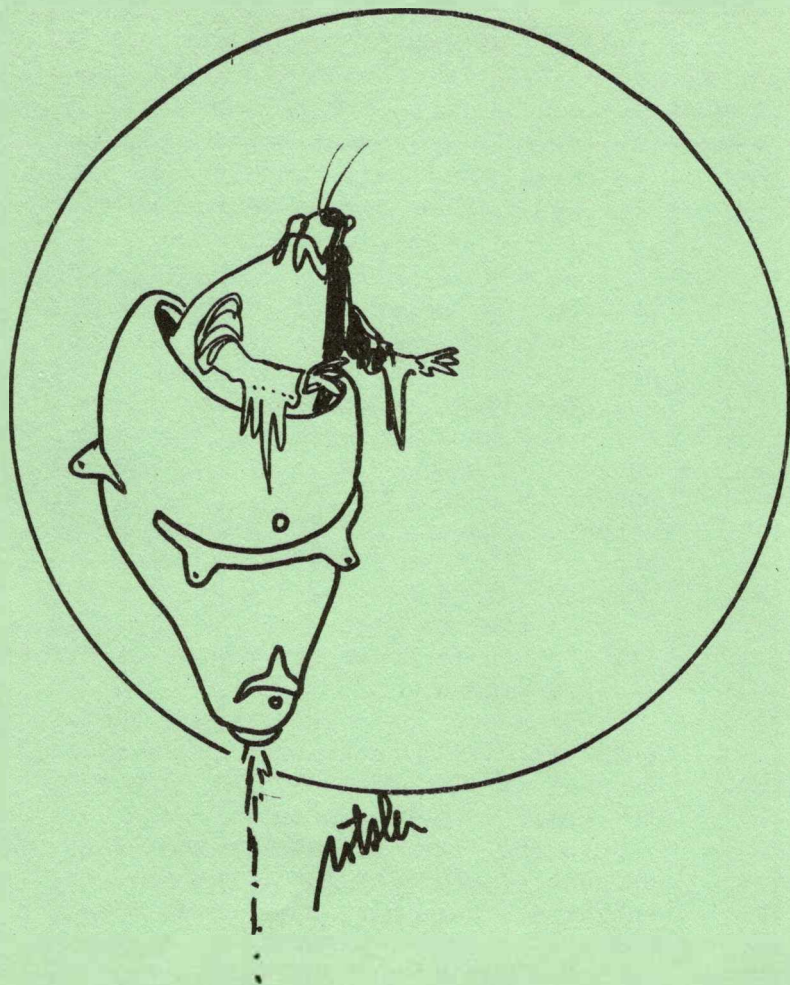
My subscribers should know that their subs will still be honored for a full 12 issues; it'll just take that much longer for their subs to run out.

Doing this is probably the worst by-product of starting the bookstore, but I anticipate this will have to be only for the next couple of issues.

I suppose it's for the better. I mean, who can go monthly and still manage to publish a fresh, original zine each time? When I started monthly I was only doing six to eight pages an issue, now I'm doing two to three times that. Can't keep it up forever.

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Mel Gilden's

During the last ten years, there's been a lot of sociology under the bridge. Gays have leaped out of closets, women have cast off their chains, minorities of all colors, shapes and sizes have started on their separate-but-equal paths to equality. Now it's time for me to highlight another downtrodden group, time to strike a blow for--if not freedom and liberty--at least understanding. The group of which I speak is the graduates of the Clarion Science Fiction Writers' Workshop.

I thought the anti-Clarion attitudes that characterize a particular form of fannish idiocy had died years ago. I was wrong. The thing that got me all fired up about this subject now is something Dan DePrez said in SCIN 7. He said that the tiresome, condescending trip John Shirley laid on Carl Bennett was a "favorite Clarion trick."

Let me start by saying that I am not gunning for Dan DePrez in particular, or even all Clarion detractors in general. I'm after those who lump all Clarion grad-

uates together as if they were so many Rice Krispies and for their own purposes give all Clarion grads a personality that's easy to vilify.

The things that Shirley said are not at issue. I refuse to either defend or condemn them. All that I am sure of is that he said them on his own behalf, and not as a representative of the Clarion Workshop. But his individual action in itself doesn't prove that he wasn't using a "favorite Clarion trick."

The thing that convinces me there are no Clarion tricks, let alone favorite ones, is that there are no typical Clarion students. They range in age from 17 to over 60. They are of each sex, every color, and every economic background. The only things Clarion students have in common is that they all want to write, and that they all were accepted to attend the workshop. As far as I know, the art of the put-down was not on the official Clarion curriculum, so no homogeneity could stem from there. It would seem to follow then, that such a

Scintillation Counter

"The Clarion Trick"

diverse group of people would use diverse techniques for getting what they want. It is highly improbable that the situation would be otherwise.

Vonda McIntyre, Ed Bryant, Jim Sutherland, George Alec Effinger, and others like them, the successes of the workshop, have never demanded respect just because they have been to Clarion. Clarion allowed them to be better writers sooner, but that, after all, is what it is supposed to do. Should a person not be proud of his own work, just because he was educated under circumstances some people dislike?

I have trouble dealing with Clarion critics. They usually challenge the workshop on the basis of the personalities of the people who graduate from it, rather than on the quality of work it eventually generates. I can't fight them on their own ground because it is impossible to logically defend a persons personality. But it does seem to me that if Clarion is just a place for ego maniacs to feed their egos, it is better ignored than constantly

brought to light. If, on the other hand, it can be attacked on the basis of its teaching methods--which, after all is all a workshop really consists of--then so be it. I have rarely seen it done, and never done convincingly.

I think that most Clarion detractors have an inferiority complex they've brought upon themselves. They see Clarion graduates as members of an army of jack-booted elitists because it best serves those who imagine they are ground under its heel. If a person acts superior because he's wearing a purple overcoat, it's your own silly fault for being impressed. If the purple overcoat means nothing to you, if it is totally without value, you ought to be able to stand up to one wearing it without fear, trembling, anger or disgust. You can have a little pity for him if you're moved to it, that a purple overcoat is all he has.

Clarion has become the purple overcoat of fandom. It means the most to them what hasn't got it. On the one hand

critics see the Clarion experience as worthless; on the other, they allow themselves to be awed by it. This makes sense?

In all fairness to Mr. DePrez and others like him, I admit that such tricks as he describes, "tiresome, condescending, yet effective manipulative trips," are sometimes used by some Clarion graduates. But Clarion certainly has not got the corner on boorishness. One might as well place most fanzine articles (perhaps including this one), the public speaking fans in general, not to mention the activities of most of the human race, in those same dismal categories. The Clarion critic may be disgusted and annoyed by the pre-

tensions, whose main virtue is that they are members of groups not so conveniently named.

The strangest part of this entire situation is that any individual can become one of these elitists with no trouble at all. All he has to do is get accepted at a Clarion workshop. As far as I know, there are no good-guy or bad-guy lists. Anybody with the money to pay for a summer away from home, and who has written a couple of unpublished stories can get in. If not this year, then next, certainly. You too can be empowered to practice the dreaded Clarion tricks. Such as they are.

Paul Walker

There is a kid in the shop where I work who is crazy about rock music. Whenever the boss is out, the radio is turned up, the floor trembles, flakes of plaster fall to their deaths. I am in the back room. I listen to classical music. He comes in with an armful of work in the midst of an aria--"Jesus Christ," he mutters. Minutes later, I go into the store with an armful of work, the blare of sound--song and machine--hitting me like a malicious wave. "Keep that up and you'll go blind!" I yell at him. But now and then he works in the back room and we listen to my music, and I try to persuade him it is music. "Too slow," he whines.

I have tried to listen to rock. Some of it I have been told, I know, is interesting, but it bores me as my music bores him. Rock has come a long way since my days watching American Bandstand. I liked rock, then. I was nuts about calypso --what ever happened to Belafonte? I became more involved with folk music, but I never could take Bob Dylan, and then I drifted away from it all. Rock seems to me more like jazz these days. I never cared for jazz, either. Classical music is so much more varied and substantial.

For a while I had this yen to know something about it. I got books and I studied them--andantes, scherzos, arpeggios, non troppos, chromatic scales. What did it tell me about music except that it was played fast or slow, loud or soft, or in a state called a "key" which I really couldn't understand? Unless you play an instrument and are consequently personally involved in the technical problems of performance, the technical details of harmony



notes from new jersey

a column

and rhythm means very little. There is no more uninformative, no more vague prose than the program notes on the back of a record. The listener has really only one lesson to learn about music and that is how to listen.

It isn't as easy as it sounds. First one has to determine what one is listening to. We are accustomed to simple, innocuous tunes which are played over and over again predictably. "Mary had a little Lamb etc." But in classical music, there is a language of sound. I won't carry the analogy any further except to say that the point of understanding the language of music is not understanding but perception of its structure. From our perception of the thematic structure of the music comes intimacy with it and emotional satisfaction. There is also an intellectual satisfaction, I am told, but I do not understand it.

