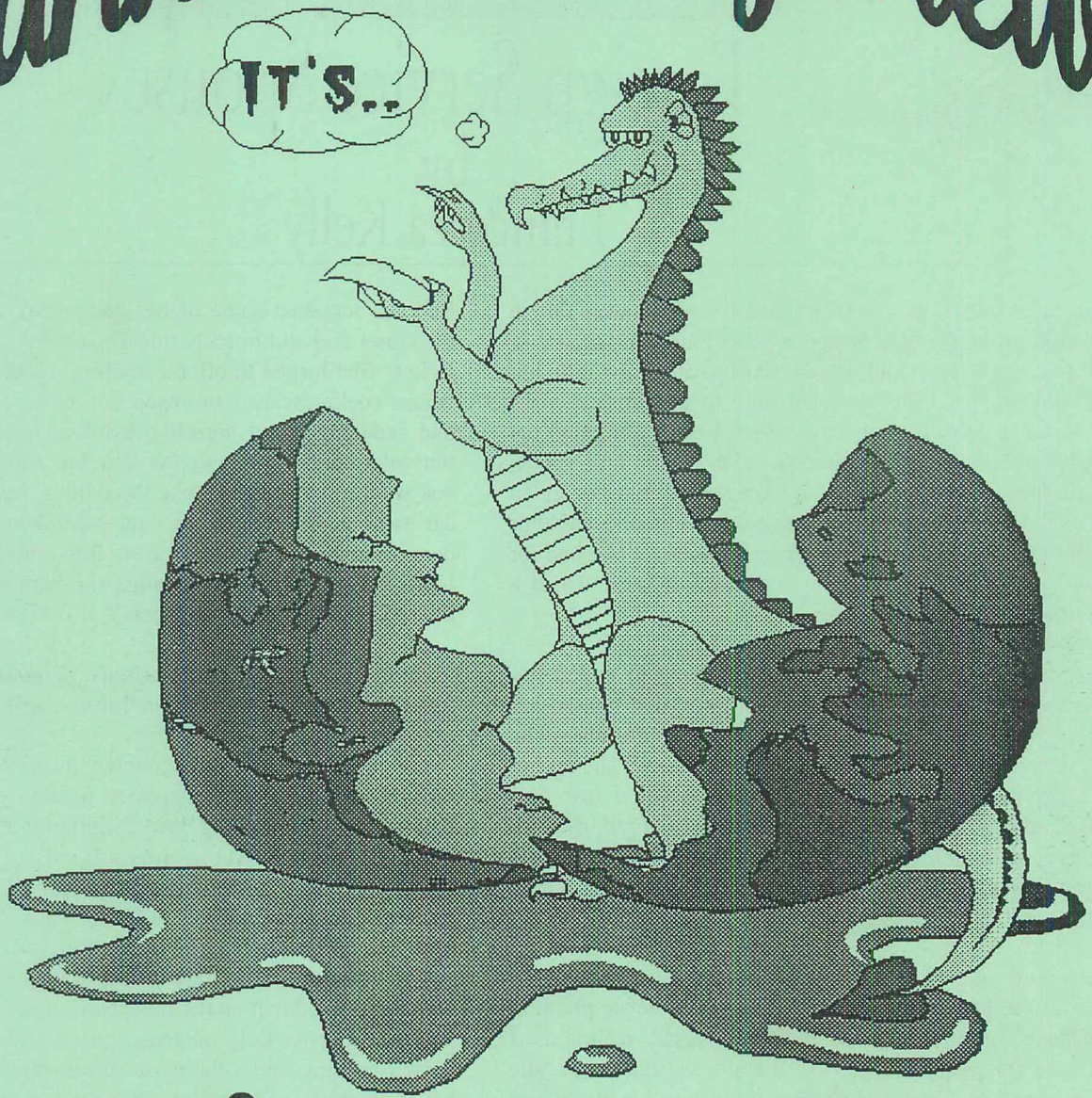
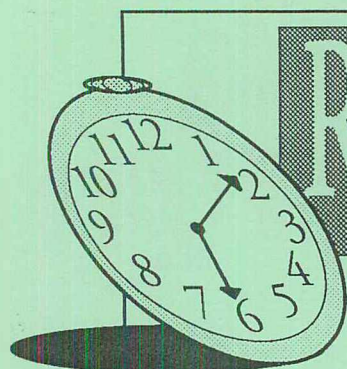


Earth Shattering News



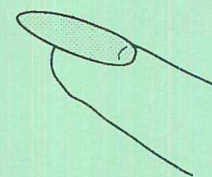
BEN'ZINE FIVE



Rebecca Long Fairchild

Foreign Service Spouse

by
Francesca Kelly



It was after 6:00 p.m. (1800 Hrs) and the guests were due in less than an hour. Yet, Rebecca Long Fairchild, spouse of DCM Richard Fairchild, stood staring dreamily into her bedroom mirror. She was clad only in a camisole, a diaphanous sheath of peach satin which barely concealed the nipples of her high, firm breasts. Her blonde hair shone, highlighted just that morning by her stylist, and her green eyes sparkled, set off by the spectacular emerald earrings Richard had bought her last year in Bangkok. "Not bad for a 42-year-old." She mused appraisingly as she touched a dab of Halston behind her ear.

Sighing, she realized it was time to dress, and glided liquidly towards the heavy mahogany armoire that housed her dresses, then stood gazing at her expensive wardrobe. The gray Versace knit or the Chanel dinner suit? As she let her gaze drop to the new Ferragamo pumps she'd just purchased on the much-needed shopping trip to Milan, a knock at the door interrupted her reverie. Without waiting for a response, Raoul, the household chauffeur, stepped boldly and silently into the room.

"How dare you step into my private quarters like this?" Rebecca seethed. "Why didn't you use the house phone?" She looked around for a robe to cover herself, feeling as if she were completely exposed to Raoul's searing stare. His smooth dark face betrayed no discomfiture as his black eyes raked here scantily-clad figure.

"Madame, your husband phoned to say he would be late for the reception, and asked me to give you any assistance you might require."

DCM Deputy Chief of Mission; Number 2 person at an Embassy.

Criterion country A country where there is a definite danger of intelligence operations against US personnel. The Iron Curtain countries were among the criterion countries.

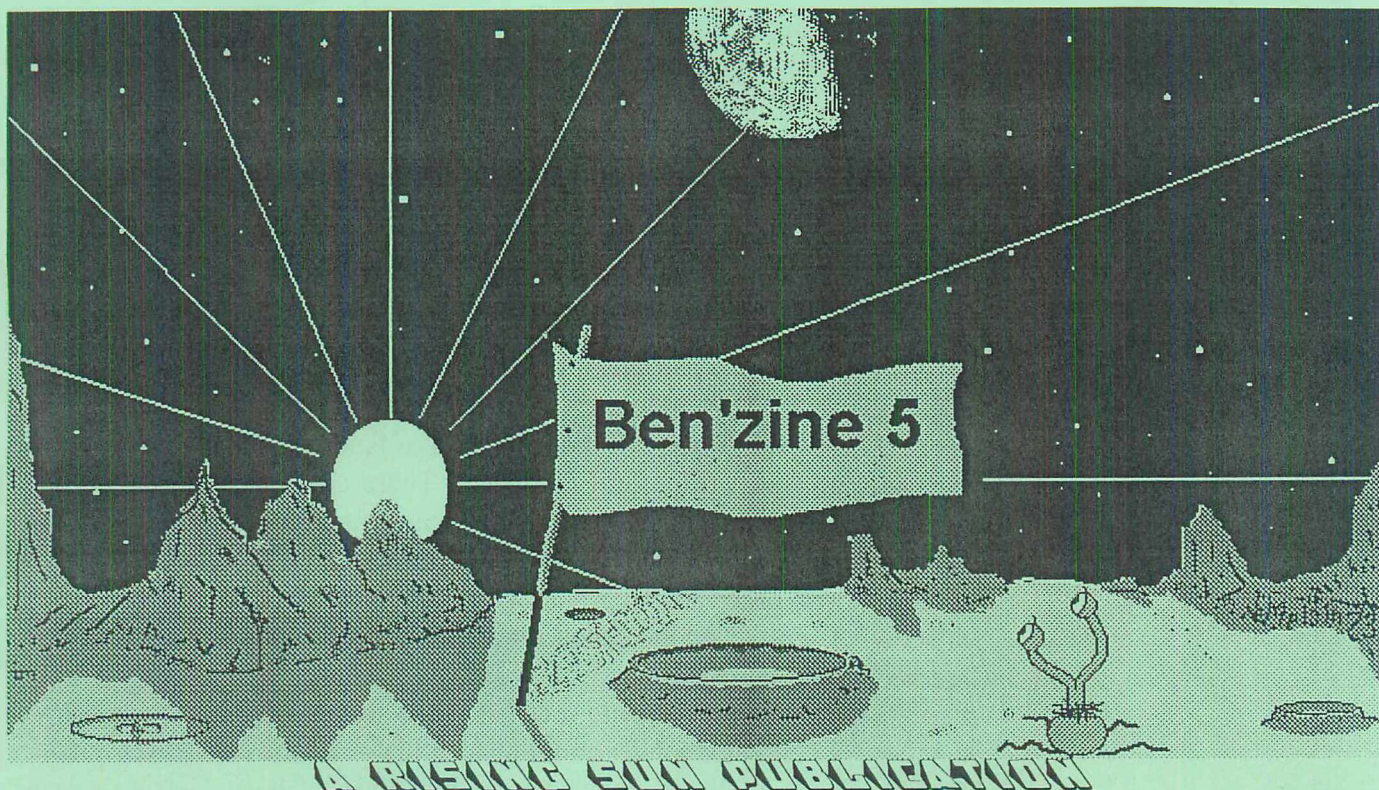
Rebecca regained some of her composure as she strode to the closet and slid quickly into Dick's silk foulard smoking jacket. She turned to offer a scathing rebuke to the servant whose cockiness had incensed her more and more lately, and suddenly found herself pressed against him, his huge muscular hands sliding up her slim tan arms. "I don't think you want to put on that robe, Madame," he purred into her ear as he gently tugged the cool silk off her creamy shoulders. She tore herself away from him and slapped his face, hard, but he pinned her against the wall and brushed his lips over her pulsing white neck.

"You insolent bastard!" she hissed. "You know bloody well I can't fraternize with a national from a criterion country!"

"Let's just call it a brief encounter, then," he murmured as he pressed his aroused manhood against her increasingly helpless body. Growling unintelligibly in his own language (a language which Rebecca was still attempting to master in her weekly visits from a tutor), he tore the flimsy camisole from her heaving bosom. "Oh no!" she shrieked. "That took four months to get here from Victoria's Secret! And you're not supposed to have access to duty-free goods!" But he pushed her down on the huge bed, snarling, "It looks like you'll be paying duty on these goods after all." She felt herself go limp under the masterful touch of his hot lips on her soft skin. Struggling to regain her authority, she gasped, "But you are my US-government-hired domestic servant! You simply may not do this!"

"Madame," he whispered harshly, "I am still your servant. Tell me how to make love to the wife of the Deputy Chief of Mission. Order me to do your bidding; shall I kiss you here? Or here? Or even...here?" And he parted her silky white...

to be continued...
see pg. 32



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March 1995

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According to my Funk & Wagnalls, BENZINE is: 1) A colorless, flammable liquid, used as a solvent, cleaner and motor fuel. 2) A fannish Science Fiction Fanzine usually reproduced on green paper. Take your pick as to which definition you like best (and let me know how many miles per issue you get).

B'Z is available for fanzine trade or a show of interest. Interest can be shown by contributing articles, artwork, letters of comment, old fanzines (6th Fandom era preferred) or large cash endowments.

Ben'Zine is produced electronically on Ghodfrey, my 386 DX 40 PC, using Word for Windows 6.0, and Windows Draw. The resultant files are printed at 600 D.P.I. It is then copied to keep my fingers clean and pockets empty.

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Hey, what's this?

As you can see from Doug Rice's artwork -- it's time for a change. But the change can also be seen by looking at a calendar. BEN'ZINE, not previously known for frequency of issues, is out again inside of 6 months. It must be all the energy enclosed with the nice LoCs many of you sent. Thanks and keep them coming.

Cruisin' the Net

When I'm not working at teaching bureaucrats to use computers correctly, or laboring in the pleasant green gardens of fanac (you wondered about the color I chose for B'Z, did you?), I travel the world electronically on various networks. It has many of the hallmarks of fandom. Kind of like a convention in an Apa written on rice paper. There are conversations on just about every topic imaginable. There are virtual game rooms where one can compete against others from around the world. There are huckster rooms where one can order anything from sf books to vacations flying a MiG in Moscow. I, not so oddly, spend most of my cybertime in places such as Internet's Rec.Arts.SF.Fandom, a worldwide fannish bulletinboard. Discussions have covered subjects such as: 'How to get more books in Huckster rooms'; 'The first convention, Philadelphia or Leeds'; and 'Jon Singer, Myth or Reality'. There is even a fanfund to get Chuck Harris on-line. Fans chime in from all over the world and response to one's comments come faster than a Harry Warner LoC, usually within a day if not sooner.

Big Bad BNFs

In one of my excursions on another network I happened upon a conversation by various fans about BNFdom. These fans, and I didn't recognize any of their names, were grumping about the SF roundtable using BNF as the title for an arena in which they can talk about themselves and other fans. Several of them suggested boycotting the new area because of the name. They say that it is an elitist term and claim to have been snubbed by BNFs too many times to mention.

I know I've been away from it all for a decade but things have changed that much, have they? Perhaps fandom has become so fragmented that there are splinter groups with splinter BNFs who ignore fans from another splinter.

I remember it quite differently. There was Mike Glicksohn, Worldcon GoH, faned, LoC jock, who would write an article for a neo faned because he asked, bought him a drink and gave him a topic. And Phil Foglio, multi-talented, multi-Hugo winner, who would stop what he was doing to draw a cartoon for strangers. He has been known to do this even when asked in a restaurant where the only thing at hand to draw on was a plate. And Bob Tucker who gives of his time so abundantly that he has to make appointments for some forms of fanac. And Bob Bloch who sadly is no longer with us, but is remembered fondly not only for his wit and wisdom but for taking the time to contribute to or comment on nearly all the fanzines sent to him. These are some of the BNFs I remember and it seems to me that

they represent just the opposite of the accusations being bandied about on that bulletin board. Far from being exclusive they have hosted, toasted, roasted, held us spellbound by their speeches, writings and art, in both zinedom and condom, an amazing number of times. So I remain unconvinced there is anything wrong with most BNFs.

