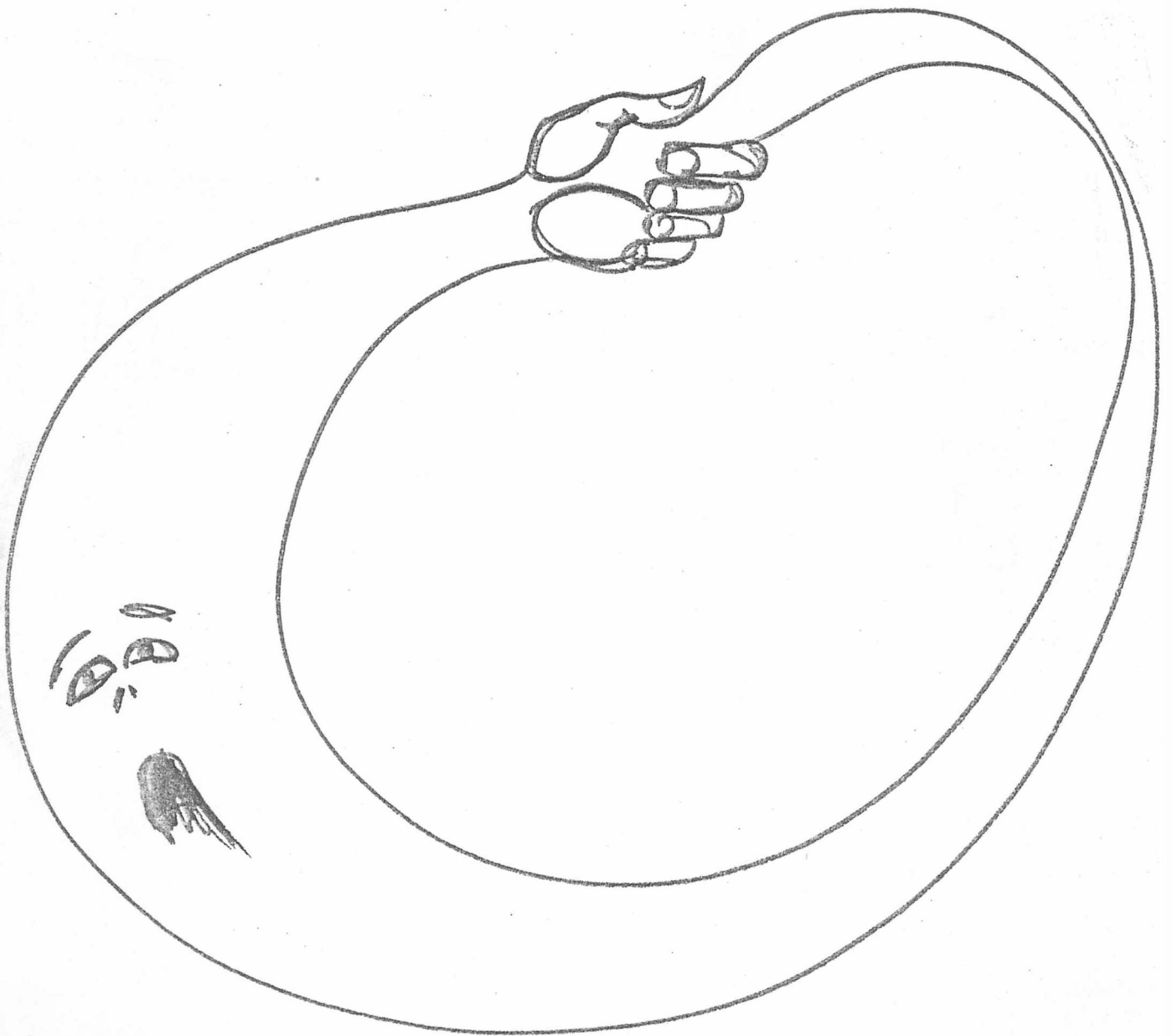


# DIASPORA





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F A N S P R A C H

Well, maybe worldcons won't just keep on getting bigger and bigger. SunCon in Miami Beach drew just over 2,000 attendees, about a third fewer than last year's worldcon. It was still fairly crowded and hectic, but less so than worldcons have been for many years (Aussiecon excepted). Besides, the Fontainebleau Hotel was a huge, sprawling site where you could spend ten minutes walking from one meeting room to another even if you didn't stop off in the bar; there was plenty of room in which people could move around.

"Huge" may not be the mot juste for the Fontainebleau; maybe "gross" would describe it better. It's the premiere Garish Hotel from Miami Beach's days of affluence and its decor reflects the tastes of the nouveau riche who traditionally made up its clientele. Marble pillars are common, and the main lobby featured enormous glistening chandeliers the size of tugboats. "The style of this hotel is High Tacky," I said.

