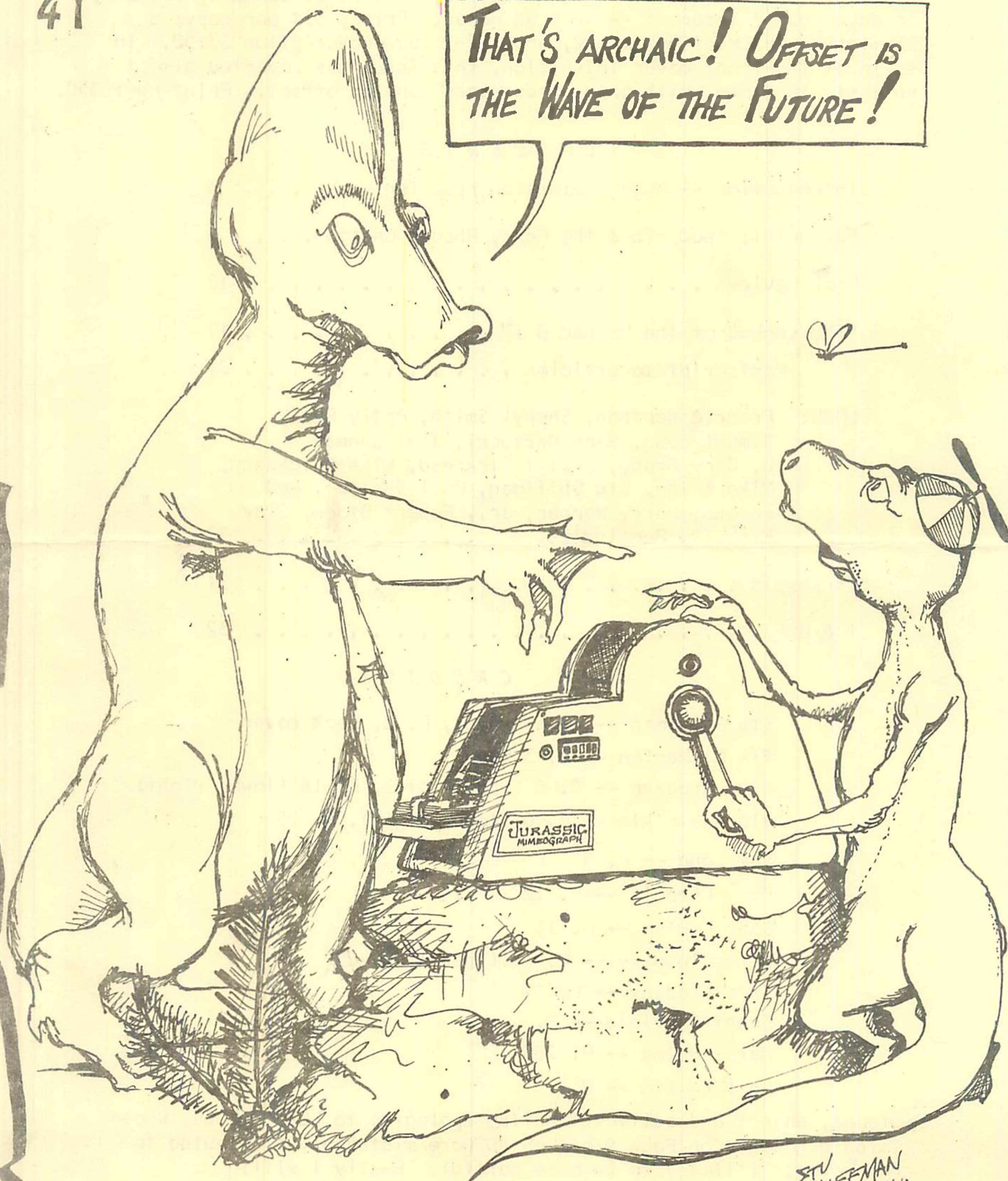


don-o-saur

41

THAT'S ARCHAIC! OFFSET IS
THE WAVE OF THE FUTURE!



STU
SHIFFMAN
74

don-o-saur 47

April/May 1975

Vol. IV No. 5

Published bimonthly by Don C. Thompson, 7498 Canosa Ct., Westminster, CO 80030. Phone (303) 429-6562.

Available in exchange for other fanzines, letters of comment, artwork, or any show of interest -- such as money. Price, 35¢ per copy; a six-issue subscription for \$2, or a 12-issue subscription \$3.50. In spite of the front cover injunction, this issue has reverted almost entirely to mimeo, with only a few pages done on offset. Print run: 350.

CONTENTS

Introduction -- Hugo nomination reaction	3
Editorial: Spec Fic & the Perry Rhodan Ghetto	6
Book Reviews	12
"The Legend of the Banned B I"	17
Postscript to article	21
LOCS: Fredric Werthan, Sheryl Smith, Polly Ryan, Samuel Long, Rich Bartucci, Jim Kennedy, D. Gary Grady, Sheryl Birkhead, Mike Glicksohn, Mike Kring, Stu Shiffman, Paul Skelton, Ned Brooks, Harry Warner, Jr., Robert Bloch, Clay Kimball, Ben Indick.	22
Personals	31
I A H F	32

ART CREDITS

Stu Shiffman -- Front cover, P. 3, Back cover
Tim C. Marion -- P. 3 logo
Mike Bracken -- P. 6 (upper left), P. 16 (lower right)
Vic Kostrikin -- P. 6 (lower right), P. 25
Sam Long -- P. 9
Pete Chronis -- P. 12
Shari Hulse -- P. 13
Bruce Townley -- P. 16 (upper), P. 22
Eric Lindsay -- P. 17
Grant Canfield -- P. 20
Marci Helms -- P. 28
Phil Foglio -- P. 29

Profound, abject and self-castigating apologies to LEAH ZELDES, whose missing dinosaurs on Page 9 of DoS 40 were mistakenly attributed to Marci Helms. I'll try to be more careful. Really I will!

DONALD-SHELLER

NO. 41
April 1975

Gosh! Gulp! Goddam!

I'm trying to blush prettily but that's hard to do in print. It's even harder to do in the flesh though, at my age and with my face, so I'll keep on trying it in print.

But seriously, I don't know what to say. How am I supposed to react? Demurely? ME? Nonchalantly? That's even more ludicrous.

I presume you know what I'm talking about?

Hugo nominations, that's what.

It was Friday evening, April 11, at the Indo-Ceylon Restaurant in Boulder. Carolyn and I were sitting at a table with Al Ellis and a couple of Colorado University professors. At other tables nearby were other participants in and organizers of the SFRA Regional Conference that was to take up the entire weekend. At a bigger table off in a corner sort of by themselves were the pros, the big names -- the people who were being paid to be there: Tom Clareson of *Extrapolation*, Bob Silverberg, Harlan Ellison, Ursula LeGuin -- and Charlie Brown of *Locus*. (Lois Newman was at the head table, too, but I don't know whether she was being paid to participate in the conference).

Toward the end of the meal, Charlie Brown got up and came over to our table. He put his hand out and I grasped it enthusiastically, pleased that he remembered me from DisCon, but there was a twinkle in his eye that was more than simple recognition.

"Congratulations," he said.

"Oh?" said I.

"You're on the Hugo ballot."

I don't remember what I said.

Nothing intelligent or appropriate, I'm sure. I was afraid to believe it at first, but Charlie displayed a copy of the very latest issue of *Locus*, and sure enough, there in the Best Fan Writer column, up there with John Bangsund, Dick Geis, Sandra Miesel and Susan Wood, was Don C. Thompson!



AND HERE I'D THOUGHT PERSZLINES
HAD GONE THE WAY OF THE DINOSAUR!

I started having hot and cold flashes that continued throughout the weekend, off and on. The first rush was not abated by Charlie Brown's cautionary comment: "Now you're not going to win it this year, you know. But next year, if you keep at it, you'll have a good chance."

Carolyn said, "Well, I guess that means I'll have to quit complaining about how much time he spends with that offset press."

I was mumbling something incoherent and Charlie Brown said, very casually, "Oh, here's something else that might interest you." And he showed me the back page of *Locus*, which included the results of the *Locus* poll, Best Fanzine category. He pointed to number 8: Don-o-Saur!

Carolyn said in response to my gurgle: "What? You don't mean Don-o-Saur got a Hugo nomination too?"

"Oh, no," I said. "This is just the *Locus* popularity poll, but . . ."

Charlie Brown said softly, politely, but quite firmly, "Please remember that the *Locus* poll gets more votes than the Hugo, the Nebula, the John W. Campbell and the Gandalf Awards combined."

"My God, I guess that's right," I said. "I apologize. I shouldn't say just the *Locus* poll."

Both Carolyn and Al Ellis were properly impressed. The CU people at the table were improperly impressed: they'd heard of the Hugo but not of the Fan Writer category, and I couldn't tell that they'd heard of *Locus* or its poll before. Nevertheless they offered me polite congratulations, which I greedily accepted.

I sort of floated through that weekend. (I had taken all three days off from *The Rocky Mountain News* to devote to it). And my egoboo was not yet at its maximum, though the news from Charlie Brown would certainly have been enough. But the capper came on Sunday morning when Bill Siros of El Paso asked me if I would consider being fan guest of honor at next year's SolarCon. I hemmed and hawed and shuffled my feet and stalled in every way I could think of, not wishing to seem too eager, for approximately three quarters of a second before saying yes.

This is not a con report. A SFRA conference is not a con (though there were enough fans intermingled with the scholars, and enough pros, and huckster tables --Lois Newman's -- and sercon panels and even a film room of sorts, and parties in the evenings, for the whole thing to be very reminiscent of certain cons). I'll have a little more to say (or maybe quite a lot) about the conference, particularly the public lecture/discussion on Friday night, but I really don't want to go into any detail about the rest of it.

Mostly what I had in mind by mentioning the conference at all was to put the news of my successes in context so I could work my way around to thanking whomever needs to be thanked for them.

I'm not having much luck approaching that subject through the twisty back alleys, so I'll try a direct route:

I wish to take this opportunity to thank publicly all those who voted for Don-o-Saur in the *Locus* poll.

And I wish to thank publicly Bob Vardeman, this year's fan goh at SolarCon, for suggesting me as a possibility for next year, and I thank the SolarCon people for following up on the suggestion.

As for that Hugo nomination, I wish to thank . . . well, here's where this whole thing gets a bit sticky. Even before the SFRA-Con weekend was over I was having severe misgivings and trepidations about that Hugo ballot, and they continue to grow.

Before I thank anybody I'll try to explain that. It's easy enough.

The question gnawing at my mind is this: How do I know that I'm the Don Thompson listed on the ballot? True, in *Locus* the name appears as Don C. Thompson, and that is me all right, so I thought nothing about it at first. But later Charlie Brown told me that on the official ballot the name is just Don Thompson, and that he had added the middle initial when he published the list.

In the past few years, several people have thrust a copy of *All in Color For a Dime* under my nose and asked me for my autograph, and I've had to decline.

Recently a member of DASFA (who I thought should surely know better) cornered me at a meeting and said, "Say, I'd like to talk to you about those articles of yours in *Unknown Worlds of Science Fiction*."