The Trough

In the late seventies in Chicago there was a bar called the Public Trough. It became a fannish hangout because of its Cheerslike atmosphere, and closeness to where many of us lived. Trough regulars at one time or another included Bill Hebel, Phil Foglio, Dave Ihnat, Doug Rice, E. Michael Blake, Marty Cody, and Lanny Waitsman. It was a place where beverages, alcoholic and non, flowed almost as freely as the quips and jokes and pops of free games won on the pinball machines. Just walking in and being greeted by one of the regulars gave one the welcome feeling of being home.. It was special. But it certainly wasn't the facilities that made it so. The backroom we congregated in was mostly storeroom with a picnic table and a couple of pinball machines thrown in for atmosphere. Ah, but the fans there made it OUR place.

I tried to put something of that feeling in BEN'ZINE 4. Judging from the LoCs it seems I succeeded to some extent. While delving into the past, present, and future with the likes of Mike Glicksohn, Ro Nagey, Ron Legro and Larry Tucker, we managed to evoke that feeling. Perhaps Avedon Carol said it best in her e-mailed LoC

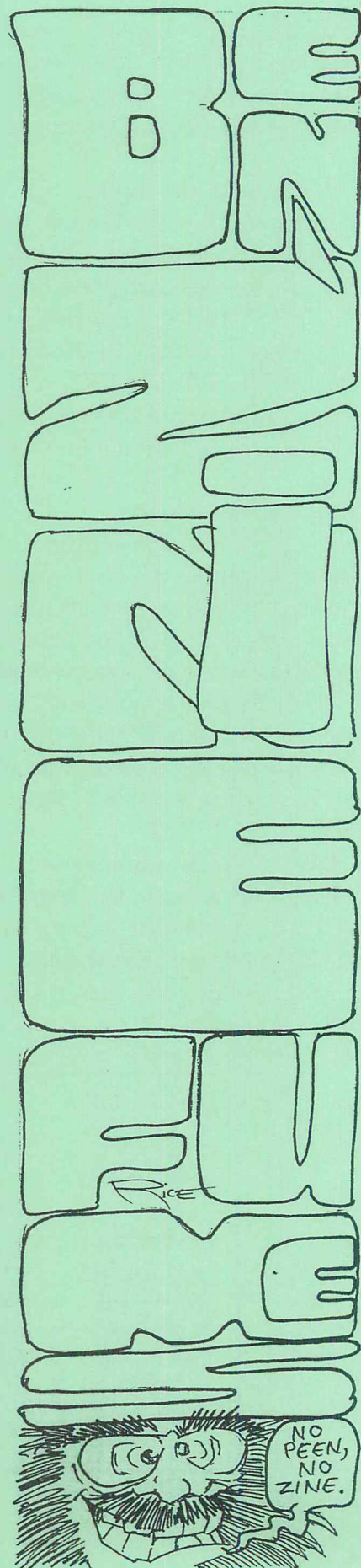
Right through the time-warp, like you never left. Like any minute now Applesusan and I will get in the car together and drive off to MidWestCon, where we will see you, and Midge, and Joni, and Ro, and Tucker, and Rusty, and Gay, and Joe, and several people named Mike. Those two skinny guys with the long hair are Patrick and Gary. Oh, and there's Yang, hitting on women. And Anne-Laurie, saying something very sarcastic.

Hmmm. Not much like London....

But it is like the fandom I remember and it will continue to pop up in these pages.

And the theme of this ish...

Yes, at last, the theme of this ish is *Fans* and the things they do. We start with new fanwriter Francesca Kelly (more about her later) who begins and ends this issue with the first two installments of her series about Rebecca Long Fairchild a fictional Foreign Service Spouse. She also tells an actual, real story about life as a US diplomat. You'll find the Great British John Berry here telling us a true story about his hair raising experiences with the Apollo program. Mike Glicksohn tells the truth about Madman Riley and damns the consequences. Mimosa's Dick Lynch's job takes him to many far away places and he takes us with him to Moscow in the first of



his two part trip report. I have a dream... And now you have it too when you read *Kinko Nights*, a true nightmare. Steve Leigh steals my time machine to attend Confusion 50, and writes a LoC that comments on Larry Tucker's conreport from B'Z 4. So inside these pages we have fans at work and at cons, making and breaking myths, viewing science and using science fiction. That certainly qualifies it as Fan ish.

Welcome to the future

As I said about the Trough, it was the fans there that made it special. Knowing that certain people would be there made the place and time fun. So to help BEN'ZINE toward that end the next issue will begin the continuing presence of several fans in these pages. Ron Legro comes out of gafia to start a column titled, SYNESTHESIA. The British John Berry gives us contemporary accounts of the fandom he enjoyed beginning with tales of Irish Fandom in DOWN MEMORY LAIN. Ro Nagey will pop up frequently with SHAMELESS FILLER. And, if I have anything to say about it, BEN'ZINE's ghodfather, Mike Glicksohn, will appear in every issue (just don't refer to it as a column in your LoCs, please). There will be more news of Rebecca Long Fairchild and other Foreign Service stories from Francesca Kelly and others.

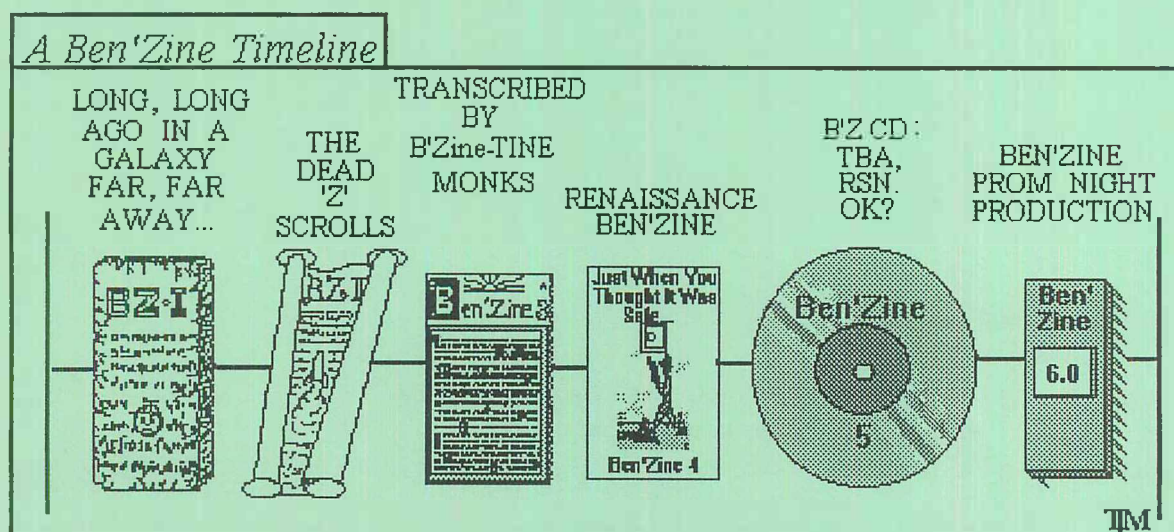
Francesca revealed

In the Foreign Service, especially in posts like Belgrade, the shared experience, troubles and tensions tend to bind families together. While in Belgrade we found that we and the Kellys had more than a few things in common. We had lived in Evanston, Illinois at the same time, share long-time loves of science fiction and baseball, and our oldest children are the same age. Francesca was at Northwestern University where she graduated with a Bachelor of Music in Applied Voice and an ex-bachelor, Ian Kelly.) While we were all in Belgrade, Francesca started and still publishes the only Foreign Service fanzine -- The Spouses Underground Network (The SUN). If you are interested in seeing The SUN, they are available for \$4.00/issue or \$10.00/1 yr. (3 issues). It is available from: *The SUN/Francesca Kelly, PO Box 166, Vienna, VA 22183*. It is definitely worth it!

TAFF Vote deadline near

The Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund is one of fandom's best traditions. This year an American is going to the other side of the Big Pond. Of the three candidates (and, frankly, out of all of American Fandom) I can't think of anyone more qualified to go there, have a good time, represent us well, and come back and thrill us with his exploits, than **DAN STEFFAN!**

VOTE DAN STEFFAN FOR TAFF!



The Real Cold War



It is one of the most beautiful cities on earth, although its beauty is admittedly, but not irreversibly, faded. It has reclaimed its old glorious title of St. Petersburg, but for more than half a century it was known as Leningrad, a name that conjures up all the woeful, sodden hues of grey that go along with that Soviet epithet. We lived there in 1983-84 as students and again as diplomats in 1987, 70 years after Lenin's triumph of communism.

We arrived late on the night of January 9, 1987, the coldest night since the worst days of the second world war. The temperature fell to minus 40 degrees. That marking is, coincidentally, the number where Celsius and Fahrenheit temperatures are the same. So -- minus 40 is minus 40, wherever you are on this earth. And if you happen to be in a place that's at minus 40, you usually don't like it much.

My husband, a Foreign Service officer, and I, a slightly less enthusiastic drag-along, brought our 3-month old daughter and our milquetoast terrier to this dark freezing place so that we could work and live at the US Consulate. There were 28 people there, including dependents, and no one was happy about getting socked with a record-setting temperature that made your eyeballs feel as if they had just frozen to your eyelids. To further destroy Consulate morale, diplomatic battles between our two nations had resulted in the Soviets pulling out every one of their local staff, so that the American diplomats, rather than dealing with American-Soviet policy questions, were preoccupied with dividing the more mundane but necessary duties of keeping an old building running in the cold: elevator

maintenance, refuse removal, interior housekeeping, doing errands and driving, etc. Most of the vehicles held up relatively well, which was a good thing, since there was no one to repair them nor any way to ship them out of the country for repairs, unless you hired a tow truck to drive in from Finland and haul the car out of the country, hauling it back in again when fixed. The bill for the towing alone was more than \$1000. So, we made do, sharing rides and getting out our auto repair manuals, deluging the few people who traveled out of the country with orders for spare parts.

The cold and hardship were matched with an equally compelling sense of paranoia about being Americans on "enemy soil." The main Communist Party newspaper, *Pravda* (which, ironically, means "The Truth") fired anti-American propaganda at its citizens daily. We Americans were briefed about how to act normally when you were being "tailed" and to expect someone to follow you everywhere. We were frequently reminded about editing our conversations with each other: we were not to mention Russian friends' names, nor talk about which American worked for what agency, nor of course discuss anything else which was classified. It was even recommended that we "contain" marital disputes, as they could be used to blackmail us. Being bugged was a fact of life. We got to the point where we felt unable to discuss anything sensitive even when we were out of the country; we wondered if somehow "they" followed us wherever we went and set up bugs to catch every word we said. But as paranoid as we were, sometimes we missed the obvious even when it laughed in our faces.

On a freezing night soon after our arrival, a consulate friend and I embarked on a grocery-shopping trip at the diplomatic foodstore, the only place in the city where you could count on a relatively consistent selection. Smaller than a 7-Eleven and with far less variety, and located 20 minutes away, it was not terribly convenient, but it was "the only show in town." So off we went to get some groceries, my tiny daughter bundled up and strapped in tight to her carseat. What little light there is fades very early there in the winter, and by 3:30 p.m. it was completely dark and bitter cold. By 5:00 our mission was accomplished and we set off to pick up my husband from a nearby exhibit of "underground artists."

Needless to say, we were quite upset when my friend's little Volvo, usually so reliable, began to stall each time we stopped at a light. The third time it didn't start at all, and we sat there for a moment in ominous silence, pondering the next step. I would have to stay in the car with the baby while my friend found a phone to call the Consulate, inform them of our plight and hope like hell they could not only arrange for a taxi to get us, but that the taxi would actually come. But we hadn't sat there for one minute before a black Volga pulled up to the curb and its driver, a slight man of about 50 who looked a lot older, jumped out and smiled at us. With our pathetic Russian ability, we were barely able to explain the problem, but he didn't seem to need us anyway; he just lifted the hood and pointed at the frozen gas line. Then, to my horror (since my baby was still inside the car in her carseat), he lit a cigarette lighter and held it under the gas line. I found myself smiling politely at him while inwardly praying that the car wouldn't explode into a fireball. I let out a long breath when he closed the lighter and motioned for us to try the ignition once more. It started! We looked for something to give him as a token of our thanks: I think we ended up giving him something from our shopping bags. He never stopped smiling as he tipped his hat and got in his car.

We chatted excitedly as we drove to the exhibit hall.

"Wasn't he the nicest man?"

"Aren't the Russians terrific people?"

"He saw we were in trouble and he stopped right away." And then...

"Look, there he is behind us! He's making sure we get to where we're going with no more trouble."

Sure enough, he was there again when we got out at the

exhibit hall parking lot. He got out of his car and exchanged a few cordial words with my husband, explaining why he had helped us. He never stopped smiling.

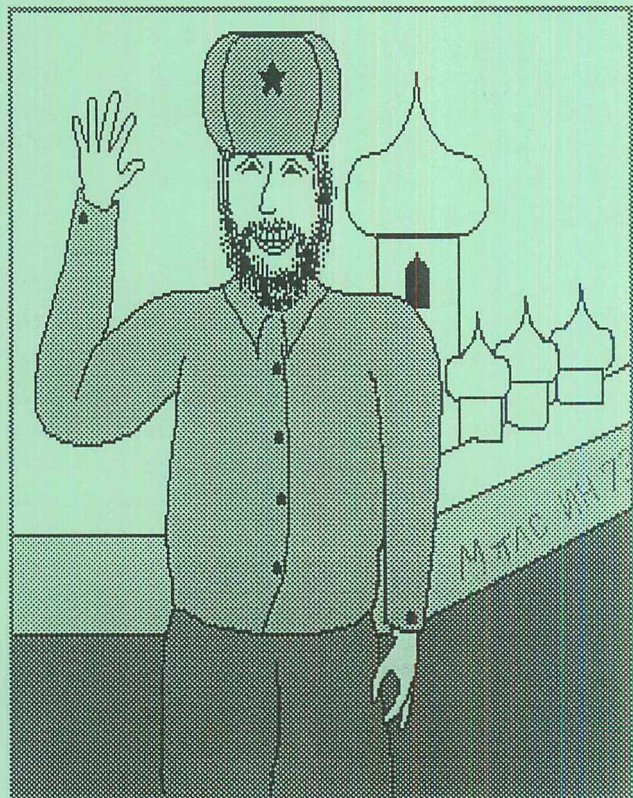
When we drove home a short time later, our Protector was still driving right there behind us. As we crossed the bridge over the icy Neva River, a small, slow, what you might call even a *dim* bulb began to light feebly in my head.