The smaller number of attendees was attributed largely to poor public relations on the part of the Committee -- who, even more than usual, came in for a lot of criticism. The del Reys and Wollheims stayed away because of conflicts with the Committee, or so went the rumors; andy offutt, President of SFWA, stayed away for the same reason. People said the Committee had been "fascistic"; people said the con was badly organized because the Committee members didn't live anywhere near Miami Beach; people complained about a lot of things to do with the Committee. No doubt they made some goofs, but as I was moved to say several times during the convention, "No committee can ruin a worldcon, and this one

is proving it." A committee may choose a lousy hotel, may antagonize some people into staying away, may make unwise programming decisions, but what does it matter? Two thousand fans, readers, writers, artists, editors and publishers gather under one roof for a weekend of hijinx and business, and how can anyone stop them from having a good time? Put me in a room filled with the likes of Sid Coleman, Dave Hartwell, Liz Lynn, Howard Waldrop, Gardner Dozois, Ginjer Buchanan, Sherry Gottlieb, Ed Bryant, Ted White, Jack Dann, Marta Randall, Lee Hoffman, Tom Perry, Avedon Carol, Bob Silverberg, Jay Kay Klein, George R. R. Martin, Gale Burnick, Lesleigh Luttrell and all the rest of That Crowd, and I'm going to have a good time.

It didn't start out all that well. I flew to Miami Beach with Bob Silverberg, Marta Randall and Liz Lynn, and the in-flight movie was

Smokey and the Bandit, which features Burt Reynolds in one car chase after another. Bob and I serconly read science fiction rather than watch the movie, but Marta and Lizzy happily donned headphones and chortled their way through. (Though Lizzy thought Burt Reynolds was Robert Redford -- shows how well she keeps up with male sex symbols.) Bob was reading my Best SF of the Year #5, which struck me as ironic since I was reading 1977 sf magazines, researching Best SF #7. Sometime during the flight Bob turned to me and said, "I just read RETRO-GRADE SUMMER -- now I know

why everyone's talking about John Varley." Marta laughed aloud, lifted off an earphone and said, "Did you see what he did to that truck?"

We landed in Miami and Bob picked up the Hertz Pinto he'd reserved. There were ants in the car; as we drove out to the causeway leading to Miami Beach, Bob said, "It's a tropical climate, that's why. Look at all the greenery." Indeed, Florida was astonishingly green after two years of drought in California; besides, there was something falling from the sky, something...well, wet. Rain? I could hardly believe it, but rain it was, and lots of it, a torrent.

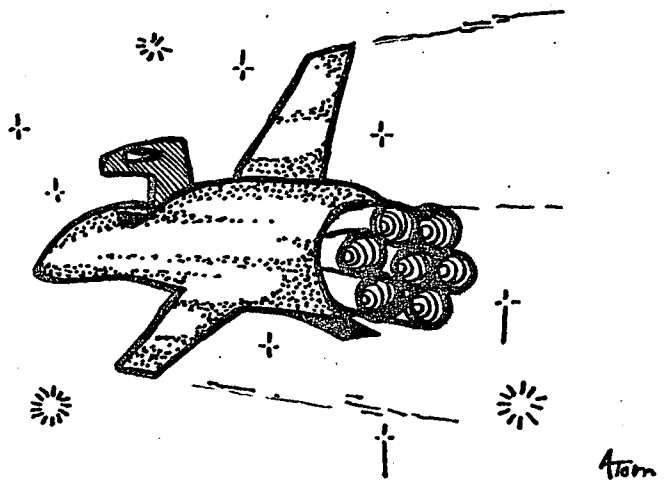
Somewhere out on the causeway, pelted by rain and lashed by cross-winds, we noticed that the car was acting funny -- bumpy ride, and getting bumpier. "Rough road," said Bob. "Flat tire," said Lizzy, so we stopped and Marta got out and checked all the tires. "Nothing," she said, so we proceeded another half-mile while the ride got rougher. Finally Bob pulled over again, and this time when Marta looked at the tires she came back saying, "Jee-zus! We don't have any tire at all in the right rear!" We all got out in the pelting rain and looked: the steel-belted radial had completely shredded, leaving only a wheel-rim surrounded by mangled rubber and wires that looked like Shredded Wheat. Marta went to a nearby call-box to tell Hertz to get another car here soon, while I stared bemusedly at the remains of the tire and muttered, "I knew something was wrong when the ants deserted the car."



The rain stopped, and we got out and stood by the car for forty-five minutes waiting for a Hertzperson, examining roadside rocks for fossils (found one), occasionally seeing fan-types pass by in taxis on the way to the Fontainebleau. Sherry Gottlieb and Larry Niven waved to us. Five cars stopped and their drivers asked if we needed help; I was impressed by Southern Friendliness till I noticed at least two of the cars had out-of-state plates. (Besides, Miami Beach is the Sixth Borough of New York City.) Eventually our replacement car arrived and we proceeded to the hotel without further incident.

We all checked in, I met Lizzy for a quick dinner in the coffee shop and then we went off to look for the action. What we found was an elevator that took us to B, and K, and P, but not the fifth floor. "I feel like a character in a Kafka novel," said L. We gave up and went to a Meet the Authors party. (There was one Thursday night and another Friday night; I forget why, and maybe the Committee does too.) Oh, and I stopped to register for the con -- it took exactly two minutes and eight seconds, which was a bit of an improvement over the forty-five minutes it took at Kansas City last year, so evidently this Committee did something right.

Among the Authors I met was ...Lee Hoffman! Whee! Hadn't seen her in six years. We hugged and danced around manically for a while, then I asked her what she'd been doing lately: "You're a Big Name Western Writer now, aren't you? Won a Spur Award and all that." "Yeeaahh...but there's no money in westerns. I'm writing a historical now." "Why not write more science fiction? -- there's lots of money in sf right now." "Well, maybe...but you know I was always a fakefan."



