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&  
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# BLAT!

A  
SUPPLEMENT  
TO  
**BLAT! 4**

A · R · C · H · I · V · E · S

THE BEABOHEMA  
SYNDROME

Labor Day, Monday, September 5th, 1994

Detective Steffan and Lieutenant White interrogating the suspect,  
Francis Towner Lunney, aka Blank Frank.

*TW: So tell us, Frank, where were you at in fandom when you decided to stop publishing BeABohema and start publishing Syndrome, and why you made that decision.*

*FL: I guess I was in college; so I stopped being in high school.*

*TW: What year did you change from BeABohema to Syndrome?*

*FL: I remember doing the all-Flinchbaugh issue [#20] at the end of 1971. That was the last BAB.*

*DJS: Did fannish fanzines now seem more sophisticated to you? Is that why you switched over to a fannish format, after doing a more academic or sercon fanzine?*

*FL: BeABohema had been fannish, as far as I was concerned.*

*DJS: So why did you bother to change?*

*FL: There was still too much baggage being carried over from the Perry Chapedelaine and the Robert Moore Williams, Dean Koontz, Piers Anthony period. I was still getting too many complaints from people because they weren't getting those kind of science fictional articles anymore.*

*But the real thing that made me decide to change was being at the Boston worldcon in 1971 with the Katzes and the Kunkels. They had some hashish that made me hallucinate. (laughs) And they loaned me A Sense of FAPA with Ah! Sweet Idiocy! in it, and I read that and I realized that not writing about science fiction was a lot more interesting than being concerned with science fiction at all. The science fiction itself was more interesting than any of the fannish writing about science fiction — the twenty or thirty pages of stupid book reviews I had in each issue of BeABohema; the Mike Gilbert artwork. . . .*

An Interview With  
Frank Lunney

# SYNDROME 5



**TW:** Let's backtrack to the beginning of BeABohema. At that point, you were a teenaged kid. You were what? In junior high?

**FL:** I started in 1967 or '68.

**TW:** How did your idea of what a fanzine should be evolve? Obviously, you didn't have, I'm guessing, a grand plan when you started out. You just wanted to put out a fanzine.

**FL:** Yeah, I put out what I thought everybody else was trying to put out.

**DJS:** What were you seeing that made you want to publish in the first place?

**FL:** *Science Fiction Review*, *Algol*. . .

**TW:** *The revived Odd*?

**FL:** . . . and mostly *The WSFA Journal*.

**TW:** Ah, Don Miller.

**FL:** I was reading "A Doll's House," Doll Gilliland's fanzine reviews and sending away for fanzines that she was reviewing. And I got *WSFA Journal* through *Castle of Frankenstein*. I guess that was Bhub Stewart doing fanzine reviews?

**TW:** Yeah. Ken Beale was editing it and Calvin Thomas Beck was the publisher.

**FL:** Through that I sent away for *WSFA Journal* and *Yandro*. *Yandro* came in the mail and I read it immediately. After that I was never interested in another fanzine again. (laughter) *Yandro* had those vomit yellow pages and the artwork was hand-stencilled still, so there was too much Margaret Dominic and other childish line drawings. And all the boring writing and . . .

**TW:** Bear in mind that I was in *Yandro* in those days.

**FL:** . . . yeah, I remember you were in that, too. And you were the only thing that was interesting.

**DJS:** Nice recovery. (laughter)

**FL:** I hated the one or two line reviews of books and fanzines — this is good, this is bad. Buck and Juanita Coulson, I was interested in reading their stuff, but all the other stuff I just couldn't get a grasp on because it was letters responding to things I hadn't read. Obviously you, Ted, stood out as completely better than everybody else in there, but it just wasn't worth sending off another fifty cents to get another one. After about three months *The WSFA Journal* came and that was much more readable.

For some reason I liked that he would end his paragraphs and immediately start the next paragraph . . .

**TW:** Non-stop paragraphing?

**FL:** Yeah, I thought he was doing it to save time and that he was spending all that extra time putting out more fanzines. I thought that was a good concept. He was so into it that he couldn't even take the time to send the carriage of the

typewriter back to the beginning of . . .

**TW:** (laughs) Did you actually think that was why it was done?

**FL:** Yeah, yeah. (laughs) *WSFA Journal* had just gotten into their big issues that weren't folded over and sent out. I got a bunch of back issues and they were only eight or ten pages, but eventually it got a lot bigger.

**TW:** They got to be fifty or sixty pages.

**FL:** And that was what I was interested in. It seemed to be more of a magazine but there was no artwork in it — except for covers. And that seemed to be an improvement and then I got into other fanzines that I'd sent away for because of Doll Gilliland and her reviews.

**DJS:** Is that when you started publishing BeABohema?

**FL:** No, then I joined the NFFF.

**DJS & TW:** Ooooooh.

**FL:** I was in the NFFF for one year and got into Round Robins and the New Fanzine Appreciation Society, so people started sending me their fanzines. I was in Round Robins where five people write a letter and those letters get sent to the next person in line and that person writes their letter replacing the letter they'd written the last time it went around the circle and then sends it to the next person in line. That's how I first got in contact with Gary Hubbard.

**DJS:** Who you essentially discovered, right?

**FL:** Yeah, I was corresponding with him through the NFFF. I was also in a Round Robin with Richard Delap and I got to know him and Seth Dogramajian who knew Gene Klein, who eventually became Gene Simmons. So the Round Robins got me corresponding with all these people.

**DJS:** And these people all contributed to the early issues of BeABohema?

**FL:** Yeah. And Gabe Eisenstein — remember Gabe Eisenstein?

**TW:** I barely remember these names.

**FL:** These were people I was corresponding with at the time and these were the people I counted on for the first few issues of *BeABohema*. That's how I met a guy named Bill Marsh, who then introduced me to Jim McLeod who I thought was a great artist, but he wasn't getting anything printed. So I was corresponding with all these people and it seemed I knew enough people who weren't in fanzines, that I thought were talented, that I could do something with their material. I started out with a co-editor named Joe B. Drapkin. He was a poet.

**DJS:** He was the co-editor of the first issue of BeABohema?

**FL:** No, we argued even before we ever put out



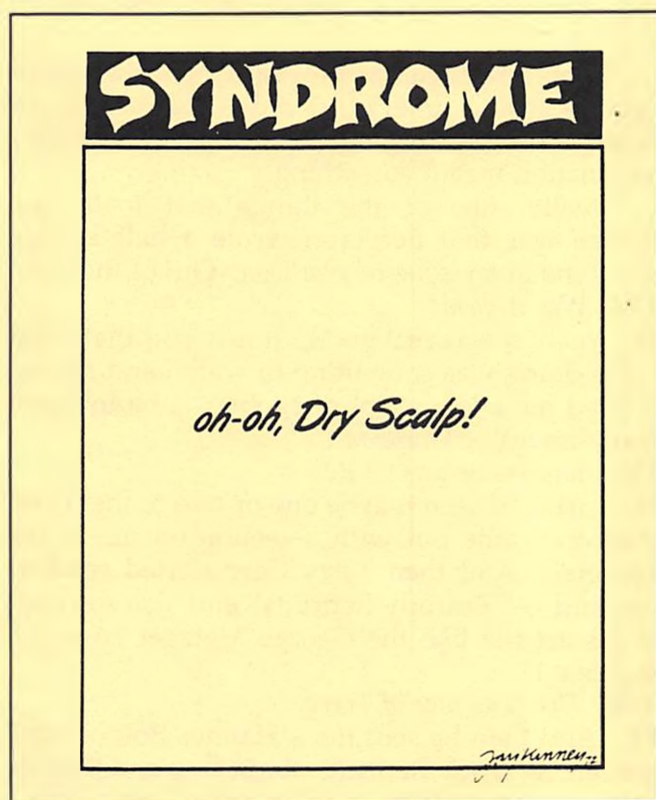
the first issue. Basically, I was going to do everything he wanted to do. I was going to let him choose the material and then he could send it to me and I would tell him what I thought of it. I knew some artists. He was going to run it off. I was supposed to give him some money — like ten dollars — to help him run it off, but then he decided that I was coming up with too many opinions and he said that I could just do it all myself. He was no longer interested in doing it with me. So I had to go out and buy a Sears mimeograph for \$99.

But first I had to go out and get a job. I got a job at a pizza stand to earn enough money to buy the mimeograph.

TW: *Wow. How old were you at this time? Sixteen?*

FL: No, I started doing all of this when I was fourteen. I actually went out and got a job when I was fourteen so I could save up money to pay for my fanac.

TW: *I got a job in a stationery store, so I could get a discount on mimeo supplies.*



The cover of *Syndrome 2*

FL: I finally got the mimeo and I put out the first issue and I did include some of Joe B. Drapkin's poetry. So there was a little bit of poetry in the first issue.

TW: *Looking back on it, was it any good?*

FL: No, it was terrible. I included poetry in the first couple issues, but I eventually dropped it because I realized that it wasn't my idea in the

first place.

TW: *How did you come up with the name BeABohema?*

FL: In the summer between seventh and eighth grade, when I lived in Illinois, there was a summer softball team called the Bohemas. It was some kind of a bastardization of bohemians, I suppose. And there was this older guy on the team who called everybody Bohemas — the Beach Park Bohemas. "Be A Bohema! Be A Bohema!"

I would stand at third base and he'd stand at shortstop and he'd tell all the players to "Be A Bohema!" Instead of saying "Hey batter, batter!" he'd say "Be A Bohema!" That's why the early issues had capital letters in the middle of the name; it was always three words: "Be A Bohema." That's why it was BAB.

DJS: *That's truly obscure.*

TW: *So when you came into fandom, you used this as the name of your fanzine?*

FL: That was because I didn't have any fannish references at all. All I could refer to was something personal from my own past and because nobody knew what it was I thought maybe it would be cool.

DJS: *I guess we're all lucky that the fanzine wasn't called He Can't Hit. (laughter) Anyway . . . BeABohema very quickly grew into being a very popular fanzine. How'd that happen?*

FL: I think that was because I corresponded with so many people. I would just write to everybody. I would write to pros — after I got *SF Review* I had easy access to their addresses — and I would write to the pros like Dean Koontz . . .

TW: *He was in a lot of your issues.*

FL: I would just write these people and say "Let's correspond" and I would suggest some topics. As naive as that sounds. (laughs) And some of these guys would actually write back to me. That's how I wrote to Jack Gaughan and said, "Hey Jack. Could you do a cover for me?"

TW: *And he did?*

FL: Yeah, he sent me a cover. It had never been used anywhere else. I didn't even have the name of the fanzine yet, but he sent it anyway. He just sent me a full page thing and it was so good I had to get it printed offset, even though the rest of the issue was done on my Sears mimeograph. So the first issue had a Jack Gaughan cover, and a real good one, too.

There was a lot of response to that and by the second issue it was already up to fifty or sixty pages.

DJS: *By issue four they were up to around 100 pages, weren't they?*

FL: Yeah.



DJS: So how long did it take you to get a Hugo nomination?

FL: I was nominated in '70, I guess it was for what I had done in '69 — which must have been issues 3 through 8, or something like that.

TW: Really, you did that many?

FL: I was doing five or six a year. I did them all between 1967 and 1971, so that's at least five a year.

TW: How many issues were there altogether?

FL: Twenty, including one double issue. I published about 250 pages in one year, I think that was in '69.

TW: That's a lot of energy. It was around 1969 that I started getting it and writing you letters and contributions in response to Perry Chapdelaine and people like that.

FL: And Piers Anthony. I think you responded to Anthony because you were publishing him in *Amazing* and *Fantastic*.

TW: "Orn" was in *Amazing* and "Hasan" was in *Fantastic*.

FL: Yeah, I always liked Piers Anthony.

TW: Piers was always kind of a fan.

FL: Yeah, I thought that when he'd always write about his kid and the little mechanisms he'd set up so he could write and take care of his kid crawling around the room at the same time. He was only writing about the inside stuff about science fiction and I'm always interested in that — the way people hate each other.

TW: The inside nitty, dirty stuff.

DJS: Around issue 11, you decided to become more fannish. Was it because of the fanzines you were receiving?

FL: Because of Jay Kinney's *Nope*. It was the first fanzine that got me to try changing what I was doing in *BeABohema*. Then there was *Egoboo* and *Focal Point*, but the straw that broke the camel's back was [Greg Shaw's] *Metanoia*.

DJS: So, if you got nominated for the Hugo in 1970, it was for the issues you did before you went fannish.

FL: Yeah, when number 11 came out I started referring to myself as the Hugo nominated fanzine. By number 12 I had lost.

TW: What did it mean to you being nominated for the Hugo? Did you take it seriously?

FL: I was surprised because I didn't think what I was doing was that good at that point. But then, all of a sudden, I was ranked with *SFR*, *Zenith/Speculation*, *Algol* and *Yandro*, I think. It was weird.

DJS: After that, even though you changed *BeABohema*'s contents, as you personally evolved and got exposed to other fanzines, you had to eventually stop publishing it because you still couldn't shake the

personality it had assumed in your reader's minds?

FL: Yeah. It was a break. I wanted to get rid of Schweitzer's book reviews — I wanted to get rid of all the reviews entirely. Here's the way it went [reading from the editorial in *BeABohema* 11]: "Because of the controversy, I found I was losing readers and friends as well as gaining compatriots, as it were. The last issue of *BAB*, #10, has thus far drawn only two locs, and both commented on what downs were to be gained from reading it. That's what I'd try to avoid in the future. A fanzine should be fun to read, and for my sake, it should be fun to publish, rather than a pain in the ass and something that's thought of more as a duty than as a hobby.

"And now it looks like the fringy types are sending in their sticky money for sample issues of *BAB* after the curse of the Hugo nomination. In one sense, it may be good, in that I'm getting rid of some of those issues, and it won't hurt if I want to continue putting out this fanzine. But in another sense it may continue the worshipful attitudes that have been accompanying hatred for the past year."

I wanted a break from what I'd been doing in fandom at that time, but I didn't want to let go because of the Hugo nomination. The Hugo nomination meant something.