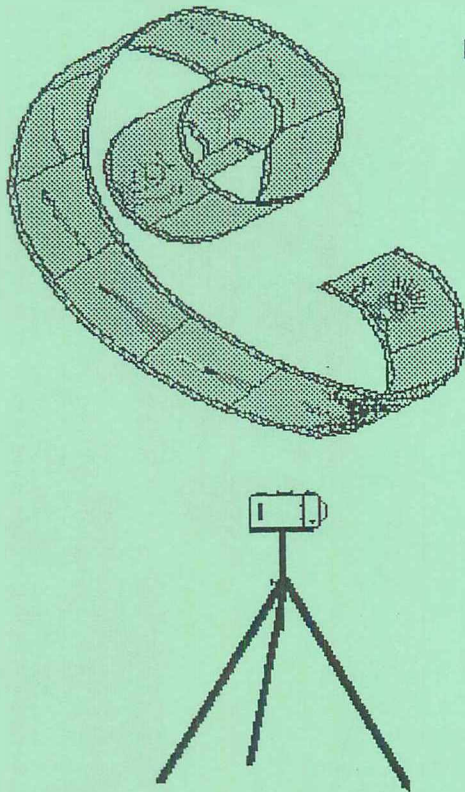
"You know, guys, he's still there...uh, you don't suppose...?"

My husband looked at me with something disturbingly close to contempt. "Didn't you figure that out already? He's your KGB tail!"

Naturally we groaned all the way home at our stupidity and naiveté. Just before we got back, we looked back one more time. He gave us a nod and that same smile, and turned off. We laughed for weeks afterward.

I still remember his smile, and wonder if he tells that story himself. ("Grandpa, tell us again about the stupid Americans!") They say that being in the right place at the right time is no accident. Ain't it *pravda*?

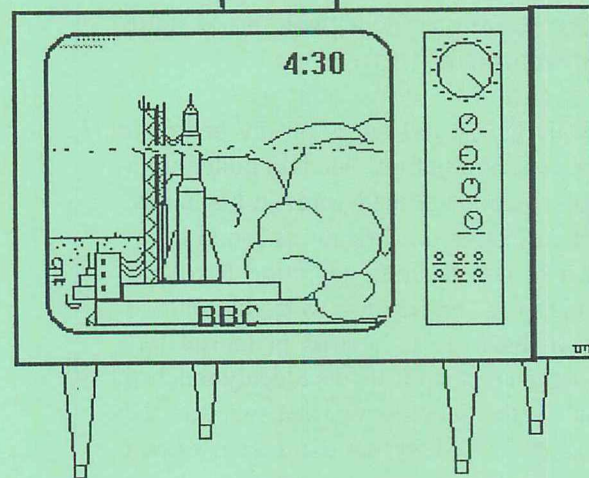




Total Wardrobe

by

John Berry



I have maintained comprehensive files of press cuttings about space achievements since the orbit of Sputnik 1 in 1957...now I have accumulated thirty three volumes of cuttings, photographs, personal observations, etc. I am extremely proud of this vibrant section of my library, most particularly because of the volumes devoted to the Apollo space flights of the late sixties and early seventies which I recorded by photographing the TV screen whilst live reports were relayed directly from the space craft and actually from the Moon's surface. I managed to record photographically the flights from blast-off to the final parachute into the Pacific. I missed the blast-off of Apollo 14, though.....

I had measured exactly 39 inches from the camera to the TV screen. Everything was wide open on the camera, and it was supported by books on the table-top to ensure it was exactly opposite the TV screen, and reasonably firm. I was excited.

"Only a few moments to go, dearheart," I smiled to my wife, and I cocked the camera lever to actuate the film, but it wouldn't manipulate. IT WAS RIGID.

Christ.

Four and a half minutes to go before Apollo 14 rose in its after-birth of smoking fury, and my frigging camera

was inoperative.

I have often been criticized for pondering long and hard before making decisions. I do not accept this...I reckon that I do have moments when my brain reacts like greased lightning, and on this occasion I feel that I reached the culmination of hyper-brain activity.

My problem has been stated...before I was actually aware of THE PLAN, my brain had issued firm instructions to my arms and legs. With three and a half minutes to go I grabbed the camera and raced from the room. Every second was critical, you see. I had to take out the film and rewind it in the camera...it was light outside and I did not have a photographic dark room. Mentally I tried to keep up with the smooth muscle movements of my body...why was I pounding up the stairs three at a time...why did I burst the bedroom door off its hinges...why did I leap into the wardrobe?

THE WARDROBE???

I closed the door and sat down. It was dark in there, and claustrophobic; the hem of my wife's coats and dresses almost suffocated me, but I moved them to one side and tried to open my camera. I knew I had missed the blast-off shots, but I would still be able to photograph the rocket whilst the various stages were

expelled, until it curved out of range....

I zipped out the film in the blackness, held it at arms length and wrapped it round my neck like a scarf. I blindly unscrambled the mechanism and with difficulty re-threaded the film into the camera. A couple of lever movements...it worked perfectly. Fantastic. I burst out of the wardrobe door with an ecstatic scream of sheer exuberance.

A man was on his hands and knees on my bedroom floor. I'd never seen him before. He had pulled up a couple of the floorboards and had wires in his hands. As I shot past him I uttered a breathless 'good evening'. He looked at me in sheer gibbering bewilderment. It was his eyes...wide, they were; his opened mouth was drawn back as if he was in mortal terror...his hair stood on end, as if he'd suddenly touched two bare wires. What secretly worried me was the fact that people frequently had that expression when I was in close proximity to them, in the enthusiastic pursuit of my latest whim.

I took the stairs in two bounds, and started snapping the ascending rocket with abandon, smiling triumphantly at my wife over my right shoulder, demonstrating yet again my success over adversity.



was knocked, and a man's head appeared round the door.



"I've fixed the wiring, missus," he panted, "that's three pounds."

My wife moved to my coat hanging behind the door and nimbly extracted the required amount.

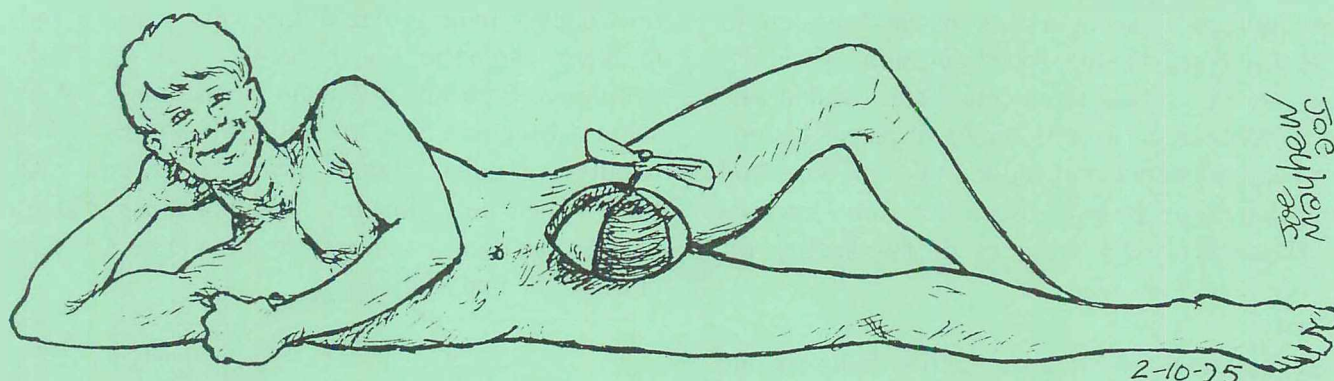
I heard their muffled voices in the doorway.

I went out to bathe my face in cold water...I saw the man at the front door...he had his hand paternally on my wife's shoulder and whispered to her in a kindly manner. He looked at me furtively, and I heard his boots scuttle down the front path....

The rocket had climbed out of camera range. I sat on the chair, perspiring freely at my endeavours. The door

MADMAN: OF SOME OF THE PEOPLE

BY MIKE GLICKSOHN



As any true aesthete and aficionado of real culture is aware we have a larger than life figure right here in the WWF who has fashioned a career out of being super macho.

No, I'm not writing about the World Wrestling Federation and the immensely popular "Macho Man", Randy Savage. I'm referring to the Wide World of Fandom and our very own, if not necessarily always as popular, Mark "Madman" Riley. (The very man of whom the brilliant American writer Don Marquis may have been thinking when he wrote, "It is better to go swaggering through the cates of life loose-lipped and genial and greedy, embracing pleasures and suffering pains, than to find one's self, in the midst of caution, incontinently slain by chance and eaten by worms." And, yes, that is "cates" not "gates." Go look it up: Ben and Mark and I can wait...)

Every culture and subculture has its memorable icons. The stuff of which legends are made. And every culture has its famous or infamous members, the people whose reputations precede them, sometimes because of and sometimes despite what they actually do.

The Midwest science fiction fannish family is certainly no exception to the rule. We can lay claim to, joyously or otherwise, such notorious fans as Buck Coulson, Claude Degler, Joni Stopa, Ed Sunden, Lou Tabakow, Bill Bridget, Martha Beck, Phil Foglio, Rusty Hevelin, Leland Sapiro, Bob Tucker. And Mark Riley.

"Mark Riley." It is a name to conjure with, to evoke strong memories with. And yet the vast majority of science fiction fans will never have encountered the name. A contradiction? Not at all. Just an example of the little pond/big fish nature of hobby groups everywhere. Why should fandom be any different from the rest?

As with most of the fans that have had the greatest impact on me during my almost thirty years of relatively high-profile (except recently, unless you ignore BEN'ZINE and who among us doesn't?) fannish activity, I have no idea when I first met Mark Riley. But I do know two things: One is that at whatever time it was he was fiercely promoting himself under the nickname "Madman." The other thing I know is that Mark Riley is quite a complex character.

Unlike most of the fans that have had the greatest impact on me over my almost thirty years of fanac, the complexity of Mark's character tends to split those fans who've met him into two opposing camps: Those who think he's a total arsehole and those of us who disagree on the definition of "total."

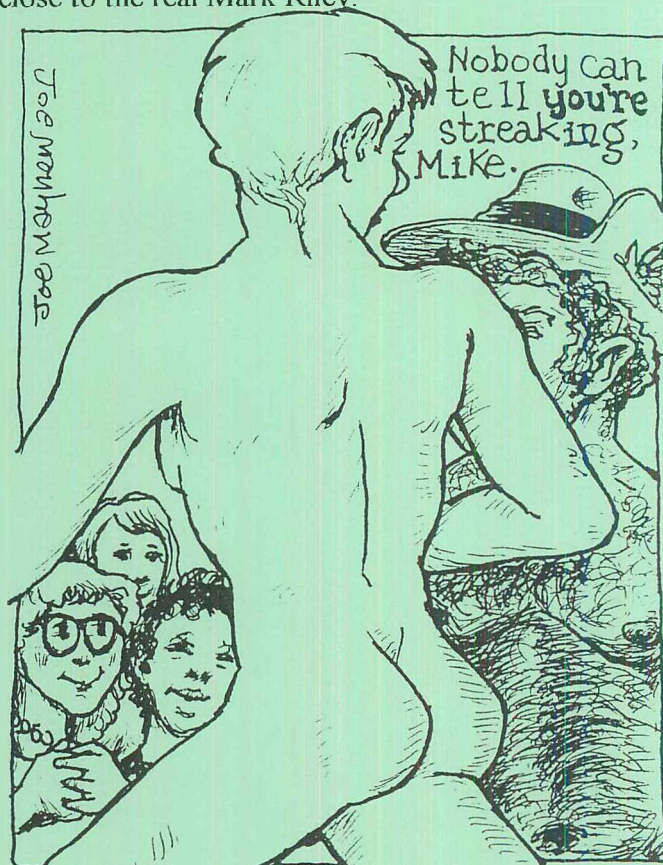
Let me say here that if you were hoping for a fact filled fanhistory piece in this article I hasten to disabuse you of this misplaced delusion. Even if I had all of my original brain cells I still wouldn't be able to write nuts 'n bolts, times 'n places historically-accurate detailed anecdotal tales of Who And What Has Gone Before. Seek out Rob Hansen's and Harry Warner's volumes of fan history for that.

When I first met the Madman the first thing anyone would notice about him was his physique. In a fandom mostly known for the faintly repugnant physical appearance of the great majority of its members, Mark stood out. Broad-shouldered, narrow-waisted, tight-bunned, muscular and athletic, he loved to strut around conventions in tiny little bikini briefs, fully aware that he had probably the best body of any male fan at the convention. And yet even for the seventies he was, shall we say, somewhat lacking in appropriate sensitivities, prompting one woman to observe, "Well, his body is pretty good but his personality is rather paunchy."

A harsh initial judgment? Perhaps. And yet at the time Mark went out of his way to provoke that sort of superficial reaction. He was loud. (No, he was L*O*U*D!!!!) He was brash. He was arrogant. He was sexist. He was a macho, hard-drinking, hard-doping, hard-partying, 100% male chauvinist. He yearned to be centre stage whenever there was a con or a party going on and so he was. He didn't seem to care what reaction his behavior caused in those around him. Needless to say, not everyone was positively impressed by this.

And yet, strangely, even while he was doing his best to impress the younger (and better looking) fans with his Macho Man persona, he never

adopted it fully when with me. In the midst of a convention, after doing something outrageous like parading nude through the lobby to get to his room, he'd sit down and talk with me as one decent, thoughtful individual to another. He'd talk about books he'd recently read or radio shows he'd listened to and the things he'd strongly agreed or disagreed with. We'd share our love for certain sports (although his enthusiasm for hockey always outweighed mine.) He'd talk about his grandmother, whom he loved deeply, and about the people we both knew that he cared about. We'd share a beer or a shot of good whisky and a few minutes of quiet, almost introspective conversation. Then he'd don his Madman mask and go back to the con to annoy those people he never let close to the real Mark Riley.



I was lucky. So were a few others. We got to see the complicated reality of the fannish character known as Madman. (Ask Joni Stopa who has worked the hardest and done the most to make sure that her weekend-long parties were a success and were not a crippling load of work for her and Jon and I imagine Mark Riley's name will lead all the rest.) Most fans have never had that oppor-

tunity. Riley could be abrasive. Hell, Riley frequently went out of his way to be abrasive. But if you ever got beyond that you'd be surprised at what was there.

Most of Mark's reputation, good and bad, is based on his social activities. But for historical accuracy (in case MIMOSA ever wants to reprint this piece) I should observe that he has in fact made other contributions. The few fanzines that he co-edited were quite good (even if it was Cat's doing) and his addition of "ANF" to the continuing fabric of fannish interaction will be remembered as long as there's even one drunken Australian fan willing to greet the sunrise over a glass of straight tequila. If anything, I might guess that Mark's enthusiastic creation of and promotion of All Night Fandom might well ensure the survival of his name in fan-nish history long after the writer of this article and the publisher of this fanzine have been consigned to the scrap heap of fannish obscurity.