Ted White was there: "I have a new career," he told me. "I'm a radio deejay now; I have a regular program where I play all the progressive rock I want. I did one program, right after Elvis Presley died, where I announced a Tribute to Elvis Presley and then played three of his most famous numbers, only recorded by better people. Then I said, 'That concludes our Tribute to Elvis Presley.'" I remarked, "Wow, you must've gotten plenty of calls complaining about that," and Ted's face lit up in a grin. "No, actually we didn't get a single one. Nobody who listens to this program knows me as Bitching Ole Ted White. It's terrific!" "Don't worry, they'll learn," I assured him.

Later I went up to the Berkley-Putnam suite, where Dave Hartwell was hosting the standard drunken party of the sort at which the next two years of science fiction are negotiated late at night over vodka-and-root-beer highballs. I talked with Larry Niven, who told me that despite his many laurels he's being twitted by Jerry Pournelle because Larry never won the John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer (the award hadn't been started when Larry broke in): "And I can't do anything about it,

because I'm no longer eligible!" I thought about that a moment, and my fannish instincts came back to me in a rush: "Why don't you take a penname," I said, "and write all your best stuff under that name?" He shook his head. "Wouldn't be fair to the real new writers," he said. "Well then, just wait till you're nominated and the votes are counted but the awards haven't been engraved, then call the Committee and withdraw so the second-place writer can get the award." Larry shuffled his feet and thought about this. "There's one problem," he said: "What if I don't win?" "...Um," I said. We discussed various alternate methods for a while, came up with nothing workable. Finally Larry said, "Let's talk about this some more tomorrow when I'm sober." "Nah," I said. "When we're sober we won't be interested in talking about this. Let's continue this discussion at the next drunken party." He said okay, but we never got back to the subject despite many drunken parties thereafter, and so I'm still unsure how Larry Niven is going to meet the challenge of Jerry Pournelle.

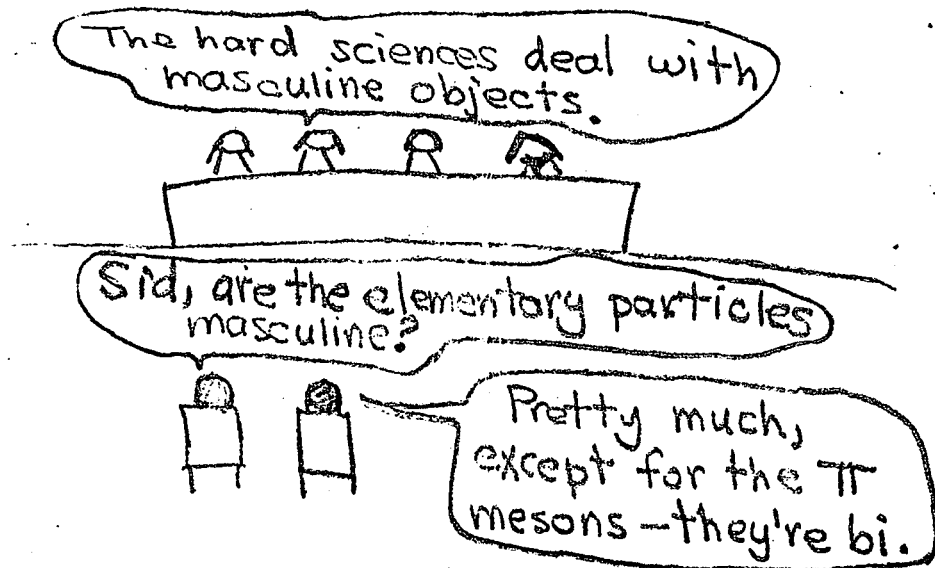
I STEPPED ON AN  
UGLY BUG...



It was, as you may have gathered, late at night. A number of people began filtering out of the main room of the Berkley-Putnam suite into the bedroom searching for breathable air and a place to sit down. Among these were Marta Randall, Jack Dann and Sherry Gottlieb, who invented a game which I encountered when I entered the room. "Anybody who steps across that threshold," said Jack, "has to tell us when they first Did It, and how old they were, and where." He thought a moment, then added, "And don't tell us you don't remember, because everybody remembers." So for the next hour, as the party in the main room kept getting more and more crowded and the number of people in our room grew to a dozen or more, we were regaled with funny stories from one entrant after another. No names were used, of course, nor were there any salacious details; it was just that one's First Time always seems to have its ludicrous aspects...fumbling, bad planning, wondering what-do-I-do-now, etc. We were all struck by awe and glee when one person said matter-of-factly, "It was two o'clock in the afternoon, in a cemetery." One young woman hesitated, and asked, "You mean with a man

or a woman?" Jack waved a hand airily: "Doesn't matter. Whichever was first." "Goats and chickens count too," I said helpfully. ...It was a very Silly party, not at all the sort of thing neofans probably imagine goes on at gatherings of distinguished pros, but as I've said several times over the years, pros are sillier than fans any day.

Sometime during this party, one of the convention's important lacks was corrected: Sid Coleman arrived, just off a plane from Istanbul or Crete or somewhere. He was suffering from jet-lag and unable to join in the general hilarity very much, but when Jack said, "I'm getting tired of this First Time game; let's start asking about everyone's most embarrassing moment," Sid responded: "That's the same question!"



