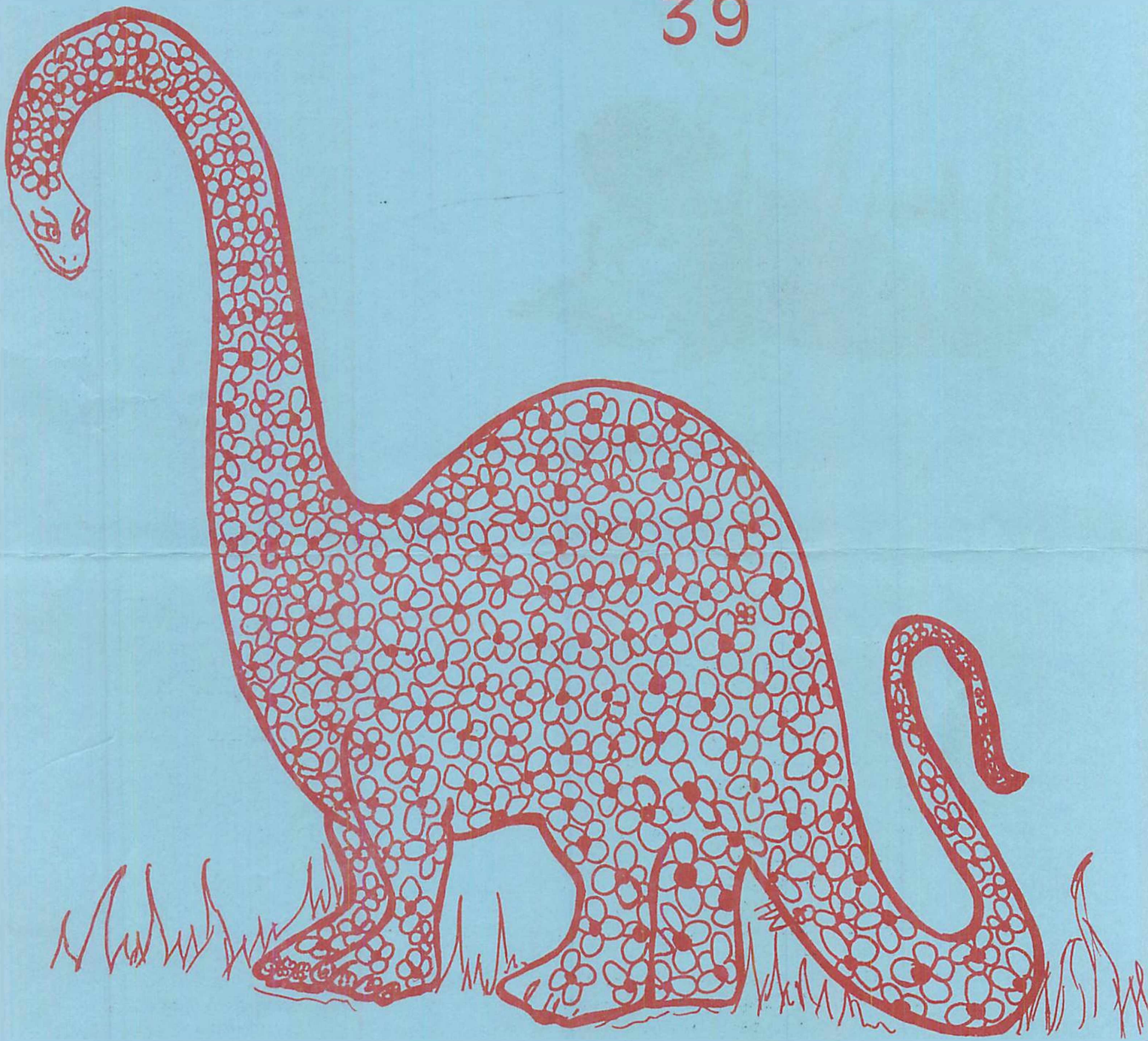
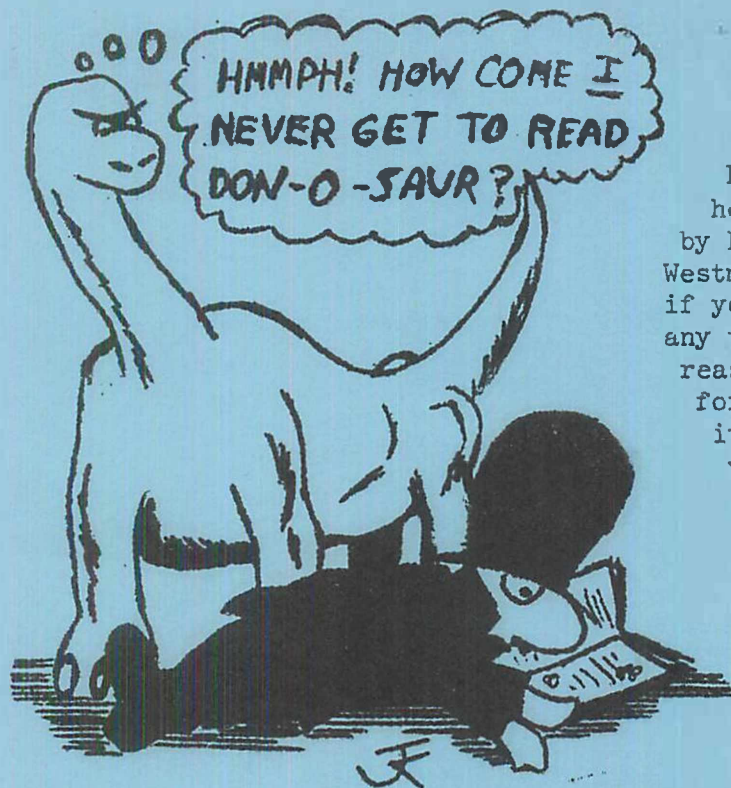


Don-o-Saur

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December 1974

Published monthly until now, bi-monthly hereafter, starting with February 1975, by Don C. Thompson, 7498 Canosa Court, Westminster, CO 80030 [phone 303-429-6562, if you feel both affluent and chatty, or any time you're in the area]. And the reason you get to read this and the unfortunate beast at left does not is that it is not a subscriber, neither does it write locs, contribute artwork or trade zines with me. Also, until now, I didn't know it cared. Almost any expression of interest is sufficient to get one on my mailing list, and once on, you may have trouble getting off. For those who insist on paying with money, Don-o-Saur costs 25¢ per issue, or 12 for \$2.50. My mailing list now totals about 220 (plus a local readership of about 50). Press run this issue is 320.

CHRISTMAS MEMORIES

Quite often, as I'm sure most regular DOS readers have noticed, when I begin my monthly [henceforth bi-monthly] discourse, I don't have any clear idea of what I'll be writing about. I simply start writing. Except that the process isn't really simple. With my fingers on the keyboard and the typer humming, I tell myself that I will write down the first intelligent-sounding and/or provocative sentence that pops into my mind. Then I sit and stare at the blank wall, twisting my legs around each other and around the legs of the chair, making myself a cup of coffee (or Postum or hot chocolate) with the pot of hot water and makings that I must have by my side while I work, gazing forlornly around at the shelves of books and magazines that line the walls of my room, studying the scuff marks on the typewriter table or the smudges on the coffee tray -- giving myself up, but not entirely, to all or any of the countless distractions that writers are capable of discovering while gearing themselves to the task of writing. Persistence is the secret, for me. If I just sit long enough, relentlessly forcing my mind back again and again to the typewriter, surviving the distractions, so to speak, not allowing myself to be totally carried away by them, eventually, after 15 minutes -- or 30 or 45 -- I'll think of a sentence that sounds good to me. That's all; just one sentence, usually is the reward for all that waiting and that noble resisting of distractions. But I write that sentence down, and then I read it over a few times, sort of listening in my mind for the logically necessary second sentence. And when I hear it, after a much shorter wait, I put it down and then read both sentences a few times, listening for the third. And so on. By the time I've got a whole paragraph written there are enough loose ends, enough cryptic statements, enough implied questions that have been raised and left unanswered that it then takes me eight to 12 pages to get everything explained, developed and wrapped up.

Honest, that is the way I go about writing. I'm pretty sure it is not a good way, but I like it because it makes the writing much more exciting for me. If I know in advance what I am going to say and how I'm going to say it, the

job of writing becomes very dull, scarcely worth doing, because in a sense it's already been done. As it is, I'm just as curious as the reader to find out what has been simmering on the back burners of my mind for the past month.

This month it has been a bit different. I knew this time what I wanted to write about, or I thought I did. I was sure enough that I went ahead and typed a title for my discourse -- a virtually unprecedented procedure. But then it seemed that certain dullness lay ahead if I just plunged into my topic, and so, to add a touch of uncertainty, the spice of adventure, I went ahead and followed my usual practice -- the one I've just described.