A reporter from the school paper at Metro came in to interview me after he'd read one of those articles.

Several letters I've received recently have contained compliments on that same series.

(I finally bought a copy of *UWSF*, and I have to agree that the compliments are deserved -- but not by me).

Charlie Brown introduced me to Bob Silverberg, and the essence of what Silverbob said in the ensuing conversation(s) is this:

"I saw the name on the ballot, and I said to myself 'oh, sure, I know Don Thompson and his wife Maggie,' and I thought it was nice he was getting the recognition he deserved. Then Charlie Brown pointed to you and said, 'That's Don Thompson,' and I said, 'Oh, no. Can't be. I know Don Thompson.' You've got a problem with your name, you know."

Yeah. I know.

If Bob Silverberg thought the name on the Hugo ballot referred to the Cleveland newspaperman and comics authority, how many people making the nominations had the same idea?

In the actual voting, how many people will cast their ballots for Don A. Thompson of Mentor, Ohio, and how many for Don C. Thompson of Westminster, Colo.?

And just suppose that by some fluke 'Don Thompson' should win the Best Fan Writer award. How would the committee decide which Don Thompson it should go to?

I'm going to AussieCon. I wonder if the Don Thompson is?

Conditions are ripe for one of the most embarrassing moments in World-Con history.

I haven't had any nightmares about it yet, but I'm getting ready for them.

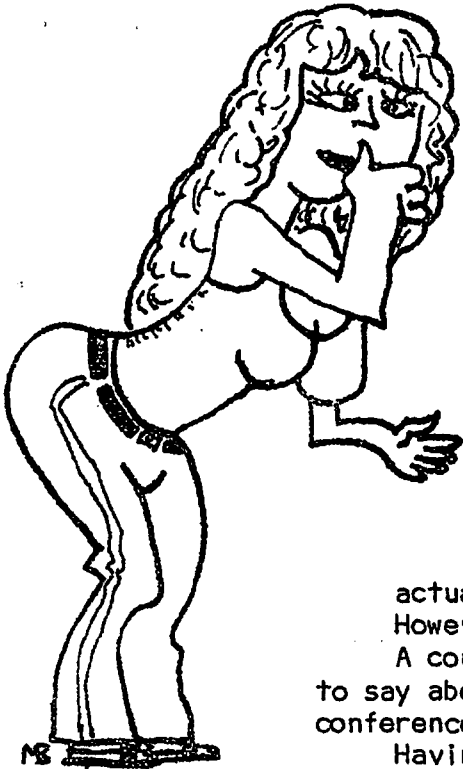
Therefore . . . well, hell, I don't know.

I have to assume that at least some of the people nominating Don Thompson as Best Fan Writer meant me. The fact that Don-o-Saur placed as high in the *Locus* poll as it did must mean something. The fact that the Cleveland D.T. is becoming better known as a pro writer than as a fan writer ought to mean something.

Therefore . . . okay. To those of you who nominated Don Thompson, and to all those planning to vote for Don Thompson:

If you mean me, I say publicly, Thank You.

If you mean Cleveland Don, I say publicly, I forgive you.



Several issues ago I wrote a sort of editorial explaining that what I write in DoS should not be described as editorials. I insisted that they were discourses; and I still insist that most of what I write here falls into the 'discourse' category, though a number of other labels might be applicable, such as 'essay,' 'autobiographical sketch,' 'reminiscence,' 'narrative account' . . . depending upon which particular piece of writing we're talking about.

But it is rare indeed that I write an actual editorial.

However . . .

A couple of pages back I said I might have more to say about one of the public sessions of that SFRA conference in Denver.

Having reached this page, I find that the impulse to do so is still pulsing; and I find in addition that what I have to say best fits a pattern that I would have to label an editorial. And so that's what you are in for now:

Editorial

SPEC FIC AND THE PERRY RHODAN GHETTO

Something like 500 people paid \$3 each on Friday evening, April 11, to hear Bob Silverberg, Harlan Ellison, Ursula LeGuin, Ed Bryant, Tom Clareson and Charlie Brown discuss science fiction. It was the first of two public sessions of the SFRA Regional Conference.

The event was billed as a "lecture and discussion." I don't know what most people were expecting. I don't even know what I was expecting.

But after fifteen or twenty minutes of dumb questions from the audience and flip replies from the panel, some in the crowd were beginning to feel cheated, and were saying so. Then somebody asked a serious question about regional influences on SF writers.

That issue was kicked around inconclusively, but Bob Silverberg somehow, in the process of insisting on being taken seriously as he explained why he had moved from New York to California, "where the air is fit to breathe" a phrase that drew snickers from the largely Colorado crowd), swung the entire discussion around to the topic of his real concern -- the reasons why he is, as of May 1, retiring as a science fiction writer.



That announcement came as a genuine surprise to quite a number of people, including even me, though perhaps I should have been more prepared for it because, as I remembered during the discussion, Ed Bryant had mentioned it previously.

Anyway, from that point on, there were no dull spots in the discussion. And while some people were infuriated, some exasperated, some humiliated, and some I think honestly aggrieved, and while there was lots of angry discussion still going on in the workshops and panels the next day, I don't know of anyone who felt they hadn't gotten their money's worth.

Damned if I'll try to summarize the discussion. My major impression of the evening is that most of the two hours was taken up with Silverberg and Harlan Ellison taking turns saying the nastiest things they could think of about science fiction, with Tom Clareson interjecting occasional long monologues about James Fenimore Cooper and Mark Twain and William Faulkner, and with LeGuin, Bryant and Brown being heard only briefly and rarely.

Some very substantial issues were raised; some very valid grievances were aired. Someone can write a book or a doctoral dissertation analyzing them all. I think I can get most conveniently to the points I want to respond to by starting with Bob Silverberg's reasons for quitting science fiction (or the writing of same), and then taking a look at the responses of some of the other panelists.

Silverberg made it clear, if not at the Friday night session, at least before the weekend was over, in private conversation, that he is not getting out of science fiction entirely: he will continue to attend conferences and conventions and workshops (especially if he's paid to do so), and he will continue with anthologies such as *New Dimensions* and *Alpha*.

But he made it just as clear that as soon as he's finished writing the novel he's currently working on, about the first of May, he does not intend to do any more writing -- definitely not any SF writing -- for at least the next couple of years.

He spent quite a bit of time trying to make his reasons clear, and I was trying to comprehend them, but I'm still not certain that I do fully. I hope that I don't misinterpret him in what follows.

For one thing, Silverberg said, he has been writing science fiction for a long time (more than twenty years) and he's tired.

Mostly though he is discouraged and depressed for reasons that have nothing to do with his own efforts or accomplishments.

Silverberg definitely does not consider himself a failure; in financial terms, on the contrary, he acknowledges that he has been far more successful than the average science fiction writer -- so successful that he can afford to quit writing.

What it comes down to, if I understand him correctly, is that Silverberg considers science fiction a failure.

He considers that the field as a whole has failed him and all the other serious writers who have tried to produce serious works of adult literature within the science fiction genre. He mentioned particularly J. G. Ballard, Theodore Sturgeon, Avram Davidson and Philip Jose Farmer.

For many years Robert Silverberg was regarded as a hack (and presumably regarding himself as such), grinding out competent but undistinguished space opera by the yard. Then, less than a decade ago, he underwent a sort of metamorphosis and began producing (at almost the same

incredible rate of speed as before) some of the most noteworthy, intelligent, mature, sophisticated, literate and just plain good science fiction ever seen. *Thorns*, *A Time of Changes*, *Son of Man*, *The World Inside*, *Tower of Glass*, *Up the Line*, *Dying Inside* . . . the list could go on and on.

One of the things that has plunged Silverberg into a depression is that his publishers are keeping his old potboiler novels in print, but are not reissuing his "adult" works.

It's a matter of economics. The recession is being felt in the book trade too. Publishers are cutting back. They're playing it safe, studying the sales figures very closely. The charts seem to show that Silverberg's hack stuff sells; his quality work does not. Therefore . . .

Well, therefore Bob Silverberg is going to quit writing science fiction.

"We have tried to upgrade this field; we have provided it with quality material that it can be proud of, but our efforts have been rejected. Science fiction readers don't want literary quality, they want space adventure -- Perry Rhodan and Cap Kennedy. That's what the public thinks of when you say 'science fiction,' and that's what science fiction is. And high school teachers of science fiction may argue that Perry Rhodan serves a useful purpose by getting kids interested in SF and that once they get hooked on that they will eventually develop enough taste to prefer the better fiction. But it isn't so. Most of them never get beyond Perry Rhodan. We have suffered by having our stories labeled science fiction, and so we reject that label!"

None of the members of the panel actually made quite that speech, but the sentiments reflected therein were expressed, in varying degrees of vehemence, by Silverberg, Ellison and Bryant.

Ellison did, in one of his tirades, actually say that he wished all the Perry Rhodan books could be burned, and that statement did actually elicit a burst of applause from the audience. Silverberg, a little later, expressed sorrow that people with masters degrees should applaud such a statement, but he did not himself disagree with it.

It was definitely Silverberg who most actively guided the discussion into its anti-science fiction channel, and it was Silverberg who seemed to dominate the discussion, if only because he was the one planning the most definite action in support of his anti-SF views.

But both Ellison and Bryant made it clear that they agreed with his contention that science fiction is an unsavory ghetto.

"I rue the day that I sold my first story to a science fiction magazine and got myself branded as a science fiction writer," Ellison proclaimed. "I've been fighting to overcome that handicap ever since. Hell, I don't write science fiction stories -- never have. I write Harlan Ellison stories!"

Ed Bryant, in his increasingly frequent encounters with newspaper reporters and during his appearances on radio and/or TV talk shows, has always been very careful to refer to himself as a writer of "speculative fiction" and he takes as much time as necessary to explain the difference between that and "science fiction." Among his friends, Bryant has been trying to popularize the term "spec-fic" as a first step toward replacing the lamentable "sci-fi."

"I am willing to take my chances with the critics as just a writer,"

Bryant told that Friday night crowd. "Science fiction is a ghetto, and I want out!"

Ursula LeGuin had less to say about this whole issue than any of the other three pro writers. She was not at all certain that her future books and stories would continue to fit neatly into the science fiction category, but she was unable to work up any indignation over the existence of the category. "I just write what I feel like writing, and I don't really worry about what it's called," she said.

Charlie Brown pleaded with the authors not to leave the science fiction field, that it was, after all, such writers as themselves who had helped to give science fiction some respectability.

It was a little hard to follow what Tom Clareson was saying, because one does tend to start yawning after Clareson has been talking for a few minutes, but I think that in his remarks about Cooper and Twain and Faulkner and I don't remember who else he brought in, he was trying to make a point that I consider of crucial importance -- namely that important writers, such as Twain and Faulkner (yes, I remember; Clareson was using Cooper and Horatio Alger as examples of enormously popular writers of no real literary merit -- the Perry Rhodan producers of their day) have always had a difficult time with publishers pinning labels on them or not knowing how to promote their books. Mark Twain's publishers thought he wrote funny books and they exploited him as a humorist, and it wasn't until after he was dead that the critics discovered what a serious writer he was. Faulkner spent most of his career in obscurity as far as the public was concerned. And so forth.