The above cartoon was done by Sid the next day, during a "Women in Science Fiction" panel on which I appeared with (reading from left to right in the cartoon) Phyllis Eisenstein, Marta Randall and Liz Lynn. I was on the end because I arrived last; I was also the moderator of the panel for that reason, because everyone else had said a firm "No!" already. But I like moderating panels, and this one went well; I enjoyed it. A fairly typical presentation on the subject, but some new things were said and the familiar things were said well. (Ray Nelson, when I was talking with him some weeks after the con, told me he's tired of the "Women in SF" panels and wishes they, the panels, would go away; I predicted they'll be a staple item on the programming of every worldcon for at least five more years, because more and more women are beginning to read sf and they're interested in hearing the subject discussed, which means these panels will continue to draw good-sized audiences. Indeed, this one had about sixty people in the room, which was an unusually large turnout for the program at SunCon. Most items had far fewer people: I saw, for instance, a dialogue between Fred Pohl, a big name, and Jack Williamson who was Guest of Honor fergod-sake, and there were only forty people listening. It seems to be a trend at conventions these days; Charlie and Dena Brown told me that at Bhamacon the weekend before, some program items had to be canceled because nobody showed up to listen!)

I was on a couple of other panels at SunCon, too. The first (since I've just remembered that the above panel was later in the con) was "The Bay Area: Science Fiction's Left Bank," on which Marta, Lizzy, I and Bob Silverberg described the workings of a social scene in which half the people are sf writers. My favorite anecdote was about the time Marta, who lives three houses down the street from Carol and me, submitted a chapter from a forthcoming novel as a short story for Universe; I didn't think the chapter stood well by itself, so the next day I phoned her at home, figuring she'd be at work and I could make history by becoming the first editor ever to reject a story to an answering machine. She was home that day, though, so I may never get that slot in the Guinness Book of Sci Fi Records. That evening I walked down to Marta's to return the manuscript, and complained that she hadn't included return postage. (More recently Marta submitted a short story which I liked, but I forgot and called her at work to tell her I wanted to buy it, thus losing my chance to become the first editor to accept a story from an answering machine.)

Monday afternoon Ted White and I did a "dialogue" panel on "Fandom in the Sixties," held in the small fan-programming room that someone had hidden off in a corner somewhere, reachable only through a series of secret passages. (Ihm, maybe that was where the Kafka elevator went!) We'd discussed earlier how we should handle this, and agreed that I'd tell about everything wonderful Ted had done in fandom in the sixties, and he'd talk about all the wonderful stuff I did. It didn't quite work out that way (well, we weren't really serious, you understand). Actually, Ted showed up that day very hyper, possibly because of the nose-spray he'd been using, and he talked a blue streak...the "dialogue" nearly turned into a monologue, and if Ted hadn't been saying such interesting things -- not all about me, either -- I'd've killed him. We talked about many of the things fans had done in the sixties (maybe even some of the things you did) for our scheduled hour, then were told that the "Fandom in the Fifties" panel, which had been scheduled right after ours, had been canceled because Bob Silverberg had elected to go look at botanical gardens instead of talking about Seventh Fandom, Warren A. Frieberg and Peter J. Vorzimer. So we called up Lee Hoffman from the audience -- she'd been scheduled on that other panel -- and continued for another hour.

A strange and moderately wonderful thing happened when we started talking about fannish fanzines and sercon fanzines: Ted was rhapsodizing over HYPHEN when Ed Wood boomed from the audience, "I WAS ON THE HYPHEN MAILING LIST AND I USED TO DROP EVERY COPY INTO THE WASTEBASKET WITHOUT

EVEN OPENING IT!" Ted told him he was crazy and had no taste and they promptly got into a loud argument that went on for five minutes while I sat there bemused, thinking to myself that this was exactly the sort of thing that used to happen in fandom in the fifties and all the neofans in the audience, like Tom Perry, were seeing history come alive. I finally diverted the argument onto some safe topic, like maybe SKY HOOK, but I kept expecting to see Harlan Ellison come striding into the room announcing "I've got Dean A. Grennell quotecards, and you can't beat 'em, buddy!"