Finally, one of the things that made me change was that Bergeron wrote a half a page about me in an issue of *Warhoon*. Out of the blue.

TW: Was it good?

FL: Yeah, it was real good. It just said that what I was doing was something to watch and he just praised me a lot. A lot of egoboo. I hadn't seen many issues of *Warhoon* . . .

TW: Impressive wasn't it?

FL: Yeah, I'd seen maybe one or two of them and then one came out with a section on me in the editorial. And then Terry Carr started sending me stuff — "Entropy Reprints" and also stuff out of his art file like the George Metzger cover on number 17.

TW: That was nice of Terry.

FL: And then he sent me a Hannes Bok original and an "Entropy Reprint" about Bok and then he sent me some other stuff he hadn't used, like a Bhub Stewart cartoon. Metzger, Stewart and Bok — and he was putting everything on stencil for me too, which looked better than everything around it.

TW: But that was still *BeABohema*.

FL: Yeah, that was still *BeABohema*. "Entropy Reprints" didn't carry over into *Syndrome*.

TW: When you made the break into *Syndrome* you had already dropped the reviews. What other changes



did you deliberately and consciously make?

FL: I got Jay Kinney more involved, in the look of it.

DJS: And he immediately started confounding people. (laughs)

FL: Jay did three out of the four covers, and I had him writing stuff that really had nothing to do with what was happening in fandom. I was just interested in whatever Jay was doing then.

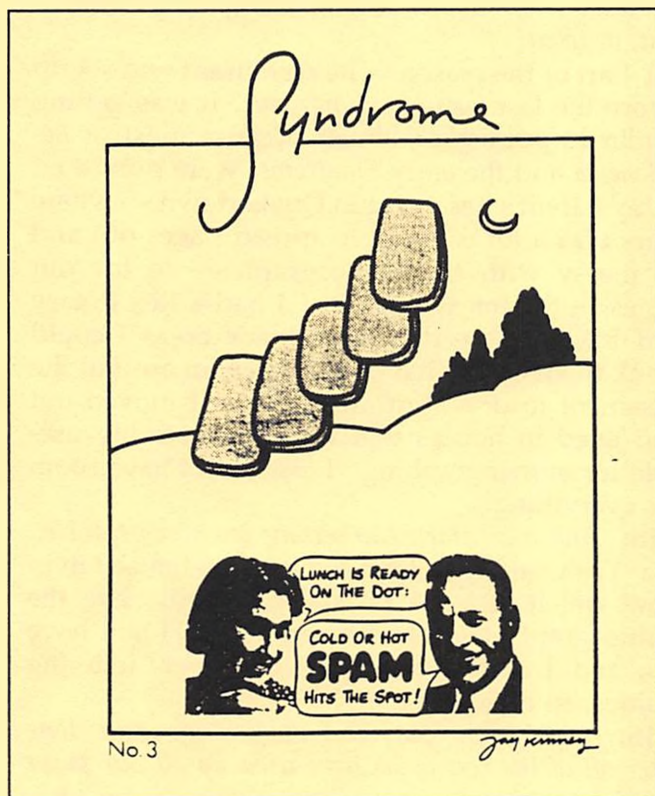
TW: Jay already had one foot in Underground comics . . .

FL: And he wasn't doing his own fanzine anymore, so he was able to pump all this stuff out for me. I was corresponding with him all the time.

DJS: I remember you printed something about a cross-country trip in the back of a truck and later some very surreal prose.

FL: "Mental Stripmines," which he also sent the artwork along for.

DJS: Three of the four covers you published were by Jay and they caused a lot of controversy because people didn't understand them. One of them was just a box with the logo and in the middle of the box was just type that said, "oh-oh, Dry Scalp!".



The cover of *Syndrome 3*

FL: And it was also printed in red, which cost extra . . .

DJS: You got hate letters about that cover, right?

FL: Yeah. There was no reason for it to be printed in red, so it was sort of ridiculing the whole pretentious printing of people like Bill

Bowers and *Energumen* — the high powered layouts and almost professional artwork that was appearing in some fanzines, so Jay just came up with the idea of printing "oh,oh, Dry Scalp!" in red. We put as much effort into reproducing that as these people were putting into reproducing these really delicately shaded, halftoned, interiors of fanzines.

DJS: And then he did one cover about Spam.

FL: Just slices of Spam cascading through the air, with people looking up at them. But that was just because of Monty Python, which we'd seen for the first time at Torcon — we saw "And Now For Something Completely Different" for the first time. Jay took me aside and said, "Hey, you gotta see this. I heard about them when I was over in England." And he took me, and we got everybody else to see them at Torcon.

DJS: So do you think that Jay's participation was an integral part of what made *Syndrome* special?

FL: Yeah, obviously. I saw the absurdity that was possible in underground cartooning.

TW: You had done a lot of growing up in the course of publishing *BeABohema* and by the time you're doing *Syndrome* you're essentially a young adult, right? So your whole sensibility had undergone a lot of evolution while you were doing it, and *BeABohema* underwent a significant evolution, too.

FL: Right. As I went from tenth grade to eleventh grade *BeABohema* grew. Then I published *Syndrome* while I was in college and then published the last issue with material I got while I was in college. Then, when I got out of college, it seemed like I needed to make things happen in the real world. That's why I stopped, I think.

TW: So you're saying that virtually all of your fan-publishing took place while you were in high school and college. And you put an incredible amount of energy into those *BeABohemas*. Had you essentially used up that energy in some sense, or was it simply diverted in other directions after you got out of college? Did you feel burned out from having done so much?

FL: Yeah, I think that the fanzines were my way of relating to people a lot.

TW: And you developed other ways of relating.

FL: Yeah, I think what happened was that I came up with [the restaurant] *So Eat Already*, and that became a form of fanactivity. Having to put out plates of food, rather than a platter full of written and drawn material.

DJS: You were using the same kind of energy to run the restaurant.

FL: Yeah, that's why Catherine and I got fannish type people to do advertising for us. Jay did a billboard for us. So instead of distributing Jay's



ideas on covers there was a billboard that people would drive by every day — maybe twenty or thirty thousand people drove by it every day. And we got Dan to do business cards and the sign in the window. Grant came up with ads and stuff.

**TW:** So your last issue of *Syndrome* was published when?

**FL:** October 1975. I have a letter from Harry Warner dated the end of October which mentions getting the issue two weeks earlier. And most of the other letters of comment are dated October.

**TW:** Now the material for the issue of *Syndrome* that we're doing is stuff that you had planned for number 6?

**FL:** For number 5. There were only four *Syndromes*, even though two of them were numbered number 1.

**TW:** Oh really? Explain that.

**FL:** Because I apparently forgot that I'd published number 1. (laughs) Those were hazy years. The real first issue had a Joe Staton cover, with a logo by Dan.

**DJS:** Was *Syndrome* going how you wanted it to go, before you gave up on it?

**FL:** Yeah, except I wasn't getting much response to it. I wasn't getting the response to the things I liked doing.

**DJS:** Do you think that's because you were publishing material by names that the average fanzine audience didn't recognize? Like Richard Meltzer?

**TW:** Did you feel that you were losing connection with fandom as a whole, as you were putting it out?

**FL:** Yeah, I just wasn't getting the response I thought it deserved. Even you guys weren't responding that much to it.

**TW:** I never wrote you any response on *Syndrome* because that was a period when I wasn't being very fannish.

**FL:** I was getting Dan to do stuff — I would send you articles to illustrate — but you weren't writing letters of comment, and stuff like that.

**DJS:** I didn't do letters very well, then.

**FL:** People were doing stuff for me because they felt they had a duty. I felt *Syndrome* was getting a response out of some strange kind of duty — other than Jay. Jay was real into it. Jay was writing me letters saying, "Hey, nobody is doing stuff like you're doing. I don't see stuff like this anywhere. You're ahead of your time."

**DJS:** When you were doing *Syndrome* it was at the peak of the success of *Energumen* and *Outworlds* and fanzines like that who were setting standards that you were completely at odds with. This was anarchy.

**FL:** Yeah, I was sneering at them.

**DJS:** This was Punk compared to their Bee Gees.

**FL:** I still have the last issue of *Energumen* sitting on a shelf and I still haven't read it. (laughter) I know where it is, though.

**DJS:** Obviously, what you were publishing in *Syndrome* was at odds with that. You weren't interested in doing what they were doing, but you said that response was very bad. Do you think people weren't enjoying it because it was bad or they weren't enjoying it because they didn't get it?

**FL:** No, they didn't know how to respond and that's what a lot of the letters of comment said. They don't know how to respond.

**DJS:** Maybe they were waiting for an example. Maybe they were waiting to see how others commented, so they would be able to respond in kind.

**TW:** It is always possible that *Syndrome* struck people as too self-contained to respond to. It's not like it was engaging in what was going on in fandom, either. The material itself was almost more about the counter-culture than about fandom, *per se*.

**FL:** Which is what most fanzines are about now, of course.

**DJS:** I guess you were just ahead of your time.

**TW:** Was this lack of response part of the reason why you didn't continue or was it setting up the restaurant, or what?

**FL:** Part of the reason. The restaurant was set up before the last issue of *Syndrome*. It was getting harder to publish *Syndrome* because most of *Be-ABohema* and the early *Syndromes* were published in my parent's basement in Quakertown — where there was a lot of room to spread pages out and be messy with the mimeograph — to lay out pages so the ink would dry. I had a Rex Rotary and I when I needed large black areas I could crank them out by hand and lay them around the basement to dry. But after college I moved out and lived in houses that weren't as readily useable for mimeographing. I just didn't have room for everything.

**DJS:** And it all started to become too much trouble.

**FL:** Yeah, and then I moved into the house I'm in now which just has no space. I still have the mimeograph, though, stashed away. I still have ink and I still have a case of paper, lettering guides, an artscope.

**DJS:** Maybe you can start publishing again, long after all of the rest of us have used up all our paper and ink.

**FL:** Nah. (laughter) The other reason I quit was because I just started travelling around too much. I was spending a lot of time out in California with Catherine. I'd go out there for weeks at a time. Or we'd fly to Jamaica.

**TW:** All of a sudden you had an active love life, which you'd not previously had. You had a mate. A



partner. How much did that take away from the energies that would have been channeled into your fanzine?

FL: Yeah. That contributed a lot.

DJS: Let's talk a little about Syndrome number 5. Tell us a few things about the pieces we are publishing. Tell us about the Greg Benford article — it starts off with a warning to the readers that he is not the same Greg Benford today, that is described this article.

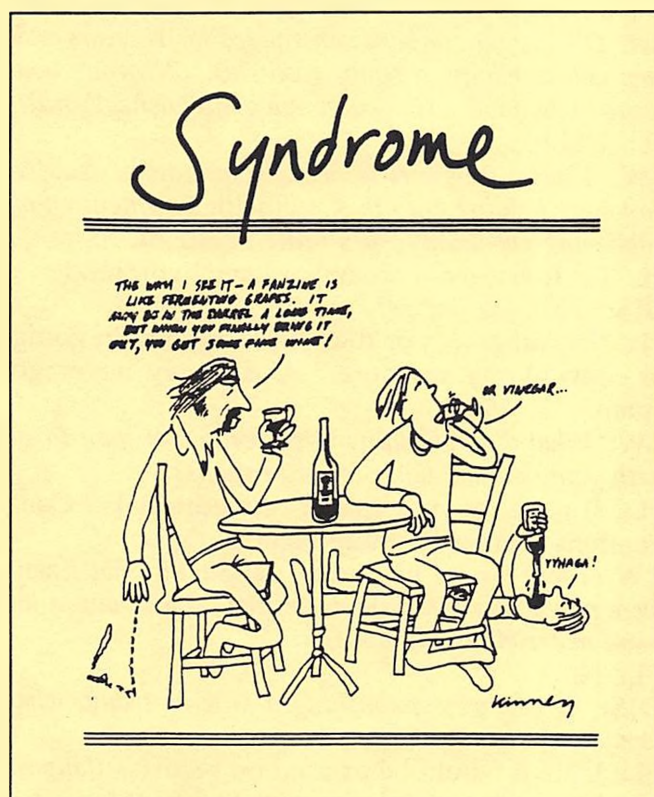
FL: I think a lot of the material that I published in Syndrome gave people an atmosphere and feelings in their own heads that made them react in different ways than they would have normally in other fanzines. Greg's article would have seemed a little far out if it had been published in, uh . . .

DJS: Yandro?

FL: Yeah, or in Science Fiction Commentary.

TW: Well, I'm here to tell you, Frank, that I read that piece by Greg, around 1971.

FL: Yeah, he said in the letter he sent with it that an earlier version of the article had been published in some skin magazine, like Adam.



The cover of Syndrome 4

TW: Yeah, but I think he sent it to me in manuscript.

FL: Okay. But I think it is like the Howard Stern show, where if you do weird stuff you get weird stuff back. People go a little farther than they would ordinarily — I think it's called cognitive dissonance — the way they perceive things is a little off from the way they'd normally perceive

them, so their values shift a little bit. So Greg sent that article knowing that it had been published before, but only in a men's magazine, which would be a different context than a fanzine where most of his friends might read it.

TW: What do you think when you read that piece? How does it make you regard Greg? What is the feeling you're left with?

FL: I don't know. Am I supposed to have a feeling? I'm just the editor, I'm not a reader. I can't react like a reader.

TW: Okay, but you got it in the mail as a submission from him and you decided to publish it. Why did you decide to publish it?

FL: Because I like people to expose themselves. I feel that this was a case of Greg pulling his zipper down a little bit. Like, uh, showing how big he is . . . (laughs)

DJS: You mentioned earlier that you met Gary Hubbard in a Round Robin in the NFFF and he wrote a lot for you. I think he was even in the first issue of Be-ABohema and right up through Syndrome. You essentially created "The Cracked Eye," which went on to appear in other fanzines like Mota in the 70s, and I published it in Boonfark in the 80s, and it is still being published today in other fanzines, like Trap Door.

This is a really large installment of "The Cracked Eye" this time and, it seems to me, a really important part of Gary's lexicon.