Except for some basic pieces, or program music in which the "meaning" of the various musical details are verbalized, it is debatable what any particular piece of music means. But it all means something. You do not have to be able to put it into words to apprehend it. There is a non-verbal, non-pictorial consciousness within us, an underground cavern filled with a sunless sea of emotional experience which great poetry, great music causes to stir restlessly, makes waves upon, creates echos of the soul.

We have a spiritual dimension. That is perhaps no news to you, but I have been skeptical until now. I am a hardnosed city boy who has always responded to florid concepts with a dubious sneer. I have had trouble reading poetry all my life because I have always been dubious that people like Byron, Keats, or Dylan Thomas could ever really feel that way. I always had the suspicion that poets were lying: self-conscious, affected, poseurs. Not all poets struck me this way. But all that nature business, "beauty"--"beauty" I suspected above all--the "sublime"--no such thing--the soul. When I was six or seven in Catholic school I had this book which illustrated the soul as a milk bottle. In picture one it was white. In picture two, bespecaled by veniality. In picture three, black with mortal sin. I have never been able to imagine the soul as anything but a milk bottle ever since. And then there is the spirit, the spiritual --you've got to understand that for the first fifteen years of my life the only things spiritual I knew belonged to the Catholic church. I never thought of them as mine. I wore them in my head like a

communion suit. And when I took off my communion suit, the church, the spirit came with them. At least, I thought so.

One never survives the ordeal of being a Catholic, or a Jew, and goes on to be someone wholly original. I used to resent that, as a few of my Jewish friends resented their experience, but I've grown out of the church-knocking syndrome. I am even glad it happened. Without a solid religious background, one spiritual affinities are at the mercy of ideological elements which can be far more irrational and misleading. Religion does introduce the young to the pleasures of the spirit --the niceness of God and the angels, the symmetry of ceremony, the darkness of hell. Without such a background of youthful emotional responses to religious imagery and ceremony, one can never really appreciate much that is beautiful in art and music, or sincere, if apparently naive, in literature. One cannot even appreciate the purpose of mysticism in man. All seems to be pragmatic in the world, the consequence of mundane desires, economics, science, facts and figures. Of course, religion as I have seen it never refines the young person's spiritual identity but slaps it into a militant uniform to do close order drill until it barks instead of sings.

Listening to so much music, out of habit trying to put my feelings into words, I came back to beauty, nature, the sublime, the spiritual. They are very general, very vague words to describe things that cannot be described. Frustrating for a man of words who has served loyally, chauvanistically in the kingdom of words to find an experience that has no words; that diminishes the words applied to it; that goes where words cannot follow. It is a little frightening. I know now why musicians are often madmen. To experience great music is to experience states of madness, to see visions without material form, to hear songs without words, to know feelings our age is alien to--the sublime, for one. And to want to communicate these feelings with someone else and find there is no way. Unless your friend has had the feelings for him or herself they, like a previous you, suspect you of making the whole thing up.

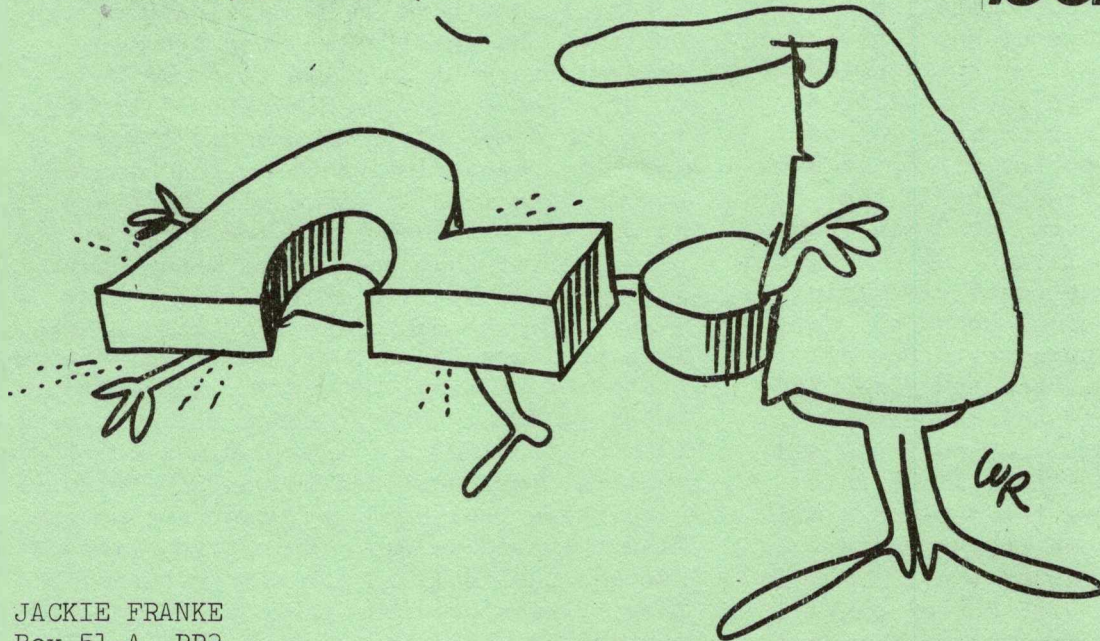
It takes time to learn to listen. A work of music is set in a time-frame that must be acquired. At first a symphony seems interminable, then just right, then too short. At first, a symphony is perceived in bits and bits--like that, don't care for that--then as large chunks of largely

intelligible sound--usually the loud and the fast is at first most appealing--then as a whole, a progression, a development. But one never loses one's prejudices for the bits and pieces, the chunks. Few symphonies (concerti, whatever), like few novels, are wholly satisfying. There are always moments when the mind wanders with indifference. But there are always those magic moments that bring one back. Familiarity breeds affection. The bright colorful moments of one piece that made its slow, intricate, somewhat boring moments endurable, fade with age. One day after not having heard the piece for some time one goes back to it and finds the magic has shifted to those long slow, intricate passages. The fast and loud seem obvious, even obnoxious; the sweet and slow very sensitive. One falls in and out of love with pieces of music. One develops and loses preferences for different dialects of music. The baroque, once tedious, now seems ingenious and supreme; and the cacophony of modern music, once cacophonous, now seems baroque.

At this point, it is traditional to say that art makes one a more sensitive human being attune to the beauty and harmony of nature and whatnot. Maybe it

does. But only of the person is sensitive to begin with. What is it all good for anyway? A sound philistine, even more sound puritan, question. An inescapable question for we who belong to our age. I haven't the foggiest idea. I got an article out of it, that's something. Many novelists use references to it to show their characters are intelligent. Many municipalities use it in the context of great cultural institutions, palatial structures with green felt foam rubber cushioned chairs in which sit dignitaries listening to other dignitaries conduct and perform. They don't pay, but the record companies and the performers do all right. And TV uses it to acquire credits for "public service" so they may get their licenses renewed. Its existence in the community or state does not ameliorate the intelligence or the morality of that community or state. Hitler loved Wagner, goddamn him to hell (Hitler that is, I'm crazy about Wagner). The more I think about it, and talk to people who know more about it than I do, the more I am convinced it is the most magnificent method of wasting one's time ever invented by the mind of man.

SOME QUESTIONS
ARE HEAVY, MAN



backtalk

JACKIE FRANKE
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Beecher, Ill. 60401

Since there are a couple DORK-PIZZLES (Oops! I mean SCINTILLATIONS--name changes confuse me) here, and since I already owe you for misspelling your name (what? Two or three times so far?), I figured the best

thing to do is to make amends for my procrastination in the first instance and my carelessness in the second is to LoC this seventh issue immediately. Perhaps it's not adequate as an apology, but it's the best I'm able to offer at the moment.

While I can scarcely call the new title scintillating (*ouch*), it does have a more well-bred sound than DP did. No, I never feared that the old title would come off in my hands--lots of room for double and triple-entendres there!-- but I did have a tendency to hide its cover from the sight of my children, lest they insist that I define the name for them. Now I shall have to seek other reasons for secreting the zine away...

Your various adventures and dreamings in establishing your very-own-business were extremely interesting to read. Surprisingly so, since when I began that segment I at first thought I'd end up skimming rather than reading because the subject bore little relevance to me. I'm not a book store fan, seldom ever enter one, and the trials and misfortunes of people setting up business ventures aren't my favorite topics of conversation. But you managed to keep the matter on such a personal level--revealing yourself and your attitudes towards your goal more than merely recounting the steps required to set up a bookstore--that I found it grabbing me and pulling me along by the eyeballs. It wasn't an unpleasant sensation at all; rather enjoyable overall.