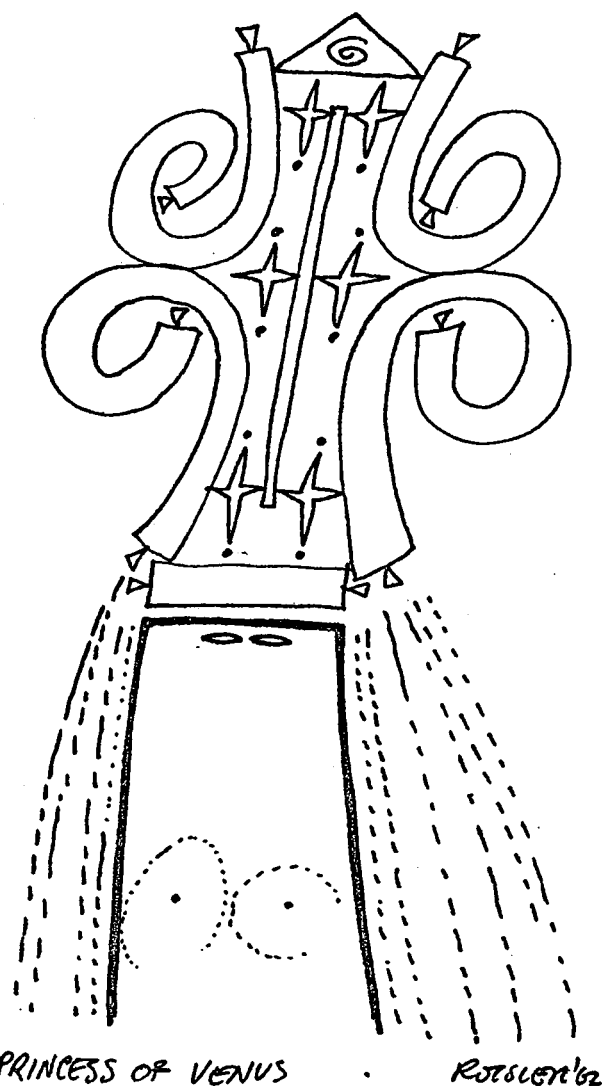
There were lots and lots of parties at the con, and I found myself hanging out alternately with the feminists and the pros. (Sometimes they were the same.) I went to the Women's Apa party, courtesy of Jennifer Bankier and Avedon Carol, but left after a while when I noticed there were more men than women there. (This was also typical of the "Room of Our Own" at this year's Westercon in Vancouver, I hear -- so much for the idea of feminists "polarizing"

fandom, as a few easily-threatened male fans had predicted.) I wandered into the Pocket Books party, the Ace party, the Berkley-Putnam party.... You know, in the past there's always been just one publisher's party per night at a con, if that, but sf has become so profitable these days that the publishers-and-editors turned out in droves to try to lure authors into their clutches. It wasn't a cutthroat business, though: at the end



of the Pocket Books party, Adele Hull sent all the leftover liquor up to the Berkley-Putnam party, for instance.

That Pocket Books party was a lot of fun, by the way. It was held in a fairly large room off the lobby with the pros gathered round various bar-type tables to chat and carouse. I spent most of my time at what I called the Silly Table, where Howard Waldrop, Gardner Dozois, Dave Hartwell and a bunch of other zanies held forth; next to us was the Hard Science table, where Poul Anderson, Hal Clement and others discussed less important things. I remember Gardner telling us about the Conan the Barbarian Pizza Parlor, which actually exists somewhere in Texas; we all immediately began to make up a variety of fast-food establishments like Fafhrd's Felafel and The Big Brak. And I remember a wonderful tee-shirt Howard Waldrop was wearing: it showed two gaunt hands reaching up from the beltline to clutch frantically at his chest. "What does it mean?" Dave Hartwell asked. "I don't know," Howard said. "It's a good writer trying to get out," I explained, and Howard fell off his chair. (He knows I like his writing -- I've bought stories from him often enough.)

