





AUGUST - DECEMBER

1977

A science fiction fanzine published when circumstances permit by Don C. Thompson, 7498 Canosa Court, Westminster, Colo. 80030 Phone (303) 429-6562. Available for trade, letters of comment, artwork, or money.

Price is now 50¢ per issue, or a six-issue subscription for \$2.50, 12-issue subscription for \$5.00.

Press run this issue about 550, done entirely on my Multi-1000 offset press, with the exception of the front cover, which was run by Copy-Quick of Denver.

DEDICATION: To the Birthday Conspirators — specifically, to Carolyn, who set it up, and for their calls and cards, to Jon Singer, Dave Romm, Linda Bushyager, Ann Weiser, Alan Bostick, Mike Glicksohn, George Laskowski, Ben Indick, Brian Earl Brown, and Elst Weinstein.



# CONTENTS:

Untitled Introduction . . .	3
Is Child Rearing Possible?	
APPARENTLY . . . . .	5
Introduction to a Speech . .	17
the Speech . . . . .	19
CON-densations . . . . .	26
LoCs from	
Diane W. White, Buck	
Coulson, Howard Brazee,	
Ann Weiser, J. E.	
Pournelle, Fred Jacobcic,	
Gina Clarke, John J.	
Alderson, Mike Glicksohn,	
Aljo Svoboda and George	
Flynn . . . . .	31
IAHF . . . . .	43

## Art Credits

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Stu Shiffman . . . . .	3, 17
Gail Barton . . . . .	8, 9
Jeff Kapalka . . . . .	12
George Brown . . . . .	13, 35
Merry Joy Martin . . . .	20, 23
Becca Jennings . . . . .	21
Anonymous . . . . .	27 (top)
Barry Kent McKay . . . .	27 (bottom)
Christine Pasanen . . . .	31
Jaron Lanier . . . . .	33
David Vereschagin . . . .	39
Andrea Ferrari . . . . .	42
Pan Dan Chee . . . . .	43, Back Cover

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Just for the sake of getting this issue started before the end of July, I will go ahead and start. There. Like that.

So now it is a simple matter of continuing, and trying to finish

before the end of August. I said try, but it's almost imperative that I do finish before the first of September -- Worldcon, and the start of a new school year, and accelerated preparations for the two Denver cons in the fall. There may not be any time at all for the rest of the year to do another issue of DoS.

But don't get me started telling about the crowded calendar and all the special projects and obligations ahead of me still for this year. It would take more space than I have allotted for the entire issue, and seeing it all spread out in front of me like that could easily terrify me into a state of paralysis of such severity that I might not be able to get anything done. I can't afford to contemplate all those matters at once. I have to take things one day at a time -- except of course when four or five of them happen to converge.

The immediate project is this page of this issue of Don-o-Saur. This is issue No. 50 -- you noticed that, I suppose? I think that is amazing, and one of the things about it that amazes me most is that it reached 50 before I did. I'm not sure why it amazes me, but it really does.

There's something kind of special about 50, both as an issue number for a fanzine and as a birthday number for a fan. I'll do something special for my birthday; I'm not sure what -- go up in a single-engine plane or a helicopter (I've never flown in anything small enough to feel like you're flying, and I've always wanted to); or a hot-air balloon ride would be great; take up scuba diving, maybe, or even sky-diving; buy a motorcycle; learn Greek -- I don't know. I've got time to think about it. My birthday isn't until November (the 10th, if you insist on exactitude). But issue 50 of DoS is right here, right now, and I intend to do something special for that occasion, too. I'll use this introductory portion to tell you what I have in mind.