FL: Yeah, it should have been published before now, because it may have explained a lot of stuff that he's published since then. And he did ask for it back from me about eight years ago, so it could be published in another fanzine, but I couldn't find it then. But I knew that, at some point, I would be able to bring it out and claim credit for having it. I guess I just didn't want to let it go.

TW: This is interesting, because I well recall a moment you and I shared at SunCon, in Florida, when you confessed to me that your fannish juices were running again. You were going to get your mimeo out and running again and you were definitely going to do the next Syndrome, i.e., this one, Real Soon Now. Which would have been only a couple of years late, at that point. What happened? You didn't do it.

FL: (laughs) The thing is, once again, when I'm around fans — there's cognitive dissonance coming into play for me, too. The rest of the time I'm just isolated up in Pennsylvania. The closest I get to fanzines is when they come in the mail and they pile up and I don't read them.

TW: One would think, that as a friend of Gary's you'd want to publish it or send it back to him.

FL: (laughter) Yeah, you're right. But Gary had become prolific by that point and seemed to be



cranking stuff out, anyway, so. . . . And the story of how he lost his virginity seemed to be a prize I couldn't let go of. Besides, Greg has asked for his article back, too. *(more laughter)*

DJS: *Well, regardless, I think you deserve a lot of credit for putting him into fanzines, because I think he is a really talented writer and one that fandom is lucky to have.*

FL: And also, it seemed to me, that he was only comfortable writing stuff for me until I didn't publish his stuff anymore and then, to get exposure, he had to start spreading out into other areas. And if I hadn't stopped publishing him he would have only written stuff for me and nobody else would have been able to get him to write for them.

TW: *You did him a real favor (laughing) by stopping when you did, huh?*

FL: Yeah. *(laughs)* And that's why I don't feel so bad. It's all really timeless, anyway.

TW: *What about Ray Nelson's article? Is it something he sent you?*

FL: Actually, I didn't even know that I had it until about a year ago when Dan made me look for all this stuff and I looked through all the letters. *(laughs)* So that's a little more irresponsible of me. I didn't even know that I was hanging onto that one. And, actually, I even have another article that I'm holding onto *(more laughter)*, that isn't even in this issue, by Aljo Svoboda. It's called, "Cassius Clay Speaks." And nobody has heard from Aljo Svoboda in years, so. . . .

DJS: *He gets BLAT! He was in the lettercol last issue.*

FL: Oh, he does? *(laughs)*

TW: *Yeah, so he'll be reading this.*

FL: Well, *(laughing hard)* I guess I'll have to send it back to him, then.

DJS: *What he's not telling you, Ted, is what he told me last night — that it has been in an unopened envelope for twenty years. (laughing)*

FL: I didn't even open the envelope. It was only the other night, before coming here, that I opened the envelope. I still have uncashed checks that people sent me for single issues of *Syndrome* in 1975. *(laughing)* There was a drawer where all this stuff has been sitting for twenty years — I really meant to get back to that drawer. . . .

DJS: *I guess the last thing we need to mention — which is most interesting, mainly, for the person who did it, as opposed to what it is — is the piece by Gene Klein, better known as Gene Simmons of KISS.*

FL: Gene Klein was involved in the early issues of *BeABohema*, as an artist and letter-writer, and that's where this — what would you call it? —

came from.

DJS: *Sort of a Feghoot.*

FL: Yeah. He sent this to me after the second or third issue of *BAB*. That was before he became Gene Simmons. He used to send me spot illustrations, too. He was a pretty good spot illustrator.

DJS: *And we're also publishing a letter he wrote you years later.*

FL: After the fourth issue of *Syndrome* came out, he got my address and sent for a sample issue and I wrote back to him saying I liked contact with people, rather than having them send me money, and that I'd like him to respond to the issue, instead. And he agreed and he wrote me a letter from a Holiday Inn while he was on tour with KISS and explained how he had been a high school teacher who didn't like teaching kids, and so he left to pursue his other interest. He didn't want to be admired, or something like that.

DJS: *Are you publishing this strictly because of who he is?*

FL: Strictly. *(laughs)* There's no other reason.

TW: *So, finally, in 1994, something that was intended to come out in 1976 is coming out, 18 years after the fact. It's like you've been constipated for 18 years and now you're having a really good shit. What are you going to do now? Are you gonna go to DisneyWorld?*

FL: Uhhh. . . .

TW: *I mean, this sort of marks a milestone. You're no longer holding onto this stuff with the intention of publishing eventually. It's being published.*

FL: I'm free now. I no longer have to pretend. . . .

DJS: *That you like us?*

FL: *(laughing)* . . . or that I'm interested in going to conventions anymore. And I may never go again.

TW: *What did publishing Syndrome ever have to do with going or not going to conventions?*

FL: It gave me material for the editorials. Conventions seem a lot more bizarre now.

TW: *More bizarre now? Are you saying that if you were publishing a fanzine today that you'd have a lot more material for editorials?*

FL: No.

DJS: *If you were publishing a fanzine today, what would it be like?*

FL: Uhh, it would be printed on t-shirts. *(laughs)* No, it would probably be a lot like BLAT!

DJS: *Perfect. Thank you. The End. (laughter)*

FL: No, I think the end should be that I really wish I had been able to do this when Catherine was alive. And that I wish I could see her reaction to it.

DJS: *So do we.*

TW: *Thanks, Frank.*





# SYNDROME



"I WEAR  
**FALSE  
TEETH**"

"because  
it tastes so  
good..."



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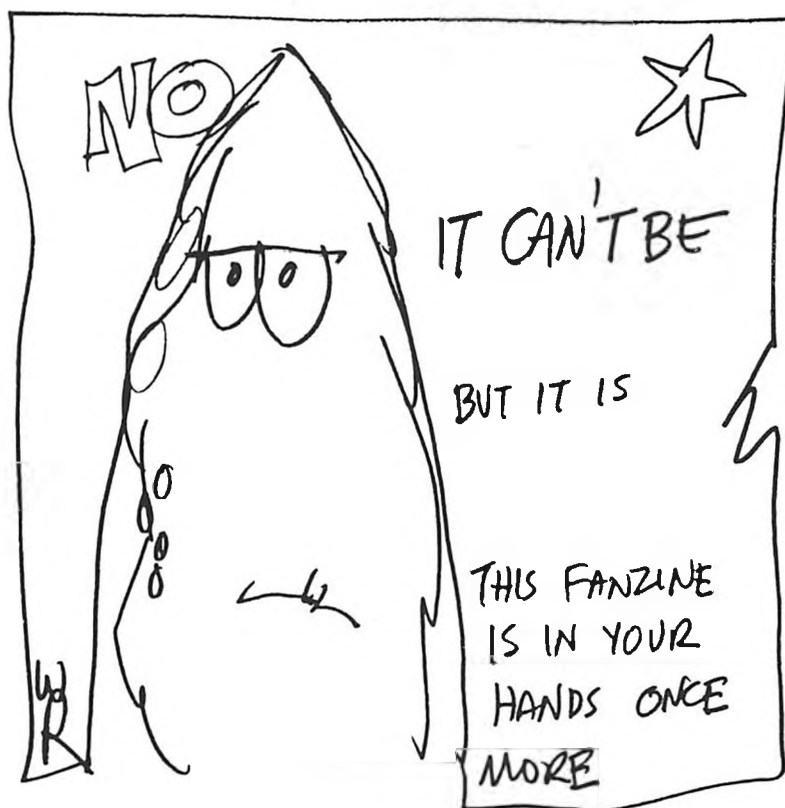
For SAFETY'S SAKE make it a  
habit to clean your windshield  
regularly with

## SELF-HYPNOTISM



*July Kinney '15*





Just when you thought it was safe to come out of the bunker, this is *Syndrome* number 5, published as a supplement to the fourth issue of *BLAT!*. Originally intended for publication in 1976, it is brought to you in 1994 by Frank Lunney (7601 Powder Valley Road, Zionsville, PA 18092). Thanks to Dan Steffan for editorial assistance and art-direction. Back issues are available only to those brave enough to enter my father's flooded basement and scrape the mold and mildew off the boxes. But that doesn't mean I wouldn't like to get *your* fanzine, does it. Each issue I say the same thing — "Next issue should be out in record time." Believe me, I'm your pal. December 1994

*Dedicated to the memory of Catherine Jackson*





**Victorian Solutions to  
Modern Problems: No. 2**

**TELEVISION**

**V E R S U S**

**THE PUPPET**

**THEATRE**

**BY RAY NELSON**

The time was 1896; the place was Paris. The event was the opening of a play called "King Ubu" by Alfred Jarry. It is generally agreed that this play marked the birth of the "Theatre of the Absurd," and in this sense may be regarded as more important as an influence on modern drama than either Shakespeare or anyone else up to that time. It is less generally known that this play also acted as the inspiration for a vast number of modern art and literature movements, such as Dada, Surrealism, Futurism, etc. The playwright appeared as a character in a novel by Gide, and many painters, such as Picasso, Klee, etc., have had a fling at drawing King Ubu, or Father Ubu as he is known to those followers of the philosophy of "Pataphysics," Jarry's philosophy, who have grown to know and love this fictional fascist pig.

But what is least known of all, though it is mentioned in every biography of Jarry (usually as a footnote), is that the play, "King Ubu," was originally written for the puppet theatre, and was first performed in a puppet theatre in the attic of the playwright and his schoolmates. Jarry rediscovered something the Japanese had known for centuries; that one of the most startling effects in theatre is to have living actors imitate puppets, reversing the normal effect of having puppets imitate living actors.

I have performed "King Ubu," with a little help from my friends, in the original medium of glove puppets, and unless you've done the same, you'll have to take my word for it when I say it is even better with puppets than with live actors. . . . I've seen it done with live actors, too, and it never fails to lose something in the translation, and I don't mean the translation from French to English.

It becomes no longer merely shocking and brutal, but somehow charming, even beautiful. In miniature the violence of the play becomes unimportant and the political and philosophical meaning much clearer.

I don't mean to imply that Jarry invented the puppet play, or even that he introduced it for the first time to the world of "serious" theatre. He only brought to a climax a trend that had been developing throughout the Victorian Era, a trend that probably began with the puppet shows that, in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, such figures as Goethe, Yeats, George Sand, Franz von Pocci and the artists and writers in their circles gave to a small but devoted audience.

Since the end of the Victorian Era, the Puppet Theatre, like so many other art forms, has been in a decline. Nobody takes it seriously; it's just "kid stuff." The artforms for adults are, according to the MacLuhanites, the movie and the TV show. The movie and TV show must be great, according to the valueless values of our time, because it is so expensive.

It's expensive to make a show. It's expensive to go to a theatre to see one. It's expensive to buy and maintain a TV set in your home, particularly a color TV set. We don't think much about that money . . . we're used to paying a lot for everything, but it really is a lot when you consider that a fine puppetshow can be put together with two old socks and a needle and thread to make the handpuppets, and a few properly hung sheets to make the stage. The thing that is



really important in a show is not all that expensive production, the casts of thousands, the rebuilt cities of ancient Rome, etc. Even movie lovers say the settings can hurt a show as much as help it. The important thing is the story, the drama. Everything else is cakefrosting.

The modernist doesn't like to hear that kind of talk. He's hoping that if there's enough frosting, nobody will notice that there's no cake inside, just as the modern musician, even in the pop field, often tries to hide, with elaborate arrangements and strange electronic effects, the fact that there is no tune.

But the tide is turning. The audience of the seventies is learning (God knows how) to tell the difference between essential and nonessential things. The ecological mentality reaches back and finds a soulbrother in the Victorian mentality on at least one issue: they both hate waste.

And there's no denying that every night, when Mr. and Mrs. America and all the ships at sea turn on their TV sets, there's an awful lot of electricity wasted.

A puppet show can be presented without the use of any electricity whatsoever.

This is not, however, the most important way in which the TV and film show is wasteful. Wasting electricity is bad, but wasting talent is criminal.

Television wastes talent.

First, it wastes the talent of those who are involved in TV production. The overwhelming majority of the shows, because mass distribution compels a search for the "lowest common denominator," are worse than bad; they are deliberately mediocre. It is sickening and degrading to the actors, artists and technicians to be involved in the production of things which they know are not even intended to be good.

Second, it wastes the talent of those who are not involved. Television is a spectator sport. So is "The Flicks." Except for the tokenism of talk shows, TV is all watching and no participating. If you don't like what's being published in professional magazines, you can publish a fanzine. If you don't like what's on the boob tube, you can't produce a TV show of your own . . . not unless you happen to be rich.

What can you do?

You can pull out the plug on your set and sell it, then install a fine, handmade puppet theatre in its place. Compared to the cost of a TV set, the cost of ever a very fine puppet theatre is chicken feed.

Now that you've got the TV set out of the house, you have an artistic medium that you control, rather than one that controls you. You can see what you like, when you like, in color and 3D, and you can have absolute control over every aspect of the production. If you get good, you and your

friends can even rent a storefront and make money off your work.

The thing about TV and movies is that a few people at the top make too much money, while everyone else is nearly starving, or moonlighting at something else. There's no place for what one might call the "middle-income genius."



A puppet theatre, however, can employ writers to write the plays, sculptors to design the puppets, painters to paint the backdrops and scenery, actors to "do the voices" and operate the puppets, composers to write the accompanying music (particularly if opera or musical comedy is what's planned), musicians to play the music, model builders, lighting specialists, makeup men (puppets can wear makeup), etc., etc., etc. Since everything is miniaturized, all the jobs in the production can be creative. It is the uncreative "shitwork" that is demanded by TV and movies and, to a large extent, live theatre, that is almost completely eliminated.

There's room for commercialization here, too, but of a more healthy, decentralized kind. Not everyone will want to write their own plays. Not everyone will want to make their own puppets, paint their own backdrops,

compose their own songs, etc. This will create a market for the mass production of all the items required for puppet shows; the paint-by-the-numbers artist will be able to get by with nothing more than sticking his own hands into the puppets and wiggling his fingers while a phonograph record plays all the music and supplies all the dialog. (I wouldn't do things that way, but I've nothing against those who do, except maybe I'd rather they didn't waste electricity.)