Even though I know what I'm going to write about, I've been curious as hell to find out how I'm going to swing the discussion around to my topic.

I think I'll try this path -- if it proves to be a dead end I'll back track and pick another approach:

Eleven months ago -- in the Jan. 1974 issue of DOS; No. 28, it was -- I began my discourse with the resounding phrase: 'Writing is a process of revelation and discovery.' (That was an opening line that I waited a long time for, as I recall). Part of what I was trying to say with that is what I have just said here, a few paragraphs ago -- only by writing do I find out what has been stewing and stirring in my own mind -- but that particular discourse turned out to be a brief resume of my writing career, culminating with the realization that even though commercially unsuccessful, I am nevertheless a writer. In telling about all that I had to tell a little about my year and a month in Mauston, Wis., and I mentioned that for awhile I wrote a weekly column. Cryptically, I added: 'For reasons that I refuse to go into here because they constitute a separate story, I had to give up the column.' At least one reader expressed the hope that I would someday tell that story, and I filed the idea away as a possible future Don-c-Saur discourse.

That story constitutes a Christmas memory, and I'm going to tell it now (in a little while) because it seems appropriate for this Christmas issue of DOS.

For practical reasons I'd better limit myself to that one story -- that single Christmas memory -- but I had a couple of other things in mind when I typed my title, and I can't resist telling you what they were, if only to tease you a bit, to offer you a hint of future discourses.

I keep talking about the coming depression. One of my readers (I'm sorry, but I don't remember who), after computing my age, reasoned that I probably have memories of the REAL Depression, and he (or she?) suggested that I ought to tell my readers sometime what I recall of that era. The idea sort of appealed to me after I thought about it some, because I have finally achieved an age where I am beginning to recall my childhood with great vividness. I thought I might even start a whole series called something like "Vignettes from the Great Depression." (I decided against "Hard Times" in deference to Charles Dickens). As it happens, one of my earliest Depression memories is of a certain Christmas, which is also my earliest Christmas memory, and so I thought that right now might be a good time to begin the series. But it'll have to wait.

This year's DASFA Christmas orgy was also fresh in my mind when I wrote the title, and I thought it might be entertaining (as well as fannish; this issue could be short on fannishness if I bypass this topic) to recall in print how the tradition of the DASFA Yule parties originated and developed, with special emphasis on the Pink Passion Pit to explain how the term Christmas orgy has become the standard and accepted designation for our December event. This is an important aspect of Denfen history that may be lost forever if someone doesn't write about it -- and I'm as well qualified to do the writing as anyone, since it was I who created the Passion Pit, and it was I who this year (in Coprolites)

suggested that maybe what we all needed was a real orgy -- and was pleasantly surprised to find out how seriously the suggestion was being taken.

But it will have to wait.

What I'm going to tell about this issue is the melodramatic and blood-curdling episode of my youth that might be dubbed:

The Great Christmas Card Flap

First we've got to go backward in time 22 years, to an America that seems strange and alien even to me as I look back at it, and would have truly ghastly aspects for some of my younger readers if they should find themselves suddenly transplanted to that era. For one thing, only women wore long hair. All men had big ears. There were no beards and few mustaches (I did have a neat little mustache, but so did my boss; I'll introduce him a little later). Even more depressing, there was no music in the land at that time. Oh, there was jazz, but for some reason jazz never found me, or I it. It was never my music. The Beatles and the Rolling Stones and the Who and the Byrds and Bob Dylan and Simon & Garfunkle and Joan Baez and all the others who provided me with music were still a decade or more in the future. So I made do with Beethoven and Mozart and Verdi and Gilbert & Sullivan -- on 78 rpm records.

Television was a novelty. I don't recall that anyone in Mauston had a TV set. There was nothing on radio that I considered worth listening to.

There were no interstate highways in 1952. Railroads still carried passengers.

The Korean War (or conflict) was being rapidly wound down by newly elected President Dwight D. Eisenhower. It was an enormously unpopular war -- surely the most distasteful in American history up to that time -- but the idea of organized protests against the war was unthinkable.

There wasn't much of a civil rights movement. The Supreme Court decision on desegregation of the schools was still two years in the future. Earl Warren had not yet been appointed Chief Justice.

Terror still stalked the nation.

His name was Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy (R-Wis). Actually, the worst of his rampage was over, but there was no way of knowing that at the time; he had just been re-elected overwhelmingly to a second six-year term, and on the surface it seemed he was stronger than ever.

McCarthy was a professional Communist-hunter. He, and others, had convinced a large segment of the American public that Red conspirators had infiltrated all levels of government -- and not just government; all levels of society, including particularly the colleges and universities.

The University of Wisconsin was well known, by McCarthy and his supporters at least, to be a hotbed of subversives.

In May of that very same year, I had received a master of science degree in Journalism from the University of Wisconsin.

This is a Christmas story, not a political one, but I'm not being entirely capricious in trying to sketch in the political and cultural background. It has a definite bearing.

In a way, the major character of the story is the town of Mauston itself. Allow me to introduce you:

Mauston, about 70 miles north and a little west of Madison, is the county seat of Juneau County. Its population in 1952 was about 3,000, and a significant

number of its population was dependent, directly or indirectly, on the trucking industry. Mauston was the half-way point on the major truck route between Chicago and the Twin Cities. But the truckers were overbalanced by the older families who owed their allegiance to the soil, to livestock, and to trade.

The political power of the town was divided between the Taft Republicans and the Eisenhower Republicans.

Oliver Witte, editor and publisher of the Mauston Star and the Juneau County Chronicle, was a Democrat.

Oliver, tall, thin, soft-spoken but intense, was an interloper in Mauston. For many, many years (generations maybe), there had been two papers, owned by separate individuals. The Star had become an extremely popular paper and its aging editor was beloved by the community. The Chronicle and its owner were widely detested for reasons that I never understood.

Oliver had owned another, much smaller paper in a much smaller town not far from Mauston. It's not as though he were totally unknown, but he was still definitely an outsider.

Only two or three years before I knew him, he had sold the smaller paper and formed a corporation to buy the two Mauston papers.

In effect he merged them into a single bi-weekly paper. Anyone who subscribed to the Star also received the Chronicle (except for adamant individuals who refused to accept it because of long-standing prejudice) and vice versa.

As weekly newspapers go, the Star and Chronicle were pretty decent papers. Oliver cared about them. He cared how they looked; he cared how they read; he cared what people thought about them. He was always trying to make them better. He was a good editor.

That's one reason I chose to work in Mauston.

Do you realize that when I got my MS from UW, I might have been able to get on the staff of the Chicago office of the Wall Street Journal? I'd almost forgotten that myself, but it was one of the positions listed when I was job-shopping toward the end of the school year; it never occurred to me to check it out. I considered myself a socialist (without having any clear idea as to what brand of socialism I could espouse), and I would have considered it a betrayal of my principles to have even considered taking a job with that symbol of capitalism.

Other jobs on the list: The Dubuque paper wanted a reporter at \$55 a week. (Aside from the fact that I associated Dubuque with little old ladies who wouldn't like the New Yorker, \$55 a week just wasn't enough because I had a wife and child to support); another weekly paper in Wisconsin (near the Minnesota border, but I can't even think of the name of it now) was looking for an assistant editor and was offering \$65 a week, but the editor was an outspoken McCarthyite whose so-called newspaper was an atrocity, an insult to the field of journalism. I wouldn't have worked for him if he'd paid \$500 a week, and before our five-minute conversation was over he wouldn't have hired me if I'd been available for nothing a week.

And then there was Oliver Witte and the Mauston Star/Juneau County Chronicle. In addition to Oliver's political liberalism and his obvious journalistic standards, he was offering a salary of \$70 a week.

Hell, there was never any choice involved. It was Mauston or nothing. The only feasible alternative was to stay in school and go after a doctorate, but that would have meant at least four more years of abject poverty; but I was eager to apply some of the things I thought I'd learned, and Carolyn was getting thoroughly sick of cockroaches.

So Mauston it was.

If I were fictionalizing this -- writing it as a story instead of as a discourse -- the point-of-view character would be Carolyn. She's the one that the normal reader would be most easily able to identify with.

Consider Carolyn Hope Hollister Thompson at the tender age of 23:

An only child, she had never had any cause, real or imaginary, to rebel against her parents as I had against mine. She had always accepted their values and standards without much question, or at least when she diverged from them in matters of politics and religion (they were Republicans and Methodists; Carolyn became a Democrat and a Unitarian), it was in a perfectly amicable and open manner, without the slightest rancor. She had never lived away from her parents until she married me, except for a quarter or two in Laramie when she lived in the Chi Omega sorority house. That hardly counted because the Chi O house was only a few blocks from her parents' house and she still saw them nearly every day.