You could consider yourself somewhat fortunate to learn of the possible plans for demolishing the block where your store is located so early. I've heard of some shopkeepers who didn't find out that unpleasant news until a couple months before the wrecker's ball was scheduled to raze their building. I can't help but wonder why future plans for property aren't made known at the time of purchase and/or lease. There is a non-access-controlled expressway (really just a fancy divided highway) not far from here, for instance, that has several small housing developments bordering its length. About two years ago it was announced in the local papers that that strip of highway would be ungraded into a fully access-controlled expressway before 1980. As far as I recall, no further mention was made about the matter until this year--and again, it appeared only in the local papers, which hardly reach huge numbers of readers. Anyway, one of the changes that will occur because of this upgrading is the closing off of some roads that lead into the highway, and the permanent banning of any driveways or private roads that connect with it. In the meantime, several dozen homesites have been sold--rather close to the major road that intersects with the highway, and which, for some inexplicable

reason, will not be made into an interchange (one will be located about a mile south of that point, though)--and the buyers had no idea that access to the highway would be cut off in a few year's time!

A small group of semi-local businessmen were even taken in, and bought a franchise from Holiday Inn, a couple hundred acres of virgin land, and built a rambling hotel-resort complex--only to learn that after all the expense they had incurred so far, they would have to buy up land and build themselves a road to reach the place after the interchanges were put in place! They had a hotel in plain sight of the highway, and there would be no way to reach it from the highway--it would be necessary to get off on a country-road exit, drive down a half mile or so, and then backtrack along at least a mile of private road--with perhaps two bridges along its length needed to cross two creeks. Needless to say, such roads are not cheap. Holiday Inn's management took one look at the estimated costs, screamed bloody murder, and pulled out of the deal. Now the businessmen are stuck with a multi-million dollar debt and what appears to be a white elephant. I have no idea how the hotel-golfcourse-swimming-tennis complex will fare in the future, but its prospects aren't the brightest I've seen.

I would imagine that 90% of their woes would have been avoided if they'd known about the proposed highway construction-alteration plans. They didn't, and there's no way to insure that such knowledge is included as part of the information received when a deed or lease changes hands. Seems dreadfully unfair to me. It's bad enough for the businessmen, but I feel more pity for the several families who have built alongside the expressway without being in a "development"--they will be totally cut off when the highway is changed over, since they aren't located off the various side-roads in the area, and the plans state flatly that no frontage (i.e. parallel) roads will be included in the construction, they will be forced to spend untold dollars in acquiring a right of way through neighboring property in order to leave their own homes. Being land-locked is not a comfortable position!

As I said, you're fortunate--you at least have time enough to search out a new site; not dash about and settle for whatever you can get NOW because you had to move your shop yesterday. You'll have enough time to acquaint your clientele with the location of your new place of

bruce townley's page



GUESS THE CORRECT CAPTION TO THIS
PICTURE AND WIN WHAT HE'S DESCRIBING.

business if an when you move. (Passage by the city council does not automatically mean a plan will actually be followed-through, sometimes other factors become apparent and proposals are dropped quietly, never to be heard of again.) As Gil Gaier pointed out--count your blessings instead of your headaches. You may feel a bit better, even if it isn't much.

Writers can be a puzzling bunch, can't they? Even would-be writers have their eccentricities, and it seems the greater their drive to Succeed, the greater they diverge from the common herd. It must have some connection with the massive ego that's required in order to withstand the buffets delivered by all those rejection slips. Some writers are conceited bastards before they have a thing to be proud of--and some remain being so whether they achieve their goal or not. I can't say, since I know the man not at all, but Shirley (**Jackie, you mention John Shirley several times throughout the rest of the letter, but you call him Singer. Are you confusing John with someone else? I assume not, so I've changed all references to Shirley**) seems to fit that category. The know-it-all, the do-it-all-my-way-or-you're-a-shithead, pompous ass who thrives on combatting those he/she considers as inferiors. Yep, Shirley sure looks like a prime example of the type. Note the telltale signs--defensiveness about actions taken against him that he sees as personal attacks (i.e. the fact you did not publish his previous letter in full); the placing of oneself above the masses by including sly innuendoes about the "childish(ness)" and combattiveness of your readership (the "they" referred to so often); the attempts at self-praise by stressing the difficulty of assuming the mantle of Writer-as-Artist (which, by implication, apply to him since it is one...); and the various other little tidbits which display arrogance and disdain for his fellow men.

Now arrogance in a writer is no handicap in itself. Some of the best ever seen in print were SoBs of the first water; but it certainly isn't a requirement for the profession--as many seem to think--and it does nothing for PR except to get your name recognized. The possible harm may come from being recognized for the wrong reasons, and having possible readers avoid your material because of the haughty, public-be-damned-since-they're-all-idiot-anyway attitude shown. But it takes a supreme talent to supercede bad press, and assuming Sturgeon's Law is true (which I

do), most writers haven't got that much talent. It's unfair to judge by the two examples I've seen of Shirley's writing--both letters and not fiction--but I see no great and shining Master at work so far, though he may reveal better craftsmanship in his more formal writings. Overall, I feel sorry for someone that self-conscious, that positive that his words have relevance to everyone within eyescan of his writing, that touchy when he sees slights--that don't exist. To be a person like that must be painful indeed. People get hurt often enough without actually going out and seeking situations where injury is likely to be inflicted. The whole thing is rather sad...

Anyway, beware of people who tell you the One True Way. Shirley gives some good advice here and there, but he gets too specific. A writer learns by writing--that's the essence of what he says and is true enough--but the type of writing he does is best ordained by himself, not someone else. Particularly by someone who has yet to Make It himself. The weak-eyed leading the blind is not conducive to progress for either. Seek out the people who have reached their goals, not merely made a few tentative steps in the right direction, for guidance. They've travelled the road and know where the blind-alleys exist and can save you some grief. To go exploring hand-in-hand with someone who isn't fully acquainted with the territory can be heartbreaking.

I'm glad to see you didn't swallow Shirley's words wholly. Shows good sense on your part. But too often stinging words like he handed you can fester unseen and unacknowledged by your consciousness--try to root them out and exorcize them immediately. You'll be better off for the effort. Take all advice, even this, as being essentially irrelevant since no one is in your skin but you so no one but you can know what's right for you, but pick and choose which parts are applicable and pitch--really throw it away as far as you can--all the rest. It's junk, and who can operate in a littered environment?

Being a hard-core Pro-Space Program enthusiast myself, I have little to say but "Amen!" to what Mel Gilden says. I somehow doubt that he'll convince the anti-Technologists among us with a brief essay like this, but it's still nice to read it. Good words indeed.

Paul Walker's subject didn't interest me all that much, but his means of entering into its discussion did. What on earth did the opening paragraph (on seeing a

ballet) have to do with the rest of the article? While it's true that people tend to lump all classical presentation together into one category, they are not the same thing. A symphony is not a ballet is not an opera. They are not synonymous. I enjoy some classical pieces--though not opera (mainly, I suspect, because I have never seen one and opera is a gestalt of music, theater trappings and voices. By his single experience with staged opera, Paul is able to imagine what other operas could be like in his mind's eye. I haven't seen one, and I cannot)--but I don't muddle them up into a single classification. The way his article is constructed, it read awkwardly, and awkward writing is not Walker's trademark. Imagine, if you will, a discussion about contemporary rock operas beginning with the statement that the writer had just viewed a performance of the Rockettes, and then went right into a description of his first trip to see GODSPELL--with a few asides describing his occasional purchases of rock albums. None of the topics has much bearing on the other, and the piece would suffer from internal inconsistency--which is what this article did.

Enjoyed the lettercol; you're getting better at extracting the essence from the letters you print, and choosier in selecting which letter will be printed. Thass good, fella--keep up the fine work. DePrez had some fine words there; I approve heartilly. Ben said much of what I felt after reading of your familial complications, and said it better than I could have. For some reason or the other--mainly my mood at the current time--I have little else to say about the zine except I do enjoy it and think you've progressed quite quickly in the short while you've been publishing. Your writing is much better and smoother and you seem far more self-assured. Write on!

BEN INDICK
428 Sagamore Avenue
Teaneck, N.J. 07666

Pork-drizzle Sips received, with curver by Truce Brownley. Maybe he cartn't drawer alligators like Kley but he is very Ggod. Somebody with a mad taloaned like he has is a favorite indeed of the Almyty.

It seemed to me that only James Joyce could give response to old Browse Tunely, hence the foregoing. I really meant it too--I think his insanity is the uttermost

introvertedly insightful. Dali could probably best express it in words, being somewhat (if not enough) mad, on the basis It Takes One to Know One. In my apazine I have used Ecurb now and then, and I have a few for my next piece as well. It is rare that such an antic mind has the hand to express his weird vision, and if Yelnwot is lucky enough, if he cares, which is unlikely, maybe some scholar will one day collect and issue his art in bookform. The mind boggles at the thought. Can we take a bookful of (stand up and bow!)
BRUCE TOWNLEY!