But . . . Hummm. As a matter of fact, as I glance through my mental

# DON-o-SAUR

50



notes for this issue, I can't seem to find anything of a really special specialness. There's this:

Two cons to tell about -- Westercon 30 and Autoclave 2 -- without doing formal con reports on them. Both cons were enormously enjoyable, though both were a degree more onerous than previous cons have been for me. At Westercon I was involved in (or conducting) a Denver-in-'79 bid and until it became clear that Denver would lose overwhelmingly (which was fairly early in the con, actually) it was difficult for me to relax and enjoy things. At Autoclave I was a co-guest-of-honor with Don D'Amassa, and the only onerous thing about that was having to give a banquet speech, and until that was over it was difficult for me to relax and enjoy myself. I had fully intended that this time, for once, I would have my speech all prepared and polished and memorized long in advance, but once again it didn't work that way. I was still writing it just hours before the presentation.

That guest-of-honor speech -- It was based on something I said in D-o-S 49, and it was written with the deliberate intention of using it as a discourse in D-o-S 50. So with just a bit of revision and expansion, it will see print this issue -- about 10 pages of print. The main trouble is that it doesn't really end; the damned thing is wide open: it almost demands another discourse of at least equal length to help explain this one. But somehow I don't think that mandatory sequel is going to be included in this issue. It's a matter of time.

And then there are letters, of course. They're coming in at a satisfying rate of two or three a day. Most are locs on issue 49, but there are still some stragglers on #48. The responses to the almost unintentional thing I wrote about Barb and Michael in 49 have been interesting and varied. I would not have thought there was much material for controversy in that, but apparently there is. I hope it doesn't get out of hand; I think the Entropy and Optimism issue should be far more productive. Both the law-obedience and the sexism-in-language arguments have just about run their course, though there is some indication that the sexism issue itself is still very much alive.

That could be about it. Nothing special, unless you're willing to consider the mere existence of a Don-o-Saur #50 something special.

(I have a feeling my birthday may not have much more of a special flavor to it than that, either).

\* \* \* \* \* L O N G \* P A U S E \* \* \* \* \*

I am not satisfied.

The material I have listed above is quite sufficient to fill a 30 - 40 page fanzine, and I don't think I would feel I was cheating anyone if I let it go at that.

However . . .

Cons and guest of honor speeches don't happen to be uppermost in my mind right at the moment; and one of the reasons I do D-o-S at all is to write what I'm thinking about at the moment. I have no idea quite where this will lead or how long it will take, but . . .



IS CHILD-REARING  
POSSIBLE?

# apparently

Among those straggler letters on D-o-S 48 that I mentioned was one from Gina Clarke which arrived only a day or two too late to be included in 49. You'll see big chunks of it in the LoCol, but I have to use part of it here, because this is the part that's been prowling around in my mind, creating impulses to write.

Your teenage crime confession was interesting. I hope by now you've become reconciled to the pain you caused your mother. You described her as a "borderline hysteric under the most favorable of conditions," so, intellectually at least you realize that she suffered more pain than you were responsible for inflicting. It took me a long while to forgive myself for many episodes in my teen years that brought my poor widowed father to tears. Even though at the time I knew that my transgressions were petty (nothing as interesting as yours, for instance) and that they were the inevitable result of growing up and out . . . and that he, for reasons having nothing to do with me, was already in such pain that any little pinprick from me sent him over the edge.

I try to keep this in mind now that my own children are teenagers. Kids gotta do \*rotten things\*. (Especially kids as reined in as you were). And parents gotta suffer out of all proportion. That's just the way things are. With any luck, both parents and kids survive.

You mention your son Bruce. How old is he? Do you have any other children? What's it like on the other end of the stick? (Clarke's Law of the Universe No. 425: Both ends of the stick are short).

Another too-late-for-49 loc was from Denny Bowden, and he urged me, as he often has in the past, to write in more detail about my family. He was referring specifically to my wife and parents, but still his letter sort of reinforced Gina's. For unrelated reasons, I wrote back to Denny, and what I'm quoting from now is my letter to him:

What I hope I'll be able to write about soon -- if not this issue, then surely the next one -- is my children. I have written some about my parents and about Carolyn, but next to nothing about our kids. And when I think about how much grief I caused my parents, and how my own children have never caused me anything but delight -- well, it makes you wonder about such concepts as equal justice. It's something to write about, all right, and I shall.