Carolyn and I were married on March 21, 1951, (after having been secretly married in August of the preceding year (but that's a different story) between quarters in our senior year at the University of Wyoming. Carolyn had finished her work in winter quarter, graduating with honors and a Phi Beta Kappa key. We lived in a Butler hut in the veterans housing area while I finished school.

(I forgot to mention that Carolyn's father was a professor in the College of Education at the U. of Wyo. It has no particular bearing on the Christmas card story that I'm gradually getting around to telling, but it's another key to the understanding of Carolyn herself).

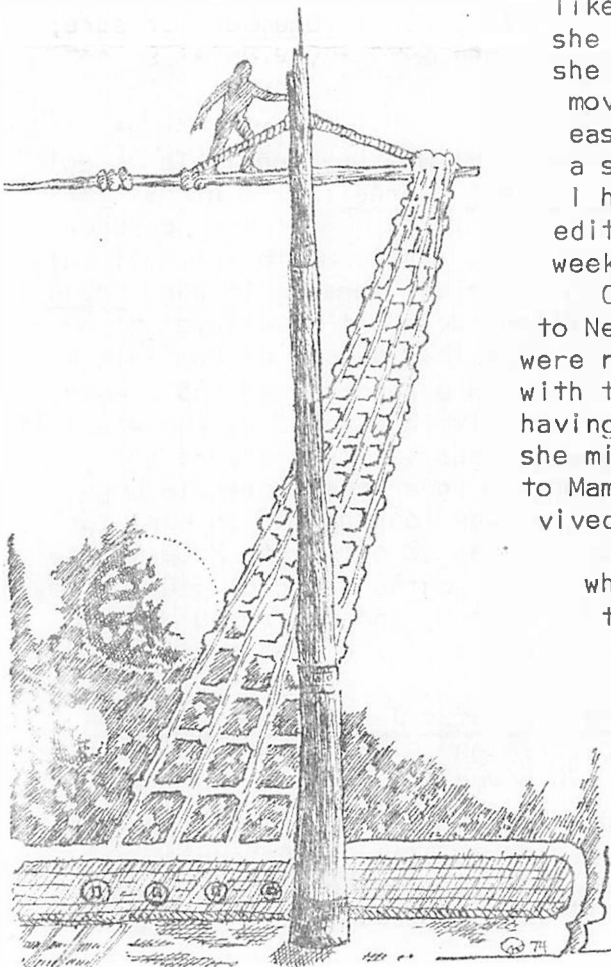
Even living in the Butler huts was still not much like being away from home for Carolyn, because she continued to see her parents as often as she wanted to. But when school was over we moved to Newcastle, Wyo., way up in the north-east corner of the state, where I had landed a summer job on the weekly Newsletter-Journal. I had the high-sounding title of assistant editor and drew the princely salary of \$65 a week.

Carolyn was already pregnant when we moved to Newcastle and the three months we were there were not easy ones. There were complications with the pregnancy and she came very close to having a miscarriage. Homesick and miserable, she might very well have considered going home to Mama, but she chose not to, and we all survived -- she, I, the baby, and our marriage.

In the fall we moved to Madison, Wis., which was much more like home to Carolyn than Newcastle was, and more like home to her than it was to me. She had lived there previously.

In many ways, in spite of her somewhat sheltered childhood, Carolyn was more worldly-wise and sophisticated than I was when we were married. Certainly she had traveled more than I had. She had spent the war as a camp-follower.

Her father had been inducted and commissioned and set to work in the



educational service of the Army Air Force. Since his only dependents were a wife and daughter, they were allowed to follow along as he was transferred from post to post (and pillar to post).

Carolyn had developed a special fondness for Madison while they were there.

The apartment that she and I found to live in did have cockroaches, but other than that our stay in Madison was not at all bad.

Bruce was born on Jan. 21, 1952. He was about five months old when we moved to Mauston.

Carolyn had toughened considerably in the year since Newcastle. She was no longer a homesick, frightened, lonely little girl. She was still little, but she was mature and calmly competent. Her essential ruggedness of character was beginning to assert itself. When we arrived in Mauston early in the morning with a hungry baby, she did not hesitate to awaken the Wittes, borrow milk from them and use their stove to heat it to feed Bruce.

One of the mixed blessings about living in Mauston was our apartment. It was clean, comfortable, roomy (enough) and inexpensive -- an infinite improvement over the Madison dwelling. It was also very close to work. Very close.

The newspaper office and plant occupied the ground floor of a two-story building. On the second floor were the apartments -- ours, the Wittes' and a third one occupied by a young trucking couple.

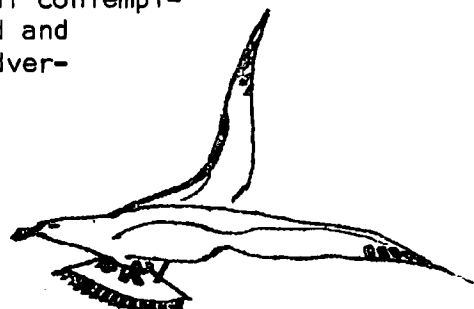
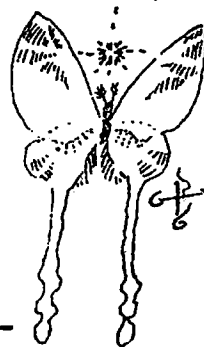
When the presses were running downstairs, the entire building vibrated. The big presses ran twice a week -- Tuesday night and Friday night (or was it Thursday? I actually don't remember for sure; no matter). On press nights everybody was down there helping (except the trucking couple): all three of the Wittes -- Oliver, Virginia, and Oliver Jr., who was about 16 then; Carolyn and I, with Bruce off to the side, observing from his stroller and breathing the fumes of the printers' ink; and all the other newspaper workers

-- Del DuMez (pronounced du-may), the advertising manager, Tex Dwyer, the printer and sports editor, Jerry (something; can't think of his name), the pressman, and Ruby Jones, the bookkeeper-secretary-receptionist-proof-reader . . . the one person who always knew what was going on, not just on the paper but around town and throughout the whole county.

It would have been a hell of an exciting paper if we could have printed even half the news that Ruby knew about.

As a reporter, I relied upon her very heavily -- particularly for background information and to authenticate information I got from other sources, but also for news tips and for her analysis and interpretation of events. And more and more I came to rely upon her friendship. She was just an awfully nice person, and for some reason she took a liking to me and to Carolyn and Bruce. She was the sort of person that most people liked (cheerful, bubbly, with a lot of enthusiasms, a lot of life), but she tended to be somewhat selective about the people she liked. She was patently disdainful of the Wittes, except perhaps for Oliver Jr., and she was downright contemptuous of DuMez (he was a backslapper, full of forced and faked heartiness and civic boosterism; he was an advertising salesman).

But Ruby liked me and gave me a lot of help that she didn't have to, and I was proud of her friendship.



In addition to selling ads and helping on press nights, Delbert DuMez also wrote occasional news stories for the papers when he would happen to stumble across a news story -- and he wrote a regular weekly column for the Mauston Star. It was called "Mauston Musings."

It was bad.

Never mind how bad. It mentioned a lot of names of local people, and most readers probably didn't know it was badly written, and so it was read.

But I knew that I could write a much better column, and there was nothing of the kind in the other paper. And so . . .

"Oliver," I said one day after I'd been on the job for about a month and had convinced myself that I was a pretty good reporter and newswriter. "Oliver, I would like to write a column for the Chronicle, sort of like Del's for the Star. Only mine would be different, of course."

Oliver stared into space for about 30 seconds, over my right shoulder. Then he nodded and brought his eyes back to mine. His eyes were pale blue.

He said, "All right. I think you can do a good column. There are just two things to remember. One is don't let it interfere with the work you're hired to do. If you have time to do it during working hours, after you've finished everything else, fine. If not, you do it on your own time. And the other thing is don't ever skip a column. If you do this, it has to be done regularly. A weekly column means every week. It's a simple matter of playing fair with your readers. If they happen to like your column and come to expect it, you must not disappoint them."

Oliver tended to talk in sermons. His father was a Lutheran minister, and Oliver had never rebelled against his parents. His editorials were strongly sermonistic, also.

This is an important point: As a Democrat in a strongly Republican town, Oliver had an uphill fight for acceptance. He was too honest, had too much integrity to compromise his political principles or try to conceal them. But Mauston was also a strongly religious town -- the Lutherans constituting maybe 40 per cent, Catholics about 35 and the rest divided among Methodists, Baptists and even more Fundamentalist persuasions. But all Christian. If there were any Jews they were silent. If there were any atheists they were invisible. Carolyn and I had identified ourselves as Unitarians and hardly anyone knew what that was, but I guess it sounded respectable, so for the most part we were left alone.

Oliver was a sincere Lutheran, and it was to his advantage to emphasize the fact. It worked in his favor, helping to neutralize the political venom.

Anyway, I signified my understanding and acceptance of Oliver's conditions for writing the column, and started producing "Juneau Jottings."