The important point, the overwhelmingly important point, is that ordinary people can do creative things if they want to. They don't have to wait until a Hollywood or a Broadway talent scout discovers them. They can start doing their thing *now*! And if they get any good at all at it, they can start making at least a little money from their art *now*.

From the Marxist point of view (Marx was a good Victorian in many ways), the Puppet Theatre is superior to the TV because it puts the means of production in the hands of the workers.

In optimistic moments, one might hope that the Puppet Theatre could replace movies and TV completely, but if this doesn't happen such movies and TV as manage to survive cannot help but be much better than they are now because of the great well of talent the "bush-league," the "fandom," of the puppet movement will provide.

After all, one can always film a puppet show.

Alfred Jarry, way back in 1896, showed that when the puppet show is translated into another dramatic medium, the effect can be almost as good as a real puppet show!

— Ray Nelson



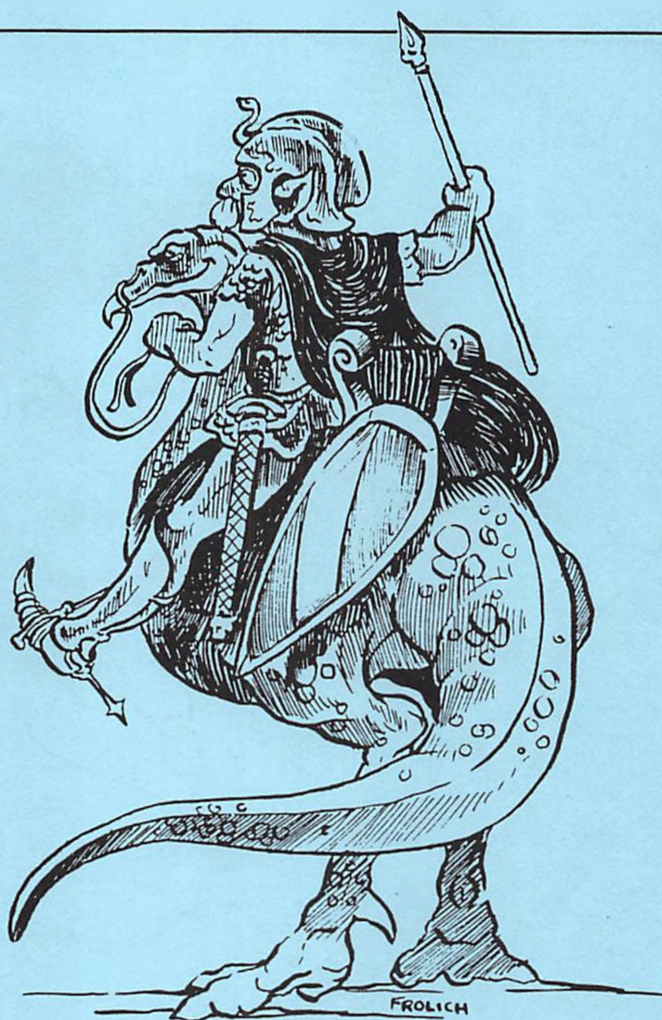
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# LEMARSH GEE AND THE MAGIC MIRROR

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BY GENE KLEIN

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Lemarsh Gee was the king. He was the absolute rule and better, he had a magic mirror.

Gee (as everybody called him — it was an informal-type of kingdom) concerned himself with the welfare of this people and subsequently, was well liked. Gee was a good king, but. . . .

Well, he had this thing about being the “fairest of them all” and he went out of his way to dispose of those young men who were more attractive than himself. As years went by, the young men in the kingdom were so fearful of losing their lives, that they purposely made themselves appear ugly (various means were used — bashing one’s teeth in, which wasn’t very popular, but which served its purpose; living with skunks, which alienated one’s friends, but which made him new ones — skunks . . . et al.). The king’s weekend strolls told him how effective his campaign was going.

Gee was happy.

He approached his mirror and repeated his favorite words. “Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the fairest of them all?”

“Snow White, ‘tis. . . . Oops, sorry about that.” (He was a punful mirror.) “I thought you’d never ask me that question. Remember, I told you there were two possibilities of becoming the fairest . . . actually three. Become a queer, get rid of all the good lookin’ guys in town or the third possibility, which I’m not about the reveal (ruin the end of the story and all that).”

“Yeah I know all that, but who is the fairest?”

“Well Gee, as it turns out, you’re far from it. I know it’s a disappointment, but what the guys have been doing is dirtying themselves up so they look ugly, but under all that dirt, they’re far more attractive than you are.” The magic mirror was somewhat upset at revealing this. . . .

“Oh fuch.” (That’s no misspelling.) “Look, MM, I’ve tried getting rid of the guys, that didn’t work. I’m not about to become a queer (being a respectable king and all that — beside, what would Sarah say?), so the only thing left for me to do is to ask you the third possibility.”

“Ok, this thing’s becoming long-winded anyway . . . I might as well. As you know I’m a magic mirror (look at the title, stupid) and as such, I’m able to do magic things (least of which is talking like Gene Klein) . . . the third possibility is for you to approach me until you come into contact with me, from head to toe . . . and then one of two things will happen: 1) you’ll get hot or 2) the more likely, you’ll become the fairest.”

“That sounds fine, MM. But, as I approach you, describe the change I go through. And damn it all, don’t be funny . . . this is trying, you know.”

Lemarsh Gee was a brave king; he started forward. Slowly he turned, step by step (Abbott and Costello, 1943) — the magic mirror spoke.

“The closer Gee gets, the better Gee looks.”

— Gene Klein







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# GOLDEN CALIFORNIA NOSTALGIA: 1964

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BY GREG BENFORD

**WARNING:** The Sturgeon General has noted that 90% of everything is lousy and probably bad for you, so you should be aware that this article contains some sexist elements — or so I'm told — and may be harmful to your mental equilibrium, if you care about that sort of thing. To me, it simply recreates an ambience and attitude I held in 1964, and I'm not the Greg Benford of that era any more.

She didn't fool around — she propositioned me flat out, no nonsense, in words of one syllable. “Well, will you do it?” she said after a pause. I was still trying to straighten out my reactions. Things like this just didn't happen to people like me in real life. Hell, they didn't happen to *anybody*.

“I'm not the world's expert, you know,” I said, stalling for time.

She nodded. “You don't have to be.” She looked down at the sand between us. “Just show me how. Give me some advice.”

“Be glad to,” I said, trying for a throwaway line. “My place, or yours?”

“Ummm, it'll have to be yours,” she said, pondering. “My mother will come by my apartment sometime this weekend, and there's always my roommate, too. Is that all right?” She looked up at me earnestly.

“Sure, sure,” I said with a casualness I didn't feel. “I may even throw in a free drink.”

So began my education into what I call Obligatory Social Sex. It all happened in southern California, shortly after I moved out from the midwest, and I think the geography is important. California wasn't just another state in these misty distant days of 1964. It was the future. Sociologists peered through their hornrims at surfer colonies, biker gangs, wife-swapping clubs and nudists, looking for signs of developing social trends. The unwritten assumption was that when a new social form or pattern emerged, it will surface

first in the Golden State.

Even before that late-summer day when the girl propositioned me, I had a hunch the sociologists were right. I hadn't been in California long, but already I'd been hearing about swinging parties, the Sexual Freedom League and girls who threw away their tattered copies of the *Kama Sutra*, already outmoded, at the age of sixteen.

I had been swimming in the rolling surf most of the afternoon, and didn't notice the girl until I was back on my blanket, drinking some dollar-a-gallon wine (ah, nostalgia!) and watching the sailboats. She was sitting some distance away, eyeing me. She had on a blue bikini that nicely set off her crisp brown skin. I knew her slightly; I waved. She came over and sat down.

I searched around for something to say and finally came up with, “How're things going at the university?”

“Oh, okay,” she said listlessly. “The social scene is a drag.”

“How come?”

“Well, I was popular in high school, but this is my first year at college and I don't seem to turn anybody on. Nobody asks me for a date.”

“Oh?” I said, rather distantly, because I didn't much want to ask her out, either. As she'd walked toward me I had realized that she just wasn't my type. I like slim, tall girls. Alice wasn't fat, but she was Rubenesque. Her breasts were large and a pleasant roll of flesh bulged out above the bottom half of her bikini. She was a lot of woman



and she moved with the body-consciousness of a healthy animal, etc., etc. But as I said, Alice just wasn't my type.

"Well, I think . . . I think I might be a little naïve," she said. She pronounced it "naigh-eff" but I let it go; maybe that was what some people meant by a Californian accent.

"Doesn't seem likely," I said.

"Gee, I don't know . . ." she glanced away at the waves, a little embarrassed. "The thing is," she said quickly, "I don't know how to go down on a guy, you know?"

I blinked. I had that sinking feeling, a sure sign that I was losing my social footing. "Why not?" I said.

"I just don't *know* how," she said, as if I were a particularly slow student. "It's not that I have any objections or anything like that."

"You've tried it?"

"Gee, sure." She looked at me as though I was a social cretin. "I tried. But I keep, you know, using my teeth too much and things like that."

"Yes, I suppose that's easy to do."

"Say, you know, you could help me out."

"Oh? How?"

"Let me practice on you," Alice said.

**W**e lived in a hyperthyroid age then. (We still do.) National reputations were made in a week. Rock groups rose and fell literally overnight. Kids grew up fast. They were in a big hurry to get to the counterculture, Vietnam and Elton John.

But that didn't mean social rules had broken down in those primordial early 60s. Just the opposite: you had to be sure you knew what to do, because everything *counted*. Tom Wolfe spent years zooming around the country, riding along with bikers and teenyboppers, leather crazies and cocktail party arbiters, because he knew that's where it all *was*, that's *all* there was, there wasn't anything bigger that made any sense.

With General Motors leering over your shoulder, the draft chasing your tail, the high school teachers ragging you about haircuts and saluting the flag — how could you believe *they* were part of *your* world?

Well, they weren't. Every kid learned that. Somebody wrote an article in the *New York Times Magazine* about "the youth culture" but it really was the *only* culture for most of the kids, the one world that counted. And to stay in that world, you had to stay hip, not fall behind.

Add that to the increasing equality of the sexes. Girls without a date didn't sit around the apartment any more, watching Jackie Gleason — they did something about it. If they were only a little daring they followed the women's magazine cures: get a hobby, initiate conversations with men, flirt a lot, join clubs, et. and cet.

That might work, back in South Bend. In Los Angeles it got a girl nowhere. There you had to do more than smile prettily and confess a burning interest in the Rolling Stones. Within a mile of Sunset Strip there were thousands of girls who knew more erogenous zones than sixth graders know Presidents of the United States. They had to — their competition has read all the same sex manuals and seen the same foreign movies.

Few questioned these ground rules, because generally

anybody below age 25 was making their own social rules. Curiously, that seemed to make the rules all the more binding. Any social convention set up by one's peers has an enormous weight behind it, a tremendous impact.

And nearly everything was a social context. Getting laid wasn't private; girls talked about it, established rules, made their own codes and code words and expectations. Fifteen years before, breathless coeds agreed in late-night dorm discussions that they wouldn't Do It unless they really loved the guy. But by 1964, the burning question in some circles was: should we make it on the first date?

Even after that hurdle was scaled, there were other niceties of convention. Should I do *this* to him first, or should I wait until he does *that* to me? What if he doesn't do it right, I mean, should I say anything?

And what if *he* says something? Suppose I'm not doing it right. Is it just him, or is my technique wrong? How do I tell? If it *is* me, who can teach me how?

There are, after all, some things even your girlfriends can't tell you.

**I** received a phone call from Alice on Wednesday. She talked about the college and friends we knew and — for God's sake — the weather. Then she said:

"Say, do you remember what we talked about at the beach last weekend?"

"Sure."

"Well, I was wondering if you were free this Saturday."

"Sure."

"Three P.M.?"

"Sure."

There is something in those crystalline, bright days near the beach that makes events in Southern California a little unreal, as though every building is just a false front on an aging movie lot. Something in me doubted that the voice over the telephone was real, that what she said was for keeps. Anyway, that's the way I explained to myself that I forgot all about the appointment. Saturday morning a guy called, wanting to play tennis, and I met him on the courts at noon. At 2:45, in the middle of a serve, I remembered Alice and the telephone call. I jumped into my car and zoomed across freeways, back to my apartment.

I was hot and tired and smelled like sour muskrat. Alice's car wasn't in the parking lot and there was no note. I went in and took off my shorts and took a shower.

Midway through, the doorbell rang. I wrapped a towel around myself and answered it.

"Hi," she said cheerily. She walked in, carrying a large handbag, and admired my view of some frothing white waves.

"Say, uh, if you don't mind, I'd like to finish my shower," I said.

She nodded wisely. "Good idea," she said.

I went back under the hot water, letting it relax and massage my muscles and not thinking about much of anything. After I had dried off, I wrapped the towel back around me and went into the living room. Alice wasn't there.

I padded back into the bedroom. She was sitting on the edge of the bed, no clothes, putting on some bright orange



lipstick. I had been right about Rubenesque: without her bikini she seemed even more voluptuous.

My towel was done in plaid. I stopped in front of Alice, framing some offhand but witty remark in my mind, and before I could speak she said, "I've always wondered if it was true, what they say about Scotsmen," meanwhile reaching up under my towel and grasping me in a practiced manner. I felt a stiffening sense of anticipation.

I said, of course, the usual things. Compliments about her heavy breasts and remarkably smooth skin, accompanied by appropriate caresses. Alice smiled slightly. She unknotted my towel, letting it fall. Without a word she leaned forward and took me in her mouth, warmly, cupping me with one hand while holding my right leg with the other.

"Very good," I said judiciously. She used her lips and I felt myself slide further into her mouth, still swelling slightly, until the tip nudged against the back of her throat. Her hand stroked me slowly.

Abruptly she unswallowed me and said, "Okay, what am I doing wrong?"

"Nothing," I said.

"I must be. What about the teeth?"

"Maybe we haven't been at it long enough."