On a sane level, the artwork by Haugh and Rotsler is excellent (is it new for you, lucky devil, or are you reprinting it?). The pair on pp 14 and 15 are particularly good and even moving.

There isn't too much to say otherwise; I always read fanfic because I like to be different from many fans, and the fic here was not bad. I have read Neal's piece, or a similar one, before, and it is effective, if too close for comfort. I rather wish Neal had datelined it 2554, instead of a mere half century ahead. I mean my great-great-great-etc-great-grandchildren may be able to fend for themselves, but I'd hate to see my grandchildren stuck with these calamities, not to mention my kids themselves...Hieronymous is himself birthed out of Freud and Monty Python and is okay enough but I preferred, if mildly so, your Hack Story. You do have a nice easy talent for writing, and I think it is worth pushing, although not as far as Hier. The latter is an experiment but not necessarily rewarding; it is a kind of dead end finally, narcissistic and self-comsuming.

BRETT COX
Box 542
Tabor City, NC 28463

I got the Big Fiction issue of DP last week. But before I go to it, there are a couple of things I want to say about some of the stuff in DP4 & 5.

First, the Ellison material. I got quite a bit of enjoyment out of Weholt's article in #4. It was a very well-written and accurate portrait of Harlan in action. I've never seen him doing the Act on a college campus, but I did see him at Discon, and I suspect that the two are much alike, the main difference being that he can get away with a lot more esoteric and ingroup remarks at cons. Regardless of what he says, though, and regardless of how one may feel about him as an author or a person, the fact is that Harlan Ellis-

on is a thoroughly fascinating and immensely entertaining individual, both in person and on paper. There is no latent homosexuality or blind hero-worship present when I say that I admire Harlan tremendously on almost every level, even if he does commit overkill on occasion and is often unbelievably inconsistent in the quality of his fiction writing. (I have yet to figure out, for instance, how the author of, say "The Whimper of Whipped Dogs", which was an absolutely perfect story on every level, could be the author of a blatant mediocrity like "Knox" or downright awful scum like "Croatoan".) I think I'm one of three people in fandom who would make this statement without shame or hedging.

Second, the Dorko Comedy Awards in #5. I, too, am very interested in comedy, so naturally I was interested in your choices for the awards. However, I couldn't help noticing that you left out a few things, especially in the TV field. So here are my own additions to the list:

BEST CONTINUING PERFORMANCE: Johnny Carson
BEST SITCOM: M*A*S*H
BEST SINGLE EPISODE OF A SITCOM: THE BOB NEWHART SHOW where the French psychologist visits Bob
BEST COMEDY-VARIETY SERIES: NBC SATURDAY NIGHT
BEST SINGLE EPISODE OF A COMEDY-VARIETY SERIES: No choice
BEST NEW TALENT: The Not Ready for Prime Time Players (NBC SATURDAY NIGHT)
WORST NEW TALENT: The Prime Time Players SAT. NIGHT DEAD with Howard Cosell)
MOST DISAPPOINTING TV SPECIAL: COZ starring Bill Cosby
SPECIAL AWARD FOR A CLASSIC PERFORMANCE: David Steinberg, John Astin, and Patty Duke Astin for the Existentialistic Psychiatrist skit done on THE DAVID STEINBERG SHOW, a CBS summer replacement series a few years back.
BEST SERIO-COMIC SERIES: THE ROCKFORD FILES
THE BRAD PARKS ACHIEVEMENT AWARD FOR WEIRDNESS ABOVE AND BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY: Andy Kaufman (guest, NBC Sat. night)
BEST NATIONALLY SYNDICATED COMIC STRIP: 1) DOONESBURY, 2) tie between TANK McNAMARA and FUNKY WINKERBEAN
MOST COLOSSAL FAILURE: WHEN THINGS WERE ROTTEN

OK, enough of that. On to DP6.

Your editorial was...well, what can I say?...very explanatory, perhaps. I feel like I'm getting to know you better

and better with each issue of DP, which is exactly as it should be. You write well, and communicate your feelings in an informative manner. I wish that I could be as erudite and honest in my own personal-type writings (which are confined to my Apa-50 zine, fortunately for the rest of fandom).

As for FRANNY AND ZOOEY, all I can say is that I know what you mean. I discovered Salinger at the tender age of eleven with (natch) THE CATCHER IN THE RYE, which was pretty much the first "adult" novel I ever read and totally wiped me out. I then went on to read everything else Salinger had written (no real hassle, with a mere four books to his name) and F&Z has always been my favorite of the lot. I really ought to go back and reread it, but...you know how it is.



I wrote ... did you?

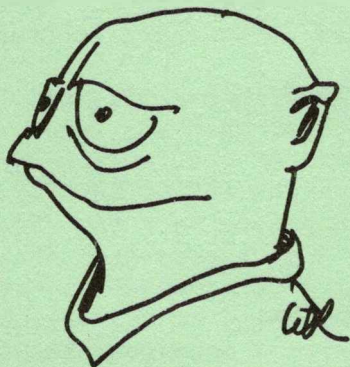
(As a point of interest, a few months ago I saw a copy of THE WAY OF THE PILGRIM in the paperback rack of an area drugstore. Shocked the hell out of me, finding out that the damn thing really did exist. Maybe someday I'll buy it.

Almost forgot--is the John Shirley who was in the lettercol the same John Shirley who had the story in EPOCH? (**Yup.***) That was one of the better efforts in, what's so far (I haven't finished it yet), a disappointingly average book.

**My experience with F&Z was turned around from yours. I had the chance to latch onto Salinger's CATCHER in hi-skool but refused because it was required reading in another English class. So thus utilizing logic that not only kept me from CATCHER, but other required readings such as THE BELL JAR, THE ILIAD, and THE DIARY OF ANNE FRANK, I didn't read it because everyone else was. Required readings in English courses have always seemed to have a repulsive effect on me. However, now that I have finally read them, I appreciate them more than I would have back then. I also knew of THE WAY OF THE PILGRIM before I read FRANNY, strangely enough.

Your comedy winners are interesting, but I must mention that the only television program I watch without fail is NBC SATURDAY

NIGHT. And would the Psychiatrist sketch on The David Steinberg Show be his immortal "Booga Booga" sketch? If you're unsure, I recommend Steinberg's excellent comedy album on Columbia titled "Booga Booga".**



JODIE OFFUTT
Funny Farm
Haldeman, KY 40329

Well, I'll tell you, Carl Eugene Bennett, I decided not to respond to your zine because I thought the title was a bit blatant. Then here it comes with a brand new name--and one that's about as different from the other as possible. So...

About John Shirley's letter: I can understand that some hard, tough comments might be of some value in shaking you loose, but I can't see how a lot of put-down, nasty remarks can be of any help. Egotistical is what comes across. Nor can I muster up much respect for a writer who puts down other writers so flat out. It's unprofessional. He sounds bitter about something.

MIKE GLICKSOHN
141 High Park Avenue
Toronto, Ontario (Canada, even!) M6P 2S3

The latest DP cum SCINTILLATION recently arrived and under the ominous threats of your manic desire to publish monthly, I'd better get a LoC out as fast as possible. It also happens to be the slimmest of the twenty-three fanzines I've had in the last two weeks and hence is attractive for that reason also.

It's a nice looking issue and reads well too. You're making good use of the potential of the offset printing process and I especially like the logo for the Paul Walker column.

Good luck with your bookstore! I clearly remember the local club meeting about four years ago when a long-haired jovial looking freak came and asked us if we'd patronize an SF bookstore, because he was thinking of starting one but

first needed to know if there was a market for it. We were all appropriately enthusiastic about the idea and he went ahead and started BAKKA, in a not-all-that-respectable neighbourhood downtown. After a few slow months getting established, getting stock, spreading the word from fan to fan and reader to reader, he's gone steadily upwards, eventually expanding into the store next door, branching out into comics, mysteries, art-books, and many other areas that most fans are interested in. I can only hope that you'll do just as well! Of course, with the three million population of the metro Toronto area to draw on he had quite a bit going for him, but if you're the best market around and if you can get the stock quickly and completely, you should make a go of it. I admire your willingness to try and to be willing to risk a lot in order to do something you'll really enjoy doing. Too many people are trapped in jobs they loathe because they lack the ability, talent, or vision to get out of them. Next time I'm in Portland (I cycle over every fifteen years for a blowjob from Geis), I'll drop by and pick up a paperback or two.