It was pretty good.

Never mind how good. I tried to emulate Del DuMez in the matter of getting as many names into the column as possible, but he easily outclassed me in that respect. He knew a lot more people. I put quite a bit of myself into Juneau Jottings, just as I do in Don-o-Saur, these many years later. My basic writing style hasn't changed an awfully lot since then.

I tried to keep the column informal, friendly, unpretentious and unimpassioned. I didn't want to use it as a forum for my political, social or religious ideas. I wasn't entirely stupid. I grasped the realities of the situation in Mauston pretty well. I understood Oliver's position vis-a-vis the community, and I knew that my own position was even more delicate. I was a total outsider in addition to being a radical (having attended the University of Wisconsin); and the fact that Carolyn and I attended no church at all was looked upon with considerable suspicion.

Being aware of all that, I tried to avoid controversial topics. The closest I ever came to a political discussion was once when Gov. Kohler showed up at the county fair. I reported in "Juneau Jottings" that I had actually hesitated an instant before shaking hands with the governor because of my disappointment in him for having declined to express any public disapproval of Sen. McCarthy.

I expected at least a few angry letters in response to that, but none came.

Oliver had been braced too, prepared to defend me and freedom of the press if need be, but nothing happened at all. We all relaxed a little.

In spite of (or because of?) its slightly insipid nature, the column did achieve a modest popularity -- enough so that some readers would have been disappointed if I'd skipped a week, and so I was very careful not to, though for the most part I was not able to get it done during regular working hours, and it took more of my own time than I'd thought it would.

We come now, finally, to December 1952. But no, not yet; not quite. Wait.

Christmas always gave me a stomach ache when I was a child. I don't mean from stuffing myself with turkey or eating too much candy, and I don't mean a really painful or disabling stomach ache. It was just a nervous reaction to the excitement and confusion and tension and the hustle-bustle atmosphere. It took me a long time to realize that I didn't really enjoy Christmas very much. I thought I was enjoying it, because of school being out and the presents and all, but gradually, as I got older, it dawned on me: pleasure was being cancelled out by the stomach pains and the nervousness. I spent two Christmases away from home when I was in the Army, and I discovered that I really did enjoy them -- by managing to ignore them. (Of course by this time I was also an atheist and thus totally turned off by the religious aspect of Christmas).

I still felt that way in 1952. My very strong preference would have been to disregard the entire holiday season just as much as possible; I'd had some vague hope when Carolyn and I were married that she might share my sentiments (or lack of them), but it quickly turned out that she did not. Christmas had been a major yearly event in her life and she had every intention of keeping it so, and of passing the Christmas traditions on to her children. It was the first real difference of opinion that Carolyn and I had ever had on anything serious, and my surrender was rather grudging and ungraceful. I grumped and grumbled quite a bit, especially when it came to the chore of preparing Christmas cards.

Okay, NOW! I will tell about that Christmas season in Mauston in 1952. I finally remember what kind of mood I was in, and what sort of rebellious thoughts were churning around in my head. I was feeling overworked, under-paid and unappreciated in my job, and imposed-upon and unappreciated at home.

My surliness was exacerbated by what seemed a conspiracy of inspirational columns about Christmas cards. Oliver wrote an editorial bemoaning the decline of religious Christmas cards. Del DuMez devoted his column to essentially the same topic, and the Catholic priest had a guest editorial in the same issue of the paper, urging everyone to get Christ back into Christmas via the use of religious Christmas cards.

It was too much for me. I simply could not resist the temptation. It seemed to me that I had exercised restraint and moderation in superhuman amounts up to now. I had bent over backwards to avoid controversy in my column; I had gone far, far out of my way in efforts to be fair. Yes! Fairness became my beacon. I convinced myself that I had an actual duty here. Three strong voices had spoken out on a single side of the Christmas card issue. But there was, after all, another side. Hell, it would be unfair if someone did not present the opposition view.

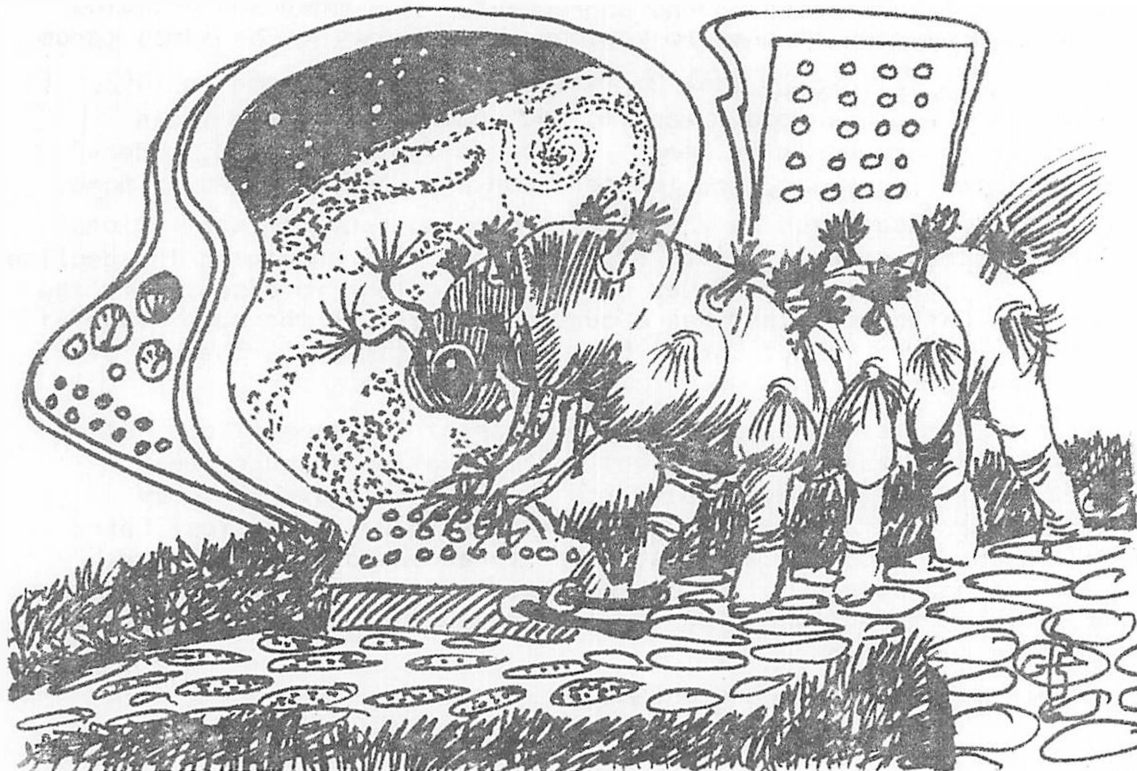
And so I wrote my Christmas card column.

Carolyn kept a scrapbook while we were in Mauston, of clippings from the papers. Mostly it was the articles and columns that I wrote for the papers, but it included other items of special interest to us -- such as the letters to the editor that were written in response to my Christmas card column.

I wish I could find the scrapbook because in fairness to you it would be better to reprint the entire column rather than relying upon my memory to tell you about it. (It would also make it easier for me). But the scrapbook is probably buried back in a closet somewhere; I haven't been able to find it in any of the obvious places, and I don't want to take time for a major house-cleaning project. This issue of DOS is late already.

What I remember most vividly is that I enjoyed writing the column. It was good to give vent to some of my long repressed anger. Invective can be enormously satisfying to write. At that though I still didn't think I was being in-temperate. I wasn't actually disagreeing with the points that had been made by Oliver and Del and the priest. I directed my hostility not at them but rather toward the same Christmas card manufacturers against whom (so I reasoned) they also were railing.

But my objection to the Christmas cards was not so much their lack of religious fervor as their lack of taste. I found Christmas cards offensive because of the banality and shallowness of the sentiments expressed in them, and by their triteness. I considered most Christmas cards an insult to the very people I would most want to send Christmas cards to. I gave examples of some of the nauseating Christmas card verses. I considered Christmas cards a logical and perhaps inevitable outgrowth of the mercenary spirit that permeated the Christmas season. My suggested solution to the whole matter was to split Christmas into two holidays. Since Santa Claus and the Christmas tree and most of the other pagan-origin traditions and trappings were so firmly associated with December, that aspect of the holiday should be left where it was, and the strictly religious celebration could be moved to some other time of year -- perhaps mid-summer, where there was a scarcity of holidays. It seemed like a perfectly reasonable proposal to me; I didn't see how anyone could take offense.



That isn't true, of course. I say again that I wasn't really stupid, regardless of how that column made me sound. I tried to give the conclusion of it a light touch, but the overall tone sounded pretty shrill and un-subtle, even to me. I knew in my gut that there would be reaction to it. I just didn't guess how much.