"Right. Say, do you want to lie down? That's the position I usually have to work in. You know."

I laid down on the bed, head propped on a pillow to watch the proceedings with a judicial eye. Alice rolled between my spread thighs and went down on me again. Her lips formed a bright orange circle that moved back and forth, expanding slightly and then contracting again. Every so often she would pause to brush her long hair back out of the way.

After a few minutes I noticed that her teeth were nipping at me, not pleasantly, but with a definite bite. I tapped her on the shoulder.

"You're right. It is the position. Use your tongue more, roll it around over the crest." Pause. "That's it. Keep it over your lower teeth on the down stroke. Right. Good."

She kept on. The nipping was pleasurable now, an added bit of spice. After a few moments, I was struggling to retain my objective mood.

"Alice."

"Mmmmmm?"

"I think you could get it further in if you'd change position — like this."

I helped her up on her knees and eventually got her turned around, kneeling at my side. She was essentially in the standard sixty-nine position, head pointed toward my toes, but still on her knees.

She opened her lips wide and slipped them down over me. I struck the back of her throat with an intense burst of pleasure.

"Uhhh. Fine."

And then I came.

She had been properly instructed by her girlfriends, of course, and didn't think for a moment of not swallowing it all down. (To not do so is a bit rude. It is considered a sign of rejection and distaste, and is impolite.) She was good at that, too.

I won't bore you with all the details. We were not

finished, by any means. Alice wanted to try several positions she hadn't had a chance to try in social situations. She liked sitting on the edge of the bed, while I stood. My bedroom mirror was arranged so that each of us could watch in this position, and I think that was what appealed to her most. She was a born exhibitionist.

The so-called "dominant" position she didn't like — I sat on her breasts, taking most of my weight on my knees, and leaned forward into her mouth. She complained that I didn't get far enough in that way and anyway it was hard to keep her teeth from interfering.

It was all quite clinical. I wasn't a guy from her crowd, so I didn't have to be impressed; and she had ample evidence when I was satisfied. I felt uncomfortable for a while, because it seemed so impersonal. Then I realized that it wasn't impersonal at all, just friendly. The act was intimate, but to Alice that didn't mean it could not be done as a friendly gesture between people who knew each other but weren't particularly romantically involved.

After that point, I relaxed. Alice was picking up another social grace, like a new step in a course of ballroom dancing. Something in the situation stimulated or released my libido, and in three hours I came five times. I enjoyed myself tremendously. Alice didn't know it, but I was learning as much as she was — about California mores and society. It has stood me in good stead ever since.

Partway through, I asked her if she wanted to ball, so the pleasure wouldn't be one way. "Sure, it'll be a good break," she said, smiling.

She turned out to be a beautiful lay, as I had guessed. She wrapped her legs around me and thumped heartily in rhythm with my lunges. She had an orgasm, then another, and I finally came and lay with legs intertwined, panting, against her full breasts. I licked and sucked her nipples for a while, suspended between sleep and wakefulness. Then I felt a familiar sensation. Looking down, I saw Alice's head bobbing rhythmically. She intended to get in as much practice as possible.

At six P.M. she noticed the time and announced that she had a dinner date. A few hours earlier I wouldn't have believed her. I would have thought she was brushing me off.

But now I understood. Nothing in Emily Post prohibits going from one party to the next, and nothing in the Obligatory Sexual Etiquette said a girl was chained to the guy she had just had sex with. She might well have learned her lessons in giving head (or, as an older generation called it, the French art) especially for the young man she was meeting for dinner that evening. Anyway, I was just as glad she was really as liberated as she had said; I had another girl on the line. And Alice, after all, still wasn't quite my type.

When she left she stopped at the door, just before going out into the desiccated, Raymond Chandler night, and turned to me. She gave me a quick kiss on the cheek, just a little shyly, and said:

"I want to thank you. I've had a very nice time. Good night."

It sounded a lot like a freckled-faced little girl, leaving a friend's birthday party, delivering the lines her mother had taught her and that she had practiced all day, just as it says in the etiquette books.

— Greg Benford





# THE CRACKED EYE

BY GARY HUBBARD

Somewhere, in a far-off country called "Columbia," there is a man. Let us call him "Pedro." Now, I don't know what Pedro does for a living. Maybe he's a poor dirt farmer with fifty-seven kids. Or maybe he owns a prosperous banana plantation. Or maybe he's a bandito. Who knows?

In any event, to make ends meet Pedro grows marijuana.

Now, Pedro probably doesn't know — and probably couldn't care less — what happens to his marijuana after he harvests it and sells it to whoever it is who buys it from him. But, somehow or other, Pedro's grass finds its way into this country, and some of it ends up in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

In fact, a *lot* of it ends up in Ann Arbor, Michigan!

The world is full of many strange things, and Ann Arbor is one of the strangest. It's the home of the SRC and Commander Cody, of the Ann Arbor Blues and Jazz Festival, of one of the nation's best radio telescopes, and of laser fusion (a process that may well solve all our energy problems and open up the Solar System).

Ann Arbor is also the home of what is probably the most lenient pot law in the country. In Ann Arbor, possession of marijuana is a misdemeanor punishable by a fine of five dollars.

So pot smoking is pretty open there. It is not unusual on a fine Summer's day to walk down the street and see people sitting out on their porches puffing on a pipe or passing a joint around. Public events around the University (the University of Michigan — Ann Arbor is a college town, you know) generate so much smoke that you could get stoned just breathing it, and once a year, students and others gather together on the U of M campus to hold the annual "Hash Bash" . . . a great outpouring of . . . uh, spirit and solidarity for our Good Neighbors South of the Border.

But, while the drug laws in Ann Arbor are pretty relaxed, don't get the impression that they don't exist altogether. You can't stand out on the street corner hawking bags of hash in Ann Arbor any more than you can in any other city. The cops are tolerant, but they *will* bust you if you are *too* blatant about it. Outsiders especially have trouble with this, and one of the problems is that — while the local law may be very lenient — the much more severe State and Federal laws concerning marijuana are still in effect, and if you are busted for smoking dope in Ann Arbor, the authorities may decide to ignore the local ordinance and prosecute you according to the above-mentioned severe laws.

Now, all the foregoing has very little to do with this article. Personally, I am not really that much into pot fandom. I can take it or leave it, in fact. I don't really care about Pedro and what he does for a living, or what people do for fun in Ann Arbor. My major concern, if you've been following my articles in *Syndrome* is getting laid, but to understand how it was that it finally occurred, you have to understand the background against which it finally happened.

I found myself in Ann Arbor one day purely by accident. I really had no intention of getting involved in that city and its obsession with that fabulous herb. Actually, I was looking for another city and . . . *meatballs*.

At this time I was a fan of a local radio station that



played Classical music. Now . . . most Classical music stations are pretty straight-laced. A day's programming usually consists of endless recordings of insipid music by obscure composers with an announcer who comes on at the end of each one to inform you — with a voice like a funeral director's — that you have just heard "Afternoon Of A Dead Horse" by Influenza Strangulatori and next you will hear. . . .

But WQRS was different. She undid her laces a little and showed us a bit of tit. An announcer worked for that station who had a normal voice, an engaging personality and a creative outlook toward the Classics. His name was Lou Rodstein, and he believed that Classical Music was a vital, living art form rather than something static and ossified, like the statue of a dead politician in front of City Hall.

Rodstein made Classical Music come alive. Before he played a piece — say, by Liszt — he would tell a little anecdote about how Liszt came to write this particular music or how many women Liszt could ball in a night or something like that. Rodstein had a particular flair for presenting operatic works.

Opera is actually a visual art form, and it is a little hard to sit and listen to an entire opera on the radio without something to look at. Before I became familiar with the plots of most of the operas, I used to make up my own stories to go along with the music. For instance, I was once listening to *Carmen* and made up a story about two American explorers who come across a band of Gypsies high on a mountaintop in Tibet. At one point, the beautiful Gypsy Princess is carried off by the Abominable Snowman. That may sound like a pretty dumb story, but a lot of operas by Famous Composers have plot-lines that are not much better.

However, to get back to Rodstein, he realized that you can't really present an opera on the radio, so he didn't try. What he did do was to present opera music as music. He did this by presenting excerpts from various operas under a central theme. For example: he once did a program called "Saints in Opera" which, of course, presented pieces that dealt in some way or other with saints. Then, in order to make sure that he wasn't violating the fairness doctrine (that is, the principle that a radio or TV station can't present one side of a controversial subject without presenting the other side, too), he did a program on "Demons in the Opera."

Some other programs that he presented included "Patriotism in the Opera," "the Great Outdoors," and "Mush." The selections for the "Patriotism" were, as you might expect, pretty turgid. One selection was from an opera called "Der Freischuss" which Rodstein claimed was Hitler's favorite. That may conjure up all sorts of bizarre images in your mind, but it's really a very innocent thing about a simple-minded dolt who has to win a marksmanship contest to get the girl he has the hots for. In "the Great Outdoors," Rodstein demonstrated that the Outdoors was a favorite place for composers to have their characters die. La Scala, for example, jumps off the top of a building, and in another opera the male and female leads are carried off by an avalanche while they are singing a duet. "Mush" was exactly what it sounds like — gushy, over-sentimental, sickly sweet things taken mostly from Viennese operettas and the soundtracks of old Nelson Eddy/Jeanette MacDonald movies. Rodstein offered

this over-sweet pastry up to anyone who could stomach it.

Rodstein was truly a creative person with a love for Classical Music; something you don't find very often. It's too bad the station recently fired him.

However, to get back to the general drift of this story, what Rodstein could do for the Classical Music that WQRS played, he could also do for the commercials that the station aired. There was one in particular for a Danish restaurant called Maerkin's which was situated in the near-by town of Ypsilanti. Maerkin's featured such culinary delights as a whole headless flounder (which may not sound too appetizing to you, but consider how unappetizing a whole flounder — head and all — would be) and "frikadeller." Now, "frikadeller" is the same thing as Swedish meatballs only it's Danish and served with little curled vegetables. In any event, Rodstein, in doing his commercial announcements for Maerkin's made the "frikadeller" sound so wonderful that I had to have some.

I don't know which of the Three Fates decreed it, but, somehow or other, I missed the turn-off to Ypsilanti and ended up in Ann Arbor. I wasn't really surprised that it happened. I always get lost when I travel. I remember once when a friend and I were in the north of France trying to find the port at Calais, so that we could book passage to England. We got lost in the town of Lille and couldn't find our way out.

Small European towns — I've been given to understand — were designed like mazes to foil Nineteenth Century armies. Whoever designed Ann Arbor must have been afraid that Bismarck was going to invade Michigan, because that's the way it's built. Now, I don't know whether or not the way that Ann Arbor is laid out would confuse the Prussians, but it certainly confused me. It wasn't long after I found my way into Ann Arbor that I found that I couldn't find my way back out again.

A drag, yes, but Ann Arbor is such a pretty town that you can't really mind being lost in it. As I recall, it was early evening. The setting sun was casting fairy shadows along the tree-lined streets. There were lots of pretty girls walking — some with their boyfriends and some alone — down the sidewalks. I was actually enjoying myself.

Until my tire went out!

The back tire on the right. It was pretty bald, so it was bound to happen sooner or later, but I suppose that I believed deep down — like some people believe they are never going to get cancer or their tax returns audited — that I would never get a flat tire.

Actually, I went for several miles after I heard the "bang" before I realized that the tire had gone flat. When I did, I sort of sloppily pulled the car up to the curb and turned it off. For a long time I just sat there behind the wheel and wondered what I was going to do. It was actually a long time before I realized that my best bet was to change the tire. I haven't been driving long, so that sort of thing doesn't come to me naturally.

I mean, the spare tire was always a sort of curiosity to me. I always considered it useful as a weight — along with the four cinderblocks that I kept in the trunk — when traveling on the snow. Now here I was finally going to have to use the damn thing.



I pulled the car over to the curb and stopped. The area I had chosen to get a flat in was not the ideal spot for changing a tire. It was a residential area, and — while the traffic wasn't heavy — passing cars were frequent (I have since been told that you can travel for quite a distance on a flat tire, and that I should have kept going until I found a gas station or a more open area).

Actually, the passing cars didn't worry me as much as passing pedestrians. I hate making a public spectacle of myself, and as I started jacking up the car, my worst fears were realized. Passersby were stopping to stare at the clown with the flat tire. I smiled at them weakly, and went grimly to work jacking up the rear end of the car.

But as I was doing this, someone suddenly said, "Hey? Are you trying to steal that tire?!"

I looked up and saw that I was being addressed by a tall, skinny man with a mustache, accompanied by a short, pretty woman. I was reminded a little of Mutt and Jeff.

"What's that?" I replied.

"Are you trying to steal a tire off that car?"

What a bizarre question! I really didn't know what to say in return.

"Uh . . .," I replied.

Then the woman spoke up.

"Last week we had some friends over, and someone stole a tire off their car which was parked out in front of our house."

"Uh . . .," I said again, "this is my car. I'm just trying to change the tire."

"Which tire?" asked the man.

"That one," I replied, pointing to the right rear.

"Well," he replied, "you're too close to the curb if you expect to change *that* tire. You're going to have to pull out a little."

Well, I couldn't see how being close or far away from the curb was going to make any difference, but I got into the car and pulled it out a little from the curb and got honked at in the process by an approaching car that I didn't see coming. Once the car was re-positioned, the guy with the mustache helped me change the tire.

Actually, the guy did all the changing. He just sort of took over the whole operation. I just jacked the car up while he changed the tire. After he got the old tire off and the spare on, he told me that I could probably get the flat fixed at any gas station.

"Okay, that's it," he said, "let your car down."

I thanked the man and was intending to get into the car and find my way back home as fast as I could. However, the woman asked me if I'd like to come in for some tea. I felt like some tea, so I accepted. Their house was just up the block. On the way, the woman filled me in with all the details concerning the tire that had been stolen from a friend's car a week past. I also found out a few things about this couple whose company I had fallen in with.

They were married, interestingly enough. The man's name was Ron. He had an M.A. in Physics, but worked as a parking lot attendant. (There is a lot of technological unemployment in Ann Arbor.) His wife, whose name was Jan, was a little better off. She was employed at her specialty.