Madman Riley? Yes, I know him. He pissed me off. Often. He was there when I really needed him. Even more often. He slipped me acid one time when I was drunk. I enjoyed it but it was a really dumb thing to do. He had a major role in making my wedding day the great success it was. I can never repay him for that. We used to get drunk together and probably made fools of ourselves. He called me to share the joy of the birth of his first child and his happiness brought tears to my eyes. He is my friend. I don't mind defending him. And it's a hell of a lot more worthwhile than defending Harlan Ellison.

Over the years Madman and I have spent many, many (too many, I know) hours drinking, partying, talking, driving, listening, working, playing and existing together. Today he is a large number of pounds heavier than he was when he was trying to impress people around pools at cons and happily married for longer than most of even his best friends thought possible and father of a new child. His presence in science fiction fandom has diminished dramatically. I think fandom has been weakened by his absence.

Mark "Madman" Riley undoubtedly rubbed a lot of people in fandom the wrong way. I can understand that. Some of us were lucky. He chose to rub us the right way. I wonder if Mark himself is concerned now about the negative impact he chose to create in his early days as a fan? Too late. Some will choose to think they know Riley from their first encounters with him. And some of those will never forgive him. Some will have reconsidered their initial impressions based on their second encounters with the Madman. Good for them. Some may still be waiting for that third encounter. You could be in for a surprise, folks.

To sum it all up: Mark "Madman" Riley has carved himself a small niche in the recent history of science fiction fandom. That niche is probably inappropriate because it is based on a very one-dimensional view of a fan. I think Mark Riley is a lot more complicated than most people think he is and a lot better person than most detractors give him credit for being. He is my friend. I love him. A lot. I have long ago forgiven him for many of the mistakes I hope my own friends have forgiven me for. If not: Well neither of us is going to lose sleep over it, I think.

Madman.

Really?

Of the People?

Maybe yes, maybe no.

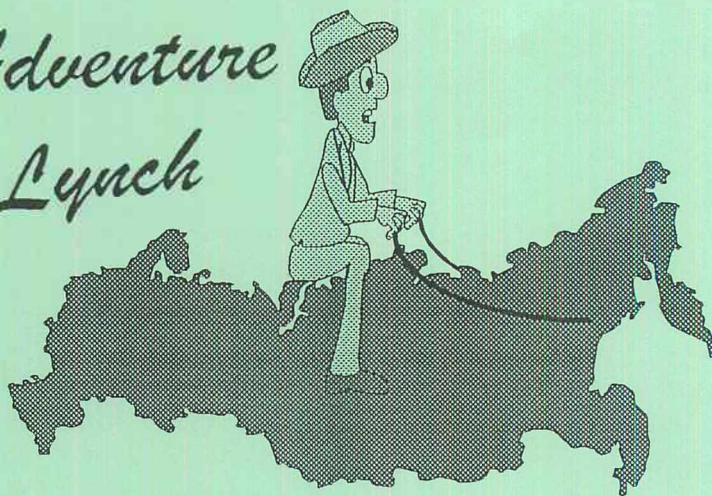
Half of that nickname is solid, my friend. Despite all you've done to frequently prevent people from realizing it, you are a damn good man. Guess you're going to have to live with that.

And if the other half of that alter ego no longer applies, I guess you'll have to live with that too.

Just as I'll learn to live with possibly blowing all the hard work you put into building that unnecessary and inaccurate and outdated reputation!

Russia: A Personal Adventure

by Richard Lynch



June 5th, 1994 -- Prologue

I like to think I love adventures in life, but until just a few years ago, overseas travel had never been one of them. It wasn't until the summer of 1990 that I made my first trans-Atlantic trip; until then, my idea of an adventuresome trip had been going north to New England, or west to the wilds of southern California. I haven't been trans-Pacific yet, but I've been back to Europe every year since then, getting as far north as central Finland and as far east as Poland. But now, *now*, there was a chance to take a *real* adventuresome trip -- 10,000 miles from here, all the way out to the Siberian cities of central Asia, with stopovers in Moscow on the way out and the way back. Was I interested in going? Of course! But circumstances didn't really allow me to savor the anticipation. I wasn't entirely sure the trip would happen at all, in fact, until the very last week before I left -- plans and schedules kept changing that much, that often. And so, even when the day of departure finally arrived, it still didn't seem quite *real* to me...

My flight out of Washington National Airport up to JFK was on a 34-seat Saab-Fairchild, a sort-of mini-DC-3-type airplane. I usually dislike small airplanes because they get buffeted around a lot more than jets, but the weather was nice and the ride was mostly smooth. The flight attendant (I made the mistake of referring to her as a "stewardess", which I quickly corrected) was a pleasant young woman with a Kathy Ireland-type squeaky voice who actually *liked* working in small airplanes, in preference to the larger jets.

Things did not get off to a good start, though. The airplane had taxied about halfway out toward the main runway, when the pilot suddenly came on the intercom

and announced we had to return to the gate. Visions of delays and missing my trans-Atlantic flight swirled through my head, but it turned out that they had only forgotten the coffee. Then, halfway to New York, there was a small problem with the airplane -- an electrical blip that caused the exit lights to come on. The flight attendant unobtrusively called the pilot on the intercom phone and was told, "We know... we'll get back to you on it." Turns out it was only a circuit breaker trip, nothing worse. The whole incident was subtle enough that only I and she had noticed (I was in the first row of seating). The fix didn't take too long and the exit lighting soon went back off; there was never any changes in the sound of the engines or anything else that caused people farther back in the cabin to be aware of the problem. I wonder how many other flights that I've been on have experienced in-flight problems that I've been unaware of, simply because I've been seated in the wrong part of the airplane.

Soon after, we landed at JFK Airport, with a spectacular sunset beyond the New York skyline in the distance -- my last North American sunset for quite some time. Russia with all its wonders was still about 14 hours in my future, but the first step in getting there, at least, was behind me...

June 6th, 1994 -- Arriving Moscow

I should mention at this point that the purpose of this trip was business, not pleasure! I was part of a fact-finding delegation, sponsored by the U.S. Government, to look into ways of finding new alternate energy sources for the populations around the Siberian cities of Tomsk and Krasnoyarsk. Presently, some of the power and heat in those regions are provided by nuclear reactors which make weapons-grade plutonium as a by-product. There has been an international agreement to

shut down these reactors before the end of the decade, but the local authorities are understandably concerned that when that happens, there won't be enough heat and electricity available, especially during the cold winter months.

There were ten of us on the trip, including two translators. We were supposed to have two others besides, but they dropped out less than a week before we left. One of them was the logistics person -- he was pulled from the trip to help in the planning for a trip to India by a cabinet-level official, and as it turned out, we felt his loss almost at once. When we finally arrived at the Moscow airport, the van that we thought the U.S. Embassy had sent to pick us up never arrived. We sat and waited... and waited... and waited... and pondered what to do next. Finally, one of the translators figured out a way to hire a bus to come and get us. The total expense was only about \$100 -- not bad for 10 people plus luggage for a 10-mile trip in from the airport!

We arrived Russia on the 50th anniversary of D-Day, which was being remembered most everywhere in Europe. In Moscow, however, there was no apparent celebration or remembrance. On the way in to the city from the airport, we passed a historical area on the side of the highway, where three huge steel frameworks -- each in the shape of a three-dimensional 'X', like a giant children's 'jack' toy -- stood in silent sentinel just outside the city limits. We were told this was the spot where the German advance on Moscow during World War II was repelled, which was maybe the *true* turning point of that war. The Russians apparently think that the D-Day invasion of France was a relatively small skirmish, in terms of significance and in lives cost, in comparison to the titanic Eastern front sieges.

June 6th-9th, 1994 -- in Moscow

Boy, Moscow is an *expensive* city! The place I stayed in, the Club 27, cost me \$190 per night, and that's for a slightly above-average room in a slightly above-average hotel! We got to the hotel in the early evening, so we just decided to go down to the hotel restaurant for dinner instead of trying to find someplace else to eat. The prices there were enough to cause a double-take -- a bowl of soup cost \$13, fruit with whipping cream set you back \$10, a salad with shrimp was \$24, and a main course of beef filet with sweet/sour sauce and vegetable was \$32. I finally settled on a plate of something that resembled meatballs wrapped in dough (the Russian equivalent of dim sum?) and a Perrier, for \$25, includ-

ing tip. Believe me, I savored every bite...

We had picked the hotel because of its proximity to the U.S. Embassy. Some of our meetings and many of our work sessions were at the Embassy, and the cafeteria there was *much* cheaper than the hotel restaurant. The commissary there provided us with lots of essentials, not the least of which was bottled drinking water. We'd been told not to drink the local water, even in Moscow, unless you wanted a case of "Brezhnev's Revenge". This advice proved hard to follow (vegetables in restaurants, for instance, were washed with the local water), and the very first night I found myself getting up about 5:30am for an urgent trip to the commode. Somebody with marketing sense should bottle some of that Russian water and ship the stuff to the States; it would make a great medicine to relieve constipation...

The U.S. Embassy seemed like a walled fortress to me. It was more than just diplomatic offices -- it was an enclosed, self-contained community. Just in the small area I was able to explore, I found that there were recreation facilities (a pool and an indoor basketball court), the commissary store, the cafeteria (which doubled as an inexpensive restaurant for dinner a couple of times), and a library. There were streets inside the embassy, complete with rowhouses. It would be possible to live your entire Russia existence in there during a tour-of-duty, if you wanted, without ever having to contend with the outside world.

The U.S. Embassy is situated out on one of the perimeter ring roads that circle Moscow, about a mile or so from Red Square at the center of the city. Even that far out, however, there are other embassies and Russian government buildings. Just a short distance down the street from the Embassy, in fact, is the so-called Russian White House -- a tall, narrow white building that I remember seeing on the nightly news several months earlier. It's the building that was taken over in an attempted coup against Boris Yeltsin, and that was shelled by tanks in the ensuing melee. A bit closer, across the street actually, is a tall-steepled old church that I first noticed when someone was up in the steeple hand-ringing the bells there. From that vantage point, it's possible to look right down into the U.S. Embassy compound, which KGB observers routinely did during the years of the cold war. For that reason it was lovingly referred to by Embassy people, I was told, as 'Our Lady of Perpetual Surveillance'...

There were *many* wonderful old churches in Moscow. The one by the U.S. Embassy fades into obscurity if compared to some of the onion-domed cathedrals located near Red Square. Unlike OLPS, all of those have been lovingly preserved (though not always as functional places of worship). Many have domes finished in shiny gold leaf, which makes them spectacular to see on a sunny day; if placed in a different setting, in a different city, any of them would be rightfully hailed as an architectural wonder. But even these wonderful old cathedrals pale in comparison to the most marvelous building that I have ever seen: St. Basil's.

It's hard to find words to adequately describe St. Basil's Cathedral. It sits like an architectural kaleidoscope, a fairy castle that's an island right in the middle of Red Square. The six multi-color candycane-striped domes are all different from each other, so the view from the west, for instance, presents an entirely different picture than the view from a different direction. It's the one image that visitors to Moscow come away with, even though the rest of Red Square and the adjacent Kremlin are picturesque in their own right.

The Kremlin itself is a walled fortress, the largest in the world (we were told). The Kremlin wall forms the western boundary of Red Square, and just about the midpoint of that stretch of the wall is a small, nondescript black structure -- Lenin's tomb, which no longer is a tourist attraction since Lenin's body was removed. Each place the Kremlin wall turns a corner, there is a tall conical tower topped with a five-pointed star. At night, these stars glow an eerie, surreal red, a sight most people did not see that time of year because the nights were so short.

By the way, those short nights took some getting used to! In Moscow, in June, it doesn't get dark until after

10 PM local time. In Siberia, the next week, nightfall came even later. [One late afternoon in Tomsk, we left a restaurant after a long dinner engagement with our hosts just as it was just starting to get dark; I looked at my watch and was startled to see it was nearly midnight!]

Luckily, the restaurants all seemed to be open very late at night. Quite often we didn't finish work for the day until about 8 or 9 PM, and by the time we found someplace to eat, it was 10 PM or later. But even at that hour, there were lots of people in the restaurants we went to. One of them, an out-of-the-way Italian restaurant, was obviously a popular place for a drink or dinner, but surprisingly, there didn't seem to be any other

foreigners there besides us. And yet, all the various menu items were priced not in Russian rubles, but in American dollars instead. We had noticed this earlier, in the hotel restaurant, and thought it was done there just for the convenience of the business traffic, but here it was too, in a place that catered mostly to locals. Turns out that inflation in Russia is still so out-of-control that rather than re-doing the menu every day or two, it's easier just to price items in some relatively stable currency

and then assume the patrons will be able to convert to rubles with whatever the exchange rate is for that day. To be able to dine out in Russia, you not only had to have an appetite but a pocket calculator too!

Our experience in that Italian restaurant showed us, as we were pleased to find out, that it was possible to get a good meal for much less than hotel restaurant prices. Lower than comparable American restaurant prices, in fact. You just had to know where to go, that's all. On the way back to the hotel, we rode the Moscow subway system, mostly just to say we had done it. Each ride on it costs the princely sum of 100 rubles -- about five



cents. Who says Moscow is an expensive city??

June 9th-on the way to Krasnoyarsk, Siberia

"1st May 1994: Po Chan and Bjorn spent 4 nights in this airport." I saw that message penciled on the wall in the departure lounge of Domodedova Airport outside Moscow on the night of June 9th. We had missed an earlier flight that day when we got caught up in a terrible traffic snarl on the way south out of the city, and the flight to Krasnoyarsk had already departed the gate by the time we arrived.

Domodedova Airport is actually the busiest airport in Russia. It has all the domestic flights, where Shermetyevo Airport, where we arrived Russia, is the International airport. Domodedova is probably the most decrepit, poorly-lit, and dirty place I've ever flown out of. It's falling apart in places, and doesn't look like the place has been cleaned in years (the bathroom facilities, for instance, are too abominable to even describe).