The audience response to the discussion was, as I've indicated, varied but tending sharply toward the angry.

Several people pointed out that Silverberg, Ellison and Bryant were at least able to get their stuff published, which was more than a good many struggling mainstream writers were able to do, and that both Silverberg and Ellison had made some pretty good money.

Silverberg conceded that point and repeatedly stressed that the finances had nothing to do with his decision to leave SF.

Ellison conceded the point, too. "But I've made money because I'm a hustler and I always assume that anything that isn't nailed down is mine, and I take it."

But then Ellison listed some science fiction writers who he said were just as talented as he but not as aggressive -- Sturgeon, Davidson, Farmer -- and who had achieved neither wealth nor critical acclaim.



J, CAESAR, DECREE:
BRITANNIA IS
FINE IN LXXIX!

Because they bear the label "science fiction writers" and their books are in the science fiction section of the stores, and because the critics never give serious attention to science fiction books.

It was that point about the critics, I think, that came closest to persuading me that Silverberg is maybe justified in getting out of SF; because it has infuriated me for many years that so many really fine writers are systematically ignored by mainstream critics (and therefore by some segments of the reading public).-- simply because what they write is called science fiction, and the critics know without having to think about it that science fiction is "oh, that Perry Rhodan stuff."

Yeah, that kind of willfully ignorant snobbishness does make me angry.

Ellison named just a few good but neglected writers. I can name a couple of dozen others without even taking a deep breath -- and just for the hell of it, I think I will. Here:

Poul Anderson, James Blish, John Boyd, John Brunner, D. G. Compton, Edmund Cooper, Sam Delany (but maybe he doesn't belong on here; Delany may have discovered that the key to mainstream success is simply to write an enormous book, obscure in meaning, with lots of kinky sex), Philip K. Dick, Thomas Disch, Geo. Alec Effinger, R. A. Lafferty, Fritz Leiber, Anne McCaffrey, Michael Moorcock, Frederik Pohl, Joanna Russ, Bob Shaw, Robert Sheckley, Clifford D. Simak, James Tiptree, Bob Tucker, Jack Vance, Jack Williamson, Roger Zelazny . . .

That's an even two dozen isn't? And I'm sure that each of you can think of another dozen or so that should be added. So could I.

These are writers who, in any sane, literate, truly civilized society, would be famous. Their names would be known to all, not to just a small cult of science fiction freaks.

If my indignation makes it sound like I'm agreeing with Silverberg, Ellison and Bryant, I apologize.

On balance, I find that I do not agree with them.

Oh, I agree with them that the plight of the science fiction writer is a sorry one, that publishers are ruthless bastards, more intent on turning a fast buck than in preserving literary values; and I also agree with them that Perry Rhodan is probably crud and that it's a damned shame that in the public mind Rhodan should have come to symbolize SF -- if indeed it does (and I'm not all that sure that it does).

In fact, several times during the discussion, Silverberg and Ellison, particularly, seemed to be saying not that the public sees SF in terms of Perry Rhodan -- but that they do.

And there's the essence of my disagreement with them. They blame the nature of science fiction itself for their woes. I blame the stupidity of critics, publishers and readers.

One of the teachers in a workshop session the next day summed up the indignation that had been aroused in many of the educators, and she came close to expressing some of my own sentiments:

"Here we've been working to get science fiction accepted as a legitimate field of study, and we've finally begun to convince administrators and parents that it's a tremendously wide field--it covers writers from Kepler and Swift to Heinlein, Clarke, Vonnegut and Barth-- and now these people come along and tell us that science fiction is nothing but

Perry Rhodan! How many teachers or even students here have ever read any Perry Rhodan books?" The hands of a few students did go up. Some of the teachers present indicated that they had never heard of Perry Rhodan before. "Well, I just think it's narrow minded and almost bigoted of Mr. Silverberg and Mr. Ellison to say that science fiction is no good just because some of the things that are called science fiction are no good."

Them's my sentiments, pretty much.

And I don't know whether the Perry Rhodan books are any good or not; I've never read any of them.

But even if they are terrible, and even if they are the best sellers of the SF field, I don't see the same significance in the fact that Silverberg seems to see.

Crud is always more popular than quality. That's a corollary of Sturgeon's Law, isn't it? And it's just as true of the mainstream as it is of SF.

I don't know whether Silverberg really thinks his books would be found by more intelligent readers or that a larger number of intelligent readers would find his books if they weren't labeled "science fiction," and I don't know whether Bryant thinks that by calling his stuff "speculative fiction" he will attract a better breed of reader.

They are deluding themselves, I fear, if their expectations really run along those lines. The average level of intelligence among SF readers is almost certainly higher by a significant degree than the average of mainstream fiction readers. No, I don't have statistics to support that statement, but does anybody doubt it?

So if Silverberg wants the acclaim of readers capable of appreciating his best work, it's my personal opinion that he'd do best to stay where he is. (And just parenthetically I think he would be well advised to quit antagonizing the SF scholars and students -- the people who are trying hardest to persuade mainstream critics and readers that science fiction is worthy of serious attention).

On the other hand, if what Silverberg really wants is popular acclaim -- like making the best-seller list . . . then, sure, it is essential to shed the SF label. And to go back to writing crud.

Actually, I don't seriously think that's what Bob Silverberg wants.

I think he's just tired and wants to take a vacation from writing, and maybe that is a good idea.

But frankly I don't think he can stick it out for two years. I hope not.

Well, sorry about that. It turned out to be a longer and less pointed editorial than I had hoped, and I spent much more time writing it than I intended, so now I'm even further behind schedule. I want to do a few book reviews next, and they'll take time, but then I plan to cheat on my autobiographical discourse. I'll explain how when we get there.

a few REVIEWS

I have never made a secret of the fact that I am lazy. I take no pride in the fact; I strive occasionally to overcome the quality, and I have learned to live with it in the realization that my best chance of accomplishing anything is to keep myself loaded down with more chores than I can possibly complete. That way, though many things perforce are left undone, a surprising number of things still are done. So many, in fact, that the impression created is sometimes That of a person of enormous energy. Yet the laziness manifests itself, though in disguised form, and it often evokes a negative reaction from friends who think they have a right to expect better from me.

Here's what I'm talking about -- in excerpts from two letters, comments about my reviews in DoS 40. The first from Sheryl Smith:

I liked to see you doing some reviews, and I think you should do more even when you don't need them as a delaying tactic. But it might be better if you chose less obscure titles (or obscure ones that are exceptionally good; it's rather a waste of time to pan things that few of your readers will ever encounter). As an English teacher and a journalist you could do a decent job on the more formidable stuff. . . .

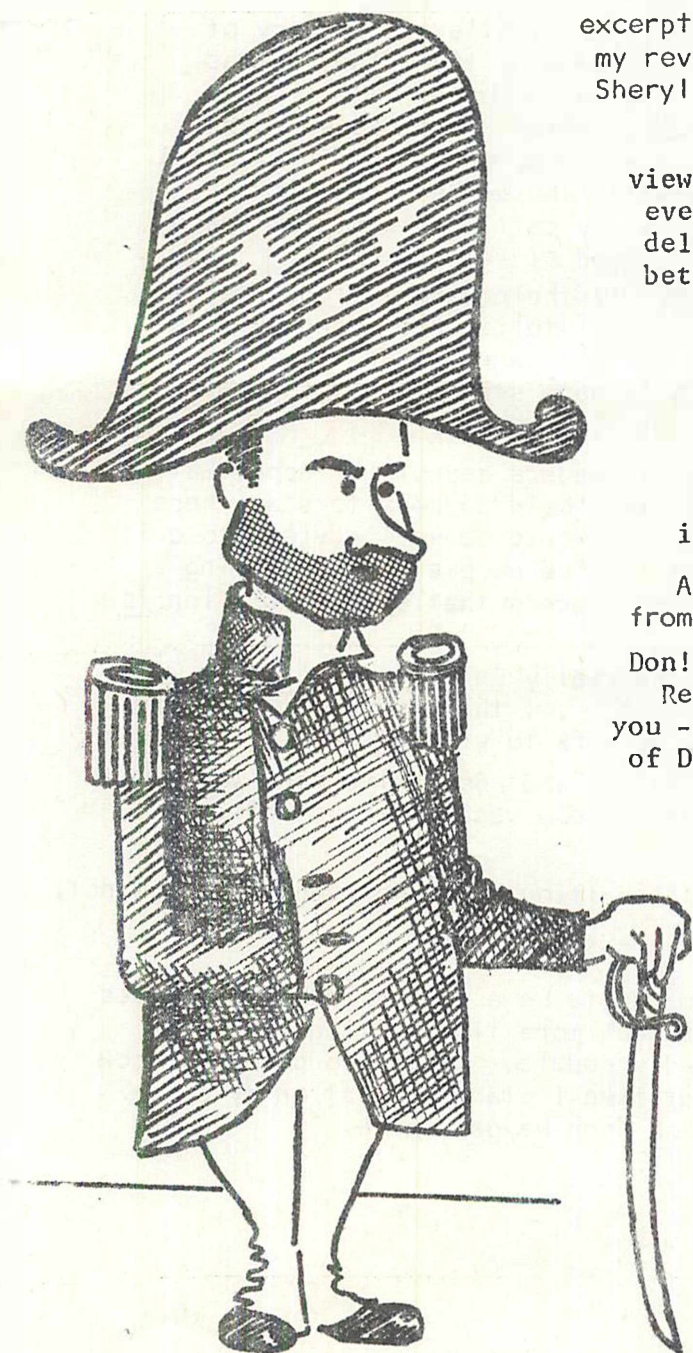
And an even more strident outcry from normally gentle Ben Indick:

Don!

Reading thru DOS I had to stop to scold you -- how dare you give away the story of Dahl's "Visitor," so exquisitely told & the best (& perhaps redeeming) feature in a disappointing collection (compared to its great predecessors).

Don't -- DON'T do it again.

Oh, all right; I'll try not to, because I really don't like to have Ben Indick upset with me. It was sheer laziness. I wanted to mention Roald Dahl's *Switch Bitch*, but didn't want to take the time to do an actual review of it, so in my haste and clumsiness I gave away the



plot of what Ben considered the best story in the book. (My personal favorite, though, was "The Great Switcheroo" not because it was such a great story; just that I didn't anticipate the ending, and it seemed more subtle in the final revelation [didn't give anything away there, did I?])

And as for Sheryl's suggestion that I select less obscure titles to review . . . well, I believe Sheryl meant that as a compliment and I'm grateful for the intent, but it is nonetheless a reflection on my laziness. Because, you see, I don't select books to review. Hell, I don't even select books to read.

Some people that I know are very systematic in their reading, going so far as to keep lists of books-to-be-read -- and then by God actually reading the books on that list! I stand in awe, but I'll never be able to do the same thing myself.