Mel's column is competent, but there isn't really anything there that hasn't been said a dozen times before, both in the fan press and in larger circles outside it. Most fans will agree on the value of the space program and on the less obvious benefits of knowledge for its own sake and on the relative importance of space exploration over war and defense budgets, and on our poor past record as planetary caretakers too. Let's hope for something a little more original from Mel in future columns, although there's nothing wrong with what he says or how he says it.

I don't know who John Shirley is, so I don't know what credentials he has to back up his advice and his insults, but the letter itself shows that he is a capable writer and after he gets down off his high horse his advice is solid and reasonable. The early part of his letter, though, if serious, is decidedly off-putting with its tone of condescending conceit. Having read fanzine letters from Dick, Lupoff, Lafferty, Silverberg, and Eliison, I can tell John Shirley right now that unless he writes fiction about twenty times better than he writes letters then he can't hold a candle to any of these men, because their letters are considerably better written than his and their fiction is orders of magnitude above their letters.

This sounds like the sort of bravado some insecure beginning writers adopt to hide their own doubts: Ellison did it, but he went on to prove that while what he said as a newcomer was hype, what he predicted for his future was valid. If Shirley can do that, good for him; but he's got a lot of really heavy writing to do before the sort of statements he makes here will be greeted with anything but hoots of derision. (I've taken his advice and avoided the cliches about "hoots of laughter" and "howls of derision"; do I get a C+?)

Where John describes your fiction I'm at a loss because I'm unfamiliar with it, but I have to admit that his letter is much better written than your reply. I wouldn't dream of arguing with you as to the type of emotional content you want to put into your fiction, but in matters of sheer style I find John's points are quite valid. Quite a few of your sentences in the reply to John's advice are quite poorly constructed, and on a couple of occasions they are simply ungrammatical. When he says you have to write and write and write, he's absolutely correct.

I can't buy that whatever failings he found in the manuscripts he saw were a result of lack of courage. Lack of skill, perhaps, or lack of experience, or simply lack of knowledge, but not courage. What it takes to think like another person/being is experience, not courage. If you haven't ever done much of anything, it's almost impossible to put yourself into someone else's head. (Here "doing" something can even be simple reading about it.) He's right in that an ability to truly put yourself into another's shoes (or claws, tentacles, whathaveyou) is a mark of an excellent fiction writer and he's also right that drive and ambition are prerequisites to a successful career in writing of any sort; but courage? Balderdash, red herrings, hogwash. At least courage in the sense that he describes it. (To embark on a career of writing nowadays takes an entirely different sort of courage, but that wasn't what John was saying. I think he wanted to call you a chicken shit and needed something to justify it so he whipped up a specious paragraph to fill the page. I doubt he believes that himself.)

Lots of meaty stuff in the lettercol, but I've gone on too long already. For once, though, I find myself disagreeing with much of what Harry said. I'm in favor of education for children at a very early age, if it's handled by properly

trained people, and I doubt that there's been a serious switch in orientation in fandom from words to pictures. These are indications, I suppose, of why I'm only the Second Best Letterhack in fandom.

BRUCE ARTHURS
920 N. 82nd St. H-201
Scottsdale, AZ 85257

Who is John Shirley, and why is he making such an ass of himself?

Actually, though, I see the reason for his remarks a bit later on in his letter, where he states that he is currently suffering from a bad case of the flu. Last year, I had a bad case of the flu myself, with an extremely high fever ...and I suffered from hallucinations too.

I suppose the above remarks are a bit unfair, considering I've never read anything by the man (or even heard of him, for that matter), so I don't really know if he's a good writer or not. I am fairly certain, however, that he's a pretty lousy human being.

I'm sure he's expecting this type of response, since it couldn't have been more certain if he'd gotten down on his knees and begged people to ridicule his remarks.

To clear a few things up right now, about who John is; he has been published in CLARION III (Wilson), AMAZING (Nov. 1975), and informs me he has sold to PLAY-GIRL, GALAXY, AMAZING, FANTASTIC, NEW DIMENSIONS, UNIVERSE, and THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY besides making novel sales to Doubleday and Houghton-Mifflin. The most current piece by John I know of is in Silverberg's and Elwood's EPOCH. If things are going well, he is currently working on another novel.

RICH BARTUCCI
Box 369, KCCOM
2105 Independence Avenue
Kansas City, MO 64124

I brought the present ish (The Last Dangerous DORK-PIZZLE) into class with me yesterday afternoon. During a slack period in the interminable path lecture, I passed it around, pointing out for the delictation of my fellow inmates the bacover and the two pages thereafter (or is it therefore?). At first, most of 'em thought I'd brought in a real tabloid-type scandal sheet--until they noticed the "Bionic Hippos," the "Gypsy Family Found Living in Sealed Coffee

Can" and sundry other teasers. One Spanish speaking gent translated the "Amazing New Product For Mexicans!" ad, to the strangulated hysteria of all those seated within four places of him. I received \$45 from three gentlemen who wanted to sponsor and correspond with Venita, and I'm passing it on to the Christian Children's Fund, Inc., care of my Uncle Charlie, the family bookie.

In answer to Mel Gilden's question: "Why not use war money for the things we need...?" I figure I should say that just because we (the USA) cut down on our military budget doesn't mean that certain folks who have proven hostile towards us in the past will do the same. As a matter of fact, a number of our "friends" might just be tempted beyond the point of prudent discretion and seek to rip us off for whatever they can get. I'm certain that, were we weak enough, Great Britain might try to reclaim the 13 colonies, Mexico might invade us to recapture Texas and California, and Spain might land marines on Puerto Rico. When your military muscle is low, friends, you've got roughly the survival time of a chicken in a pen full of hungry wolves.

I misspelled something in my last LoC to you, I cringe to say. The word "phocomyelia" (flipper limbs) is not correst--it is rather spelt "phocomelia." Don't blame me, please; my OB instructor gave me a handout to type up for the class note pool, and he spelled it "phocomyelia." Of course, he's a department chief who's delivered more than 50,000 babies in the course of his career, so who's gonna debate orthography with him?

RICHARD WEHOLT'S SWEEPSTAKES LETTER

I'm all juiced up from doing six useable pages of ms copy today on my Nuclear Safeguards--Eugene Water and Electric Board article, so as long as I've got it going I thot I might as well turn out at least part of a letter congratulating you on your recent change(s) of status. Funny thing about your new store. Walking along through the drizzle in a third level Portland funk last week, what should happen to catch the edge of my peripheral vision but something that stopped me dead in my tracks, and sent me careening down an alternate time track. There before my bemused gaze was a continuum from some twenty

odd years ago--the issue of GALAXY with part two of THE STARS MY DESTINATION. Suddenly I am once again a callow pubescent rummaging through a random assortment of battered thirty-five-center paperbacks, two-year-old NATIONAL GEOGRAPHICS, and mouldy book club edition hardbounds at a missionary society yard sale. And there it is--the Finlay illustrations, Gully Foyle, sex, violence, the works. Quite an impression on an impressionable adolescent, I can tell you, as I voraciously consume part one of the serial in one sitting with my eyes taking in Alfred Bester's clean, spare prose style as if with dream-style rapid movements, only to be suddenly plunged into dense baroque fantasies. If this ain't what the future is going to be like, then it should be. I never did find part two, having to settle for the vulgar old orange covered pb with the blurbs that would have described SKYLARK OF SPACE equally well. But I didn't have to. It was waiting for me, in stasis, never coming into phase in all those bookstores I trudged the rounds of during an interminable session of Seattle unemployment. When suddenly...