She was a career guidance counselor at the University of Michigan.

Their home was one of those classy old gingerbread houses that you can't find any more . . . except in places like Ann Arbor. It was "their" house only in a sense. Actually, they were just renting it. And only half of it at that. The other half was rented out to another couple.

"Homosexuals," Jan informed me, "but very quiet."

Sitting around in their small kitchen drinking tea, I found that I was taking to these people quite readily. Which was very surprising, since I rather tend to shun people. But no one can live quite within himself, I suppose, and even I sometimes meet people or a person and some sort of chemistry occurs and I find myself involved with someone other than myself.

So it was with these folks. I found that with Ron I shared a common interest in Eddie Constantine movies and flying saucers. With Jan it was folklore and ancient religions. With both of them I shared quite a few other interests. Except one.

I was talking with Jan. We were discussing the possibility that fairy tales were a development of the late Middle Ages rather than harkening back to ancient times when Ron pulled out a pipe and a plastic bag filled with some brownish stuff. He filled the pipe with a portion of the brown stuff and lit it up. He took a couple of drags on it and passed it over to his wife who did likewise. She then offered it to me.

"No thanks."

She shrugged and passed it back to her husband.

Fortunately for me, people who smoke dope are usually a lot more polite than people who don't. I've been in situations where my host was mortally offended if I didn't have a drink (and another . . . and another). But pot users are, as I said, not pushy. They do a little proselytizing now and then, but they are not usually obnoxious about it.

Still, it does make me feel a little uncomfortable to be around people who are engaged in activities that I am either unable to or won't permit myself to be involved in. So after what I considered a polite amount of time, so that they wouldn't think that I was leaving because they were smoking, I announced that it was time for me to go and got up. I thanked them again for the help with the tire and the tea.

As I was leaving, Jan mentioned that they were going to have a party next weekend and that I should come by. I replied that I might.

About parties. Let me tell you, I am not too keen on parties. Being surrounded by a large group of people usually makes me feel more isolated than usual. I would prefer to avoid them like the plague.

But back when I was in junior high school I had to take a course called "Hygiene." This course concerned itself mainly with health and personal cleanliness, but it also concerned itself with social development of the individual. The textbook for this course was called, *You're Growing Up*, and subtitled, "health and personal development." In this book, the author gives this advice about attending parties:

"No doubt you . . . have had mixed feelings about various invitations. On the one hand, you may



have wanted to accept an invitation; but on the other hand, you may have hesitated because you weren't quite sure what to do or say at such a social gathering. At times like these it is important to remember that you aren't the only one who has felt a bit uncertain in social situations. Everyone feels that way at times — even those who may look very poised and sure of themselves. Remember, too, that the best way to get over your uncertain feelings and to gain self-confidence is to take part as often as you can in parties and other social gatherings.”

Well, that's what the book said. If I went to the party (even though I *hate* parties), I would gain poise and self-confidence, and it would, besides, be good for my mental health. If I stayed away, I was running the risk of becoming a total neurotic or ending up in an asylum. They'd beat me with chains and feed me on nothing but gruel and bitter herbs.

I certainly didn't want to end up like that, so I went to the party.

The party was what I thought it would be; a bunch of strange-looking people jammed into a small space. Everybody was smoking and drinking and talking at once. There was a record playing, but it could only be heard every so often when the angel passed over and the drone died down.

Jan — catching sight of me — got hold of me and introduced me to a few people. Most of them were unemployed technical people or students. The couple from next door was there. Some of the persons I was introduced to asked me what I did. I was too embarrassed to say that I sold paint at K-Mart, so I told them I was independently poor.

A can of beer somehow or other appeared in my hand. Jan wandered off to talk to somebody, and I was left to my own devices.

I sipped at the beer and took a look around at the people I found myself in the midst of. They were, I suppose, a fairly normal group for this turn of the Great Mandala; bearded, long-haired men and short-haired women. Both sexes were dressed the same in blue jeans and t-shirts with funny pictures on them. They were all either standing around or sitting around or reclining twisted into various other positions gesticulating and passing those funny cigarettes around.

Except for a person I noticed over at another side of the room. He seemed singularly out of place at this party. He had short blond hair. He was wearing a pair of white levis cut off just above the knees and a U of M t-shirt. He looked like one of the Beach Boys. I wondered what this fugitive from the mid-Sixties was doing here.

But he wasn't doing anything. He was just sitting on the floor — immobile — with his eyes closed. They were using him to keep the door to the kitchen open.

I wandered into the kitchen and looked around. Then wandered back into the living room. I heard a giggle and looked around and saw three people huddled up in a darkened corner on the other side of the stereo.

There were two men with a woman wedged in between them. The man on the left was kissing the woman and massaging one of her breasts. The other man had her jeans unzipped and was fumbling around in her panties.

Well, this might not be such a bad party, after all.

Just then, Ron appeared from somewhere and said, “Hey, come and see my laser!”

I didn't want to see his laser. I wanted to stay and watch those people on the floor make out. But I thought it might be impolite to tell Ron that, so I went with him to see his laser.

However, before we got to wherever it was, he got called away by someone, and I was on my own again.

“Good. Now I can get back to the trio.”

I turned around . . . and bumped into somebody. I mumbled something about being sorry. Then I got a good look at the person that I had bumped into. It was a girl. A rather good looking girl, too. She was smiling. I noticed that she had bad teeth. But there was nothing wrong with the rest of her. She had large breasts that were stretching out of shape the word, *Magog*, on her t-shirt.

“I've been watching you wandering around here like some kind of suspicious character,” she said. “Who are you?”

“Uh . . . Gary. Is that your name?” I pointed at her t-shirt.

“No. I'm H.P. Lovecraft.”

“What?! You're kidding,” I replied. “Do you know who H.P. Lovecraft was?”

She didn't. Her name was Helene Pamela Lovecraft. She had started calling herself “H.P.” a few years ago when there was a rock group out that called itself “H.P. Lovecraft.” She was quite surprised when I informed her that th





original H.P. Lovecraft had been a man who wrote horror stories.

That — it turned out — was a start. We stood there for quite a while talking together. From horror story writers, we went on to De Sade and philosophy and Mickey Mouse and Nixon and even told each other a few bad puns. I was really astonished at the length of our conversation. Usually, the women I meet (at parties or otherwise), if they even consider talking to me in the first place, just say, "hello." They chat for a few seconds. Then they either split or something masculine comes along and carries them off.

So it was very surprising that the Ms. Lovecraft talked to me as long as she did. Eventually, though, some clod *did* come along and carry her off.

"Catch you later," she said over her shoulder as he led her away.

I doubted it.

I hung around for a while longer. There wasn't much for me to do, though. Ron had disappeared (playing with his laser, no doubt), Jan was nowhere around, and that interesting trio had apparently found a more private place than the corner behind the stereo to carry on and had repaired there. By this time, I figured that I had gained enough self-confidence and poise for one night and decided to go home.

I was on my way out the front door when I ran into Ms. Lovecraft again. She was sitting out on the porch steps. She was talking to another girl, and they were passing a corn cob pipe back and forth. She had, for some reason, tied a bandanna over her head. The combination of the bandanna and the corn cob pipe in her hand made her look like a Gypsy or, maybe, a witch. Appropriate for a girl named Lovecraft.

She looked up and smiled. "Where're you going?" she asked.

I sat down beside her. "Well," I replied, "I thought I would leave now. I have a long way to go to get home tonight."

"Where do you live?"

I told her about Westland, and its lack of sidewalks and paved roads. About how the landscape consisted of housing developments and shopping centers. About how they really didn't have a city there, but they were saving up to build one.

She offered me her pipe. I declined it, of course. She looked puzzled.

"You don't smoke?" she asked.

"No. I don't."

"Why not?"

"Why should I? I have enough vices without picking up on somebody else's."

"What kind of vices do you have?"

"Chastity. I'm compulsively pure."

"Uh huh," she nodded and gave me a little smile that told me she didn't believe it. And, of course, I didn't expect that she would. Who would believe, after all, that I was nearly thirty and still a virgin? It sounded pretty incredible to me, too.

I really should be leaving, I thought to myself. It was a pretty long trip back to Westland. So why was I hanging

around talking to this girl?

Well, she *was* pretty and had a rather engaging personality. When I got home tonight, I would fantasize about her while I jacked-off. I didn't harbor any thoughts about anything happening between us for real. That sort of thing just didn't happen to me. Still . . . I suppose that way back in my mind I was hoping that she would grab hold of me there on the porch or else ask me if I wanted to go to her place.

"Would you like to go for a walk?" she asked.

That jolted me a little bit, but with a great show of self-confidence and poise I replied:

"Why not?"

**D**id you know," she said, "that Yew trees are actually evil old men who come out at night?" We have been walking for several minutes when she came out with this somewhat bizarre question cum statement.

"No, I didn't," I replied. "Where did you ever get a notion like that?"

"Oh, it's something I heard a long time ago. They come out at night and eat Germans."

I laughed. "Now you're beginning to sound like your namesake. He used to write about weird things like that. Of course, he had a chastity problem, too."

She stopped and looked at me.

"Are you really a virgin?"

I wished she hadn't said that out loud. Good thing there wasn't anyone around.

"On my honor as an ex-Boy Scout," I replied.

"Gods! What have you been doing with yourself all your life?"

"Well . . . I spend a lot of time in the bathroom."

She found this tremendously amusing. I thought it was pretty funny myself.

"You're a very strange person."

I nodded. "It takes practice."

She then came very close and put her arms around my waist. I hadn't had anybody so close to me since my Army physical. It made me feel very awkward, and I almost stumbled over on top of her.

"Uh . . . what are you doing?" It was a stupid question, I admit. She didn't bother answering it. She just held me like that and stared at me. I stared back, but it wasn't very easy. Have you ever tried to stare at someone for a long period of time? Was I supposed to do something? Grab her up and grasp her to my hairy chest or something equally masculine? Me?

I laughed out loud at the thought.

She pulled away and frowned. I guess I offended her somehow. I explained, though, that I wasn't laughing at her, but rather myself.

It struck me that I had somewhere read a story where the hero, who was about to lose *his* cherry, also laughed and offended slightly the girl who was conducting his "rite du passage." This situation seemed more like a story than reality. The hero meets a woman at a party and she starts making sexual overtures at him. That sort of thing only happens in books or movies. I was really amazed to find it actually happening to me.

It was to the credit of my body that it was handling the situation better than I was. My heart was beating fast, my



body was being swept by strange sensations and I was getting an erection.

"Your problem," she said, "it that your brain is too much the boss. You've got to forget your mind and let your emotions take over. Come on!"

She grabbed my hand and dragged me into a nearby alley. In this alley, there were tow of those Dempsey Dumpsters out in front of the back of a store. There was a small space between the dumpsters and the store, and she shoved me into the space and followed. She sat us down with our backs up against one of the dumpsters. We were hidden from the street, though if anyone had come up the alley, they would have seen us. I hoped nobody was in the store, too.

"What you need is a little help to forget your mind, and let your reactions take over." She produced from a pocket or somewhere one of those little yellow cases that birth control pills come in. Only this case held, rather than pills, two little joints of marijuana. She took one, lit it, puffed on it a couple of times and held it out to me.

"No thanks."

"Wrong! You need this. Get stoned and you'll be able to react to things easily. You really do want me, don't you?"

"Well . . . yes. . . ."

"Then smoke. C'mon."

What a dilemma! Here it was. My chance to finally get laid. All I had to do was smoke a little grass. But I didn't want to. I just wanted to get laid; not turn into a drug fiend. And even though I had read enough to realize that marijuana was not as dangerous as it was supposed, still, it seemed to me that anything that made people feel *that* good couldn't be entirely safe, either.

What to do? What to do! I could stand on my principles. Refuse. Say good-bye. Or . . . I looked at her face. Her eyes. Her mouth. I looked at her t-shirt. I wondered what it was like under her t-shirt. I wondered what *Magog* meant. If I smoked her damn cigarette, I could find that out and a lot of other things, besides.

How strange. If I stayed strong and resisted temptation, I would lose the object of my desire. But if I gave in — surrendered — I would win.

So I took the joint from her hand and put it to my lips.

I felt defeated. I had given up smoking the regular kind of cigarettes a few years ago. The thing about giving up smoking is that you are only one cigarette away from starting up again no matter how long you stay away from it.

Other than that, I didn't feel much of anything. The marijuana didn't have any immediate effects. I didn't expect

it to. I had heard that practically no one gets a rush from their first joint. The effects of grass are cumulative, and you have to get into the habit of smoking i before it does anything weird to you. Actually, I felt less from the joint than I would have from an ordinary cigarette.

However, I will admit that I did feel pretty relaxed. The strangeness of the situation no longer bothered. The fact that I was sitting between two Demp- sey Dumpsters with a strange and sexy young lady smoking a felony did not seem so remarkable. I reached out for her and she slid into my arms. She felt pretty good there.

We finished the first joint and started right in on the other one. I admit that at this point I may have been getting a little hazy, but I seemed to have my faculties mostly about me.

When the second joint was gone, I didn't have much to do with my free hand, so I put it around her waist. She put her arms around my neck, and, since her mouth was so close to mine, I kissed her. My hand — the little devil — somehow got under her t-shirt and found its way to her breasts. For the first time, I felt someone else's nipple besides my own. It felt nice. She made a funny noise and moved her hands to my lap. She unzipped my fly and. . . .

I think, friends, that at this point it would be best to draw a veil over the events that occurred there between the Dempsey Dumpsters after that point. Some people have already told me that I write too frankly about myself. Well, I suppose there has to be a limit even to frankness. Also, I think I would find it a bit difficult to calmly sit behind this typer and relate the events of the balance of the night. I've said enough.

That was the first time I got together with H.P. Lovecraft, but fortunately it wasn't the last. Eventually, however, she decided to go to school at the Southern Illinois University. I haven't seen her since, but we correspond. She's fallen in love with another girl (she's really very strange), and they have taken up housekeeping together with a cat.