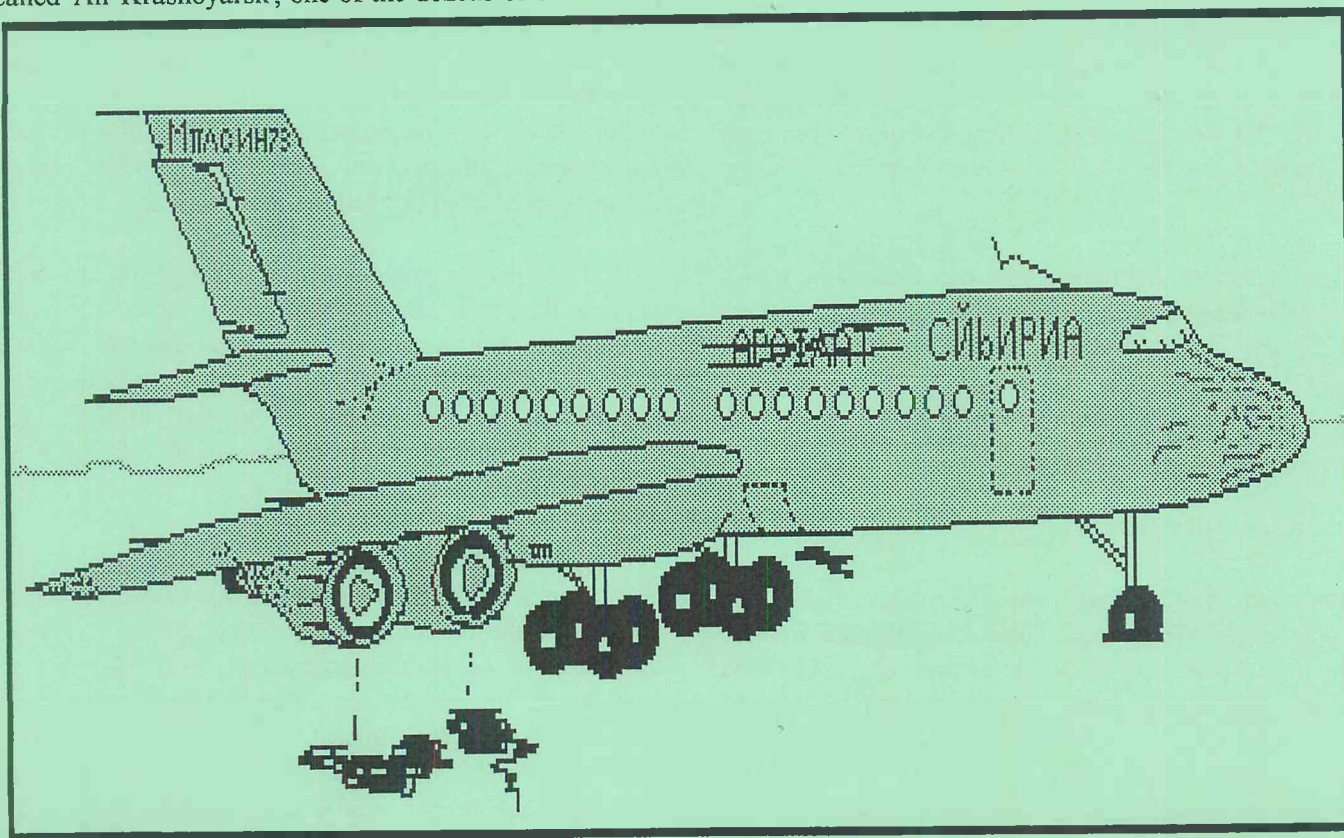
Abandon hope all ye who enter here! Po Chan and Bjorn certainly must have...

The airline we flew from Moscow to Krasnoyarsk was called 'Air Krasnoyarsk', one of the dozens of small air-

lines that were formed from the pieces of Aeroflot following its breakup a few years back. The flight we took was the overnight red-eye, since we had missed the afternoon flight earlier. All of us were more than a little apprehensive, and with good reason: the jet aircraft we flew on would not have been allowed off the ground back in the States. Safety systems like emergency oxygen were either not working, or non-existent. The flight attendant's safety instructions apparently translated into something like: "The emergency exits are over there, don't open them during the flight." The very day of our flight, the U.S. Embassy had issued a warning to travelers *not* to fly Aeroflot or any of its successors unless absolutely necessary, because of grave safety concerns. Actually, the gravest safety concern of all appeared to be the moldy-looking mystery meat that was part of the meal the airline tried to serve us midway through the flight. Eating that would have put me *in* the grave, I think!

to be continued....

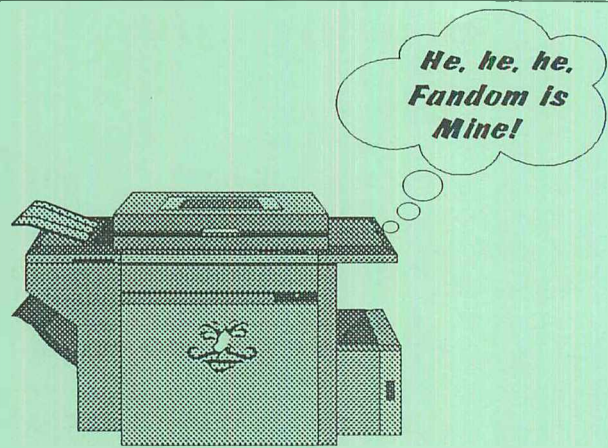
Richard's adventures in Siberia next issue.



Kinko Nights

by

Ben Zuhl



"It had to happen," I thought, "time stands still for no ghod."

What I said into the phone was, "Leah, I've always been a supporter of Roscoe, and kneeled on the slip-sheets at his shrine even though Ben'Zine has always been a Xeroxed zine. However, as I think about it now, it seems to me that there has to be a ghod of zines produced by copier. I wonder what his name could be."

No more than nine or ten nanoseconds passed before Leah replied, "It has to be KINKO¹."

"Kinko," I echoed, as I picked myself up off the floor, "yes, I'm sure you're right. I know I've been Away From It All, but I'm amazed that I've never heard of him² before. After all, B'Z I was Xeroxed 17 years ago."

Our conversation continued onto more mundane topics such as the details of the mailing list Dick and Leah are helping me set up, and finally ended without another mention of Kinko. And, not having the slightest inkling that anything momentous had happened, I went to bed, to sleep, perchance, even, to dream.

And, what a dream it was...

I was at the State Department's Computer Help Desk answering the phone and counseling foreign Service Officers. There seemed to be a rash of people who couldn't find the 'Anykey' on their keyboards. As

¹ Kinkos is a nationwide chain of stores that specialize in copies and graphics

² 'Him' in the broad sense of the word. After all I don't know if Kinko is male, female or other.

lunchtime approached, I slipped out the door and headed back up to my office on the third floor. I knew it would be empty during the lunch hour so I quickly punched in the combination and closed the door behind me. Quickly moving over to my desk I pulled out a couple of reams of green copier paper. Grabbing my briefcase I went over to the used-to-be-state-of-the-art-about-five-years-ago copier and loaded a ream of green into it. Then I fiddled with the settings to instruct it to take 2 originals and copy them back-to-back on one sheet of paper. As I punched in 250 copies on the keypad, I felt a tremor go through the machine and my nose was assailed by the odor of the air after a severe thunderstorm--and this, inside a room that doesn't have any windows and is at least 30 meters from the outside. I jumped back from the copier and stared in disbelief as my originals disappeared into the automatic paper feeder before I even pressed the Start button.

Now, I had put my green paper on top of a pile of white paper in the paper feed, but somehow I wasn't surprised when paper of a fine golden hue appeared in the hopper. Every second, with a 'fffffftt' sound, a new sheet popped out into the hopper. I glanced at the page counter and watched as it ticked down with a 'fffffftt' to 10. 'fffffftt--9, 'fffffftt--8...

Feeling faint, I leaned against the wall and looked down at the pages that had already come out of the machine. Not only were they on a paper totally alien to the copier, but there was writing on each that was written in a neat hand. The words blurred before my incredulous eyes could take in their import.

Looking back at the counter, I watched as with a 'fffffftt' it ticked down to 3, 'fffffftt--2, 'fffffftt--1. With a final thump and a sigh the lights on the infernal machine dimmed back to normal and the

room was unnaturally quiet.

I carefully picked up the golden pages and staggered back to my desk. With wide eyes and blown mind I sat down to read the manuscript.

But, even as my eyes focused on the first page, the neat-looking handwriting melted and turned into a purple blot that writhed about on the page. Just as I was thinking, "Thank Ghu, there are no tentacles," the blot gathered itself together and jumped around the page leaving horrible purple blotches behind, and finally in one great leap, jumped, split in half and landed on my hands. I stared with horror at the purple sinking into my suddenly shaking hands. It seemed to stick in spots, forming recognizable images. I was dumbfounded.

"What the heck? Oh, graphics!" I blurted.

Looking down at the mess I saw a small drop of the goo shake off my palm and drop back onto the paper. It formed itself into a faint, purple letter "I". I shook off more drops and they splatted right onto the paper with a soft 'splopping' sound. Finally, my hands were again free of purple and I could see that there were words, faintly etched in purple on the paper again.

"Oh, Roscoe, don't let it start over again!" I prayed.

It didn't. What happened was even more amazing...

The faint lettering faded away and the golden paper turned black. Then slowly changed back to its golden hue with writing in sharp black. The lettering was not only a different color but a completely new font. It read...

Testing, testing, 1, 2, 3. That's better. Almost lost it there for a minute.

Ahem.

I am Kinko! All who use copiers for repro bow down to me!

"Wow," I said aloud, "The ghod of Reproduction!"

The paper suddenly glowed like a miniature sun. When I could see again I read...

No, I believe Tucker invented sex!

I groaned and then read on.

I am the ghod of Copiers. Once known as Zer, son of Ox, I have now obtained the lofty position of king of copiers, taking the position from a dethroned Senate Chairman. Mortals and fans shall know me as Kinko!

Mimeos and hectographs are old fashioned, low resolution, and worse, fuzzy. Copiers are the wave of the future! And I, Kinko, am the future. From now on the Truefan shall be the one with his hand on the copier button.

The Kinko Papers suddenly turned hot in my hands and I dropped them. As they floated to the floor they seemed to shimmer and combine into two pages of a slightly larger size than normal. As I bent to pick it up I noticed they seemed to be bound at the top, and just beneath the binding, at strange intervals, were some holes. The Kinko Papers had transformed themselves into a mimeo stencil!

The room was quiet for a few seconds and then was filled with a strange sound--Rapp, Rapp, Rapp. Then the copier suddenly hummed to life and without even waiting to warm up it fffffffttt forth two more pages of paper. I went over to the copier to see what had happened this time. There in the hopper was the result--two sheets of twiltone paper with a line drawing of a beaver in the upper left hand corner. Each contained several lines of print in a clear, typewriter-like font.

OK, enough is enough! By Myself, I've given this young neo-deity enough space to hang himself and sure as my name is ROSCOE, he has. I am supreme among fandom's ghods. So Pass the Bheer and lets get to business.

It has been decided that some steps need be taken to keep this Kinko in his place. There are three stages to Kinko's disgrace.

The Imp Stage is that he will be forever associated with the imp Tonah. Together they will produce excellent copies but Tonah, being an imp, will choose the most importune times to desert Kinko causing copiers to stop in their tracks and blink the plaintive message, "Out of Tonah".

The next stage is even more diabolic and is to be called the Demon Stage. I have unleashed, from the site of Room 770, the demon Papa Jham. When PJ touches one of Kinko's copiers the paper will travel on the wrong path, fold and mutilate itself, and anchor itself in the most inaccessible places.

Finally, and most draconian, is the Po' Stage. This will increase the cost of producing and especially mailing fanzines. A great wailing and cries of "Po', po', too po' to pub!" shall be heard throughout fandom.

These measures will make all of fandom curse the name of Kinko.

The paper turned bright white again. I'm not sure if it was the harsh light or the harsher punishment that brought tears to my eyes. But it was through tear-stained eyes that I read the last page.

And now to you, Ben. You have given Kinko voice by writing about him. For this you will be humbled by the visits of

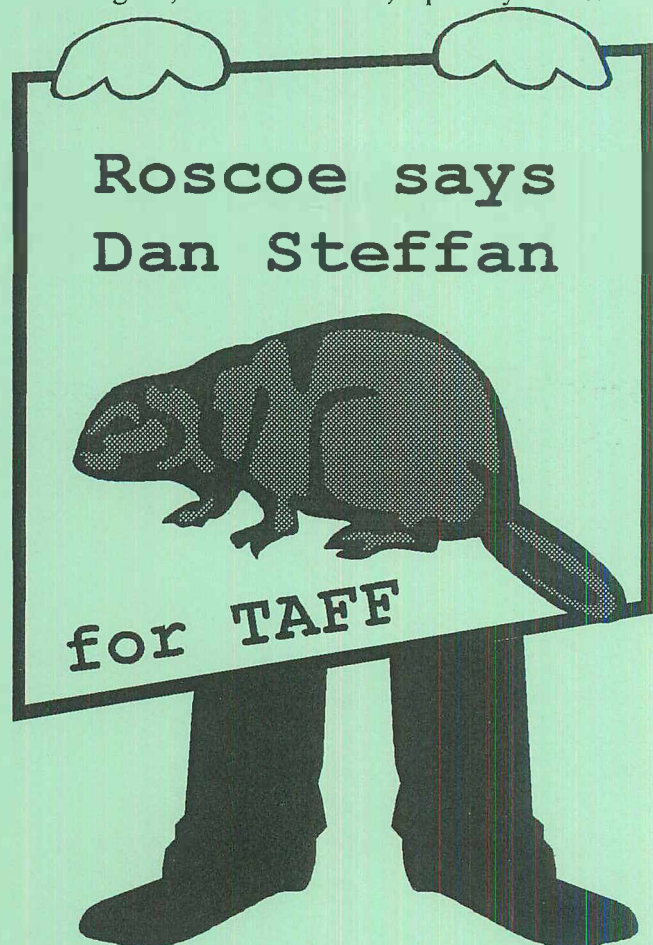
three ghosts...

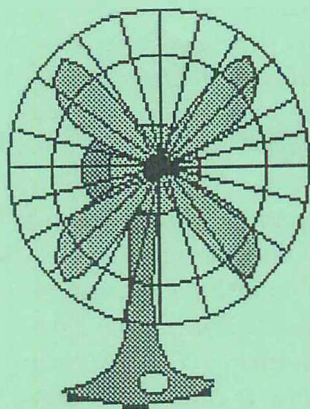
"I know," I said, looking away from the paper for a second. "There will be the ghost of Fandom Past, then the ghost of Fandom Present, and finally, the ghost of Fandom Future. Right?" I looked back at the pages in my hand and read words that froze my heart.

No, each of the ghosts will be exactly the same and say the same thing.

I dropped the papers and my heart sank to the floor with them. For I had seen the last line...I was to be humbled by spirit duplicators.

With a groan I woke up. And now I must pass the warning on to other unsuspecting fans. Roscoe is the one true ghod, forsake all others, especially Kinko.





Fanac
1467 Grand Canal Blvd
Marsport, GZ 87965
UPF, Mars



Ben Zuhl
2239 Highland Ave.
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USA, Earth

Harry Warner, Jr.
423 Sumit Ave.
Hagerstown, MD 21740

I was very happy to receive this blast from the past in the form of a new issue of Ben'Zine. Well, it wasn't completely the past, because this issue required five days to come first class from Falls Church to Hagerstown, a feat that the postal people could only dream about ten years ago.