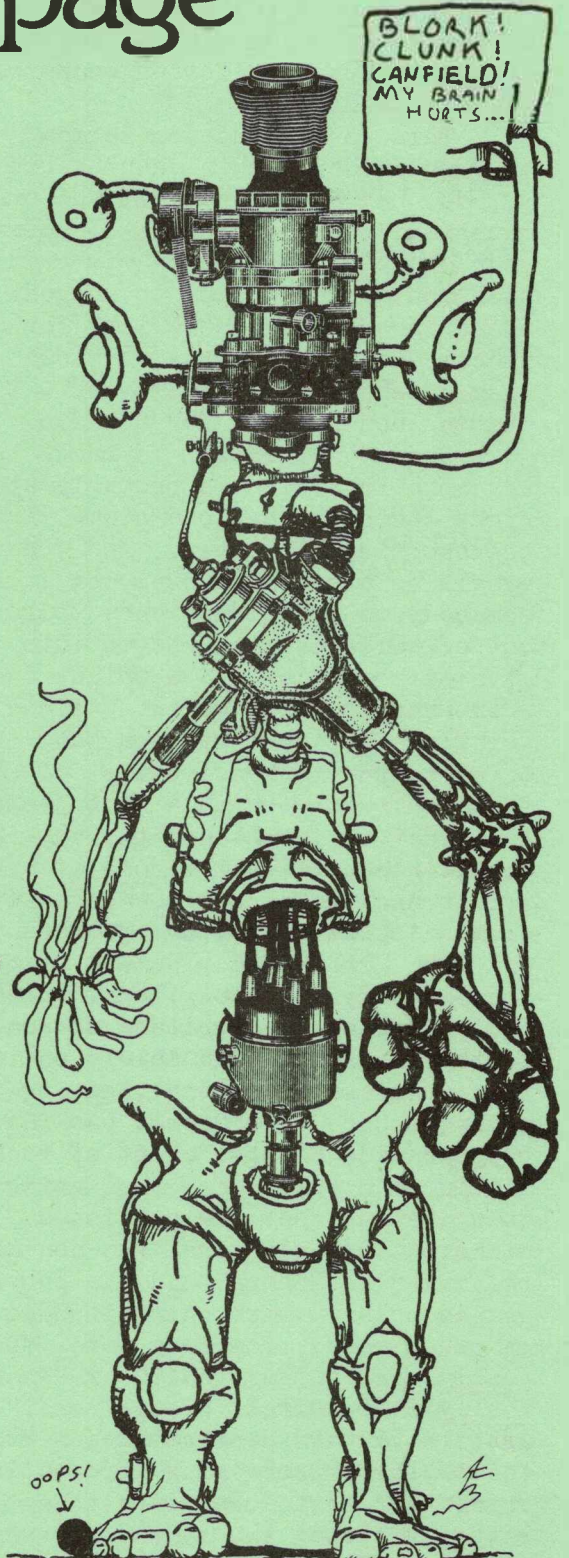
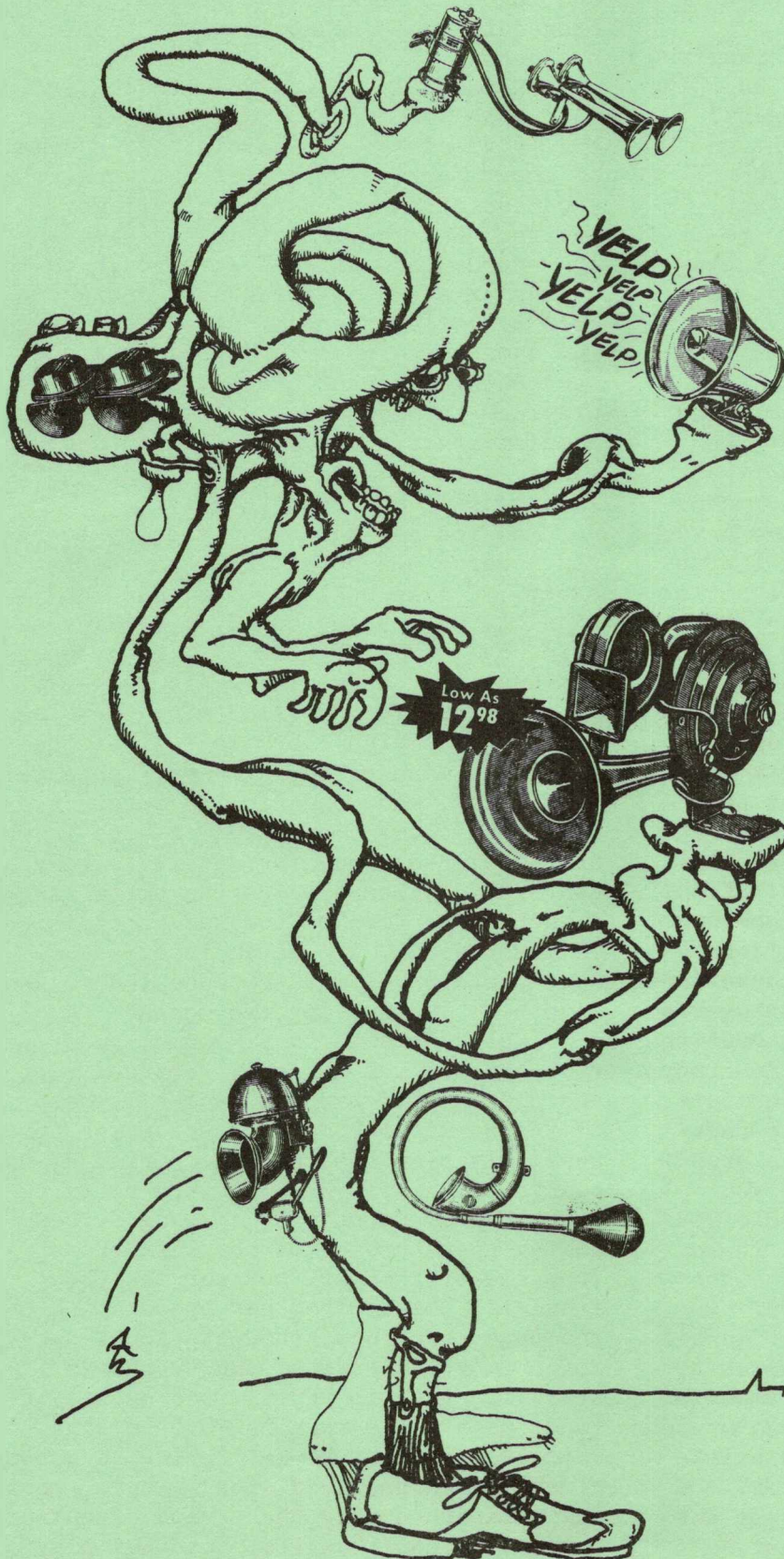
Sorry to go on like that. Sometimes I get caught up like that and I...I find it sort of difficult to control myself. Doctor, you've got to do something about these mnemonic shifts! They're becoming intolerable. Sometimes I...I don't know what I'm trying to do.

But seriously, friends. Part of the justification for this letter is that I hope to enter it in the Help Carl Bennett Get Rich and Famous Sweepstakes. You have to realize, Carl, that everybody is rooting for you to make it. The reason they want you to get there is because when you're safely established at Lone Neck State College as a writer-in-residence, everybody can drop by and impose on your hospitality, drinking your wine and fooling around with coeds (of whatever sexual proclivity or affiliation) and expounding profundities about writing. ("Yeah," says the slightly overweight middle-aged literary heavy as he exhales a filmy haze of cannabis smoke from nostrils rimmed with a thin network of broken blood vessels attesting years of hard drinking, "The only way to screw is to hop in the sack and screw." An appreciative murmur ripples forth from his attentive audience, a sound that provides a fugal counter-point to a low, glottal, slightly tense, almost harsh involuntary column of air that, rising in pitch as it passes between lips forming a subconsciously perceived vowel

WAIT A MINUTE...

HERE'S ANOTHER

bruce townley page



RAYMOND LOEWY LIVES!

somewhere between a and e, emanates from the smoothly burnished throat of his companion, an intense, blonde girl youth whose lambent eyes study his worldly features with a kind of troubled excitement.

So there I am, standing in the street in the rain, wondering who has the cojones to open a science fiction bookstore in downtown Portland.

This correspondence is mostly inspired by your exchange with John Shirley in SCIN 7. Not having seen any of the original material, I won't presume to comment on your short stories or on his critique of them, but I would like to suggest that there is another possibility for a prospective fiction writer, besides slinging hash or shelving in a library. That is writing non-fiction for a while.

I must say in all fairness that the writer of articles is probably standing right there in the food stamp line behind the short story writer. And I can't use myself as a sterling example; I can't ask somebody in good conscience to get kicked out of college, get drafted into the Army, live off of relatives a while, and tie up with understanding women. As advice it's pointless--it doesn't even have the virtue of being the impressive list of odd jobs that looks so good on a dust jacket.

What is important, though, is to differentiate between the role of being writer and the occupation of being a writer, or more specifically the profession of writing. There are a number of people in Portland, myself among them, who are minimally employed as writers of non-fiction. If they had to depend solely on income from writing to sustain them, they'd be living inside a cardboard packing case under the Burnside Bridge. Most of them have some little scam that keeps them going. But they do write and they are published. Somebody picks out the clinkers, the non-sequiturs, the mixed metaphors, and the purple paragraphs pulsing with pulchritudinous prose. In other words, somebody says, "Do you really want to say that?" or "What do you really want to tell people here?" In an article you are performing a service for the reader by conveying information. I think that what John was getting at in his letter was that the same thing applies to fiction. You are performing a service for the reader by getting some depressed wretch out of a rotten, miserable, stupid existence and into somebody else's rotten, miserable, stupid existence. Confuse the reader and you'll be tuned out, fast.

Before I mount the soapbox and declaim what great training in style the fiction writer will receive from submitting hard, journalistic copy to the slashings of an ulcerated city editor, I would like to make another pitch. What this particular struggling artist is getting out of journalism is not the acclaim of intellectuals and the adoration of the masses, but a chance to nose around in other people's business.