I have no system at all that I've been able to discern. I am strictly an impulse reader: I'll pick up a book and if it feels right I'll start reading. If it holds me, I'll continue; if not I put it aside and pick up something else, and I no longer have the slightest qualms about not completing every book that I begin.

And that's why, if I continue doing book reviews, it will be of a haphazard assortment, rather than of books selected on the basis of their importance. Sorry, Sheryl.

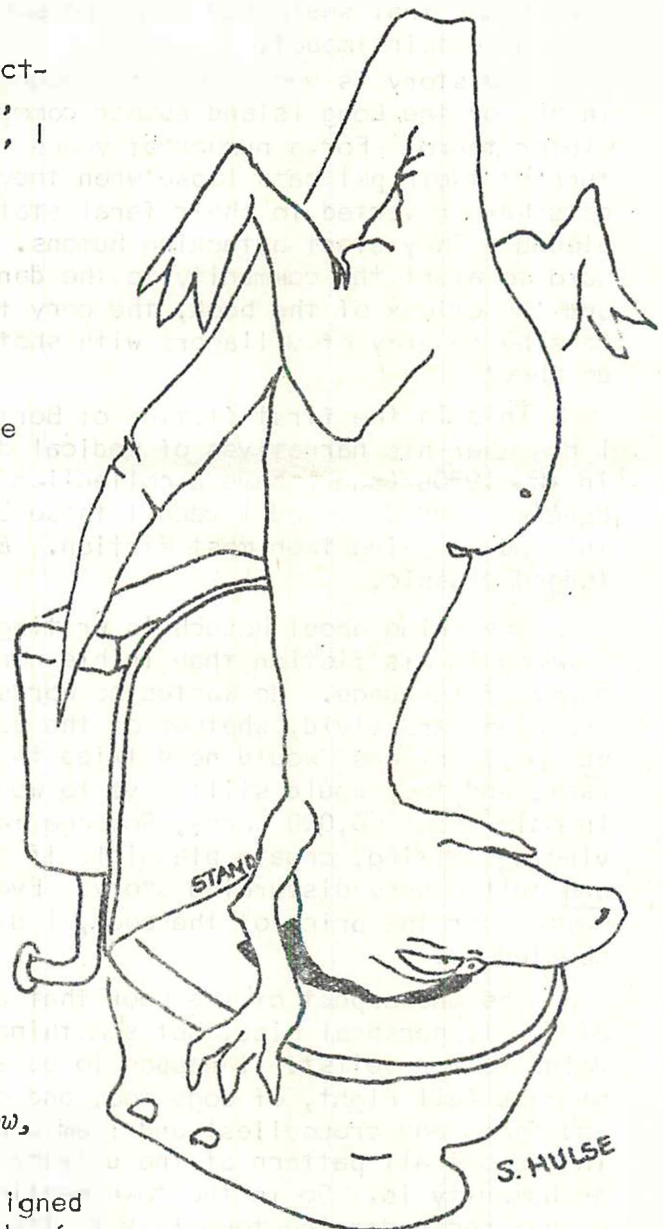
But enough with the apologies now! I want to tell you about some of the books I have been reading:

FERAL, by Berton Rouche, Harper & Row, (Book Club edition) 149 pages.

This is one of the reasons I resigned from the Literary Guild, come to think of it. Not that this is a bad book -- it isn't, but the book club price for it was close to \$5; less than 20 per cent discount from the publisher's price, which is three or four times too high to begin

PROCTOSAURUS

170,000,000 YEARS AGO.....



WITH A BRAIN IN MY TAIL
WHERE DID YOU EXPECT
ASS TO BE ?!!

with. I got this and John Hersey's *My Petition for More Space* together at a total cost of more than \$10, and the total wordage of the two of them doesn't equal that of one average size novel. I'd been disgusted with Literary Guild since I first joined it for the generally crummy quality of their selections anyway, and this was the final impetus that got me out of it.

(And I haven't read *Petition* yet -- the "important" book--so don't look for a review of it in this issue).

FERAL, as an unpretentious, unambitious, straightforward Harper novel of suspense, is (as I said before) not a bad book. It held me. And I kept a wary eye for the next couple of days on the three cats that share our human household, so obviously the book made a certain impact.

The story is very simple: a young New York couple buys a home in one of the Long Island summer communities and decides to spend a winter there. For a number of years the summer people have been turning their pet cats loose when they return to the city, and the cats have reverted to their feral state and their population has exploded. They start attacking humans. It takes a while for the young hero to alert the community to the danger, but eventually he does, and the climax of the book, the gory finale, is the slaughter of the cats by an army of villagers with shotguns. They get 'em all. Or do they?

This is the first fiction of Berton Roueche's that I've read. I remember his narratives of medical detection from *The New Yorker* in the 1950s (and I have a collection of them: *The Incurable Wound*, Berkley 1958 344) and I recall those stories as being more suspenseful and exciting than most fiction. *Eleven Blue Men* is an acknowledged classic.

One thing about Roueche's writing that becomes more noticeable somehow in his fiction than in his non-fiction is his extreme economy of language. He wastes no words at all. His descriptions are clear and vivid, whether of the people, the woods or the cats, but most writers would need twice the number of words Roueche uses, and they would still have to worry about advancing the plot. In only about 25,000 words, Roueche manages to establish a convincing setting, create plausible if not memorable characters -- and tell a very disturbing story. Even though I was angry at Lit. Guild over the price of the book, I didn't feel that Roueche had cheated me.

The one aspect of the book that disturbed me most is a matter of purely personal bias, not something that Roueche was or was not doing as a novelist. I happen to be a sincere and ardent admirer of cats (all right, of dogs too, and of snakes, even, and birds and bears and crocodiles) and I am convinced that in the long run, in the overall pattern of the universe, they are just as important as humanity is. So in the town meeting scene of *Feral*, where Jack Bishop persuades the townsfolk to take arms against a sea of felines, I kept hoping that some radical would arise and argue for the removal of the human population and of letting the cats have Long Island.

Oh well. It'll never happen, at least not in mainstream fiction or in real life. Any time there's a conflict between civilization and

the untamed (or alien) "we" are always the good guys. (Oh, not always in fiction, I guess; now that I've made the statement, I'm starting to think of exceptions: Peter Matthiessen's *At Play in the Fields of the Lord* is a beautiful one).

Even in science fiction, the idea that the human race is not necessarily the most important thing in creation is a fairly new one, but there seem to be a recent spate of books in which the monster/alien is acknowledged to have a right to exist. One very successful one last year was *Soulmate* by Charles W. Runyon (which I avoided at first, assuming it was part of the *Exorcist* exploitation flood; it was only after I'd read two or three reviews of it in fanzines that I bought it, read it, and agreed that it was well worth reading.

SOULSUCKER by Ted Sabine, Pinnacle, \$1.25, 180 pp., is a fairly obvious attempt to exploit the success of *Soulmate* and can stand in corroboration of my previous statement about publishers being ruthless bastards more interested in a fast buck, etc., if corroboration is needed. I almost didn't buy the book, on just those grounds, but I thought maybe I could be wrong again. I wasn't.

In *Soulmate*, you'll recall, an 11-year-old girl is taken over by a "being" that transforms her into a voluptuous idealized female who then goes around seducing all the men she can and actually "absorbing" their souls as they die in the act of making love to her. Sounds godawful, but the treatment is mature and thoughtful and the writing is competent, and the plot takes original and unexpected twists.

SOULSUCKER is a spider creature from outer space, marooned on earth, desperate, frightened -- and hungry. Its food is blood (and don't ask me your nit-picky questions about metabolism and digestive systems and parallel evolution; either you can accept it or not). Either dog or human blood will do. The creature is telepathic and female, and to deceive its human victims (in fact just to survive, to avoid detection) it manipulates viewers' minds so it is perceived as -- of course -- a beautiful, voluptuous, tempting human female. And when a man makes love to her she drains his blood, killing him. His blood; not his soul. Not a single soul gets sucked in the entire book. What a rip-off!

Much of *SOULSUCKER* is told from the alien's point of view, and though the author's ineptness at shifting points of view is one of the book's major flaws, the attempt to present the spider lady as a sympathetic character (even as she indiscriminately drains puppy dogs and potential rapists) is its redeeming quality. The Thing's persuasion of a human male to help her is not at all convincing, but it establishes the author as a non-bigot.

* * * *

Another of the reasons I resigned from Literary Guild is that I had decided I wanted *The Seven Per Cent Solution* by Nicholas Meyer. LG had it for something like \$7. But I noticed it was available as one of the introductory offerings from the Mystery Guild -- seven or eight books for a dime (plus postage and handling, which still comes to not very much). So I left LG and joined MG.

And the first book I read, of the package of freebies I received was not Meyer's (though I'm working on it now) but:



SHATTERED, by K.R. Dwyer, Random House, 184 pp.

The book jacket has a picture of the author, and it says that K.R. Dwyer is a pseudonym for someone well known in science fiction, but I had to ask Charlie Brown who it is. Charlie informed me without a moment's hesitation that it's Dean Koontz and that his first K.R. Dwyer novel, *Chase*, (which I'm now looking for) is very good.

Well, as an unassuming, unambitious, straightforward potboiler suspense novel, *Shattered* is not bad either.

A young man, Alex Doyle, and a young boy, Colin, are driving from Philadelphia to San Francisco, because Alex has just recently married Colin's sister, who has gone to San Francisco ahead of them to find an apartment, and the boys are bringing her car out. Colin, an imaginative 11-year-old, notices that they're being followed by a van, and he makes an exciting game out of it.

But it turns out that they actually are being followed by the psychopath who has been jilted by Colin's sister; his intentions are not at all friendly.

Part of the interest in the book is the relationship between Colin and Alex, as they test each other out to find exactly where they stand with each other. And part of the interest is Alex's discovery of his own capacity for hate and violence -- and courage. Alex had been a conscientious objector. He begins to wonder, as the madman in the van puts more and more pressure on him, whether his real motive was cowardice.

There's plenty of blood and violence before the thing is over, but the fate of the psycho is almost incidental (except that it's possible, at the end, to feel actual sympathy for him).

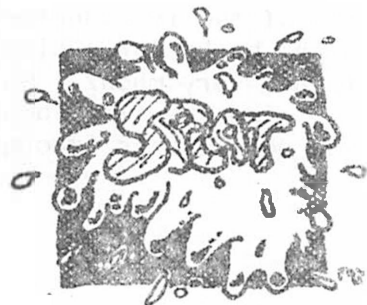
The thing that really lifted the book out of the ordinary, for me, and that held the major element of interest, and the truest aspect of terror, is the treatment that Colin and Alex receive at the hands of the "good Americans" -- the motel owners, the service station attendants and lawmen: condescension, greed, suspicion, hostility. On the basis of nothing more substantial than the length of Alex's hair and his manner of speech, the Utah sheriff tells Alex: "I'm not the kind of man you can call a pig one day and ask for help the next!"

God, that is so true! So terrifyingly true.

I was sorry that Dwyer/Koontz was unable to integrate that aspect of terror more thoroughly into the plot, but I have a great deal of respect for him for the use he did make of it.

I asked Carolyn to see if she could find *Chase* at the Westminster library, where she works, and she just received a call this evening that the book is in. I'm looking forward to reading it.