In one sense, the most remarkable thing about the column was that it was printed at all. Perhaps if Oliver had read it first it might not have been. But Oliver had made a point of not reading my column (or Del's) before publication. He did not want any hint or suspicion of consorship. Even so, if he had seen it first, or if he had happened to do the type-setting, he could not have been blamed if he'd exercised his editor's prerogative and killed it.

But the typesetting was done by Tex (who grinned at me secretively later, but said nothing to anyone).

Oliver read the column on the night that the papers were printed and were being bundled for mailing. He took one of the first papers off the press and gave it his usual cursory inspection. When he got to the back page (where my column was), I saw his head jerk. His then lips became thinner still, and I saw a muscle in his jaw begin to throb. But he said nothing. The papers were printed and mailed all according to usual procedure.

After the work was finished and Carolyn and I had taken Bruce upstairs, Carolyn read the column. Her reaction was: "Well, I suppose this will raise a few eyebrows."

This is where the wisdom of my decision to use Carolyn as the point-of-view character (in case I should fictionalize the event) should become apparent. A few pages back I invited you to consider Carolyn at the age of 23, and then I told you a little about her -- up to the age of 23, whereupon I deftly sidestepped into other aspects of life in Mauston, and you never did get that close look at Carolyn. Let's try again:

She is small and delicate-looking but nonetheless tough-minded and strong-willed; I think I've already established that point, and it is important. I'm not so sure that I made the point that though she's no longer as desperately homesick as she was in Newcastle, she does love her parents, she misses them, and she is a long way from home. Another thing sadly lacking in Mauston is the kind of intellectual stimulation that Carolyn needs. She had been thoroughly happy in college; in Madison she was active in the AAUW; in Mauston we had helped organize and were faithful members of a Great Books discussion group, but one of the major drawbacks of that (from Carolyn's point of view, even more than from mine) is that Virginia Witte is also a faithful member. Virginia was not really unintelligent, but she seemed to have the idea that women should not seem too intelligent or too well educated, and so she presented a facade of ignorance. She also believed that women must be charming, and in her efforts in that direction, she tended to gush. Carolyn could just barely conceal her impatience.

One of the key facts about Carolyn, however, and the one upon which reader-identification must depend, is that she is a good and totally devoted mother.

I think this must happen to many intelligent girls, fortunately for the continuation of the human race: they grow up sometimes with almost a horror of children and a deep revulsion against domesticity. But when they do get married and have children of their own, they find quite unexpected and delightful rewards and challenges, and so they do a superior job of homemaking, just as they do of everything else. Such at least was the case with Carolyn.

And the important thing to remember, as we resume our story, is that all of her instincts are directed toward nest-building, protection of her young, preservation of family security. She's had her fill of adventure and excitement. What she wants now is peace. Security.

Carolyn heard about the reactions to the column mostly from me. She may have gotten some of it first-hand, by overhearing portions of conversations while she was out shopping, but I don't know. When I went up for lunch the next day at noon, I mentioned the angry phone calls that were starting to come in, and I knew of at least one advertiser who was cancelling his "Seasons-Greetings" ad because of my column. He had stopped in at the office and made a special point of telling me that he was doing it.

Carolyn said, "Oh, dear! Has Oliver said anything to you?"

"No. I haven't even seen Oliver yet today."

The newspaper staff Christmas party was that evening at the home of Ruby Jones and her husband. The Christmas card column was mentioned a time or two, and there was some nervous laughter with the comments, but Oliver still said nothing.

The next day was payday. Oliver had announced that he was giving everyone a \$20 Christmas bonus. My check was for the usual amount -- no bonus. I said nothing, waiting for Oliver to speak. Carolyn worried. So did I.

That day and for the next few days, indignation continued to mount, and cards and letters now joined the continuing stream of phone calls. The message of many of them was, in effect: 'Get out of town or we'll throw you out!' The next most common was (again paraphrasing): 'We're praying for you, you miserable sinner. Repent!' Some people sent me Christmas cards with the exact verses that I had ridiculed in my column.

I got one letter, written in pencil, in an almost illegible scrawl, from someone who said he was an atheist too and he was glad I'd had the courage to write what he believed. But he didn't sign his name.

One morning, after I had gone downstairs to work, Carolyn went to the door to bring in the milk and found there, atop one of the milk bottles, an implement with a round plastic handle and a long metal blade, tapering to a tip. A letter-opener? Or a symbolic dagger? Someone else's way of saying, "Get out of town?" When I came upstairs for lunch with the news that the Catholic priest had written a long-long-long letter to the editor denouncing me as an immoral blasphemer (it was my reference to the pagan origins of Christmas customs that bothered him more than anything), Carolyn was genuinely scared.

I tried to reassure her that the dagger was nothing. I had noticed it when I left, but there was one just like it in front of the other apartments and I had deduced that it was a gift from the milkman; but Carolyn was not totally convinced.

That evening, after work and after supper, I gathered up two or three volumes of our American People's Encyclopedia and went back down to the office to work on my next column, intending to present it as a reply to the Catholic priest's letter, proving conclusively that most Christmas customs most certainly were of pagan origin.

After about an hour, Carolyn heard voices from the office directly below our apartment -- Oliver's voice and mine. Oliver's voice became louder and angrier. Mine became quieter.

Carolyn waited until the voices had stopped -- half an hour, perhaps -- and then she crept down the back steps, through the basement of the building, and up into the office through a little-used door. She saw me sitting at the desk, staring at the typewriter.

"Are you fired?" she asked.

"Well, no. Anyway not yet. That is, I don't think so." I tried to explain.

Oliver was angry enough to fire me, certainly. Not only had I upset the delicate balance of his efforts toward building good will, but my stupid column was costing him money. The ad that I already knew about was not the only one that had been cancelled. So he might fire me yet, but he was going to let me

let me write one more column. I could write anything I wanted to, just as always. But if I wrote what I had in mind -- engaging in a public debate with the priest -- I could start packing as soon as I finished. If I wrote an apology, and if it was sincere and convincing enough, then Oliver might reconsider and give me another chance.

Carolyn said, "You are going to apologize, aren't you?"

"I hate to."

She looked at me. I looked at her. "All right. Sure. Of course I'll apologize."

And now I do wish I could find that Mauston scrapbook, because I'd like to reprint that final column. It was a masterpiece, as I think you would agree if you could see it. It was a model of humility, contrition -- repentance, if

you insist, though I was rather careful not to apologize for holding the views I did. However, I did apologize for the embarrassment I'd caused Oliver and for whatever mental anguish I may have caused anyone by seeming to attack their religious faith. I said I realized that my views represented a very small minority opinion, and that while such views had a right to be expressed, from this time forward, if there was any likelihood of bringing pain or distress to anyone by expressing them, I would keep my views to myself. I thanked Oliver for letting me write the column and for not attempting to censor it; and I thanked the town for the friendliness it had shown me and my family . . . and in effect I threw ourselves upon the mercy of the townsfolk.

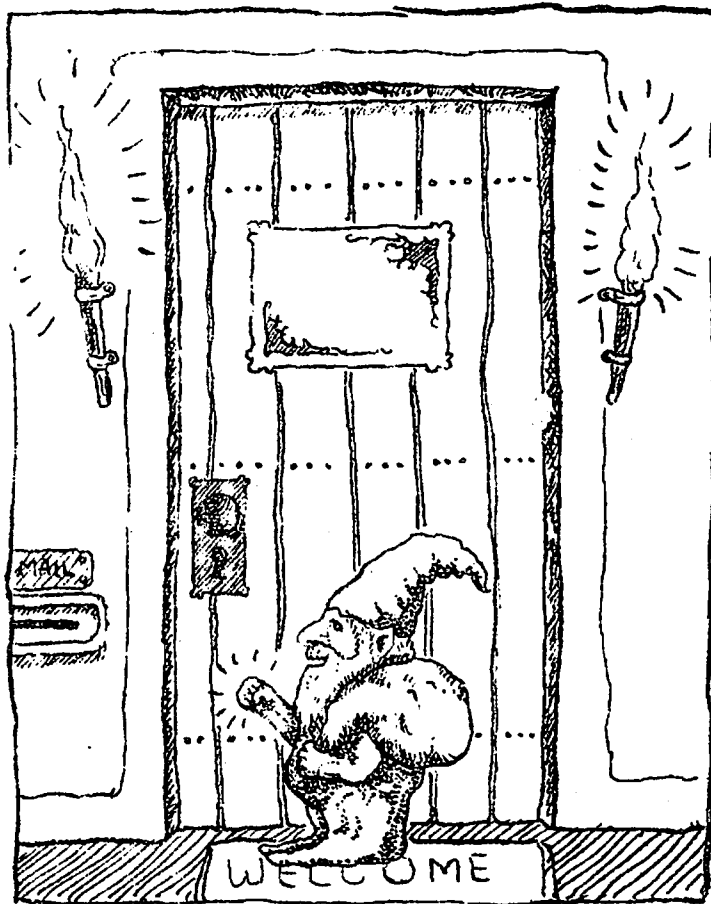
Oliver's voice was very soft the next day when he told me: "That piece you wrote last night -- your final column -- it was good; it was very good. You'll be able to stay."