Ron and Jan have since moved away, too. Ron got a job in Chicago.

And I am, as always, on my own. And, despite the incident between the Dempsey Dumpsters, I don't feel any different. So I finally got laid. I've lost my virginity, I guess, but I don't feel that I've lost *anything*. Strangely enough though, I don't feel that I've gained anything, either.

I have, however, finally found Maerkin's.

— Gary Hubbard







# PROPIN- QUITY

## letters of comment

**GARY HUBBARD** It does surprise me when other people reveal the extent to which they are into drugs. Even tho I am not exactly an innocent in this respect. Last Saturday I was at a party and smoked so much dope that they had to tuck me away in a corner of the basement, and the girl who accomplished the demise of my innocence wouldn't let me in her sleeping bag until I took this little white pill. Can't say what it was for, tho. It didn't effect me in any way that I can remember. It was just that I was in such a state of mind that I would have swallowed a whole woolen topcoat if she had offered it to me.

I don't know about sf conventions being drugged orgies. I was at Confusion back in February and while I did meet a very nice young lady and ran into Mike Glicksohn in the men's room, I still had to go to bed alone and sober. You must just go to better conventions than I do.

Well, I don't exactly know what Jay Kinney's thing ["Mental Strip Mines"] in *Syndrome* number 4 is supposed to be about, but it reads the same forward or backward. It reminds me of my great uncle. He used to talk like that. One time he gave me a talk on sex that was totally incomprehensible. I don't recall much of it, but he seemed to be advising me against leaving babies in coal bins.

If anybody had a mental strip mine, my uncle did. But then, he was very old and infirm and taking all sorts of pills his M.D. was prescribing for him. He eventually divorced my aunt and disappeared.

Liked Grant Canfield's article on work

["Work Is A 4-Letter Word"], I've tried to write an article now and again on the personalities at my job, but I always found that my feelings about them were so negative that I couldn't do it. I disliked my job so much that I didn't even want to think about it.

Of course, as I may have mentioned before, I quit my job back in August to devote all my time to my fanac and related activities. . . . And I'm glad I did. After having worked at the same job for six years, I can well understand what Grant means when he uses the term "working stiff." Work can surely make you stiff or wish that you were. It was a good thing I got out from under that job. It was really crushing me to death. When you stop and think of it, practically no one likes to work, at the least, it is boring. At the worst, it causes mental or physical disorders. Frequently both. Yet we all do it. And we are all deathly afraid of losing our jobs. I am beginning to think that the human race is basically masochistic (I used to think it was basically sadistic).

But as I mentioned, I have gotten out from under the wheels of the juggernaut of work for the present, and, Goddess willing, it may be a long time before I have to throw myself back under.

I've also quit school. After piddling around on and off for about four years now, I've decided I'm not getting anywhere. There's really nothing I'm interested in enough to want to Major. Of course, people keep asking me, since I don't want to work or got to school, what do I want to do with my life. That's a

stumper, but ever since moving here to *Jack Zill's Home for Wayward Boys* I've found that I like washing dishes, vacuuming rugs, dusting and cleaning out the bathroom bowl (those being my duties here at the *Home*).

I think my best bet would be finding some ambitious, career-minded woman and getting her to marry me, so I could keep house for her. I have one in mind, but every time I bring the subject up she throws things at me.

It's very strange. On the one hand she is a feminist and scorns the standard jock-type masculine image, but on the other, she won't have anything to do with men who don't fit that image. I am beginning to suspect that all this talk about sexism and propaganda about role reversal is just a lot of poobah.

Your article on mind control ["Was Jose Silva really the inventor of the Tequila Sunrise?"] was interesting. I don't believe that it's anything more than another one of those psychological fads that come along just about every year (like Primal Scream, or Transactional Analysis or "Humanist" Psychology). I'm not even sure that I would approve of it if it turned out that it worked. How the fuck do we know, if it were possible for us to gain control of our minds, that we would be competent enough to know what we were doing. However, I do like the fantasy about the "laboratory" and the imaginary advisors. My lab would be a floating island on Mars and I would have 3 advisors. Two of them would be a pair of Black Lesbians named Carrie and Serina, and the other would be



a Nun named Sister Vickie. They'd all dress in leather and carry whips.

*Hah! — fl*

**GREG BENFORD** Much as I've been impressed by Grant Canfield's writing, this piece is a revelation. "Work Is A 4-Letter Word" was fine stuff; detailed observation, delightful turns of phrase, an odd wry bitterness that blends in superbly. Grant could be a very interesting new sf talent, if he wanted. He writes in much the same manner as Steven Robinett ("Tak Hallus") — light, airy, telling, slicing to the bone when you least expect it.

Jay Kinney ditto: a brilliant cartoonist who can write. It all seems unfair, somehow, that these gentlemen are so multi-talented and the rest of us are gray, faceless lumps. In fact, Kinney is so impressive, what with his comix credentials and flair, that you can tell him that next time I see him, I am going to punch him in his fabulous nose.

**JOHN CARL** I enjoyed almost all the stuff in the issue in nodding silence, with occasional gasps, giggles, and various dolphins. But there are two people in the issue on whom I would like to comment. One of them is Jay Kinney. I've always known that Jay is a prodigal cartoonist, but I really can't say that I knew from a few inane LoCs that he was such a virtuoso writer as well. There are a few pieces in his article almost worthy of Tom Robbins. At the very least, he is somewhat better-travelled along the Wroughton Road than I, and he probably doesn't even have the ambition of becoming the world's greatest writer. So, I would like to hear, from Jay's own mouth with its disgusting rotting teeth, what else he can do well, and if he tells, I will refrain from revealing the secret of the existence of the universe written on a grain of salt.

The other person is Bill Kunkel. His Meltzer influence is so strong that if Meltzer's name had been at the top of his LoC, I would not have blinked. It's like looking at twin breadbatter sandwiches. What really bothers me is that there doesn't seem to be anything at all in Bill's writing of today that can't be traced back to R. in style or content. This makes me sad. We already have one Meltzer, Bill (although he admittedly seems to have run off somewhere and disappeared) — we don't need two, and I'm certain you have other, Bill Kunkelish things to offer. Hey, maybe Bill is Meltzer. What a gas. (*Ffffffffoooooogle-oogle-oogle, plocka-plocka-plocka, phit phit phit whhhheeeewwww . . . !!*) It's a possibility. Maybe there's a cosmic connection between bottlecaps and microelite typewriters. [October 17, 1975]

**MIKE GLICKSOHN** Somehow I'm not convinced by the Panshins' way of writing about Dylan ["Dylan"]. Luckily I don't have to be, since I've always enjoyed and been fascinated by his poetry. But the article comes across as an example of preaching to the converted. There are a lot of rather pretentious sounding claims with no real evidence to back them up. Maybe the Panshins knew their audience and decided they didn't need to provide any concrete examples, but I'm left with the impression of a slick piece for *Rolling Stone*; all clever arty phrases, but not a lot of bones behind it.

They've just started broadcasting *The Goodies*, a Pythonesque style program with a much greater degree of internal consistency, here in Toronto. I'm not sure if it will ever get distributed in the US but the great popularity of Monty Python, at least on campuses and in other discerning, if small, groups may mean the US networks will be on the lookout for other similar imports. If you should see *The Goodies* mentioned anywhere, try and catch it: Python fans are sure to enjoy it as much if not more than the *Circus*.

Bruce Arthurs admits he's paranoid about dope, and makes no pretense about how he feels about it. I don't agree with him, but I'd do him the courtesy of not inviting him anywhere I knew dope would be in evidence. If only to protect myself from the violent over-reaction that predictably would occur. There sure are some strange weird people in fandom. Some write oddball letters, others print 'em . . . (Still others read 'em, which is probably the silliest of all.) [October 25, 1975]

**GRANT CANFIELD** Received *Syndrome* number 4, read and enjoyed same. It was gratifying to see my article finally in print. It was dated, I think, only in its references to TV shows. *The Odd Couple* and *Kung Fu* were both top-rated shows when I wrote the piece, but they have both long since been cancelled.

Unhappily, my job has not been cancelled, but goes on and on and on, like a river flowing freely to the sewage dump. Or through the sewage dump. Whatever. To keep you up to date, almost none of the starring personnel from that piece are still working at the same place, except yours truly. I, of course, have been raised and promoted and all that, an example of the Peter Principal. Slick Dick is gone (I understand he's been collecting unemployment for over a year and is very much digging it). Clean Alex is broadcasting messages of Christianity to Russia via ComSat, and has abandoned a 30-year engineering career to do so. Two of the three Bobs I wrote about have left, but have been replaced by two more Bobs, one

of whom is actually *not* a mechanical engineer, but an *electrical* engineer. Things change too fast for me.

Even ol' Bernie, good ol' repulsive Bernie, finally managed to get the sack, after trying his slowest and dullest for the last three years. He was the world's most useless draftsman, but he claimed they kept him on because at least he was reliable. Reliably, dependably, constantly bad. Well, he finally was laid off, and I was sorry to see him go. He was good for morale. ("No matter how bad I get, there's always Bernie. . .")

One significant change has occurred in my Work Status since I wrote that piece for you. They finally paid me enough money, and my cartooning started paying off enough, that I was able to drop one day of work. I now work a 32-hour week at the office being a Project Architect or Senior Draftsman and 3 days a week I'm a cartoonist. This has proven in the 10 months or so it's been in effect to be, on the whole, a vastly more civilized schedule. The 40-hour week is obsolete, really, don't you think, Frank? What would you know about it, you effete college snob, someday I'll buy you a spaghetti dinner that *won't* make you barf.

The Kinney piece was dazzling. It sucks you in and then spits you out at the other end, and the only thing you really feel like saying is, "Wow." Quietly, without an exclamation mark, but definitely wow.

The story you tell in your editorial entertained me for a delightful bowel movement. You have a way of warping into one of your fantasies, and back out into a slightly dizzy perspective on external reality that makes you one fanwriter whose material I *always* read. On the other hand, you are not what we could call prolific. These days, anyway. Pity.

When is *Syndrome* number 5 due out, 1978? [October 26, 1975]

*No, Grant, in fact I hope to have it out sometime next month. All the material is already in hand. Ahahahahahaha. — fl*

**HARRY WARNER, JR.** All your Silva material interested me mightily and I was unhappy at the discovery that you sort of ended abruptly your description of your experiences. I wish I had the courage to subject myself to experiments of this type. But I'm too scared of what might happen to me, and all I can do is admire the bravery of those who try it. I'm convinced that some of the mental power groups are achieving real successes. But I keep thinking about what might happen to me if I took up with one that took too many chances, or if my mind turned out to be the kind that can go unstable under unprecedented strain or something.



I suspect that the efforts to utilize the full powers of the human mind today are in the approximate status that the practice of medicine held about 150 years ago. We know now that blood-letting, for instance, wasn't as useful as most doctors believed then, and I'm sure that some day, people will discover that some mental power techniques which are being utilized today have the same limited benefit and the same dangers that leeches created in the old days. Or, to put it another way: there are all sorts of ways in which I could develop my body. I could go jogging regularly, or invest in one of those isometric exercise courses, or let the physical culture experts at the local YMCA have their will with me. But I might have a heart attack or suffer lower back trouble or do other damage to my body if I grew too strenuous at these physical fitness activities, at my age. It's the same with my mind. I'd love to acquire total recall of my memories and draw on this infinitely complete reservoir of information about empty parking places and communicate telepathically with Julie Andrews. But I suspect that there's a potential danger involved in attempts to reach these desirable situations, particularly for an old fogey who is more set in his mental ways than the less rigid younger generation. I'm alone in the world, there's nobody to take care of me if I suffer an accident to my mind equivalent to the heart attack or slipped disc, and I'm afraid that I'm going to continue cravenly to gaze in awe at the articles written by the daring young fans on this topic.

Grant Canfield brought some good news to me. Not all the loathsome people in the world get newspaper jobs, he seems to be implying. Of course, not even Grant can have the full understanding of the Working Stiff that comes to a person only after extensive experience of a regular job extending over most of a lifetime. I've passed the 32nd anniversary of the day I went to work full time for the local newspaper, I'm a little over nine years away from minimum retirement age, and I'm an authority on the Working Stiff phenomena that begin to appear around this stage in a vocational career. One remarkable thing is the way time stops flying. For a long while, I found, like most persons, that the years were flashing past at an ever accelerating rate, that no day had more than two or three hours in it much less 24. But when retirement lies less than 110 months in the future, every one of those remaining months stretches out interminably, longer in timespan than a year used to be. Vacations used to be the most exciting, enjoyable time of the year but now they begin to seem positive menaces because they seem to lengthen the amount of work that remains before retirement. For instance, before I took any vacation this year, I



knew that ten of the remaining months before retirement would be idle months because I get four weeks plus one additional day vacation each year, but now that I've taken part of this year's vacation, the proportion of working months to idle months has increased because only nine plus months of idleness are in prospect.

The Panshins' "Dylan" struck me as an odd counterpart to all the writing about Heinlein that Alex has done. I doubt if Heinlein and Dylan will find much in common, if the latter should by chance show up at next year's worldcon and meet the pro guest of honor. But the Panshin material about both men adopts the same general belief: that the man is mirrored in what he creates, that the criticism can be ad personam because the creator puts his real beliefs and ways of thinking into what he creates. I don't know if it's an altogether valid way to criticize the work of either Heinlein or Dylan or, more precisely, if so much emphasis should be placed on this manner of criticism to the virtual exclusion of all others. I'm reminded of the remark someone made when reminded that Handel had claimed he thought he saw the Great God Almighty as he was composing *Messiah*. This someone conjectured that Handel had probably seen the Great God Jupiter while writing his oratorios based on mythological subjects, too. It would be disastrous to write a biography of Boris Karloff on the basis of his screen personality. I doubt if Dylan is quite the pure seeker for truth and complete prophet of the wave of the future that he's made out to be in this record review. [October 28, 1975]

**JAY KINNEY** It was a pleasure, but mainly a sizable surprise to get that two-year in the making zine in the mail. In *Syndrome's* absence during that time my interest in fandom has fallen quite a bit

(about equal to your activity) and the lack of publishing from your quarters no doubt has something to do with it. However other factors come in as well as the hectic demands of this freelance existence I've tried to continue, and a general sense of the irrelevancy of much fannish activity and then, natch, the increasing expensiveness of this so-called hobby or whatever it is. At any rate, I don't do much these days and plus keep moving every year to confuse things even more.