The other books that I received upon joining the Mystery Guild are: *Archer at Large* by Ross MacDonald; *Clouds of Witness & The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club* by Dorothy Sayers; *Doctor Frigo* by Eric Ambler; and *Alfred Hitchcock Presents Stories to be Read With the Lights On*.



Now we come to the part where I cheat. I won't apologize, but I will explain. The piece that follows has been published previously. Ordinarily I don't do things like that, but this thing appeared so long ago and in a publication so obscure that I can virtually guarantee it will be new to all but one or two readers of DoS.

In 1965, Ralph E. McWhinnie, the long-time registrar of the University of Wyoming, put together an anthology of reminiscences by former students. It was his retirement present to the school. The volume bore the abysmal title, *Those Good Years at Wyoming U.*, and the best thing about it was that it was quickly forgotten.

Remember as you read that I wrote this ten years ago about an event that took place 15 years prior to that.

(c) THE LEGEND OF THE BANNED B. I.

This would be a more credible story if I could give it some such title as "Why I Was Expelled from the University of Wyoming" or "Why I Never Became Editor of the *Branding Iron*."

But the fact is that I wasn't expelled and did serve as B.I. editor for the 1950-51 year; and if that spoils a good story it's just too bad. I've never been very sorry about it.

In the spring of 1950, following custom, the outgoing *Branding Iron* staff, headed by Cal Queal, handed responsibility for the final issue of the year to the new editor and his staff.

As soon as the next-to-last issue was finished, I gathered some of my prospective assistants into a huddle and we began making plans for our grand debut.

From that huddle emerged a momentous decision: anyone could turn out a good, responsible newspaper; that was obvious, because Cal Queal and his crew had been doing it all year; we were going to produce something special -- a gag issue.

Looking back on it over a gulf of 15 years, I find it difficult to understand and impossible to explain the excitement we felt at that concept. The campus has a perfectly adequate humor magazine -- *Snipe* -- and I'm sure we realized that the idea of a gag issue of the newspaper was not original with us.

Nevertheless, because we were going to do it, we gave the project our unbounded enthusiasm. And, right now, I'd better say who we were.

In the original huddle, as I remember, were only Don Merback, Bruce Partridge and myself. Bart Page got into the act very



quickly and almost stole the whole show, but I don't think he was one of the actual instigators. Bart had been a sports columnist on Cal's staff during the year. I had designated Warren (Bounce) Carlson to be my sports editor next year, but he was too swamped with final exams to be able to take on the full duties just yet, so Bart got the job for the special edition. He brought to the task more zest and drive than anyone -- plus a genuine talent for ribaldry that soon got beyond my half-hearted efforts to control.

I think I originally had in mind a paper that would be funny but not terribly dirty. By about Monday or Tuesday I realized we were developing a paper that was going to be very dirty but not terribly funny. And by then, though we had tried to keep the whole project a deep dark secret, word had leaked out to, among others, Wallace Biggs [head of the journalism department]. On Tuesday afternoon, I got a telephone call at home from Mr. Biggs. "What's this I hear about you putting out a sex issue of the *Branding Iron*?" he demanded.

"Well, we are working on a gag issue," I answered evasively.

"Clean it up," he instructed.

"I'll try," I said weakly.

But the situation was hopeless. Most of the material for the paper was already in type, and to clean it up would be like scrubbing a clod of rich top soil. We had the choice of depriving the campus of any *Branding Iron* at all that week or proceeding with what we had.

Publication date for the paper was supposed to be Thursday, May 25, but for various reasons, having to do mostly with the inexperience of the staff and the chaotic conditions under which we were working, it was delayed a day.

And when we arrived at the daily *Bulletin* press room early Friday morning to pick up the papers and distribute them, we thought they had been delayed permanently.

"One of Cal Queal's boys picked 'em up an hour ago," the press room foreman told us. "Same guy that's been gettin' 'em all year. Probably burned 'em. I got one copy and I'm keepin' it. May be the only one in existence."

We called on Wallace Biggs in his office as soon as he was available -- about 8 a.m. -- and raised our voices in protest. We learned from Mr. Biggs that the papers had not been destroyed, but they had been confiscated. He also told us, "An emergency meeting of the Board of Publications has been called for 10 o'clock. You are -- ah -- invited to appear. Until then . . ."

We retired in disorder, held a conference, and for some reason decided that one thing we could do "until then" was get an appointment with President Humphrey and take our case directly to the top.

I can't imagine why, at the time, we thought that was such a good idea, but I'm convinced now that it really was. We had no trouble getting the appointment, and by about 9 a.m. we were admitted to the president's office. Along the way we had been joined by Joe McGowan, popular B.I. crusader-columnist. As soon as I clarified for Dr. Humphrey the nature of our mission, Joe explained his presence:

"I had nothing to do with this issue of the paper," he said. "I haven't seen a copy of it and I don't have any idea what's in it. I am here solely in the interests of freedom of the press."

President Humphrey gave us an erudite and quite valid lecture on the distinction between freedom and license as applied to the press, and he did it without being pompous [my only deliberate falsehood in this article]. Then he asked each of us who had helped produce the paper what we thought its most objectionable features were.

My nomination was a page one story I had written, ridiculing the religion of the commencement speaker. Bart confessed that he might have overstepped the bounds of good taste with a sports story carrying a five-column headline: "Jacques Strappe Lifts Poke Hopes."

Other items were mentioned, including a picture of Dr. Humphrey himself, bearing the caption:

See this funny old man? He is a Civil War
veteran. He is the janitor at Old Main.
He is Jasper Humphreys. He plays piano
duets with Harry Truman.

Dr. Humphrey listened to our descriptions with blood-chilling aplomb. And then he asked us:

"Well, what is your own honest opinion? Do you think the papers should be released and distributed, or do you think they should be suppressed?"

Don Merback thought they should be distributed; Bruce Partidge thought they should be distributed; so did Bart Page; and so, most emphatically, did Joe McGowan.

"And you?" Dr. Humphrey asked me.

I said, "Well . . . I think maybe they should be suppressed."

Seeing the betrayed and horror stricken expressions on the faces of my colleagues, I quickly added: "But it should have been done several days ago, by me, before they were ever printed. I think it's too late now. The whole campus knows that a gag issue has been printed, and has been confiscated. Imaginations are going to run wild, and no matter how bad the paper is, it can't be as bad as people will think it is unless they can actually see it."

President Humphrey said, "Well, of course the whole thing is in the hands of the Board of Publications." We left with no promises, but I knew then that the papers would be released.

Until I actually opened my mouth to make my little speech, I wasn't certain what my position would be. Now I had clarified my thoughts. I didn't have to defend the paper on grounds of humor or esthetics, or even freedom of the press. I could campaign frankly against unbridled imaginations.

So I took that line when we appeared before the Board of Publications, but it turned out that its members weren't our real obstacle. They reserved the right to consider disciplinary action later, but they didn't officially oppose the release of the papers.

Cal Queal did. It seems that in the masthead of the gag issue,

we had neglected to identify ourselves. We had removed the names of Cal and his staff, but we hadn't given our own.

Cal was still the official editor of the paper and he didn't want people assuming he was connected with this issue of it. So we made a deal with Cal and then rushed downtown to a printing shop and put in a rush order for 2,000 2" X 2" gummed labels reading:

BRANDING IRON

Published unofficially for the first and last time by four renegade pseudo-journalists; and released only on condition that the names of the culprits be included.

Bart, Don, Bruce and I spent our lunch hour licking labels. Before 1 o'clock the papers were being distributed all over the campus, and before 2 o'clock we were getting repercussions.

I had anticipated loud, widespread and violent reaction. We had insulted any number of fraternities, sororities and miscellaneous organizations, but they didn't complain very vociferously. Almost every page of the paper contained some disparagement of Dean of Women E. Luella Galliver, but never a murmur of reproach from her. If the commencement speaker -- a fellow named Ezra Taft Benson, who later became secretary of agriculture -- was offended by my page one article about him, he never bothered to file a libel suit.

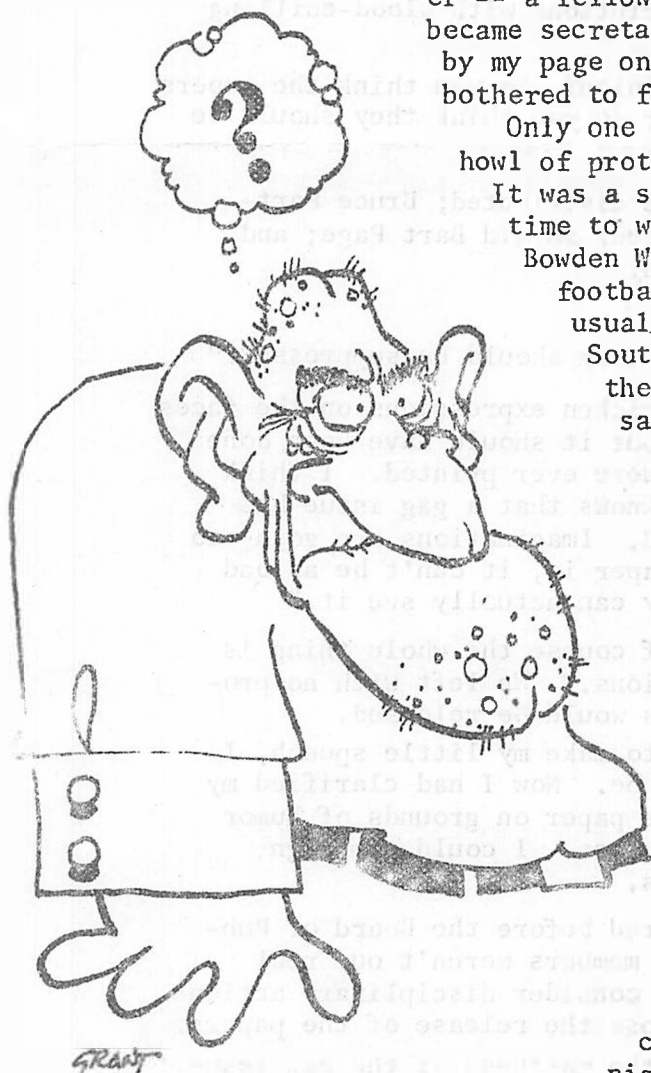
Only one article caused a sincerely angry howl of protest, but it was quick in coming.

It was a story that Bounce Carlson had found time to whip out, the gist being that Coach Bowden Wyatt was extending his search for football talent even further south than usual and was recruiting gorillas from South Africa. I considered it one of the few examples of really clever satire in the paper. But a little before 2 p.m. the B.I. office was invaded by a brawny delegation of half a dozen gridiron giants, and they didn't think it was funny.

"Wheah is this guy Bounce Cahlson?" their leader demanded. "We goan bounce him. He cain't say things like theyut bout us!

Callin' us gorillas, why thass bad as callin' us niggahs!"

Bart Page gets full credit for calming down those Mississippi maulers, maneuvering them out of the office and somehow convincing them that in the first place the article was a joke and in the second place, joke or not, no one was calling them either gorillas or niggahs.