I don't know whether it was my final column or just the natural reaction of people to the stridency of the voices that were urging our expulsion; but the tone of the letters and phone calls did begin to change. Some of the Christians pointed out that to cast a young couple and their 11-month-old baby out into the cold, especially right at Christmas time!, was not exactly an act of Christian charity -- even if they were Unitarians and Democrats.

Well, to bring this story to a long-overdue end, we did stay in Mauston another six months, and while I wrote no more columns, I did write (and sell) a long science fiction story; and I wrote a large number of news and feature stories for the paper (some of them pretty damn good). Before we left, I had been given the title "news editor" and an increase in salary.

And when we left it was on our own conditions, at our own speed, and to our own chosen destination.

One final note: That \$20 Christmas bonus that I didn't receive; it turned out to be as innocent as the letter opener/dagger -- Ruby Jones had made an honest mistake in bookkeeping and she discovered it herself. We were probably never in as much danger as we thought -- but there was no way of knowing that at the time.



Locs & keys

The response to
the story of mine that
I printed last issue ("A
Proud and Lonely Thing")

was gratifying. Most people who commented on it all said they liked it, though most (again) had some reservations. I did ask for comments; I was hoping for them; I got them; and I appreciate all of them. Even the negative ones. Actually there was only one story loc that I considered predominantly negative. I'm going to present it first and with little editing, partly to demonstrate that I really do welcome detailed criticism, and partly because I think Sheryl Smith makes some interesting and thought-provoking points.

Sheryl Smith
7512 N. Eastlake Terrace
Chicago, IL 60626

. . . Look: if you really go so far as to give up a perfectly good teaching job so you may bring into being more undistinguished fiction like the piece you printed in #38, sir, you are crazy! It's not your age that is the problem, nor do your familial problems seem insuperable; and if it were straight prose you wanted to write, my advice would be different since your prose is quite readable and interesting; but unless you are capable of work that is not just better but much better than "A Proud and Lonely Thing" . . . ugh! don't, just don't. Not only is the piece (by association) fannish (though for us human beings who are not "faans," that is indeed a limitation), but worse, it is tedious, passionless, purposeless, and the fact that you are obviously competent in the use of the language makes these faults seem that much more permanent. The story seemed like it "wanted" to be factual prose: a history of fandom (Harry Warner has already got dibs on that subject), or a sociological study of that phenomenon; but instead you dreamed up a too-boring fictional parallel (names, for God's sake! What more would these name-freaks have to talk about after a mutual introduction? Everything else would be anticlimactic), and then worked out this parallel laboriously in banal dialogue and icy summation that went nowhere either emotionally or intellectually. There is nothing expressed in this story, which -- again, if it is typical -- makes it a most eloquent indication that you probably have nothing you must say in fictional

form. I would suspect your longing is not so much to write as to be a writer, and that probably means you are not a writer or at least not a fiction writer, and it is probably only the skewed fannish scale of values, which empedastals writers as the ideals most worth emulating, that causes you to dream of being one.

And it is sad to see you adhering to this too-insular value-system -- especially since, dammit, you sound like an exceptionally fine teacher!

[Oh, come, come, Sheryl!
Anything you want to say
about my writing, I will
listen to with respect,



An
Eater
of
Typewriters

even though I may disagree with it, knowing that you have at least read one of my stories and thus have some knowledge of the subject. Unfortunately I cannot give equal weight to anything you say about my teaching, even though I may agree wholeheartedly with it; for until you have attended one or more of my classes, or have talked to a large number of my students, you have no way of knowing what kind of teacher I am. If you were trying to soften your criticism, I appreciate the concern for my feelings, but I assure you it isn't necessary].

The thing in DOS #38 that caught Sheryl's eye first was not the story but Ben Indick's use of the Magic Word: Wagnerian. Sheryl points out in her letter that she is member #003 of The Wagner Society, and she invites any other admirers of the Great Composer to get in touch with: The Wagner Society

c/o Art Clifton
1140 W. Pratt Blvd.
Chicago, IL 60626

This next letter, for some reason, (actually the reason should be obvious enough) carried quite a bit more weight in my mind than Sheryl's did, and it prevented me from taking her advice too seriously. I don't want to belittle Sheryl's contribution, but I really found this more genuinely helpful:

Gene Wolfe
Box 69
Barrington,
IL 60010

. . . "A Proud and Lonely Thing" is the focus of interest in this issue, of course; and it's ideally suited for the part, because it's quite good -- without being really good enough. I'd like to run down the three major faults I see -- and drub you a bit -- and if you want to be cross afterward that's your privilege. But I hope you'll read what I have to say, and think about it, because it's going to take about ten minutes work to write, and I'd hate to waste it.

First off, the fannishness your writing group complained of. It's there, but only because you put it there. Convention, committees, and name tags are not specifically fannish; you sunk the story at its inception with the title, the last line, and a couple of drun-in references to sf fandom. All these can be taken out in 30 seconds by running pencil lines through them. Think up a new title -- how about "By Any Other..."? And a good, punchy finish. You can leave Will Jenkins and Robert Bloch where they are; nobody will notice.

The biggy: characterization. You haven't made the people real enough. Never make the error of thinking that the characters cannot or need not be real just because the story is light. Think of Jeeves, Bertie Wooster, and Bottom the Weaver. Who is Krystel Wonder? Who is Holly Golightly? By the end of page three, we should know what Krystel and Forrest look like, and by the end of page four we should have some insight into why Krystel feels as she does.

Lastly, style: As a teacher of creative writing you should not be doing some of the things you do here. From the fourth page: "Krystel's pregnancy, far from taking her mind off names, served the opposite function of providing a focus for her energies. It provided a powerful motivation (as she explained it to Forrest) for her to start doing things to make her dreams come true." Rewrite: "Krystel's pregnancy, far from taking her mind off names, served to provide a focus for her energies -- a powerful motivation (as she explained to Forrest) for her to start doing things to make her dream come true." Notice that the revised paragraph is six words and three letters shorter than the original, but says everything the original did. You're also guilty of muddled logic once or twice, as when you say: "Ginger Ayle had moved into an apartment with a boy named Ellis Dee, but she would not marry him because she refused to change her name." No woman today -- at least in America -- has to change her name shen she marries. Rewrite: "...but he would not marry her because she refused to change her name." See how much more effective that is?



As I said before, this story has a lot going for it. Now may I give my own favorite name? It's Joseph Bourgeois.

Tell John Robinson that one of the largest banks in New York City has failed -- in case he still hasn't heard. The term depression, however, is normally used to describe a period when the rate of unemployment is 10% or more. Most TV news-rooms don't seem to know this.

Needless to say, Gene's letter did not make me the least bit cross. In fact it gave me almost as great a feeling of euphoria as did this next one:

Donn Brazier
1455 Fawnvalley Dr.
St. Louis, MO 63131

Now you've gone and done it!

. . . In thinking over the best of fan fiction for the year 1974, I had decided that Eric Mayer's

"Menace" was the best I had read. And now you come

along with "A Proud and Lonely Thing"!

Since Eric's story, though different from the kind of SF I'm used to, is still more closely allied to the commercial kind of SF than yours, I will solve my problem by giving two awards.

Your story has its fannish level, though I feel the story's moral might apply to any busy-busy triviality that keeps people happy -- like beer can collecting, for instance. Therefore, it has its commercial appeal, too -- except . . .

The story is too literate. Your vocabulary is too large . . . "fatalistic optimism implicit in that statement manifested . . ." (page 9)

[It isn't really a matter of literacy or even of too-large vocabulary; it's the style problem that Gene Wolfe was talking about, for which Sheryl Smith used the term "icy summation. I think it's a correctable problem, if I decide to rewrite the story.]

Of course the names you came up with were funny. When I completed the story, this name popped into my head: Hank O'Hare. Then I began thinking of what I ought to have named my kids: Char Cole Brazier, Barby Q. Brazier, and other improbables. [How about Dee Culp Brazier for your wife? Or is that going a bit too far?]

Then I began thinking of how many fans could have been named had their parents belonged to NOMEN: Happy Bliss, McDonald Burger, Candy Lee Franke, Rare Jewell, Spring Meadows, Ringfor Porter, County Y. Parks, Lena Shank, Gimme A. Slick, Pop Singer, Sloe Walker, etc.

Then I realized I ought to write and tell you how much I liked the story.

Which I've just done.

Richard E. Geis
P.O. Box 11408
Portland, OR
97211

. . . Your story is pretty damn good. A few malaprop phrases in the beginning, a kinda non-ending, but interesting, captivating, and funny in a gentle way. Not sorry I read it, which I am sorry after most of the published stuff in prozines I read . . . So keep at it.