You seem to have adjusted very well to fandom again except in one respect. You don't understand the fact that fans who use computers for fanzine publishing always utilize the smallest font as their principal typeface, choose the darkest shade of purple they can find for paper stock, find a copying service that hasn't discovered yet how to reproduce an entire page clearly, and otherwise willfully wipe out the alleged benefits of electronic publishing over older methods. You have produced an extremely easy to read issue which doesn't waste a lot of paper with radical makeup tricks.

I don't go to cons, but from what I read in fanzines here and there, I feel sure you chose the best possible con to resume attendance at fannish gatherings. As I understand it, MidWestCon soft-pedals publicity, makes no effort to attract younger fans, and thus preserves some of the attributes of all cons a few decades ago. Of course, there's always the danger that the entire gathering of fans will drop dead simultaneously in the middle of some future MidWestCon from extreme old age. But I suppose that would be as good a way to go as any.

For some time, I've been predicting that Mike Glicksohn is about to make as complete a return to fanac as you've accomplished. His long article in this new issue seems to give some promise that I'll be right about

something for once in my life. I once experienced something similar. It was so long ago that I was actually passing a truck on an interstate (where I understand that no truck has moved slowly enough for this to happen in recent years) when there was the most incredible banging noise, my car bucked and leaped violently, all the mirrors twisted out of proper angle, and on my left was no real shoulder, just a rather steep incline covered with grass. Worse, I was driving one of those old Oldsmobiles that had high and long fins that prevented full vision of what might be in the slow lane. By guess and by God I managed to get into that lane without smashing up, stopped on the shoulder, and inspected the car. No flat tire, nothing had fallen under the chassis, no sign of damage to the body, and the engine continued to idle properly. I nursed it back into town and stopped at a service station. The mechanic couldn't find anything wrong, either. I began to wonder if I'd imagined the whole thing and began driving away when he yelled at me and pointed at a rear tire. The tread was gone. He'd never heard of a tire losing a tread without causing an accident or going flat after a few miles. I got a replacement tire without charge from the embarrassed store where I'd brought that one and I've stayed off interstates as much as possible since then.

The Northern Lights don't often make a good display this far south in North America. So Ron Legro's article makes me wish I could experience them in their full brilliance someday. Of course, I'm not at all sure they're a natural phenomenon. What I think is, bems on some nearby stars have the ability to communicate over distances of light years by sending rays against stars that cause magnetic storm, and by varying the intensity or frequency of the rays, the Northern Lights on Earth

and other planets can be made to convey information. Since we haven't been out in interstellar space yet, those bems are probably trying to say hello in Basic Galactic Code and we just admire the rapidly shifting forms and colors and don't assign code experts to interpret the meaning.

Ro Nagey's conclusion reminds me of the old cartoon showing one young man wearing a suit and hat standing in the midst of a hundred or so other young persons clad in blue jeans and the other items of modern dress, yelling at him in chorus: "Conformist!" I'm glad he came through his wilder years without apparent lasting bad effects. Alas, other fans haven't been as lucky. Hardly a month passes without a fanzine item about the death of a local club member or regular congoer not yet in middle age, almost always traceable to excesses of one sort or another.

In Larry Tucker's article, I liked particularly his vision of First Fandom's future. It's hardly any more improbable than some of the things that have happened within that organization during recent years. The next thing we know, First Fandom will be soliciting dues from all Russian fans and classifying them as Verst Fandom.

Try to publish more frequently during the next ten years, please. If it isn't forbidden, I'd love to read of some of your experiences in the far-off places where the job took you. *((It isn't forbidden and not only will I write about life in the Foreign Service, but, I also have asked others to chime in with their stories.--BZ))###*

Gary Deindorfer
447 Bellevue Ave., #9-B
Trenton, NJ 08618

Hello, Dr. Gafia! Good to hear from you after all these years. I remember the earlier issues of Ben'Zine and how

much I enjoyed them. I remember you wrote a note on one of theme that you used to work for Public TV in Trenton, and now you have been all over he world and I'm still in Trenton, in which vicinity I pretty much have to stay until I retire in 14 years, since I am an employee of the State of New Jersey. Low pay, great benefits.

Congratulations to you and your no doubt lovely wife Lowry on moving to the neighborhood of the Faanish Elder Ghods, such as Ted and Lynda White, Dan and Lynn Steffan, Terry Hughes, Michael Dobson and spouse (I forget her name, but she is a very nice person), and let us not forget the **original** Dr., Gafia, rich brown, legend that he surely is. You are living in ultra

hip faanish company and I expect that you will fanishly begin to exfoliate all the hell over the place. *((I think I'll leaf that last comment alone. However, there is mulch to what you say. I've had good times meeting & getting reacquainted with WSFAns. Not surprisingly, the warmest welcome has come from fanzine fans. I've really enjoyed meeting Dick and Nicki Lynch. Ted White has been wonderfully welcoming and I've enjoyed his and Lynda's hospitality. rich brown has long been a favorite name since he and the CRY crew put so much fannish fun in print (even tho it was 20 years before I read of them) that I first thought about doing my own fanzine. (The name BEN'ZINE, with my name in the title, is a kind of reverse bow in the direction of those long ago Nameless Ones.) And rich has proven to be even more fun in person and modem.--BZ))*

Now I have a dim idea of what you look like, at least in 2-D, from the Foglio cartoon on page two. Thom Moore is a new name to me, but his cover is boffo yocks (as the showbiz talent agents like to say); at least to the reader if not to the drawn participant. But isn't that always the way it is?

Wow. You and your wife and children have really been all over the place, haven't you? Sounds like an interesting profession to be in; and undoubtedly a highly paid one, as well it should be. MidWestCon '94 sounds like a real blast. I must get around to attending an occasional con again. Haven't in a long time.

Speaking of the marvelous Leah Zeldes, I would figure fandom is about due for a new issue of the excellent fanzine STET. One of my favorites, especially the marathon letter column, which was missed in her last issue.

Good to see something from the always urbane and witty Mike Glicksohn. After all, he has been gafia for so long now. I for one miss his articles, and his incomparable locs. Nobody does them better, no, not even Harry Warner or me. Of course, for Mike and Susan this was quite an ordeal, but look with what flair and lightness he treats it. That is what we call being a true-fan.

Ro Nagey -- that is a name I haven't seen in ages, but I remember him for always writing Funny Stuff. This is no exception. Boffo yocks, once again.

"ConFusion 50" is mind expanding and sensuh wonder-

ish, too. Great faanish SF concept here!

As for the artwork, I am surprised that you are such an accomplished cartoonist, Ben. *((Out of necessity and clipart I can do what's needed for the zine. I did add to or change the clipart so I felt I should credit myself. It was mostly done with a very nice program called Arts & Letters Draw that is designed for this very purpose. --BZ))* I also like delphyne wood's heading for the Glicksohn article. Atmospheric in both senses of the word. The Moore on page 10 is a lotta laffs, fer sherr. As is the Mr. Spock -- but for me the illo in which Doug Rice outdoes himself is on page 17. Wonderfully psychedelic and eerily vivid, not to mention that it is technically a wonder any artist should be proud of.

Always good to see something from that Ghood Man and Artistic Legend, Ken Fletcher. And I like Thom Moore's convention center drawing. ###

Walt Willis
32 Warren Rd
Donaghadee
N. Ireland BT21 OPD

I enjoyed Ben'Zine 4, especially your nostalgic editorial. The third paragraph summarizes what I feel about fandom

and why I have never forgotten it, even when most distracted by the problems of this country.

Your editorial was fascinating, though I didn't understand the reference to Central Africa. Is it a pun on Congo-er? Your experience at MidWestCon tallies with mine at Magicon, I mean the impression of continuing a conversation from years ago, in our case from Tropicon, 1989, or from the Brighton Worldcon, or even from Chicon 1962, or rarely but wonderfully, from Chicon 1952.

Mike Glicksohn's article was a classic example of what I think of as the self-referential article idea, an article about writing an article. When it's done as well as this, you hardly notice it.

Legro's piece about the aurora borealis was delightful, especially the concluding sentence.

Nagey's article was refreshing, and said a lot of worthwhile things about the nature of fandom.

The report on Confusion 50 was amusing, and I loved the advert for Minneapolis in 1973.

Altogether it was a brilliant little fanzine. Congratulations. *((Thanks Walter, Irish Fandom as it appeared*

in the zines I read (HYPHEN, SLANT, QUANDRY, etc.) was another large influence in turning a dedicated congoer (not the country, this time) into a fanzine fan. ###

Eric Mayer
Box 17143
Rochester, NY 14617

Nice issue of Ben'Zine. I'm afraid I'm a bit rusty when it comes to loccking.

As for my reaction -- I hope you'll write something in future issues about your travels. Sounds like you've had an interesting time. *((Sounds like the Chinese curse.-- and perhaps it is. We've served in 3 overseas posts, each had its good and bad points but what they had most in common was the interesting times. Krakow--Fall 1995. Lowry was 6 months pregnant with our first son when we arrived. Martial law was in full swing and Polish citizens were reluctant to be openly friendly toward us.*

Manila, coming on the heels of Krakow seemed like paradise. Unfortunately we arrived a couple of months after Aquino came to power and there were 5 coup attempts against her regime while we were there. It was nice to know that the Navy and Air Force had bases close by.

When we made our commitment to go to Belgrade it was considered the best of the Iron Curtain countries. By the time we got there it was the only one! My joke had been that there were 3 major news organizations clamoring to know where we are going next, but after last November it is that the White House has ordered the State Department to send us overseas before November 1996. --BZ))

I enjoyed Ron Legro's account of seeing the aurora. I've seen it only a handful of times. None recently. I grew up, in the small town of Dallas, Pennsylvania, with the Milky Way overhead. The night sky in those days went on forever, the stars were uncountable. Rochester's night sky is a handful of dim stars pasted onto a hazy wall of reflected city lights. Every once in a while I'm out in the country at night and see the sky as it once appeared, and so I know its just geography and not my age.

Mike Glicksohn's article was amusing. I will NEVER wish for an idea for a fanzine article while driving to or from a con. Not that I've been to many SF cons. I was to an orienteering convention in Canada over the summer, however, and on the way back was stuck for two

hours in a traffic jam on the QEW. I must admit, as I sat watching my car's thermostat creep upward (it is known for overheating) I couldn't help thinking about the horrifying effect of SF cons on automobiles. Luckily, the curse seems confined only to SF cons and not to other sorts of cons because I made it back to Rochester without boiling over (or at least the car did.) Anyway, the article was a nice bit of extrapolation and as devotees of good fan writing we can only hope that Mike and Susan's car continues to break down at unexpected and inconvenient times!

Ro Nagey struck a chord when he remarked that convention panels today are about tools, not literature. I've been looking for a job, and encountering a similar problem. All employers seem interested in are the tools -- whether you know this or that computer program. One's skill at WRITING, as opposed to one's skill at manipulating a writing tool, is never mentioned. I hate to sound like an old fogey, but no one's ever going to teach a computer to write or create art and a computer whiz who's a bad writer is going to produce bad writing no matter how many megs he's got at his disposal or how many programs he's mastered.

Ned Brooks
713 Paul St.
Newport News, VA 23005

Thanks for Ben'Zine! I must admit I never heard of you, but we are similar in that I also do a zine and am in two apas...*((Thanks for IGOTS Ned, I'm doing the fanzine again, but I'm not active in the APAs at this stage. I used to enjoy SAPS and the Michigan APA., Mishap. --BZ))* By a strange coincidence I ran across Ro Nagey's Captain Ro's Whizzbang in the files yesterday -- I was looking for zines by Captain George Henderson, and it was right behind Captain George's Whizzbang. Is there something about captains that they always have whizzbangs?

Funny piece by Mike Glicksohn, but if it had been me I would have captured one of those mystery disks!

I agree with Ro Nagey that the disaffected shouldn't have a uniform, but his notion of ever-changing weird attire wouldn't suit me either -- what I want is comfort. And people being physiologically similar, it should not be too surprising if rational fans are found wearing similar garb. This may have more effect on how fans dress than some imagined dedication to the hippie style of 30 years ago.

Great art, especially the Ken Fletcher piece and the two

by Doug Rice.*((Thanks Ned, I can't argue with you about the artwork, GREAT! --BZ))*

Teddy Harvia
701 Regency Drive
Hurst, TX 76054

Interesting that you should illustrate your 'Before' with a caricature and your 'After' with text. Words seem more you.

Your cover art appeals to my love of large predators. The world would be overrun with obnoxious grazers without them.

Mike Glicksohn's article started with a great title and went uphill from there. *((I agree. And speaking of the short, hairy, brilliant Canadian...))*

Mike Glicksohn
508 Windermere Avenue
Toronto, Ontario M6S 3L6
Canada

Well, how about that? I guess 14 years is *not* too many! Welcome back to the ranks of the active fanzine editors (a small and select if ever-diminishing band to which some of us no longer belong, of course.) As you know, I've pretty well taken up residence here in the Glades of Gafia, saving my occasional and infrequent burst of almost-energy for locs to a very small number of top quality superior fannish fanzines. But for old times' sake I'm willing to make an exception in your case...

Overall, I like the issue. It looks good, has a nice fannish colour to the paper, has good production values and was even fun to read. Of course, it would have been a lot slimmer had you used any sort of decent type size but I'm sure us Old Fharts on the mailing list appreciated the monolithic type you did use since it allowed us to read the fanzine without having to put our eye-glasses on. Or even be in the same room with it.

As I said, I enjoyed the contents as well as their presentation. Initially I was somewhat underwhelmed by Ron Legro's ability to finish a promising start but when you rushed me a copy of the missing sheet with the last two pages of Ron's contribution my estimation of his finishing powers rose considerably. (It does seem to me, though, that you'll have to stop using personally spawned child labour for collating and/or hire a non-government worker to check if at least the contributors' copies are complete before they're mailed. I realize that such sensible measures will be in direct conflict with your training as a Federal Government employee but try and let your fannishness overcome their programming, eh?)

((OK, I apologize. To Ron, of course. I knew I'd have to provide Mike a 'jump start' but didn't want to call on the Great Ghod Zuhl again. You have no idea of the almost Lovecraftian ritual needed to do that and I wanted to spare Susan any more transportation trauma. The missing page was something I knew Mike couldn't resist writing about. I just hoped he'd read the issue beyond his own article. And he did... --BZ))

Okay...specifics...

When ENERGUMEN 16 appeared in 1981, a mere eight years after the previous issue, it sported a cartoon cover and a caption in very large bold letters that began "Just when you thought it was safe..." For fairly obvious reasons, I liked your cover for BZ #4!

It's far too scary to think about all the changes we've both gone through since the third issue of BEN'ZINE rolled off the presses. Today's life includes things that were unheard of back then: INTERNET and computers for typing locs, gray hairs and flabby bellies, happy married life, gaffiation, mortgages, Mark Riley offspring and other things deemed science fiction or fantasy in the halcyon days when Phil's cartoon of you was first created. I guess it's one of the joys of fannish publishing that we can even make the comparisons at this time since our personae of THEN and NOW are preserved and available for contrast. I guess it's also a somewhat healthy sign that I really don't mind when these lusty old versions of me arise from the fannish past to possibly haunt me. Evidently you feel the same way which may say something about both of us but more likely says something about the people who've helped us become who we are today. So thanks for evoking some fascinating and nostalgic thoughts for me.