As soon as the door was closed behind them, Don Merback was dispatched through the window to head off Bounce Carlson, who in fact was expected at the office at any minute to help with the label-licking.

When I had to get to a 2:10 history class for a final exam, those gorilla-like football players were still milling around in the hall, insisting they weren't gorillas. To avoid them, I followed Don Merback through the window and arrived at Dr. T. A. Larson's class only a few minutes late but totally unprepared to write an examination on the foundations of Western culture.

So, instead of the regular exam, I wrote a brief history of "those events on campus in the past week which may have dealt a crushing blow to the foundations of Western culture."

Dr. Larson gave me a passing grade for the course.

* * * * *

Actually, Dr. Larson gave me an A for that course, and I wouldn't have had any trouble aceing the exam everybody else was taking, but Dr. Larson said he was more interested in the inside story of the banned B.I., and so that's what I gave him -- the version more or less as detailed above, although not so polished.

Actually, neither version was quite complete. The story contained only that one outright lie, but I was very careful not to tell the whole story. But now it can be told, I guess.

You see, there was a fifth staff member, one whose name did not appear on that gummed label because she had pleaded with me as though it was a matter of ultimate importance that her role as society editor not be disclosed. She acted as though she'd kill herself if anyone found out that she had written those suggestive women's section stories. (And they weren't all that suggestive, but to have come from her, they were -- somewhat).

She was a fundamentalist Baptist and a member of the same youth group in which I functioned as (literally) Devil's advocate.

She was a sorority sister of Carolyn's (Chi Omega). Carolyn said she was the most inhibited person she'd ever known; she would blush at the very mention of sex. She undressed by putting her nightgown over her head and wearing it as a tent while disrobing inside it.

She was a competent enough journalist, though, conscientious and hard working, never missing a deadline in the year she was a staff member while I was editor of the *Branding Iron*.

Immediately after graduation she married a rancher and overcame her sexual inhibitions enough to have four children in about five years.

One windy Wyoming afternoon (the howling incessant wind on those exposed, isolated Wyoming ranches has been known to drive people mad) her husband came home, took the whole family into the basement -- and shot them all: the four children, his wife, and himself, in the head, fatally.

I promised my society editor for that "gag" issue of the B.I. that I wouldn't tell anyone she had been a part of it, and I have kept her guilty secret these 25 years.

Even now, you notice, I can't bring myself to use her name.

It would be a betrayal, in a way . . .



Naturally enough, most of the mail resulting from DoS 40 is concerned largely with the long thing I wrote about Polly. My only regret about the story and the response to it was that my last line left an impression that I would rather not have left. I knew when I wrote it that it could (and therefore probably would) be misinterpreted; but I let it stand anyway, and resisted the temptation to add a paragraph or two explaining what I really meant. I'm hoping the explanation will come through now, as I print some of the letters.

Some people actually liked the ending. I guess Dr. Fredric Wertham did:

Fredric Wertham, M.D.
Kempton R#1
PA 19529

. . . Your piece on Polly is really beautiful and moving writing, especially the way you end it.

As a psychiatrist, as part of my duties, I have had to see many people in similar conditions and situations in general hospitals. Your writing reminds me of other Pollys.

Sheryl Smith voiced the objection as clearly, candidly and forcefully as anyone:

Sheryl Smith
7512 N. Eastlake Terrace
Chicago IL 60626

. . . the last line was a bit flakey, though I can see the technical justification for it -- and it was not an apt final impression, considering the character and dignified maturity of your sister. (She doesn't need you to "save" her, my dear sir -- she seems to be taking the wretched business better than you are, and it's her life); but on the whole I found it an admirably restrained portrait of a (to me) very impressive woman . . .

Right here would be an appropriate spot for me to present my attempted clarification. Even more appropriate though, and far more interesting and more illuminating and more everything is this letter from Polly herself, with her interpretation of my infamous last line:

Polly Ryan
10424 Lake Ridge Drive
Oakton, VA 22124

. . . The autobiographical sketch about "me and Polly" was especially enjoyable. I began reading it with great interest thinking here "how similar" and there "how very different" our memories were. I delighted in the sensation of seeing myself from your eyes. I was surprised by my memories that were stirred to life by your words. When I was finished reading I had tears in my eyes, which I dried while thinking that you must have heard wrong. I didn't think I had called for you to save me. Then I thought again and I will have to admit that in a way my letter was the little girl crying "Save me, Donnie, save me."

Like you I have heard the "save me" story, but I am sure I don't really remember it. I do remember feeling, at a slightly older age, afraid and lonely, and knowing that if you were there to take my mind off my fear it would vanish. I doubt that even as a small child I really thought you could protect me, but you didn't make fun of my fear either. You accepted it and thus accepted me in a way that made me feel "right" about it. Later in our "game" you listened and respected my ideas, thus giving me a feeling of having status and worth.

If I didn't really expect protection from you then, I don't now. I only expect you to accept my feelings about that which is. That is not too hard to grasp if you remember that I was not more than two years old and the vocabulary of a two year old can hardly express what I may have felt, either about big noisy trucks or about you. I could say "Save me, Donnie, save me;" I could not say, "Accept me, Brother, reassure me that I am really intelligent and that I have the right to make decisions." The decision of the two year old was simply to believe that the noise was a possible threat and therefore something to be avoided.

At the age of two I ran to you crying "save me" and you knew that I did not literally mean it. You must have understood and you did what I needed you to do. At the age of 44 I wrote you a letter (thus re-enacting the "save me" scene), and again you must have understood and have done what I needed you to do. You have reassured me of my intelligence, and my right to decide. You have again accepted me, just as I am.

Right. Okay. I wholeheartedly endorse that explication. If it isn't just exactly what I meant it is so close (and so generous) that anything I could add by way of additional explanation would be a waste. I'll give some more of the reactions to Polly's situation and let the letters gradually move on to other matters:

Samuel S. Long
Box 4946
Patrick AFB, FL
32925

. . . Polly is a pet form of Mary. Lord Peter Wimsey called his sister, Lady Mary Parker (as she became when she married Scotland Yard's Charles Parker), Polly; but Lord Peter never lapsed into calling his brother-in-law "Chuck." Curious that your Polly should not have Mary among her birth-names.

Her tale was of great interest to me in that it parallels my own experience--and so does yours. My father's father was fairly well-to-do until the Depression. He started working for the Atlantic Coast Line railroad, and his family--especially his widow--used their "free ride" privilege extensively. Grandmother would spend her summers in the mountains of North Carolina and her winters in Florida. She died in the 50s, before train service had gone completely to pot. My father,

however, unlike you, became an avid railroad enthusiast and remains one to this day. He has a model train outfit in his shop, he follows railroad-ing affairs avidly, and watches trains with delight.

Your sister's experience with cancer parallels my late mother's. Mother had a breast removed, but the cancer had spread and neither radiotherapy nor drugs helped more than a little. When it was evident, though, that she was dying, and quickly (in spring of last year), she refused to be kept alive on machines, stopped the anti-cancer drugs (I think), said her goodbyes, disposed of her property, and allowed herself to be sedated to ease the pain. She was a very tough woman; she fought that disease with all her might, both with and without drugs, and it had to work hard to kill her, which it finally did, but only after it had gone after her liver, lungs, blood, and finally her heart. She did ". . . not go gentle into that good night." . . .

After writing something like the thing I did last issue, I always experience, for a while, a feeling of calm and peace. Before, and especially during, the writing, I experience anguish, pain, sorrow, remorse -- a wide range of sometimes violent emotions. But those emotions are drained from me by the process of writing and at the conclusion I am in that state of tranquility.

It shouldn't be, but is somewhat surprising to me each time I discover that what what I have written has aroused in someone else the very emotions that I have been purged of.

That's by way of introducing this next letter.

Rich Bartucci
Box 369, KCCOM
2105 Independence Ave.
Kansas City, MO 64124

How do I apologize on behalf of the entire medical profession? Do I say that, in spite of kindly, benign Dr. Marcus Welby, not all of our curative methods are entirely successful?

Do I console with statistics about how much company your sister will have in her ending?

No.

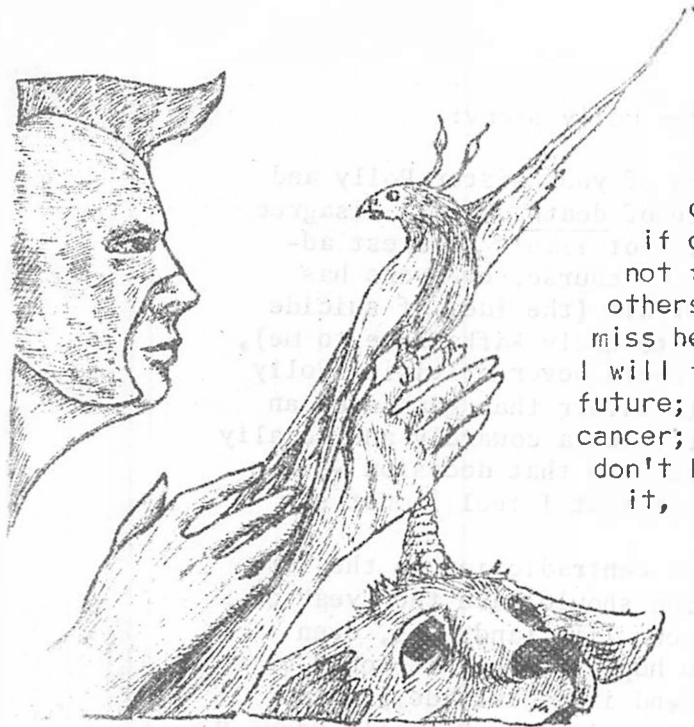
Jesus, Don, but I'm sorry for Polly. I'm sorry for you and for your family and for anybody who might know her and have to suffer the knowledge that another human being is dying. Mostly, I'm sorry for me. I feel very, very useless and raw and stupid, incapable of doing for a patient what I must -- giving him back his health. Only a very few years stand between me and the people in the clinic, between my ignorance and all the injuries and ataxias, the sniffles and the tumors, the living and the dead. Frankly, I'm afraid. People are going to die under my care, in spite of all I can do for them. People like Polly, like my grandfather, like all the ones we fight for and then lose.

Thank you for spreading a little of yourself out in the pages of your magazine. Give my regards to Polly, for what they're worth. God grant me that kind of courage...

Do you know, we call cancer "The Bad Disease?" We anthropomorphize it; it's an active, evil, malign presence, an enemy. We fight it, we hold it, we lose to it -- and we die of it. Can you hate a cell gone mad with the blind desire to reproduce?

I think I can.

Well . . . obviously Rich works very close to the problems of cancer and death and disease in general and is far more familiar with them than I am or wish to be; and I certainly respect Rich's feelings and have



no intention of trying to change them.

However, I must confess that I don't share them. I love Polly, and if cancer kills her I shall be unhappy-- not for Polly but for myself and for the others even closer to her than I who will miss her. But . . . well, I don't know how I will feel in some indefinite, uncertain future; but I don't believe I will hate cancer; I don't think I will hate death. I don't know whether death is, as Polly calls it, life's greatest adventure, but I can see some justification for thinking of it as perhaps 'life's greatest gift.'