Personally, I wouldn't touch fiction with a ten-foot pole. Of course I have the fragments of the novels, the rudiments of short stories, the plot outlines, the hundreds of notes on people's flakey habits. But they exist in the same way the chords and scales I go through on the guitar exist. I'm doing just enough to keep my reflexes and sense of form in shape. The same thing goes for my drawing and cartooning, my photography, and even my Go playing--the perpetual diletante avoiding commitment at all costs. But in another sense, each is a medium, to be dealt with functionally and structurally.

As you may have surmised, my tastes run towards the novel, not the short story. I like scale, scope, and contradictions. Right now I am reading an epic novel (MEN OF GOOD WILL by Jules Romains) that spans the years 1909-22. I don't care for jewelled miniatures as such, but Romains' work is full of them and still manages to be funny, suspenseful, terrifying, and wonderful in turn. A great forgotten classic of the 30's--one in which an encyclopedic eye for detail is only a context in which appears the bitter/sweet French perception of the human condition. In other words, I'm in an intellectual and epistolarial mood because that's what I've been reading for two months.

Jules Romains (a pen name; under his real name he was a highly regarded poet and playwright) had a phenomenal grasp of the structural detail that makes up a seemingly simple situation. Granted, not everyone can afford the luxury of an entire chapter devoted to a young actress waking up--a crease on her left breast from sleeping on it, her worries about financial losses from her speculation on the sugar exchange, thoughts about her lover (a young radical deputy who is attacking the oil trust), the quality of light on a Paris morning--but Romains succeeded in what he was trying to accomplish. He associated with writers, poets, and painters during the period of cultural ferment in the twenties, but they play a

small part in his twelve-volume work. Their way of seeing the world, or society, or known universe exists on many levels (hierarchies, paradigms in general systems terminology) all interacting with some predominating and others receding at any given temporal cross section.

There is no substitute for that wealth of perception and awareness (physical and intuitional). Once a writer has written about his first acid trip or sexual experience, he's had it with that subject. Finis. Or at least the reader is through with it, unless the reader is a person who wants to go through life reliving and building upon what he perceives to be a highly significant contribution to the universal data bank. I am not that person.

Take your job at the flour mill. (Take my job at the flour mill, please! Ta dah dah dah dah dah...) The creative writing teacher will say, "This is an invaluable experience for you. You are learning how blue-collar workers live, what they think, what their values are, how they talk. Remember everything." But what if you want to write a story about a bank president? Do you walk into First National and say, "Hey, hows about letting me take over the bank for a few weeks so I can get a sense of how it feels." Or what if you want to write CRIME AND PUNISHMENT? I am not a great believer in experience. I prefer observation anyday.

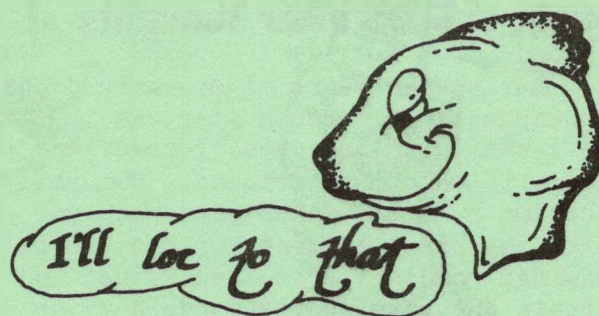
One note on style. In my latest article, a set piece about four utility commissioners good and true who have gone on record against the Nuclear Safeguards Act, I describe the board members only in terms of their thoughts and actions. I use no adjectives until page eight of the manuscript when I refer to the oldest commisisoner as "querulous." Because the descriptions of the individuals have been so neutral up to that time, the adjective leaps into the subconscious of the reader and images the commissioner as being ready for the senility ward. As a rule, cutting down on adjectives can damage your style and inhibit the flow of your writing. As a device, it can be very useful if consciously done to add dynamics to the overall structure. (The previous literary device works only if the reader knows the denotative and connotative meanings of the word "querulous." I assume my audience in the Eugene university community will, though you can't tell these days. This is a pretty high rent article I'm working on.)

If all of this copy has been discursive, personalized, "I" oriented, and

overly reliant on the indefinite "you," I guess it's just the nature of the beast, i.e. the LuG (Ledder ub Gobbedd if you have sinus problems and live in Portland). These little communications are the laboratories in which we work out our ideas and expand technical capabilities.

Clarity, flow, dynamics--once the writer has those down, content is secondary. It's OK to surprise the reader, but not to confuse him.

The foregoing are some of the things I keep in mind when I all too infrequently sit down at the typewriter and start on a working draft. As I say, thus far all I have done are articles and think pieces, so one can apply the principles and practices of MY METHOD to fiction only at one's own risk.



A note on easy-to-follows: I've never learned to pick a single song from tabulature, and I'm the same way about how-to-write books. I'm just too contrary to follow the good advice that would, if followed conscientiously, see me writing my third bestseller on the sun-washed beach of the Brazillian Riviera. I'm not kidding; Koontz's book I especially enjoyed and every word in it is graven on tablets of gold. I just happen to work the other way, fitting things together to form a pattern rather than adopting an arbitrary pattern and making things fit. I'm not familiar with Cassill's book, but even though Cassill represents about 80% of what I think is stale, sterile, and dead-end wrong with American fiction, it undoubtedly has a plethora of sound tips and techniques. I suspect, though, that a writer could put an equal amount of attention and structural analysis into studying books on other areas of creative activity, DESIGN AND FORM: THE BASIC COURSE AT THE BAUHAUS by Johannes Itten is an example, and get just as much good out of it. (That's not a very well structured sentence, but I guess it conveys the point.)

Somewhere here I have another letter that's more directly concerned with SF. SF, it sounds like some kinky code term.

"Swngng hrmphrodte into chns & sf skng undrstdg andrd w/ deviate mod fr xtd rltnshp. Snrc rqsts only, pls. Beam Alice/Orville, Delany Dome, Triton, Outer Planets, JWCJ738024RH6593."

Good luck on your ventures. Personally, I think you're going to lose your ass on the bookstore--it's too high class for Portland--but who knows? It should be interesting, anyway. Old Alpha Centaurian curse: "May you live in an interesting continuum."

to Unknown Ends on dreams, warmth, and the baring of one's inner thoughts

During the years of my early "school-hopping period", when a year was the longest I stayed in one area, I never had the chance to make many friends. Naturally, I became a little introverted and got used to making entertainment for myself (i.e. drawing, reading). As I got older and certain thoughts went around in my head I needed some way to sort them out. One way would have been to tell someone about it and talk it over. That would have been nice, but people don't keep secrets; especially when you've got a crush on someone. After all, when you're young those type of secrets are the only ones you have. What I did was to keep a personal journal. A diary (whatever). I've been keeping sporadic journals since I was 13 and had a crush on a skinny girl in Walla Walla (my home-town).

In those days I sat up late nights, trembling, as I wrote each word carefully, thoughtfully, and threw the word "love" around a bit too freely. Ah, innocence.

These days I don't tremble, but there is that feeling inside whenever sit here at the typer and stare at the last few words. The words, and the whole act of producing them is soothing. A close friend. These days I write about anything that knots up inside; and it helps.

I believe grade school and the contemporary peer groups are most responsible for my misconceptions about love relationships. Undying respect was paid to the guy who "broke" some girl's "cherry". A competition kind of attitude was adapted and most of the boys I hung around with were running a steeplechase, hopping over one bed and another with incredible speed. Me, I kept trying to clear the first hurdle. 20

And so I continued to try for a few years after that. "To conquer" was the name of the game.

I had a dream a short while back that really drove a worthwhile point home. As I remember, the scene was some darkened apartment living room, and the whole place was full of the kind of silence you can hear at four in the morning. A slightly older, and (most important) very desirable, blonde and I were wrapped together in an easy chair wearing only open night-robes. And it was warm.

I find it just a little hard to explain just how much warmth means to me. It, most obviously, represents security. However, it's not just physical warmth. Sometimes you meet certain people and (like the old cliché) they make you feel warm inside. Warmth is one of the things I remember most about a girl (except lips, I never forget lips).

As we lay there, we held ourselves together and we made soft noises. Deep inside, I could feel something stirring and turning over ("love", maybe?). The whole scene was very vivid. At any rate, my domination reflex took over and said in my head, "conquer".

"Holy shit," I thought, "this again?"

With some gathering of courage and a long, contrived look in her eyes, I said, "I want to make love to you."

Ho-hum.

Even in the dream I had sense enough to be embarrassed saying some ridiculous line like that.

Before I could say anything else, she put a finger over my lips and said, "You already are."

Then and there every muscle in my body relaxed. There wasn't any need to "conquer."

It all sounds like common-sense. To love someone, you don't need to copulate with them. Intellectually I've understood that for a long time. But until I had that dream, I couldn't accept it emotionally.