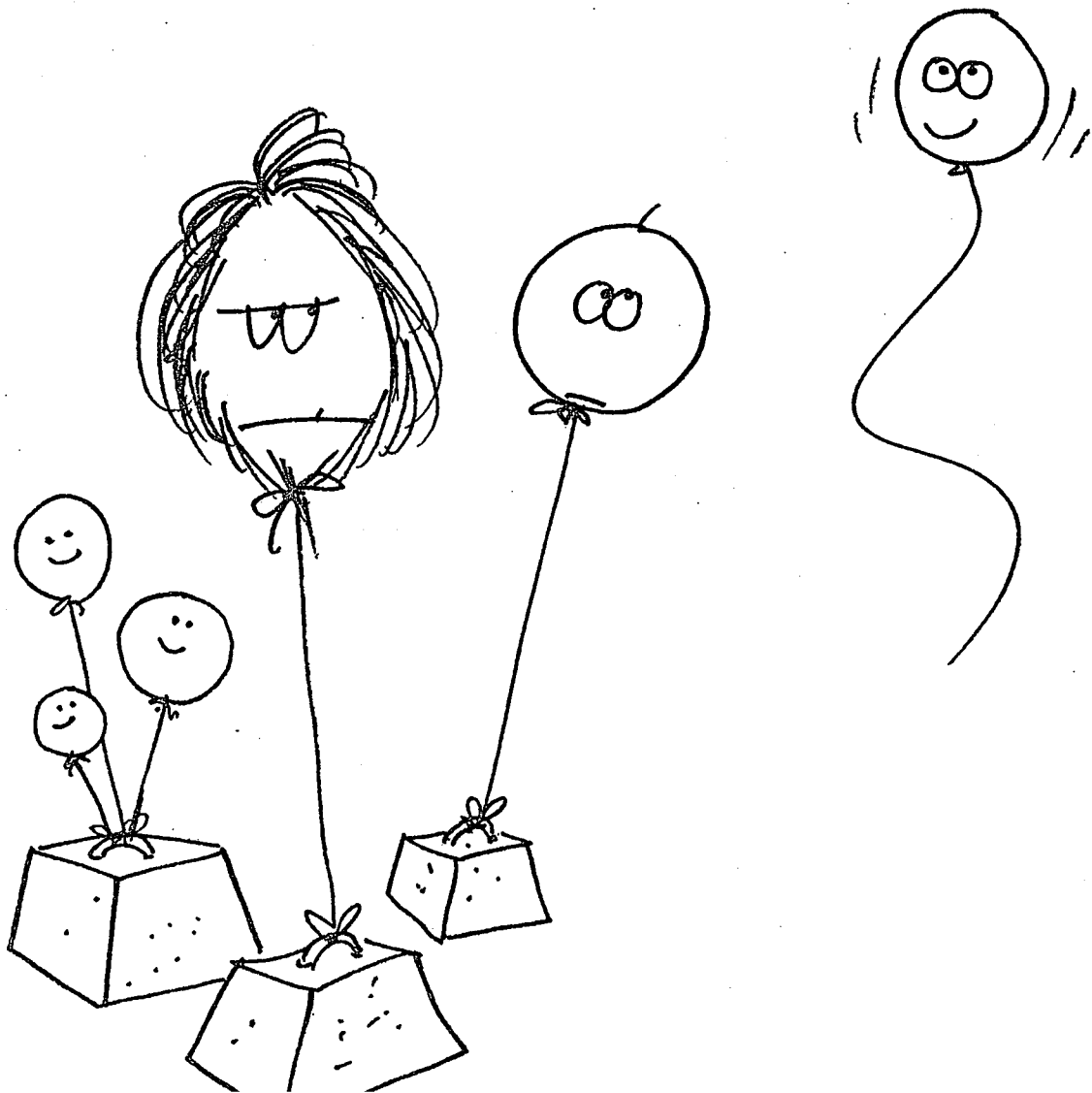


The fan programming in that little room off a broom closet included a couple of feminist panels, too: "Sexism in Fandom," etc. The panelists were sometimes quite explicit in warning neofannes about which pros were Grabbers, etc.; it was refreshing to hear truth instead of mythology over the mike at a convention. Nor was it all as humorless as feminists are supposed to be; during one panel Ann Weiser said to the men in the audience, "Hey, we don't want to be called girls, or chicks, or broads, or ladies, or any of those. Call us..." "Dykes," said another panelist. "Right! Dykes!" she cried, raising a clenched fist and then collapsing under the table in laughter. I fell madly in love with Ann Weiser at that moment.

I got to meet all sorts of people I'd been wanting to meet, like Jim Baen and Kirby McCauley and Jim Frenkel (who did a wonderful boggle when, after we'd been joking together at the Silly Table for ten minutes, he glanced at my name-tag and said, "You're Terry Carr? Wow!"). [Didn't stop him from rejecting a book proposal of mine, though.] Ran into Buz Wyeth in the huckster room when I had ten minutes to eat lunch and get

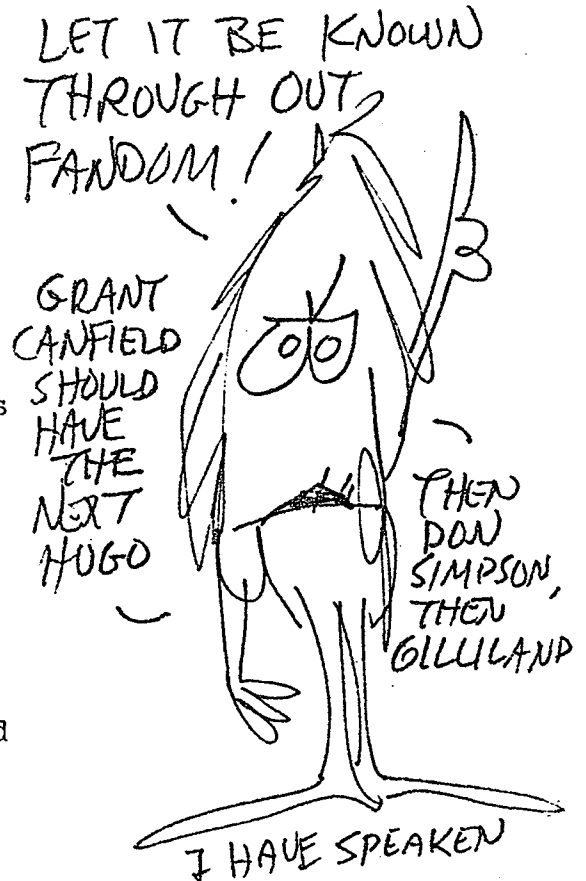
to a panel I was on, so I didn't get to say much more than hello and see you again, which I didn't -- a pity, because Buz is one of the nicest people in publishing. Spent a fair amount of time with Hank Stine, who's now living in the South and seems in remarkably good shape; we had some delightful conversations about the philosophy of this and that, the sort of talk one can conduct (in Carol's phrase) "only with the utmost clarity." Sat next to Leigh Brackett at the Hugo banquet -- I'm madly in love with her too, but that's nothing new; I fell in love with her when I first read a story by her at age twelve. Carolyn Cherryh was at our table, also, and brought back from the podium both the Gandalf Award which she accepted for Andre Norton and the John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer. I talked with R. A. Lafferty during the Meet-the-Authors party; he said he's pretty much abandoned writing novels and is concentrating instead on short stories: "I'm like an aging relief pitcher -- I can still throw smoke sometimes but mostly I get by on junk pitches."