Think about it: would you like to live in a world in which there as no death?

For a vivid and horrifying fictional exploration of that idea, I would recommend *Doctor Arnoldi* by

Tiffany Thayer. That is, I would recommend it except I don't know where you're going to find a copy. It was published in 1934 by Julian Messner and not reprinted ever, as far as I can determine. I picked up an *ex lib* copy for a quarter in a Goodwill store and I've never seen another copy of it anywhere. I don't know why the novel isn't better known. It isn't great, by any means, but it isn't bad. Maybe the book is so obscure because the subject matter is so unpleasant. Most people don't like to think about death -- but the thought of no death is even worse.

In the novel, all death suddenly stops, and any notion that that is a Good Thing is quickly dissipated with the realization that messy accidents continue. People get hopelessly smashed up, maimed, mutilated, dismembered -- but go on living. Disease continues; old age and senility continue. Misery not only continues but becomes enormously magnified, for everyone. There's never any explanation of how or why this happens; the character of Doctor Arnoldi has nothing to do with it. Come to think of it, that's the big weakness of the novel as novel: there's no cause-and-effect chain running through it. I kept waiting for Doctor Arnoldi to come up with a solution to the problem, or for the revelation that he had brought it about -- but nothing. He's just another victim. The book isn't even an indictment of the medical profession or of scientists who in their restless, never-ending prying into the secrets of nature, so often come up with Forbidden Knowledge. But Thayer seems to have no particular axe to grind; he's just obsessed with this grisly idea. And his descriptions, toward the end of the book, of the great floating islands of mangled but living -- and suffering -- humanity are indeed memorable. Sickeningly so.

Getting back to my own feeling about death: I love life, and I may not be able to let go of it gracefully, as Polly is willing to do. But all in all, I find the thought of death, as the culmination of life, more of a comfort than otherwise. If we must anthropomorphise it, I think it should be regarded as a reward, not as a punishment.

But my goodness! This is supposed to be the loc-col, not an editorial or book review section.

Here's the most non-typical reaction to the Polly story:

Lord Jim Kennedy
1859 E. Fairfield
Mesa, AZ 85203

. . . this business of your sister Polly and the calm acceptance of death . . . I disagree with her. Death is not life's greatest adventure, Life is. Of course, everyone has the right to decide if they are to live or die (the idea of suicide actually being listed as a crime seems grotesquely Kafkaesque to me), and that is so personal a matter that I could never criticize Polly for electing to chance her cancerous death rather than gamble on an uncertain cure, even if I consider the decision a cowardly and morally wrong one. But for you to seemingly agree with that decision - in print particularly - repels me to the point that I feel I must say something.

You have probably caught what seems a contradiction in the foregoing paragraph. I say first that a person should have the "yea" or "nay" vote over continuing or ending his own life (and, yes, even saying that someone who feels his life so hopeless that it would be best not continuing should be allowed to end it in suicide); then, in the same sentence that choosing death over life is "morally wrong." This I ought to explain.

It's possible that such isn't the case here, but for the most part a risky medical operation or treatment becomes less so as the medical community acquires more data - experience - on it. With every patient who agrees to put himself in the position of "guinea pig," the day that that "risky" operation becomes a safe and commonplace one is that much closer. With every one who refuses the operation or treatment, that day becomes so much further away. You say "the world needs more people like Polly," but does it not occur to you that it may lose another like her because she fears this perhaps yet somewhat experimental treatment? This is what I mean by "morally wrong."

Let me put it this way: I just don't see that anyone has the moral right to volunteer someone else as a guinea pig. I don't question Jim's authority to decide what is morally right or wrong for himself; at the same time I suspect that anyone who states positively what he would or would not do in a situation that he has never been in is just making empty noises -- and he sure as hell has no authority to say what anyone else should do.

D. Gary Grady
3309 Spruill Ave. #5
Charleston, SC 29405

I sympathize strongly with your sister, and I do not mean that I feel sorry for her. My grandmother had a similar attitude. She used to say she wanted to make sure she died before her eyesight failed, and she did. The last time I saw her I had just shaved off my beard preparatory to going to boot camp. She asked me if I was going to grow it back (she hated it) and I told her I was. And she said, more or less, that that was all right since that was the last time we'd see each other. I told her that was nonsense. I was wrong.

When Gail left me I came very close to suicide, and since then I have had no fear of death whatsoever. I have come too close to it for it to frighten me.

Sheryl Birkhead
23629 Woodfield Road
Gaithersburg, MD 20760

I work in cancer research -- but removed from the actuality. I have known two people "closely" who have died from cancer -- but I was never there toward the end -- simply because they both knew the route and did not want others to see what the disease had done. In all honesty, I don't know if this is true when chemotherapy is the treatment, or just when the disease is left to run its course. What more can I say except that you have had a most remarkable relationship with Polly -- one to be treasured and remembered -- and what more can a human being ask? Perhaps the term "unfair" comes to mind -- but who ever said it had to be fair?

Mike Glicksohn
141 High Park Ave.
Toronto, Ontario
M6P 2S3

Some fanzines demand a response while simultaneously inhibiting one. DoS 40 is such an issue. I just cried while reading your discourse and as much as I might want to say something that will make it somehow easier, I lack the capability to do so. It's a beautiful piece of writing, and I hope you won't be offended by that reaction. It isn't as unfeeling as it sounds. In all likelihood, I should say nothing at this point, but you have made me think and made me feel, and I want to tell you that you've reached out and touched others who have known similar experiences. I hope that somehow things work out for Polly; such things do happen. But if not, she is in some ways lucky to have had you for a chronicler. You've described her beautifully, and you have made me sad I never knew her, yet happy that she lived the life she did. And shared it with you. That is not a bad thing.

All four of my grandparents died of cancer, three when I was at an age that did not let me truly understand what had happened or what I'd lost, only one when I could feel the pain, the guilt, the loss that goes with untimely death. A ridiculously few years later, my mother died of cancer too, and I sat by her bedside and held her hand and tried to understand what was happening and why it should happen. I never succeeded, but to this day I'm proud of the courage with which she faced what she knew was coming. I wish I could have expressed those feelings but I was inadequate to the task, and I never tried. In some odd way, you've done a part of it for me: for that I thank you, and for what you are going through, I stand somehow with you.

Thank you, Mike. That's all I can say. Just thank you. That's a nice letter. You are a nice person. Thanks.

And while I'm about it, THANKS to all of you who expressed (or even tried -- or didn't try) your sympathy for and admiration of Polly, and to those of you who shared with me your own experiences of the same sort of thing. I have many more letters here on the subject that I would like to print, but I've given a representative sampling of them, I believe (maybe I'll just make a bundle of the others and send them on to Polly).

But now there are other topics that deserve discussion.

It was about a year ago that the Great Death Debate first began in DoS. Obviously it has been given new life:

*Sheryl Smith
same letter
same address*

. . . I am not of the school that thinks amateur journalism is not to be taken seriously, nor do I see the inappropriateness of any topic for such a publication, death included. It seems to me that death is not discussed sufficiently or with adequate realism & openness in this country, a situation you have done your bit to rectify. Good for you!

[This next excerpt from Sheryl's letter has nothing to do with any topic that has been discussed in DoS that I can recall, but it is obviously of great personal importance to Sheryl, and I think it's fascinating. So...]

. . . Ben [Indick (Sheryl and Ben have "met" each other through DON-o-SAUR, as have Joan Dick and Mae Strelkov, and perhaps others; and this is one of the things that most delights and croggles me about doing a fanzine)] wants me to tell you I write verse tragedy, perhaps as a calnative in the unlikely event you have been losing sleep wondering why no one is doing that any more. I will go so far as to inform you I've completed two -- a *Gilgamesh* and a *Volund* (the latter is good, even; the former is at least cuttable) -- and hope to finish my current project, a *Prometheus*, this year. And damned if I know what to do with them.

Surely someone will have some marketing suggestions?
One more observation on death:

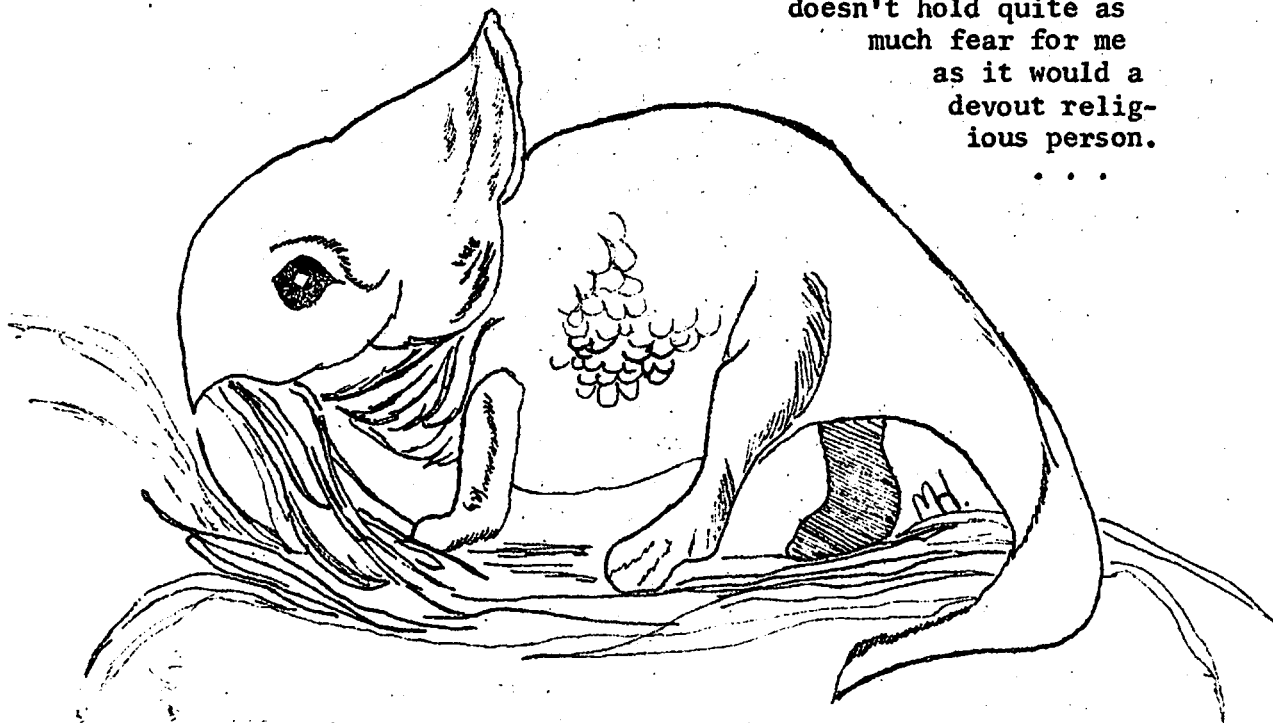
*Mike Kring
PSC #1 Box 3147
Kirtland AFB, NM
87115*

Death is one of the things that has become fascinating to us in the seventies, for we hear all the time the door-criers all about us, telling us this is it, this is REALLY it.