When I came to my first abrupt ending to Ron's foreshortened article I was left feeling it was going in some sort of Rocky Horror direction since his fourth paragraph is redolent with images from the start of that classic film but the arrival of the rest of the piece proved me wrong. And also proved that Ron's gaffiation is a definite loss to fanzine fandom! I think this is the first writing of Ron's I've seen and it's damn good indeed. Powerful, well-written stuff with a marvelous finishing touch. This is first rate fanzine writing and I hope you encourage Ron to do more for you. (Hell, if you can pry an article out of me you should have little trouble getting something more from Ron. Or from Burbee. Or even Laney for that matter!)

And what can one say about Ro's article? One could say that it's exactly the sort of article it's very difficult to say anything about and then go ahead and prove the truth of that statement by not finding anything to say about it. (At least that's the way I used to teach it in Letterhacking 101.) One could also say that it's quintessentially Ro: provocative, lively, trenchant, the sort of piece that very few people other than Ro could possibly write. (And not *only* because very few people other than Ro would have had the physical and mental endurance to survive living the sort of life that earlier Ro had to live for this later Ro to write this article about!) I guess one could also say he really enjoyed the article (as much as he enjoyed seeing Ro again at that memorable twentieth ConFusion) and hopes to see more and read more of Ro in the immediate future.

Oh, I guess one might actually comment on the eternal verities in the piece as well. Yes, we are none of us the people we once were. Yes, many of us did silly foolish things when we were younger. Yes, some of us have changed for the better. (Some of us haven't and which camp you're in can sometimes be difficult to ascertain. Might be a little Eye Of The Beholder involved even.) Yes, sometimes you *can* go back and sometimes it is *really worth doing so*. And, I guess, yes things change and even if you don't like some of the changes it doesn't necessarily have to prevent you from having a good time and deeming things worthwhile. It's just a little more of that old familiar refrain of The Other Ten Percent.

By the way, Ro has definitely not lost his ability to turn a delightful phrase as this contribution so powerfully demonstrates. Easily the best writing in the issue and I hope it's an indication of Things To Come.

((It is, see Ben'Zine Fumes in this issue. --BZ))

Larry's piece was also a great deal of fun and actually dovetails very nicely with some of Revenant Ro's observations on his return to ConFusion after a lengthy absence. As one of only three (or is it four?) fans to have attended every ConFusion plus the precursor I have some familiarity with the traditions and history of the con and could appreciate Larry's deft evocation of various aspects of that fine fannish gathering. His extrapolations of some current fannish trends were often hilarious and the whole article shows - once again - that Larry is probably one of the most underrated writers in fandom. (I hasten to explain that he is only underrated because his contributions and expertise in other areas tend to overshadow his very real talents as a classic fanwriter.)###

Richard Lynch
P.O. Box 1350
Germantown, MD 20875

I enjoyed your new issue, long delayed as it was, but I was most intrigued when I came to the end of Larry Tucker's article on Confusion 50 and found this notation: "Did you notice in artist, Thom Moore's , title illo that there are several fannish activities going on outside the convention center? For example, there is the large team Ghoodminton game. Or the large Smoooth fountain spewing Beam's Choice into the Tucker Pond. Can you find the others?"

Well, hey, I love challenges, so I got out my trusty TuckeResearch™ magnifying glass and had a look for myself. Sure enough, there were a number of faanish activities there to see, if you looked reeeeeeeceal close! For instance, right beside the Tucker Pond, you can see the little beaver Roscoe, propeller beanie and all, sunning himself near what looks to be Courtney's Boat. When I inspected the little blimp at the left in the illo, I saw a 'Mpls in 73' logo. And when I looked closely at that spire with the flag, at the right of the illo, I could see it's really made out of empty bheer cans!

My biggest surprise of all, though, was when I looked closely at the single lonely little figure who was standing like an outcast, just inside the convention center. He looked very familiar, but I had to look again just to be certain of his identity.

Sure enough, it was Claude Deglar...((OK Dick, I used your entire letter and Thom did the illo just for it. Now, about my letter to MIMOSA... --BZ))###

Terry Jeeves
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Scarborough
N Yorkshire YO12 5RQ
United Kingdom

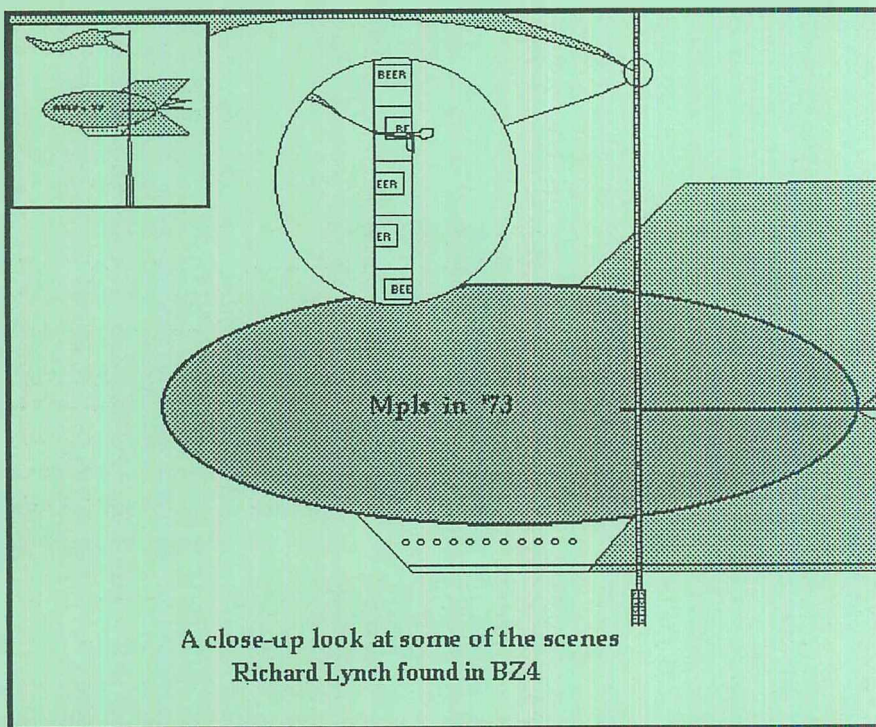
Many thanks for the issue of Ben'Zine 4. Must be sure to keep it away from naked flames -- for that matter, have you ever heard of any fully clothed flames? --

apart from old ones of course, and even those were better naked. Nice cover, the bloke is in danger would soon get safe. Ouch!

Interesting to hear of your wanderings and can understand the difficulty in producing a fanzine in Serbia. I seem to recall that in many (most, all?) former Iron

Curtain countries, it used to be an offense to have a duplicator. This was, of course, to prevent people distributing nasty leaflets about the regime. ((Yes. I heard stories of not only duplicators and copiers being confiscated, but also computers with desktop publishing programs being carted off.))

Your re-starting your zine coincides with me deciding to close down my own ERG after 35 years. It was costing me a bomb and responses was way down so I thought, 'To hell with it', I'll quit pubbing a genzine and join an apa. That's how ERG started and in those days (1959), 20 issues got more feedback than 100 do today.



((Damn, another reason to regret my long absence from fanac. --BZ))

Mike Glicksohn's travel to con report was frightening. I suppose that's an on-going hazard with North America's long straight roads which don't hit civilization for umpteen miles at a time.

Interesting to read about the Northern lights. They have been visible from the UK on several occasions but I've always managed to miss them. We do have other freak conditions though. Usually in hot weather we get freak TV reception from the Continent. At times we have had a German station completely swamp the native BBC.1 channel, almost as clearly as the one it replaced. Only last night it began ghosting and we saw German wording on the screen. That was at, an outside temperature of 40 degrees F, which is far lower than we've ever had

the trouble before. I hope we're not heading into an Ice Age, I don't like German TV. ###

Lloyd Penney
412-4 Lisa St.
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CANADA L6Y 4B6

Many thanks for Ben'Zine 4. I guess this is a Welcome and Welcome Back! at the same time. All this travel can put a stopper on the bottle of fanatic, but coming home again seems to have put you back into circulation, and it's good to see that part of that circulation includes sending a copy to me.

Seeing that you just came from Krakow reminds me of some Australian fans who have just moved there. John and Narelle Harris are Ozfens who are in the Australian Foreign Service, and they were just sent to Krakow after being some years in Cairo. (*An Australian Consulate in Krakow, Wow! When we were there the only foreign representatives were the US, French and Soviet Consulates and an East German Cultural Center! -- BZ*)

Ro Nagey...there's a name I haven't seen in some time. Ro was the fan guest of honour at Ad Astra II, the regional con in Toronto, way back in 1982. (Ro, this may be apocryphal after all this time, but help me out if I'm wrong...) Jerry Pournelle was the ProGoH, and Jerry was at his arrogant, swaggering best. Jerry, angry at being bested in an argument, waved his switchblade under Ro's nose, and said, "What're ya gonna say now, huh?" Apparently, Ro told him to put his toys away, and with his last line of defense gone, Jerry slunk away to friendlier, more right-wing company. This is from Ro's Ann Arbor days, where fanwise, Toronto was a suburb of Ann Arbor. ###

Ruth M. Shields
1410 McDowell Rd.
Jackson, MS 39204

I'm not sure how my name ended up on your mailing list, since I am not at all a prolific loccer, but I'm glad it did. I thoroughly enjoyed BEN'ZINE 4, and would like to see more issues.

It looks like you have plenty of memories of interesting places and experiences to share, if you care to write about life in the Foreign Service. I grew up as an Air Force dependent, with years spent outside the continental US, and I only wish I had a better memory of some of our foreign experiences--alas, I was too young and unaware. No doubt I could spin wonderful tales of life in foreign climes, if only I had the skill of tale-spinning to rival Mike Glicksohn's.

I very much enjoyed Mike's "Getting There Was All the

Fun". I don't think I have ever seen any of his writing other than locs, and I was glad to have a chance to do so. I always enjoy the work of writers who can transform mundane events into entertaining whimsy.

Ron Legro's account of stopping to watch the auroraL display was very nice. I am told that occasionally such phenomena can be seen this far South, but living inside the city I am unlikely to ever witness one. I envy people who have that chance, and who are of the right mind to appreciate it.

I very much enjoyed "ConFusion 50" although I no doubt missed some in-jokes aimed at those who have attended ConFusion. There are, however numerous incidents common to all conventions, and I found it amusing. ###

Chuck Connor
Sildan House
Chediston Road
Wissett
Near Halesworth
Suffolk IP19 0NF UK

Ro Nagey was sharp and well worthwhile and yes, I have a couple of those Mae Strelkov zines --hand written, printed on tobacco-leaf wrapping paper as that was all the paper available to her at the time -- hand produced and parts even hand coloured -- pages and pages (some of which a damn fucking zeeb has spilt coffee on and stuck some pages together). It was called TINK and they were the most amazine I've seen as well (and for hekto I would have thought that the likes of TWIG were the highpoints). The 'jeans & T-shirt' is now the accepted uniform and like Ro I have to admit that I find it depressing. There is also a lack of awareness - most T-shirts advertise another convention rather than tweak the imagination or impart some cryptic knowledge/slogan. That was the joys of the SubG, Rev. "Bob" Dodds, the BVI News Service, DEATH™ (yep, trademarked), the '23's (now being carried on in Ian Gunn's STUNGUN) - a whole host of stuff on the go that 'fandom has isolated itself from in many respects.

###

Mae Strelkov
4501 Palma Sola
Jujuy, Argentina

Dear Ghodfrey:

Yes, Ben, I address your alter-ego, the computer of "Great Ben Zuhl". I like the easy-to-read print. (Give Ghodfrey a pat!) You and Lowry sound like fun people. I look forward to when your loccers gather!

Ron Legro's piece is vivid and nice. Ah! And Ro Nagey. Welcome back. I do remember you fondly. The day solemn male fans wear cod-pieces, that'll be

The Day! *((Thank you, Mae. You are the most perceptive fan I have ever had the pleasure to read. Please send more of the same to this issue. --Ghodfrey --BZ))* ###

Mark Riley All I can say, is "Bravo, Zulu,
1201 E. 54th St. Bravo!"
Minneapolis, MN

Ben'Zine #4 was, in a word, astonishing...containing as it did the resurrection of Nagey, the road tribulations of Mr. & Mrs. Hairytone, the aged, light-bedazzled musings of Ron Legro and the prescient vision of Larry Tucker.

Past, present and future all stapled up into a nicely laid out bundle, replete with cartoons and illos from the likes of Moore, Foglio, Woods, Rice & Fletcher. Good jobs done, all around with excellent repro.

In July I ended 13 years of self-exile from my native state (Minnesota, not libertine hedonism) and BZ #4 had to be among the LEAST expected things to find in my new mailbox!

A couple of general observations: dump the right-justify layout format. Reason? It's over-used, unnecessary, boring and, frankly, amateurish. Years ago it looked different to 'space out' words to make right margins even, but now that every document, memo, article, summary and letter generated by a word-processor does this -- often as a default -- it adds to a feeling of ordinariness. That's not what you want, is it?

At least leave me right-ragged
if I make your lettercol.

Oh yeah, do remember to invoke your 'spell checker'. We've talked about this (via our America Online correspondence) but, really, Ben "immanent"? We hold you to a higher standard!

Hell, blame the word processor, right?

To get a bit more specific, re your writers:

If "Getting There Was All The Fun", then, Michael, get yourself a Cel phone and learn how to use it. Or teach Susan, 'cause I know how electronic mysteries (like modems) mystify you as much or more than deciphering 'military time'.

And, by the way, those 'alien disks' you were trying to

identify are very simply this: the V-ger Frisbees returning from some of our longest summer tosses. Had you looked more closely, you'd have seen an interplanetary postmark from Wilmot, Wisconsin, USA.

Ron: buy an "Eye of the Storm" and re-create the light show effect any time you want. All that you'll be missing is the mental context [conventions] that help you appreciate it.

Ro: If "the only difference between us [fandom] and a motorcycle gang is that literacy is more important in fandom", I invite you to have a "disagreement" with an MC club member.

Oh, yes, fandom was (and is) "the family that I always wanted but never thought I'd find" yet it remains a family with which one can disagree and find reason to avoid.

Just as you did.

So you "don't drink, don't smoke and [are] monogamous".

Excellent. No argument nor quarrel with your right to choose how to live your life.