Ed Bryant was another late arrival. We'd heard he wouldn't be able to make it to the con because he was laid up with flu, but the second night as Sherry Gottlieb and I were heading for the SFWA suite we found him registering for the con, suitcase at his feet. Sherry and I jumped all over him and hugged him and so on (Sherry hugged him a little more than I did), and he said, "You both now have forty-eight hours before



you collapse from Venusian Slime Mold. Where's the action?" So we took him up to the SFWA suite and he walked in carrying his suitcase and a temperature of 102°. He seemed to have a good time, though. (Marta jumped all over him and hugged him, which possibly didn't hurt too much.)

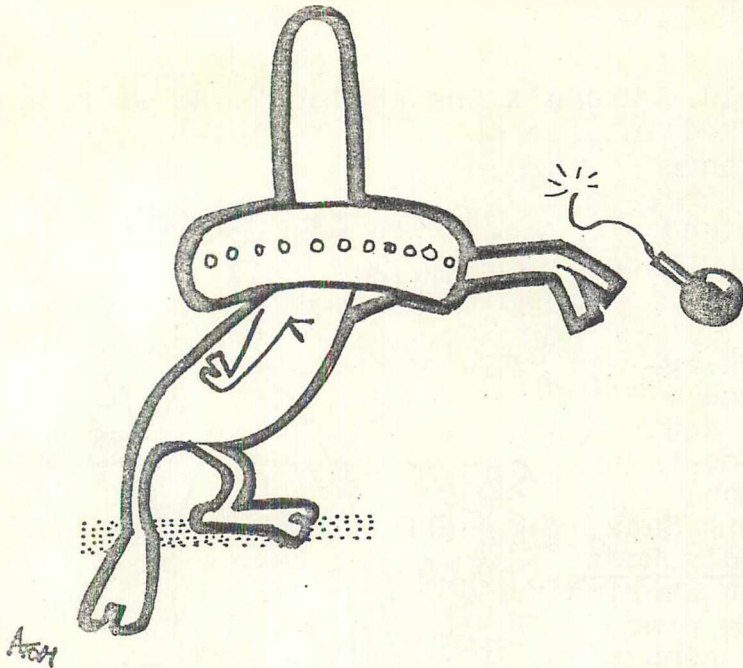
One night I went up to the Berkley-Putnam suite in search of a party and found...Pat Hartwell, newly arrived and in cheerful health; she introduced me to a small being who I believe was a human baby. Elsewhere I discussed with Art Saha, who works with Don Wollheim on World's Best SF, our methods of choosing the best stories of the year; we agreed that sticking pins in the contents pages of Analog was almost as reliable as examining Gardner Dozois's entrails. I got interviewed for a radio program on KPFA and then for Ginger Buchanan's column in Cosmos. The last time I was interviewed for a science fiction magazine it was Vertex, which folded one issue later; I feel a little guilty about Cosmos. Ran into Pete Weston and we chatted till George R.R. Martin came by, at which point we began vying for first look at George's next story; George gave each of us a definite maybe.



I also ran into Gene Wolfe, with whom I'd had some correspondence over the fact that in Best SF #6 I referred to him as "fiftyish." Since he's 45, he was shaken by this, and for several days I was getting a postcard-a-day pointing out that he was two years younger than Jacqueline Onassis, etc. On seeing him and exchanging greetings, I said gravely, "You're, uh, looking good, Gene," but he declined the gambit. He did, however, inform me that he was telling all his fellow writers that I was the best fortyish editor in the business, on Wednesdays.

There were lots and lots more parties. The Happy Gays Are Here Again party, hosted by Lizzy and Ctein, was a mob-scene both early and late, when I was there. Rick Sternbach brought a crate of California oranges. The Hugo Losers' Party, hosted by Ace Books, was another highlight, though I deny the report that I took part in a "mock-orgy" there; actually I mostly stood on the sidelines and yelled "Cut that out!"

The Dead Dog Party in the SFWA suite was hilarious, though. All the zanies were there -- zanies never sleep -- and we amused ourselves listening to Gardner Dozois and George Martin recount the plot of some story a Clarion student had once turned in. (If it'd been half as good as their retelling it would have won an award.) Various of the group, like C. J. Cherryh, Jay Kay Klein, Gardner and so on, collaborated on an impromptu Conan satire which was given a dramatic reading by Jay Kay and then Bob Silverberg; we tried to convince Dave Hartwell to buy it, but he's too canny, even at 3:00 a.m. on the last night of a convention.



Ginjer Buchanan was there, and Sid Coleman and Ted White and Rick Sternbach and lots of other good people. Liz Lynn drank a spayed gerbil for us, though she'll deny this.

Sometime before dawn I went to bed and giggled away what was left of the night. I'm not sure whether I was awake or sleeping while giggling, but that's a fit summation of the con anyhow.

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On the other hand, Octocon I, which was held in Santa Rosa CA late in October, was in some ways a throwback to earlier "mainstream"

conventions, no doubt because it was put on by a committee with little or no experience running cons. True, it was Modern in that it was held in a motel and that made it strange -- what, after all, is a convention without elevators? -- and there were all sorts of redoubtable Names there like Theodore Sturgeon, C. L. Moore, Robert A. Heinlein, Leigh Brackett Hamilton, Poul Anderson and so forth, and they inaugurated an Edmond Hamilton Award "for the work of fiction that best typifies the Sense of Wonder" and the Heinlein-sponsored blood bank did big business, and there were Serious Talks about Science and all that. But...when a worldcon draws only c. 2,000 attendees in Miami Beach, what do you make of a new regional con in Santa Rosa that brings in 1500? Not only that, but the attendees actually went to the programs: I believe there were 500 or 700 at every program item I saw. How Old Wave! How roob! But a good con, largely for that reason. (I may be prejudiced: I was on two of the panels.)