Incidentally, you should understand it doesn't embarrass me to write (or speak) openly like this. I found out some time ago that if you approach your emotions and personal thoughts adolescently, you'll be embarrassed and tend to keep them in letting them clog up your head. But if you deal with them as an adult, you'll be able to talk about them freely (not to just anybody; and there is a time and a place), and make it a lot easier to live with yourself.

(Oh! A flash came to me. I was just thinking about writing out of what is personal to the writer, and thought of Gene Wolfe's PEACE. An excellent, excellently perfect work to come from an SF writer. Not that I am classifying Gene as an SF writer, but there are quite a few SF people that could take lessons from PEACE. A beautiful book, Gene.)

This dream made me think about learning, and its distant cousin, wisdom (another unfortunate cliché). I wonder if we have a certain amount of inherent wisdom buried in our subconscious to be dispursed at an excruciatingly slow rate like a pine-cone spreading its seeds. It seems every revelation I've ever had came about on its own; not nudged along by someone else's cheap philosophy or even, unfortunately, by books. It seems whenever the conscious can handle something new, the subconscious springs some heavy-weight thought on it. Notice how most "I never thought of that before" thoughts come while dreaming, or while you're half-thinking on nothing?

I don't know how much truth there is to that above, but it's just idle pondering. Idle time, idle writing.

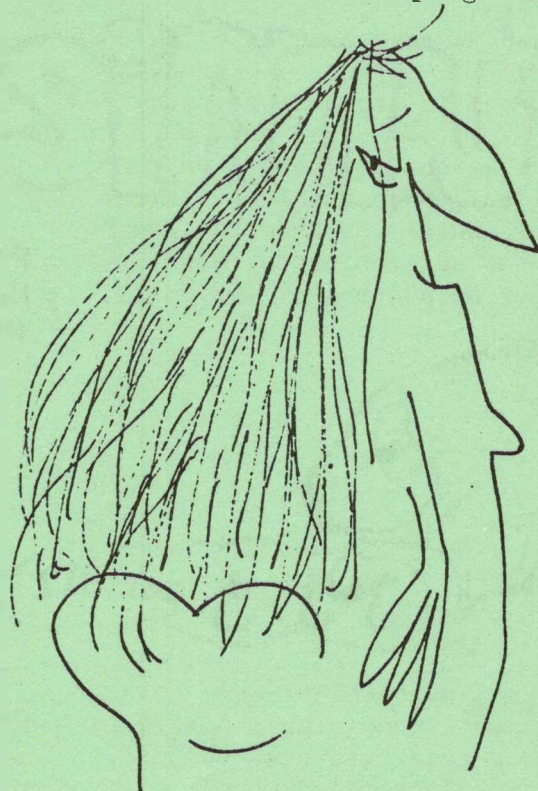
Late in the construction of this issue I received this letter from Doug Holm, a friend of four years now (seems like only yesterday), or better. He says:

At first, many months ago when the premier issue of DORK-PIZZLE was released, I was skeptical. The first few issues were surprisingly small, but very personal. It was more an oddity reading these obscure magazines.

I have just finished number seven and my feeling, unfortunately a cliché because there are no words to describe the sort of feeling one can have for a magazine, is one of "I can't wait to read the next issue." The reason for this response is the personality of the magazine, its two-fold life; it is an uncharacteristically provocative periodical where almost every word is interesting. The other reason is your own personality. Each issue, with great courage you discuss details of your personal and psychic life, and Goddamnit, they're interesting. Your writing style in "Dribblings" had grown on me. An unrefined reaction is to wish that the whole of every issue be written by you. But on further reflection, the brevity of the "Dribblings" parts are part of the attrac-

tion. Each month, a little piece of Carl's life...

With unrelenting determination you plunge into the mores of contemporary society, art, and literature. I no longer feel that you are "fooling" yourself, or that you are lost among dreams bigger than your imagination. You are shaping life,



I SET SOME MEN AFLAME!

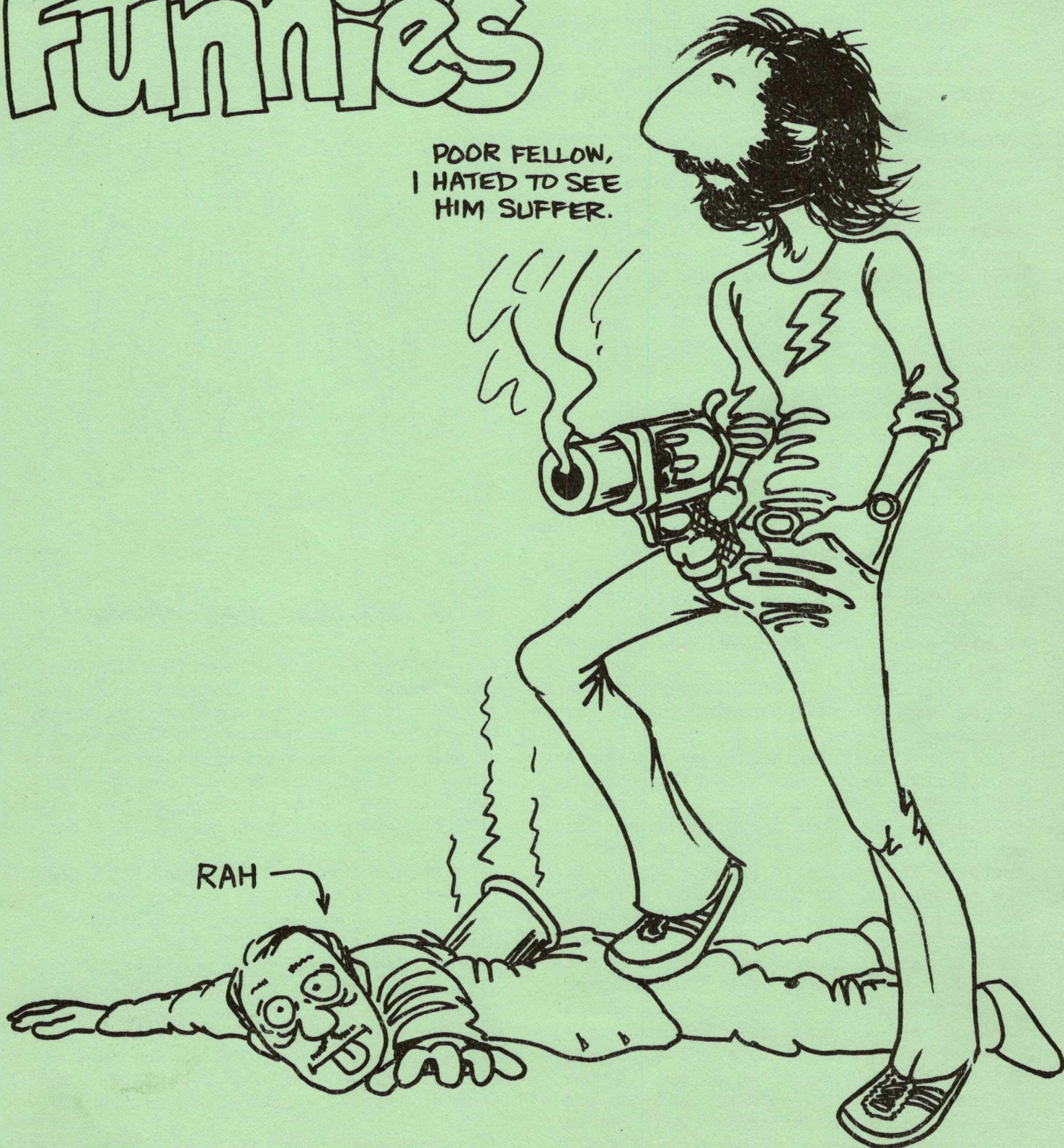
not studing it from an ascribed distance. The magazine is not a "fanzine" (which should not be seen as a pejorative anyway), but rather a new form of communication; or new to me, the personal journal. Each issue is a compleat realization of your own interests. As with the journal, so with the store you have opened.

Before I run out of room, I'd like to mention the WAHF for this issue: Dave Kleist, Neal Wilgus, Mike Bracken, Darrell Schweitzer, Jerry Kaufman, Dan DePrez, Bruce Townley (2 phone calls!), Gil Gaier, Norbert Spehner, Hank Heath, Grant Canfield, Sheryl Birkhead, Keith Justice, Chris Hulse, Don D'Amassa, Wayne W. Martin, Gene Wolfe, and Dave Szurek. Met Charlie and Dena Brown, and Anne McCaffrey; a real pleasure, really.

Love and thanks to Dawn. Once again: Happy Birthday! 20 years old today! □

MidAmerican Funnies

POOR FELLOW,
I HATED TO SEE
HIM SUFFER.



RAH →