But if you out-live me, remember this:

The Sex,-Drugs,-Rock'n'Roll atmosphere that we all pursued in the '70's may now seem repugnant to you. For me that is a time of incandescent remembrance: I cherish it.

It is NOT true that "those of us who survive change" although "dancing a jig at the precipice of the Cliffs of Self- Destruction" is something we all may have done.

Change?

Not me. And I've survived.

We're past the point of "giving (ourselves) over to absolute pleasure", we've lived beyond the moment of that time, we've passed the torch of youth to another generation and DO "enjoy watching the new 'uns take their turn" but that doesn't mean any of us should deny who we are, what we were, nor forget the ultimate sensuality of the youth we had and what helped us enjoy it.

"Keep dancing"?

I surely will.

And I still look good in black.

Drapes.

...spin my shroud some other year.

And so, Ben, thanks for BZ #4. Not only did I enjoy it but I re-lived some things within it. I hope you accelerate your publishing schedule and that the things you bring to light are as lucid and entertaining as this past issue was.

My thanks.

-- Madman Riley
((Thanks, brother Mark, your comments are appreciated and the memories are worth re-living. Is this accelerated enough? Next issue in July-August. --BZ))

That's all the space I have available this, so reluctantly I say, *We Also Heard From:*

Bill Donaho *((Thanks, Bill. Love your zine, HABAKKUK))*, Gene Wolfe, Ben Indick, George Flynn, Pamela Boal *((I'll hold you to that promise, Pam.))*, Ben Bost, Murray Moore, Tom Feller, Russ Chauvanet, David Levine, Susan Levy-Haskell, Ron Cass, Franz H. Miklis *((Thanks for the art))*, Linda Hardy *((and thanks for your art, also. I'll use it in future issues.))*, Bruce Pelz, Garth Spencer, Dan Hoey, Derek Pickles, Arthur D. Havlaty *((Liked DR, ask me sometime about the secret IlluminatiCon))*, and Ken Cheslin *((Love THE OLAF ALTERNATIVE, Ken))*. And Knarly. As well as several others I'm probably forgetting. Thanks!!!

Special thanks to Martha Beck who says, "I cried reading Mike & Ro's articles -- they took me back further than I thought my short term memory could relate to!!" *((Your letter made me feel good, too, Martha))*.

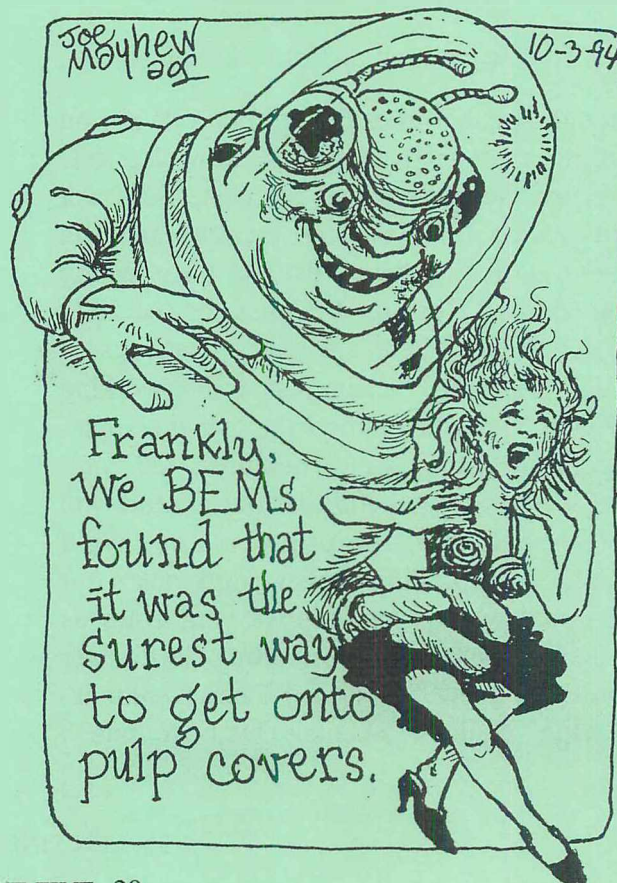
Mini Fanzine Review:

BLAT! Ted White & Dan Steffan.

Superb zine from the editorials through the artwork and layout to the damn fine articles. Rob Hansen's REAFFIRMATION is the sequel to The Enchanted Duplicator and the best article I've read in years. Walter Miles puts the essence of con parties on paper. And then there is Andy Hooper tour guide. Get this fanzine!! Available for the usual from Ted or Dan (Trade to both, please.)

Contributors

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
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In the last BEN'ZINE I presented a con report. Nothing special about that except that Larry Tucker's report was on ConFusion 50 in the year 2024. Reaching into the future once again I found a 'contemporary' reply to Larry's conrep. Along with it was/will be my reply to Steve Leigh's...

Taking Another LoC at ConFusion 50

5 February 2024

Dear Ben:

I enjoyed the con report for ConFusion 50 in the latest Ben'Zine, and since I also had the honor of attending that convention, I thought I might add a few comments of my own regarding the festivities...

It *was* good watching Megen and young Bob Nagey doing their retrospective of "Cosmos & Chaos." I especially liked the fact that they tried the six bowling ball pass which Ro and I attempted at our last ConFusion show, and I certainly hope that the surgeons can repair Frank Johnson's shattered hip. He never *would* learn to stay out of the middle of the pattern. When he screamed "I've fallen and I can't get up!" I thought it was just a clever ad-lib. I should have known better.

Did Larry Tucker get it all on holo? I hope so.

I will have to say that even though our kids put on a wonderful retrospective of those now-classic C & C routines, the original was the best. This will be exciting news for everyone, I know, and I'm proud to reveal it first here: Ro and I are talking about reuniting as Cosmos & Chaos for the 2025 ConFusion. Yes! There are still a few bugs to work out -- the Nerf™ clubs just aren't working out very well, and when I tried the 'eat-the-apple-while-juggling-it' trick, my dentures fell out. However, we're very hopeful that our doctors will sign the release forms and let us give it a try. We'd certainly like you and Frank (assuming Frank's out of the hospital by then) to reprise your roles as stage managers -- as you know, after the disaster of our previous show, we'll need a new ~~victim~~-assistant for the "Blades of Flaming Death" routine.

It was sad that Mike Glicksohn and Susan couldn't make ConFusion 50 due to the permanent closure of I-75 for repairs. I knew this might become a problem for Canadian fen when both Michigan and Ohio cemented the orange barrels to the pavement way back in the spring in 2001. We certainly missed them, but having a walker up on stage in Mike's place during the GoH panel was a nice touch--and since Mike tends to doze off at a moment's notice nowadays, the walker was just as entertaining. We're looking forward to being in Toronto for Mike's 100th birthday Party soon.

When we weren't coaching the kids on the finer points of axe-tossing, Ro and I enjoyed strolling around the convention, and I had to admit that Ro's always been on target with his observation that not much has changed in fannish fashion in the last half century. I was perfectly in style wearing outfits that I wore as a musician back in 1974. I was especially pleased to find that I could still fasten the waist of the pants around one of my thighs. I do bemoan the fact that the Huckster Room not only didn't carry any of *my* books, but in fact had no books of *any* kind. Why, back in *my* days...

Oops... there I go again. Sorry. That kind of thing happens when you get to be my age--why, I turned 73 this year, Ben. Amazing, isn't it? Anyway, thanks for the fanzine, and I hope to see you again soon... maybe at MidWestCon 108

Steve Leigh

And my reply...

6 February 2024

Steve,

Sorry for the delay in responding to your letter, with InstaNet it really is tough to ignore an incoming, but I was in another newsgroup nearly the whole day.

My, this is exciting news. You and Ro juggling again! Are you moving down to Florida. If not, when you practice, where do the bowling balls land? Atlanta? By the way, I have a source of 4 lb bowling balls--are you interested?

I'll be happy to be stage manager, again. Can I please, please, have a line this time. I've gotten to be pretty good at the delivery of lines over the many years since we last performed. Of course, my voice doesn't carry so far anymore.

Instead of an apple you could try juggling and eating a soft pear, if it is still too hard how about a tomato? It should leave your dentures where they belong and as it smashes into your face the comic value will be twice that of an apple. I'll try to do a prat fall next to you and if I get up (I'm 73 also) you can use the tail of my shirt to wipe your face. If I don't get up, just leave me there. I wouldn't want your back to lock up like it did at MidWest-Con. Denise says you made a very comfortable chair for a few days.

Oh, yes, do you think Frank will talk to me yet. When he went down, I too thought it was a gag. His wince looked just like a wink. If I had it all to do over again I wouldn't have dropped the bowling ball on his chest--I really thought he would pop up as it dropped down. I guess the adrenaline made me feel 40 years younger and I expected Frank to be the same. Oh, well, what's a couple of broken ribs when he's going to be laid up for so long with the hip.

Is your memory going or has Mike shrunk so much that he is invisible? He and Susan made it to Con-Fusion on their flying disk. Isn't it amazing that they were there at the beginning of the new age of transportation. It really took the world by surprise when the Canadian Government announced the disks.

I understand our scientists are still stumped over this new technology--leading many to believe they got it from aliens. I guess Mike was right, once again, in his report in B'Z 4. (By the way B'Z 68 should be out in time for MidWestCon!)

Anyway, it is not surprising you missed him. He sat down to play poker at the table stakes game and put his head down on the table and started snoring. When Joe nudged him he raised (the stakes, not his face). Unfortunately, he was bluffing and lost his head.

All the best, and see you at MidWestCon 108.

---BenZ---

-Dan Steffan For TARP-



As you will recall from our last episode, our heroine, attempting to dress for a cocktail party she and her husband (DCM Richard Fairchild) are hosting, has been interrupted by the audacious manservant Raoul, and is in great risk of being compromised on her new king-sized US government-issue mattress...

As Raoul parted her silky white fingers and kissed them, Rebecca, almost unconscious with desire, glanced down at his mouth on her wedding ring and was suddenly, lucidly aware of what was happening. "Get off me, you ethnic brute!" she croaked as she pushed the burly chauffeur away. "We've got 75 people arriving here in exactly 30 minutes. There's no time to lose!"

His flaming manhood doused by the soggy call to representational duties, Raoul departed churlishly to prepare for the guests, and Rebecca was finally left alone in peace to collect herself. She sat on the bed, her clothes torn, her hair disheveled, while self-accusatory thoughts flew through her head. How could she have found herself in such a position? Where was her sense of honor, of duty? How had her moral fibre so rapidly deteriorated? How could she have so easily forgotten her pledge to be faithful, loyal and true? And not only had she betrayed the US government, but come to think of it, this was kind of unfair to Dick too...

Thirty minutes and one gin & tonic later, Rebecca descended the staircase without a hair out of place, just in time to greet the first guest. He was an internationally-known poet whose works Rebecca had barely attempted to read, let alone understand. Besides hating his poetry, she especially disliked the way he wetly kissed her hand at each diplomatic function. One of these days she was

going to wipe her hand off on his suit. However, this time she wisely just smiled and went on to her next guests, the director of the national television station and his heavily made-up wife, whose entirely unnatural hair color and style made her head look like a fluorescent tennis ball. These two didn't speak a word of English--oh, where was Dick? She murmured a greeting to the host country's premiere ballerina, a waiflike child-woman who looked like ballerinas everywhere: delicate, doe-eyed and anorectic. Rebecca steered her over to some particularly fattening hors d'oeuvres and braced herself for more introductions alone by downing another quick gin & tonic, when suddenly Dick was there, looking dashing as ever and smiling apologetically about being late. "Sorry, darling, but a cable just came in that needed immediate action." Rebecca wondered for the umpteenth time what would happen if someone just unplugged all the cable machines for a while. Would global diplomatic relations suddenly cease? Sounded nice... Or had anyone ever had the audacity to cable back, "I'll take action when I *#&\$#@* feel like it!"

She became aware that Dick was whispering in her ear, "Becky, here comes the Rector of the University. What's his name again?" Rebecca drew a blank. Too late, here they were. "Good evening! How wonderful to see you again! Let me get you a drink!" Dick boomed in that louder-than-necessary voice he used for people whose name he forgot. He was back at her side again in a moment, as several older men in full military dress arrived, spouses in tow. Just once while we're overseas, thought Rebecca, I'd like to see a distinguished older woman in full military dress dragging her disinterested husband along to one of these events.

She realized she was beginning to feel lightheaded. She knocked off her third gin & tonic and although the lightheadedness continued, her mood was definitely improving. How funny all these people were! What if she were to say all the things she really thought of them? She suppressed a giggle as Dick introduced her to the director of the circus. She asked him if he'd had to work his way up from being a clown. Dick shot her a look. He'd seen this mood before and the outcome was never dignified.

Rebecca, more than a little tipsy now, moved in on one of the military attaches and plucked at his chest medals. "Ooo, I love this little red and yellow one; it looks like a stop sign. Can you get me some of these? They'd look great on my Perry Ellis coatdress."

Why was Dick guiding her away? Wasn't she finally starting to enjoy herself? She yanked herself away from Dick and burst into a group where the ballerina was conversing with some other luminaries, including a large woman in a glittery dress whom Rebecca knew to be one of the stars of the opera. Rebecca smiled happily at them all, suddenly filled with goodwill. "Are you all having a nice time? I am!" She frowned as the ballerina refused a cocktail wiener from the waiter's proffered tray. "No, no, dear, you will never get any breasts or hips if you don't start eating at these functions. Look at our friend from the opera here; *she* knows how to eat. Watch her; learn from her." My, my, these silly people didn't seem to appreciate her advice at all. Well, ###%&* them if they couldn't take a joke.

Rebecca careened across the room like a wobbly frisbee and landed near the poet, who was holding forth in a small group of admiring fans. "Oh, what joy to see you again!" she shrieked as she picked up his hand and licked it. Suddenly Dick was behind her, pinning her arms behind her back, dragging her away from the shocked stares of the guests. "Daarrlling, where's your party shpirit? I was having ssucchh a gooooood time," Rebecca slurred as Dick hauled her upstairs. God, this was like a high school party. There was always one nerd who took everyone home.

Dick was laying her on the bed. "Hey, baby," whispered Rebecca, hiccuping and giggling, "Be my designated driver."

"I think you've had enough activity for one night, Rebecca," Dick growled.

Yeah, that's for sure, and you don't know the half of it, thought Rebecca wearily. Maybe she'd better just sail off into dreamland and deal with it all in the morning...

Will Rebecca be blessed with amnesia in the morning, or just a horrific hangover? Stay tuned for the next installment of REBECCA LONG FAIRCHILD, Foreign Service Spouse.

Artist Credits

Sheryl Birkhead
Pages: 2, 32

Joe Mayhew
Pages: 11, 12, 29

Thom Moore
Cover, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9,
10, 14, 16, 17, 21, 26

Doug Rice
Pages: 4, 5

BEN'ZINE
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