The highlights, for me, included E. Hoffman Price saying on the Edmond Hamilton Panel, which he moderated, "I'm tempted to say I'll remember Ed Hamilton as long as I live, but that would be faint praise, because I'm so damn old I may die any day!" And I remember Phil Dick coming by while I was talking with Dave Hartwell and Chester Anderson in the parking lot; in the most terrible Mexican accent he could muster, Phil asked if we could direct him to Tijuana: "Is close enough to jualk? You know what I mean, jualk?" I must've stared at him oddly, because he turned to me and said, "Stop that! I hate it when people look at me like they know all my weaknesses!" Recovering, I said, "I know." He threw up his hands and went away. ...There was also a Masquerade, and belly dancers (who I was told would be in the best of taste and dancing to an original script of a fantasy musical, though I missed seeing this), a crowded huckster room no more than 40% full of comic books and Star Wars items, an address by Guest of Honor Poul Anderson, etc. It was very much like a Real Convention, but after SunCon it seemed an anachronism. Maybe Santa Rosa is a parallel world.

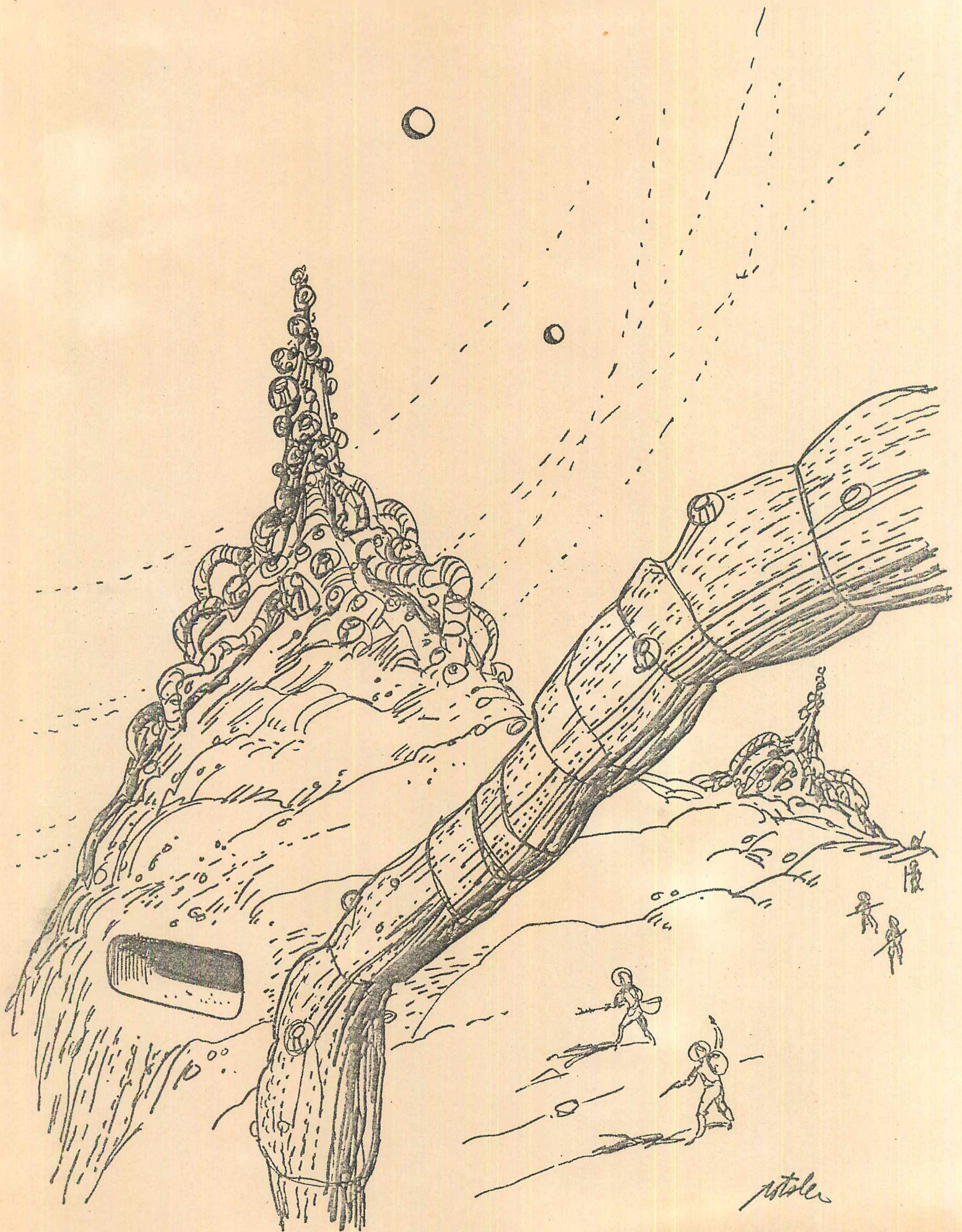
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ARTWORK this issue by Wm. Rotsler, Arthur Thomson and Sid Coleman.  
COVERS by Wm. Rotsler, who also did the lettering.









W. H. R.