To knock off a few quickies on this issue here: Its sort of hard to comment on as at this point I sort of feel like the issue was some sort of weird half-*Nope*, and you can never comment on your own zine very well. It looks good first off. Understated good design and clarity. (Ha. Here I am actually writing a LoC. I better end this quick. . . .) Your editorial about the Silva Mind Control course was immensely readable and informative even. Have you had any other experiences in that area since? Well, the whole thing proves to me that if a burnt out sterno bum like you can psychically diagnose physical ailments then the World certainly has lots more surprises in store for us than we might expect.

Grant's article was his always amusing stuff. Jesus, Lunney, it's hard to comment on this stuff. It's all good and it's all easy to get thru . . . unlike 99% of the zines that come my way anymore. You're some sort of anachronism here at age 22 or however old you are; 23.

The Panshins' piece was a bit . . . oh . . . shall we say romantic? I'm still not real familiar (at all) with *Planet Waves* and so I can't comment on that. But what they say about the culture is both true and false and I will explain in 25 words or less. I think there will be a new cultural upsurge when the circumstances demand it — thru the worsening of conditions to the point where people will have to speak up or be seen as totally self-indulgent toadstools — and it will be at that point that the bulk of trash of the early '70s (and I might include even Mott the Hoople and Bowie in that not totally negative category) will be seen as the time-bound floating music of times when those who still had the option decided to go hedonistic in one last fling before the deluge. Yes. All this nostalgia shit is the confusion of a culture between epochs (well) and a culture without any notion of what direction to take other than that of racking up big immediate profits. I just wrote a 10,000 word piece for *Co-Evolution Quarterly* on the current state of the left in this country. So, after 2 or 3 months of research I'd say from inside this tunnel-visioned foxhole I'm in at the moment that the SHIT is about to hit the fan again and it'll probably be for bigger stakes this time. Gluhglugh. [October 31, 1975]



**PIERS ANTHONY** On October 15th *Syndrome* arrived and I skimmed through it. I was amid *Cluster*, 102,000 words, so wasn't answering letters much. But now: Several months ago I went to a presentation by a man named Masterson on the Silva Mind Control technique. For a fee of about \$200 (as I recall) he gave a money-back guarantee of fabulous things, such as being able to look at a picture and tell what illnesses a person miles away had, to be able to sleep instantly by an effort of will, etc. I did not sign up, being dubious — but I remained curious. Now you have your own experience, telling me just what I wanted to know. Thank you! I may draw on this material for a book I am working out, *God of Tarot*, my most ambitious novel to date. If so, I'll give you a credit. [November 5, 1975]

*Still no credit after all these years, Piers. I might have read the book if you'd given me some credit. . . . — fl*

**TERRY HUGHES** Grant Canfield had some excellent illustrations for the piece he wrote. You laid this out very well which added to the visual treat of the artwork. Once again Grant has matched the high quality of his art with some skillful writing. Unfortunately his written work appears all too infrequently. He continues to hide part of his talent like a light under a bushel. (Don't ask me what that means, Frank. I just used it 'cause I'm sure it will impress the hell out of some of your readers. It'd impress me, that's for sure. So just drop it, okay.) But bushel or peck, what the heck. Grant can provide as much enjoyment behind a typewriter as he can at a drawing board.

You may be surprised that I am saying such nice things about Grant after the insults he hurled in my direction during the course of this article. However, I will admit real talent when I encounter it and would never stoop so low as to use the underhanded methods and tricks which have become his trademark. No, I will never resort to the kind of cheap shots he takes, no matter how cruelly and falsely he may vilify me. This is due to our differing personalities and conceptions of right and wrong. He may be more talented than I but I am a better human being. Really. Cross my heart. No joke.

Jay Kinney is another artist who writes well. Of course his mind is twisted and deranged. "Mental Strip Mines" was insane, warped, non-linear, totally abstract, and fundamentally weird. I liked it. If any of your readers would pay me ten dollars (\$10) I will happily explain the moral to them. Ah shucks, I'll do it for free just this once: You can lead a woman up to your apartment after a rock 'n' roll

concert but you can't make her raise the level of consciousness much less her skirt.

The part of Bill Kunkel's letter concerning me was full of hot air, but I should have expected that I guess. I was not "being a good little neofan" as he rants. I went back and read Calvin Demmon's "How I Got to be a BNF in only Ten Years, by Accident" which appeared in *Syndrome* number one and I still think it is very funny. You must have too, Frank, or you'd never have used it. Let me quote one paragraph from it (which I hope doesn't lose too much by being taken so out of context):

"I moved to New York, drawn, like the moth, closer and closer to the fannish flame. I hung around with Ted White. I was chased by subway police with Les Gerber. I went to church with Steve Stiles. I spoke on the telephone with Calvin Thomas Beck. I threw up on Carol Carr."

I laughed out loud when I first read it and I have each time since. This is just one paragraph from it. Whether or not a piece is enjoyed comes down to a matter of personal taste. Bill said he likes most of Calvin's stuff but not this one. Fine. I happen to enjoy this one in addition to most of Calvin's stuff that I have read. So Bill and I agree on Calvin's excellence as a writer, but disagree on the merits of this one piece. However when Bill begins to ascribe motives to my actions and statements his credibility is about as good as Ron Ziegler's. Bill was just making a fool out of himself and doing a good job of it.

Excuse me, but I must go commit a Lithuanian crime of passion. [December 21, 1975]

**DARRELL SCHWEITZER** Your essay on Mind Control or whatever is irritatingly imprecise as these things always are. The whole thing smacks very much of crackpottery from the way you describe it. Not the way you seemed to want to describe it, but the way it actually came through. All this talk about "energy," "powers," "vibrations" and the like without defining what you mean. I've heard it before from everybody from the UFOlogists to the Nichirenshoshu Buddhists (a noble attempt at spelling there — I think I got it right phonetically) who also talk about cosmic powers, vibrations, and the like. When you ask them what they mean in terms that can be demonstrated, a blank. Nothing. Frank, when you mention on page (Fuck! Number the pages!) — ah, somewhere near the end that somebody can't concentrate because there are too many "vibrations," what do you mean? Do you mean regular periodic disturbances in some medium, such as the air? If so, what is generating them? Measure them. Prove in some way that the things you are talking about actually exist. You are very vague

on what these alleged "powers" are, what they are supposed to do, what they actually do, and how they work. If you don't care yourself, don't bother to question the people in charge for something more than evasions, you are very likely going to get bilked. The Dianetics people work like that, and when they're done, a fool and his money have been parted.

I'm beginning to realize that I don't have much aptitude for the informal personal essay which is generally regarded as "fannish." This is shown by the fact that Bill Kunkel read my sex thing ["The Difference Between Men and Women" in *Syndrome* 3] all too seriously (and Mike Glicksohn did the same on the Fake Hugo thing some years back), failing to realize that it was to a great degree intended to parody that kind of true fannish confession writing that Hubbard does. (Usually pretty well, I think.) If anything, the article moved rather heavy-handedly into the transparently absurd, but if anyone missed the point, let me state now once and for all that I do not get sexual pleasure out of fondling my typewriter. Sometimes writers have to say these things outright. Ellison in the afterword to "Catman" insists that he is not a machine-fucker, and likewise I'm not a machine fondler. And I know that there is a greater difference between men and women than the fact that one has whiskers and one doesn't. I even knew it before I was 18 and a half or so and started to have noticeable whiskers myself.

As for Fuck Funds, I think SFWA should have one, or at least the Clarion Workshops. The one I was at had a shocking number of admitted virgins: eleven out of nineteen unmarried men and (I think) two out of three women. Possibly instead of a Synanon style encounter session they should have an orgy. It would do most people a lot more good. (In case you're wondering, yes the question did come up and yes, there was a show of hands.)

Bruce Arthurs was over-reacting about the joint, I'll agree. The most obvious thing to have done in a case like that, if he really didn't want to be in the same room with a marijuana smoker, would have been to leave. Simple as that. The guy is free to light up in his own house, and if Bruce doesn't want to share the risk, get out. It's a lot politer, too.

When joints are passed around at parties I attend I simply pass them on. I'm not interested. I have yet to meet anyone who uses any of the substances variously grouped as "narcotics," or alcohol for that matter, and gets anything worthwhile out of it. I've met no heavy users of dope or alcohol that I don't regard as cripples. Some people use drugs because they have no imaginations, some because they can't maintain social standings and contacts, some because they have no physical stam-



ina (i.e.: the kid who can't get through Phys. Ed. without speed), some because they have no power of concentration, some because life is just so plain miserable that they can't get by from day to day without decreased sensitivity, and so on. In all cases they're using the drugs or booze to do something that a healthy person can do all by himself, with no crutches. I find these people pitiable and tedious at the same time. I wouldn't want to join them, because all they do is make themselves less aware, less sentient, a little less human. Can you think of any better way to reduce someone to an object than to keep him stoned or drunk all the time?

Also there's the professional side of it. I've yet to meet a successful writer who uses dope. I've met a few with the talent to succeed, but inevitably they lack the drive to keep pushing their work until finally it catches on, and they never end up in print. [February 2, 1976]

*Where do you come up with this shit, Darrell? Obviously, you never heard of Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Charles Bukowski, William Burroughs, Hunter S. Thompson or Philip K. Dick, to name a few. — fl*

**PAUL WILLIAMS** Just wanna let you know that I don't know why you sent me *Syndrome* or why I read it but I enjoyed it quite a bit, especially your editorial and Canfield's piece. And the artwork. And it seems to me I read Jay Kinney's piece and was impressed or something one stoned night a few months ago, when it arrived. Anyway, it's not my intention to break my vows and write a LoC or anything, just wanted you to know I had a good time, and thanks. [February 18, 1976]

**GENE SIMMONS** Dunno if you're aware of it, but about ten years back (I guess it was only eight or so) I used to receive your other fmz (fanzine).

Strange, but growing up (finishing school and having to start working for a living) is as strange an experience as first coming out of a womb — that whole experience of being snatched from the womb/home where all needs are provided for — can be a startling experience.

The switch from being the center of attention at home (being an only child and being the only male in the entire family) to being just another piece of flesh trying for "Grade A Gov't Inspected" grading (or, trying to be someone special) wasn't easy. I simply did not like NOT being thought of as someone special — my ego wouldn't stand for it!!!

I started working as a messenger boy, which was the pits. Then I learned to type (became quite adept at it — up to 90 wpm)



and started typing for typing agencies — where the psychology was still being an expendable piece of meat. Through that, I started working for *Vogue* magazine: specifically for the Associate Editor (now editor). And it was there I started to feel important — again being the only male around. The possibilities there could have lead to a column of sorts — all that youth culture, and the like. Anyway, all this time there was also Rock and Roll and Practice. I had finished school by that time and had already undergone the rigors of trying to teach 6th Grade in the New York City Public School system — I lasted six months before I realized I *hated kids*, one and all!

Meanwhile, the Rock and Roll avenue worked out and I became "important" once again.

Now I'm wondering how I'll take death — where, I understand, it doesn't matter who you are, *again!*

By the way, is Buck Coulson still pubbing *Yandro*? [April 14, 1976]

**JONH INGHAM** I was interested to read about Silva mind Control (it sounds like a ciggie commercial — "Silva Mind Control! A silly millimeter stronger. Yes, make your friends look like fools!") — the US seems to be really into all this, while in England everyone's still quite happy with meditation and the Guru Mararaj Ji (or Fat Boy, as we cynics call him). Are you still into it?

The other major comment hook was Alexei and Cory's ruminations on Dylan, which sounded like Ralph Gleason's Dylan-has-brought-us-a-"New Morning"-and-it-was rap, which had me on the floor. I've never been a Dylan fanatic, though I like a lot of his songs, and I find it a bit suspect to think of him as a God and sage, especially after "Joey" on the new album. Since when does a prophet and leader of the people write such a lying inaccurate piece of romantic bullshit about such a creep and (insert descriptives) as Joey Gallo? It only throws mud on something like "Hurricane," which as a song is *amazing*, but apparently is also wildly inaccur-

rate. That Dylan is back on the road is great, and that he encompasses his entire past is also great, but the reverence and godhoodness with which it's treated by such as *Rolling Stone* says more to me about the lack of new vibrancy rather than Dylan's or anyone's longevity and such like. If one has to praise old fogeys, then I'm for Neil Young, who was here three weeks ago with four nights of the most mind blowing rock and roll it's ever been my pleasure to experience. I've only felt that transcendent about twice before at concerts. The other thing about all this attention on Jiants of the Past is that it detracts from spotlighting new talent. Lou Reed was right when he said no kid wants to like what's in *Stone*. They're only concerned with the music they dug ten years ago. [April 24, 1976]

**ALJO SVOBODA** Grant Canfield's article made me laugh four or five times. I forgot to keep an exact count until I was a couple of paragraphs into it. Myself, I've never worked around people I disliked, except for two days writing exhibition notes on antique watches for an uncle. And even then, I was alone for most of the time.

A wet fart is worse than a loud fart. Also, a fart will often determine if it is just another infatuation or True Love. I won't say how.

Most of the people in your letter-column sound like minor assholes, even if they aren't in fact and I know they aren't. It's the context that is doing it, probably. Where else would Bruce Arthurs feel compelled to be as absurd as that about things no one should care about unless an asshole tries to force the subject into a false prominence. Marijuana and virginity should be kept silent about for a number of decades, and even then brought up only the way Coors and cocksucking are nowadays. Anyway, I'll bet everyone who writes to you LoCing *Syndrome* sounds a little like an asshole. That's the way things are. I'll bet I sound a little like an asshole right now. Too bad. [June 30, 1976]

*Well, you do seem to know an awful lot about farts. — fl*