So the fascination grows. Roy Tackett mentioned at one of our monthly sf club meetings here that death is what sex was during the Victorian times. Feared, repressed, and yet at the same time intensely fascinating. Being one of the many who have given up religion, I think death

doesn't hold quite as much fear for me as it would a devout religious person.

. . .



Stu Shiffman
59-17 162 Street
Flushing, NY
11365

Your childhood game reminds me of something I used to do with plastic soldiers. I created a whole "known-space"-like universe, with its Terrestrial Union and diverse paper cut-out aliens and space-ships. I even invented a whole genealogy for one plastic soldier, the "hero" of my universe, going back to 1970. Of course, at the time I was playing this, 1970 was at least six years in the future. Wow! Commissioner Abern Aistein

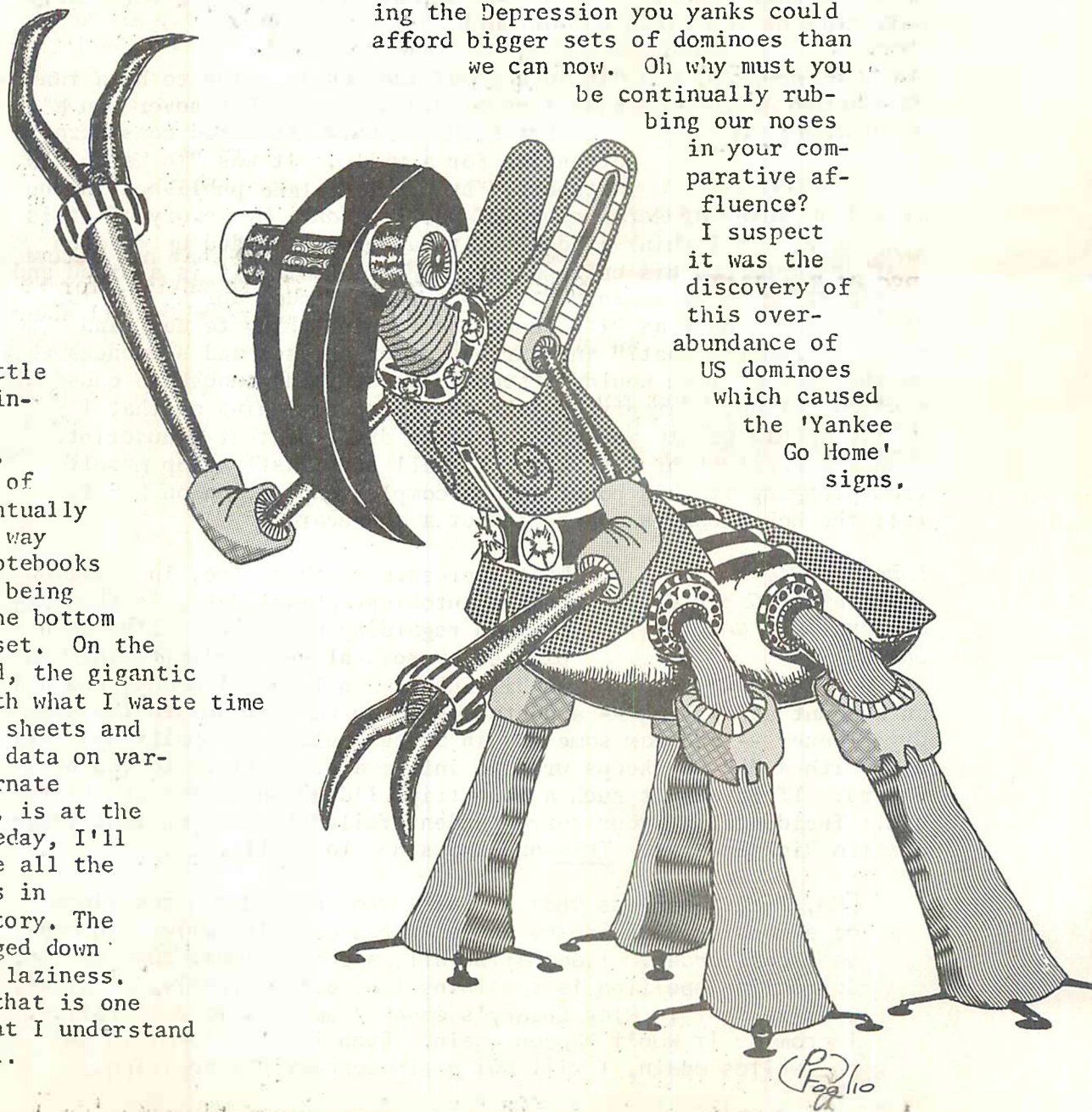
of the Ministry of Science and Space's Space Guard and his Starship AQ-UARIUS battle the villainous alien SZYRCHANN. This type of thing eventually found its way into my notebooks now still being kept at the bottom of my closet. On the other hand, the gigantic binder with what I waste time with now, sheets and sheets of data on various alternate histories, is at the top. Someday, I'll try to use all the imaginings in another story. The first bogged down in my own laziness. You see, that is one malady that I understand quite well.

Damnyankees change the rules of everything! Even domin-

oes. Every set I've ever seen only went as high as double-six. So, see how easy you had it. Pity us poor alglefen who had to do our building with only 28 dominoes. You had nearly twice as many. Mind you, dominoes is a very 'working-class' game over here so maybe there ought to have been 55 to a set but people could only afford special mini-sets or half-sets. Why, even during the Depression you yanks could afford bigger sets of dominoes than we can now. Oh why must you

Paul Skelton
25 Bowland Close
Offerton, Stockport
Cheshire SK2, 5NW
England

be continually rubbing our noses in your comparative affluence? I suspect it was the discovery of this overabundance of US dominoes which caused the 'Yankee Go Home' signs.



Ned Brooks
713 Paul Street
Newport News,
VA 23605

I had to laugh at your statement that your parents were hillbilly Virginians rather than "Eastern plantation Virginians" - I have lived in eastern Va for 16 years and have yet to see a plantation. Or any plantation Virginians, unless they look just like everybody else . . . Your statement brought to my mind a picture of gentlemen in long coats and silk cravats sitting out on the veranda drinking mint juleps. But they are all gone - and good riddance. Most of the people in this part of eastern Va are NC hillbillies who came here to work . . .

[DAMN! There goes another myth, along with the Easter Bunny and Santa Claus and God; I guess you just can't believe everything you learn at your mother's knee.]

I don't know what the name of the story was, but the quote that it ended with was, of course, "It is a proud and lonely thing to be a man." I have read it, but it was a long time ago. I'm sure Harry will tell us the title and author!

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

"It is a proud and lonely thing to be a fan" came from a prozine story that never won a Hugo but seems to have attracted considerable attention for a while. It was "To Watch the Watchers," by W. Macfarlane published in the June 1949 issue of *Astounding Science Fiction*. My memory of it is very hazy, but I think it dealt with a hero who ended up dead on another world and his epitaph was: "TULLY KLOOTE: It is a proud and lonely thing to be a man." It ran through fandom during the 1950s in the same manner as "It seemed the fannish thing to do," and "Who sawed Courtney's boat?" and various other phrases and sentences which on the face of them wouldn't seem to be striking enough to cause all that commotion. Paragraphs like this keep reminding me that I really should get to work on the final draft of that manuscript. With the greatest of restraint, I shall steadfastly stop myself from plunging at this point into a complex exposition on how to tell the Bob Stewarts apart without a scorecard.

Robert A Bloch
2111 Sunset Crest Dr.
Los Angeles, CA
90046

What impresses me this time, in addition to the autobiographical data, is the discussion regarding namesakes. I've been plagued by several -- an advertising man in Milwaukee when I was also one, who had an account at my bank -- a doctor out here who patronized the same dry cleaner -- and now some guy in Santa Monica who spells his last name with a "k" but keeps writing inflammatory letters to the newspapers. If it wasn't such a long trip, I'd go out there and kill him. Incidentally, your correspondent failed to mention that there are two Rick Snearys. This one knows how to spell . . .

[No, I must confess that it was I who created the semblance of a monster Rick Sneary whose words contain letters in conventional order. I am, after all, a professional copy editor. Correcting spelling is something I do automatically. I didn't realize that in Rick Sneary's case it amounts to desecration. I promise it won't happen again. Even if Rick forgives me and writes again, I will NOT again correct his spelling:]

Clay Kimball
1441 Delaware
Eden, NC 27288

I am just renewing my interest in fandom after a long absence. At a local con I picked up a couple of issues of Don-o-Saur and I find it one of the most interesting fanzines I've read since my return.

I was a fan during the glory days of fanmags -- the early and middle 50s. Remember *Oopsla*, *Hyphen*, *Quandry* . . . ? These are the type I've been looking for since my interest revived. So far I haven't found them. But D. is one of the most interesting of the current crop.

I prefer the fannish type much more than the *sercon* (tho it also is interesting if well done) and yours is a well-written personalzine. I would prefer that you had a columnist for contrast.

An interesting discussion of the difference between being a writer and wanting to be a writer. I wonder if you would consider quitting your job to write for a soap opera or to do he-man fiction for the men's mags? If you really want to write you probably would, but like me you probably consider these people hacks. Writers write s-f. The prestige is more important than the money.

[You hear that, Bob Silverberg? Harlan Ellison? Ed Bryant?

It's what I was trying to tell you back there in the editorial!]

I am such a new fan again that I'm even reading s-f. I find that I have little taste for the new breed -- Delany, Zelazny, even Ellison. I like the old line authors who still feel that the plot is more important than a flashy style. People like Jack Vance and Phil Farmer. The field has changed quite a bit since I left but it still contains all the elements that made me want to read it in the first place. It is just more open, much better written. (Not all of it -- not all of it). Anyway, it's good to be back. Fandom is always a nice place to visit.

Is Ed Bryant the same Ed Bryant who used to publish *Ad Astra*?

[I believe so, though Ed doesn't much like to talk about it].

Ben P. Indick
428 Sagamore Ave.
Teaneck, NJ 07666

Since you're talking about all those there published writers, heck, I refuse to be left out! Now, I didn't get any money for it, but I challenge anyone to produce so handsome a booklet as the folio Randy Everts' *The Strange Company* put out of my Lovecraftian pastiche on his poetry, letters and stories, all in four or five pages, complete with a photo of the author (me) himself! On pretty parchment paper, typeset, all for a buck plus a quarter postage, 100-copy edition, RUSH! (Ahem: Box 864, Madison, Wis., 53701). Oh, title: *A Gentleman From Providence Pens a Letter* . . .

[My check will be in the mail before this issue of Don-o-Saur is!]

P E R S O N A L S

DAVID KLEIST: That's Don A. Thompson, but thanks anyway. On mail, I estimate 8 a day, average. On iced tea: no. On books, I intend to read 'em all someday and if I don't buy them now I won't have them when I'm ready to read them.

BILL BREIDING: A genuine loc will be in the mail (probably) before this issue of DoS. *Starfire* 5 is a total goshwow, and I love the Kostrikin portfolio.