But don't quit your job . . . you ain't THAT good, yet.

Thanks for the Don-o-Saurs. I enjoy them and value them, but don't feel I've earned them. I see you have made progress on the offset press. If you ever get 200 subscribers you can get a second class permit and mail the zine for 25¢.



Hank Jewell
P.O. Box 244
Warrensburg,
MO 64093

I enjoyed reading your story . . . I noticed that on page 12 you refer to Rose Budd of Silver Springs, Md., and I suggest that you omit the "s" if you want to please the residents of that Washington, D.C. suburb. I used to live near there and people were often complaining about how often their city was misspelled in the popular media. Perhaps this is nitpicking, but since your story is focused on names, I decided to mention it. [Glad you did. Ever since it was called to my attention, I too have been noticing how often the name comes out incorrectly in the Rocky Mtn. News].

I am enclosing a newspaper clipping entitled "More Women Keeping Maiden Names to Retain Identity" (Kansas City Star, Nov. 24, 1974 p. 3C) which might interest Ginger Ayle. Not only could she marry Ellis Dee and retain her maiden name, she could send for a booklet published by the Center for a Woman's Own Name, Barrington, Ill., and learn of the legal implications.

[That's one aspect of the story that I should have known enough to change even while I was retyping it into DOS. After all, when Judith Brownlee, this year's director of DASFA and a member of the Writers Workshop, married Ted Peak within the past year, she did not change her name, and I was aware of the trend. I was just lazy].

One more letter (or parts thereof) about the story, and then let's move along to other matters.

Ben P. Indick
428 Sagamore Ave.
Teaneck, N.J. 07666

In truth, I must agree that it is not a generally salable type item. Not so much because of its fan-nish qualities, but rather because of the story itself. You have allowed your fondness for the fun of names to run away with the story, so that the fun of it all is more important than the plot, which finally actually simply peters off. The narrator began by stating that his problems began when he sat down again to talk to the girl, but at the end he seems to have not merely accepted her game but to have decided it is worth playing; this is okay except that I did not feel it came as any sort of true conversion of character. It simply came. Essentially then the story is a sort of long joke about funny names -- many of which did make me laugh.

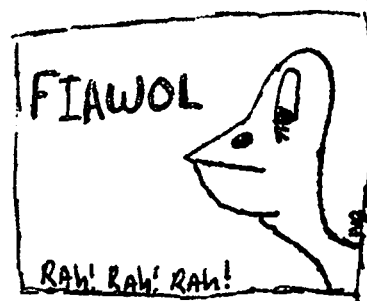
I do think plot must be considered more, even in such a tale. I also think, in such event, the fan element would have worked to the advantage of the story, a unique if nutty life form which might appeal to the active curiosity of non-fan readers.

Dave Szurek says that I have twice in a row forgotten to list him in the IAHFs, and it seems to be true, and so I apologize. I may have forgotten others, and if so I apologize to them. I'm trying to invent some sort of system for keeping my correspondence in order but I have a long way to go. Anyway, here is a portion of a Dave Szurek letter -- this in response to the inquiry by Sam Long about a certain movie.

Dave Szurek
4417 Second Apt. B2
Detroit, MI 48201

. . . Dark Star is the first film of recent USC graduate John Carpenter, and is being released theatrically (with an "R" rating) by the corporation of Jack H. Harris. Harris is the guy who gave us such films as The Blob, Dinosaur, The 4-D Man and most recently, Equinox (a witchcraft picture featuring Fritz Leiber in an acting role -- or so I've understood; I've not seen it personally). Reportedly, it is far superior to any of those movies and the most likely reason is that Harris has no hand in anything but distribution this time around. Now, if Long or Mervyn Barrett knows how to get in touch with Harris, they've got it made. If not they'll probably go through channels...

And I'm still getting inquiries about another certain movie, the legendary Pleasure Planet, produced by DASFA and shown at HileHIcon 6. I will direct all requests for the film to Ted Peak, 1556 Detroit #1, Denver 80206. He was con chairman; he did most of the camera work on the film, and it is in his possession.



The latest inquiry came from Jim Kennedy (Lord Jim Khennedy, Master of Tyme and Space, High Priest of All Arizona!) He mentions that OSFFA is staging its first con on March 14-15-16 (Larry Niven, guest of honor!) and he, Lord Jim, is in charge of a fan film festival or contest. First prize is \$25, with lesser prizes for special categories. For anyone interested in the film frolic, Jim's address is 1859 E. Fairfield, Mesa AZ 85203.

For more information about the con itself, contact: Tim Kyger
702 E. Vista del Cerro
Tempe, AZ 85281

I was truly delighted to receive this next letter. I had been sending DOS to Mae Strelkov for several months before DisCon. I met her there and was as entranced by her as everyone is but she had not yet received any of the Don-o-Saurs (mail to South America is as slow as to Australia, apparently). Mae was forced to cut short her bus tour of the United States after the con, partly because of the illness of her husband (who is better now). The good aspect of her early return home, from my point of view, is that she did read DOS finally, which fact elicited a loc, a portion of which follows:

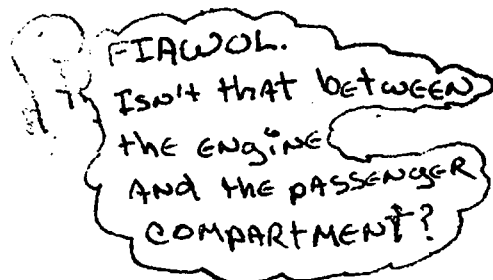
Mae Strelkov
Casilla de Correo 55
Jesus Maria, Cordoba,
Argentina

. . . I am really fascinated by all you write, the stories of your life at home, Carolyn, the children. It's such a shame I didn't manage to visit you, especially as you most kindly gave me your phone number when we met at DISCON II. Yes, I am very sorry about

that. I'm a bit of a timid sort, I confess, and one or two people en route who'd given their phone numbers -- when I did phone them while passing through -- sounded somewhat dismayed, so I let them off the hook and assured them I was in any case continuing the journey on the same Greyhound bus, so, "Hello, just!" Well, that made me a bit scared of phoning yet other fans further along, unless I really had gotten a bit to know them -- had a chance for a real chat, etc., or letter-exchanges. In any case the trip is the USA (with a Greyhound pass) just flashed by, and I didn't see a quarter of all I planned. Nonetheless, I loved every minute of it . . .

[What really saddens me is that any fan could possibly be or even sound dismayed by a phone call from Mae Strelkov! What saddens me even more is that because of one or two fans didn't know how to welcome Mae properly, she decided not to call some people that she otherwise might have -- including me. I think I hate someone].

I found really saddening your story of the club house that burned down and the tragedy of that disoriented child whose dad died so suddenly later, so the kid must have felt he was really punished. I wonder why such things have to happen. (Me, I suspect there's something in a sort of "karmatic" give-and-take or cause and effect, that makes these things occur. I'm not a fancy believer in any-special-thing, but ecologically speaking, it would make sense. I get VERY exasperated by True Believers who go converting around, wanting us all to believe EXACTLY as they do... Thinking they have the light -- they and none other...) But it is comforting to give a little leeway and harbor



such suspicions of "immortality" . . . I mean, it explains things that otherwise could never make sense.

Talking to Mae Strelkov and reading her letters arouses in me a very strong sense of wonder, and I think it's in direct response to her sense of wonder. She always seems to be seeing things for the first time.

On another Southern Hemisphere continent, but clear around on the other side of the world, lives another very remarkable lady who reminds me a lot of Mae Strelkov (though they may not be at all alike). She too has a powerful sense of wonder and the ability to communicate it, as you shall see. This is the second letter I've received from

Joan Dick
379 Wantigong Street
Albury, N.S.W. 2640
Australia

I don't know if I told you before but I am president of the Astronomical Society of Albury-Wodonga. We decided to go Australian all the way and instead of having a Latin motto, we ended up with NYAGAG DURD MAYO. It is aboriginal for "look at the distant stars." From a dialect of Western N.S.W. All the natives in this area (Albury) died out a long time ago and there is no record of their language. One night I was waiting to go to a meeting (I'm secretary of the Wodonga Arts Council) and while I waited I doodled. This is the result:

Once there was the Dreamtime.
Untold races of man
Food- family- friend and foe
Slept undreaming.
Unknowing - not caring what the unborn eons of time
held in store for them.
A spirit stirred. A thought. A movement.
From chaos came form and order.
Light appeared
Giving birth to night and day.
Unknowing - uncaring time plodded on
Stirring the vats of evolution.
Rejecting- reclaiming- recycling.
Seeking perfection in the vast universal laboratory
Ever adjusting the changing flame of the bunsen burner stars.
Time stirred - the sun blossomed.
The sea stirred and life was created
Floating on the great primeval ocean
The Dreamtime ended.
Mankind woke to fulfill a destiny.
The first stumbling steps on the highway to the stars.
Time still plodded on. Always. Forever.
Unchanging - day follows night - night follows day.
But man, tiny- unhappy- restless
A never contented creation, speed up.
Homo-erectus spread ever outwards.
Always seeking. Always finding new pastures
To explore, settle, develop, pollute and ruin.
The wind - the wheel, helped this headlong rush
But impatient devious minds found faster and more dangerous speeds.
Dreamtime is forgotten.
Destiny calls.
Man hears the call and hastens to answer.

What will we find as we tread our way among the stars.
 Across the Galaxies.
 Maybe we complete the full circle and once again cry.
 "NYAGAG DURD MAYO."

I'm very much looking forward to meeting Joan Dick at Aussiecon next year.
 NO! This year. 1975.

While I was typing, 1974 trickled its last few pathetic grains of sand through the hourglass and 1975 crept into being. A good many vital and portentous things are signified by that event. Not among them is the fact that for the first time, Don-o-Saur will be completed in the month after it is dated. I know that many of you, particularly in recent months, haven't been receiving it until the month following its date. But this is the first time I've still been working on it so late.

It's probably a good thing that I decided to go bi-monthly, although the result of easing up the pressure on myself could be the opposite of what I intended. I've had lots of time in December -- a whole month off from teaching, though working full time at the News, but still more free-time than I've been accustomed to -- and you see what's happened.

Back at the beginning of the loc-col Sheryl Smith advised me not to quit teaching in favor of writing. Dale Donaldson offers much the same advice. I sort of scorned Sheryl's advice, but a few days have passed since then, and all of a sudden Dale's is distressingly meaningful:

Dale Donaldson
 P. O. Box C
 Bellevue, Wash.
 98009

Dear Don -
 Don't do it. Unless . . .
 Two years ago I left the Establishment to go into full time writing. Under a variety of names I had built over the past 20 years some small following in the field of

literature (?). Nothing pretentious, just a comfortable side income. I had never wanted, really, to be a full-time writer.

But with the kids not all departed and on their own, and with my wife earning a comfortable living, I thought it would be the proper time to indulge myself in beaucoup writings along with putting out more frequent issues of MOONBROTH. So I left the rat race.

Tsk. I found that without pressure I did no writing at all. Further, my interest in the child, MOONBROTH, waned quite dreadfully. For weeks, months, I sat vegetating. Just short of the point of complete decay I came to the conclusion that I had no real literary drive - that I wrote for the enjoyment, solely. I have/had/will have much to say, but I do it best under pressure.

So at the age of 51 I returned to work. Oh, not the Establishment. Never again, I trust. But a highly satisfactory job without much pay. Work I enjoy. No responsibilities (hardly) and a flat 40 hour week. Now MOONBROTH functions well again, and I pull in a few clams now and then from writing primarily just to hold a pro status. I am entertained by Life.

So don't do it. Unless . . . you really have a drive. End of lecture by the Old Sage of the Northwest.

Yes. And an attentive student has taken careful notes and will study them diligently. I'm 47. My big move, if it's to be made at all, probably won't come before age 50. By then I expect to know for sure what kind of literary drives I have and how strong they are. I know that when I do have leisure time I tend to squander it -- to vegetate. If by age 50 I find that I can overcome that inertia on my own, then I probably will cut loose. If not, then I'll probably hold on to my jobs -- and Don-o-Saur may be around for many years to come.

Don D'Amassa
19 Angell Drive
East Providence,
R.I. 02914

The question of whether or not one has an obligation to educate one's children in college (or in high school for that matter) is an interesting one. My in-laws spent their entire lives slaving for their children, insisted that they go to local colleges, etc. Now that the kids are growing up and leaving home, they find themselves with too much time on their hands. I refuse to live for my children, and I have strong reservations about the pressure for "education" in our society in any case.

Actually, I don't disagree. When I said that I would work three or four jobs if necessary to send my children to school, I realized just after I'd written it that it sounded terribly sanctimonious and wasn't even what I meant, anyway. I do believe that children should have as much education as they want, but any kid who really wants an education will find a way to get it. It's probably better for the kid (more educational) if he works to put himself through school than to rely upon his old man. Bruce, my oldest son, very firmly (but politely and lovingly, as always) declined to be supported through college. He moved out, got part-time jobs and financial aid from the school (a thoroughly modern form of self-reliance!), and he's gotten the education he wanted, not the one I might have wanted for him. Claudia on the other hand, essentially far more of an independent spirit than Bruce ever was, has been content to remain at home and let her parents pay her education expenses. But she wants the education, and for her this is the quickest and easiest way to get it. And she wants a year of school in Scotland. If I can pay for it, fine; if not, she'll find some other way of getting it. And she needn't feel guilty about anything. She's quite intelligent, and she knows me well enough to realize that I'm not working two jobs just for her.

Now, finally, to change the subject one more time:

Ken Millett
1930 E. LaSalle St.
#102
Colorado Springs
CO 80909

. . . you have often stated in your publication your belief that a depression is imminent in this country. True it has appeared in recent weeks that you might be right, but I think we'll manage to avoid a depression for now and the economy will boom again for another six or seven years. Then, however, I think we'll have a DEPRESSION (all caps deliberate). I have a lot riding on my belief that it isn't going to happen now; all the money I could afford is invested in common stocks. I have an opportunity to read the advice of numerous "experts," and most seem to think the stock market is about to become a bull, forecasting a recovery of the economy in mid-1975. I won't take long to determine whether I'm right or not; I think that if the Dow Jones Industrial Average (at this writing [December 19] it is at about 580) isn't over 650 by the beginning of the year, I'll concede that you're right.

Well, it's the beginning of the year and the Dow Jones Average stands at 616.12, but I'm not claiming victory either. The market is moving in Ken's direction; I fully expected it to go down from 580. Moreover, I don't much want THE depression this year. I too have a stake in the economy (even beyond the fact that I have about \$10,000 tied up in tax-sheltered annuities -- some socialist, huh?!). A real depression would be the thing most likely to interfere with my plans to attend Aussiecon, so I'm perfectly willing to postpone it. The only thing is . . . as Ken indicates an awareness of, the longer the slump is postponed the more severe it's likely to be. I definitely agree with Ken that if it doesn't happen for another six or seven years, it will be an all-caps DEPRESSION.

DEDICATION: [I have never before even considered dedicating an issue of DOS to anyone, but it seems singularly appropriate to do so this one time].

This one is dedicated to Carolyn

(of course) -- AND to Ralph

Collins, who has never even seen a Don-o-Saur before but who might appreciate this one because he was There; a friend when I had but few.

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ART CREDITS

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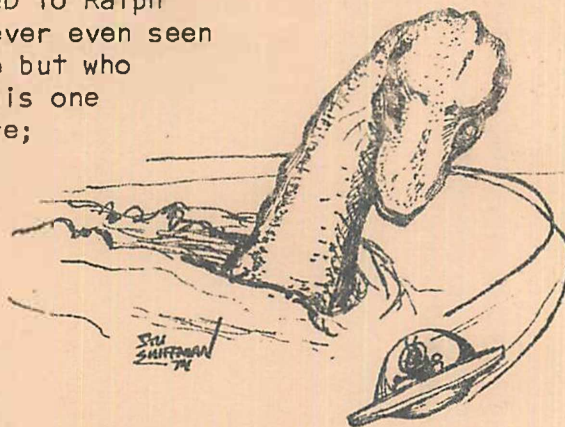
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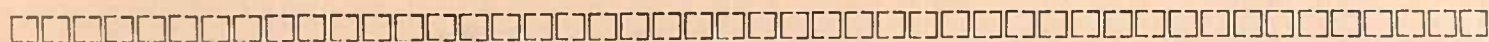
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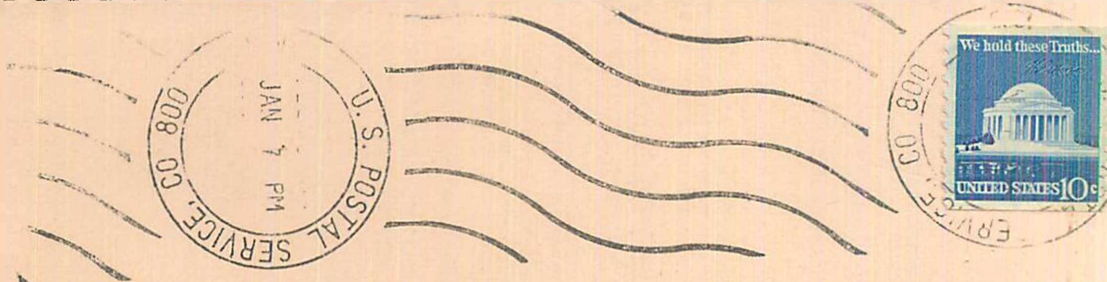
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