And I might as well do it now, while I'm thinking about it.

First a disclaimer or two, huh? It is very difficult for me to talk about my offspring without sounding like I'm bragging about them and therefore, by extension, about myself, since the general assumption is that children are the product of their heredity and environment, and that if a child turns out well it must be because the parent is doing something right.

And I can't argue convincingly against that assumption (though I do believe the kid should get some of the credit). So what I'm saying is that if I sound like I'm bragging it's because I am, and you are just going to have to put up with it for a little while.

At the same time, though, I don't want to sound like I'm one of those monumentally doting parents who believes that just because they're my children, they can't do anything wrong.

My children do things wrong occasionally -- like getting traffic tickets, as a current example.

Now, I personally taught all three of the kids to drive; they should be pretty good. And Claudia took drivers' ed in high school; she should be very good. Well, nobody's perfect, not even one's own children, and if my children's driving is not quite flawless, at least they displayed a remarkable sense of family solidarity in getting their traffic tickets.

About a month ago, Claudia was unable to stop in time when the car in front of the car she was following braked suddenly. No one was hurt; the only significant damage was done to Claudia's car -- a 1972 Honda 600 sedan; the headlight was smashed and the grill was caved in so the hood wouldn't open. Claudia was ticketed for careless driving.

Less than a week later, while Doug was on his way to work (summer job at a pancake house, washing dishes), he somehow managed to hit the back bumper of the car ahead of him, smashing the headlight and putting a slight dent in the three-month-old Rabbit Doug was driving. Doug was ticketed for careless driving.

Carolyn is a firm believer in the theory of threes. Any time that two similar things happen, a third of the same nature is inevitable. Check it some time. It's impossible to disprove. Sometimes you have to stretch a point, and sometimes the count goes to four or five, or sometimes you may not ever hear about the third thing happening, but that doesn't mean it didn't.

"You be careful," Carolyn warned me. "Don't you go running into the rear end of someone."

"Why me? I'm always careful. It's the three kids that're involved in this, anyway. It's Bruce's turn next. He's the one has to be careful."

A day or two later, I happened to see Bruce. (Maybe I should mention that of our three offspring only Doug is still living at home). "You be careful," I warned him. "Don't go running into the rear end of someone. Doug and Claudia have both done it, and according to Mama's theory you're next."

"Well, okay, but there's usually a long gap between the second and third event, isn't there?"

"Is there? I never noticed that. Be careful anyway."

But do you think a child -- especially a 25-year-old child -- pays any attention to his wise old dad? Hell no.

And so, after a just barely decent time gap of about two weeks, Bruce . . . well, he didn't run his car into the rear end of another; he just



got caught going 45 in a 30-mile-an-hour zone and got a ticket for speeding.

(The Rule of Threes sometimes fools you like that. In this case it wasn't three accidents that was happening -- it was just three tickets).

And so what was I trying to prove with that little story? Not that the Theory of Threes is sound; I don't even . . . Oh! Okay. My point was that even my children are not perfect.

Now I can go ahead and tell you that as far as I am concerned, as far as causing me any mental anguish is concerned, getting those tickets this summer is just about the worst thing any of those three kids has ever done.

What I am saying is that my experience runs directly contrary to Clarke's Universal Law #425. That doesn't mean the law is invalid, just that I have been fantastically, undeservedly lucky. Or that Clarke's Law just hasn't caught up with me. Yet.

One more disclaimer -- I've got to make this point clear: I know absolutely nothing about the right way to raise children. I used to, but that was before I tried it. So what I'm about to say here does not by any stretch of imagination constitute advice or any kind of how-to-do-it instruction.

I'm going to tell a little about my two sons and my daughter -- who and where they are now and a little (only a little) of how they got there, but all I'm trying to do is acquaint you with them to some small extent. And of course to brag a little.

Bruce is the eldest, and he really is 25; he was born Jan. 21, 1952, in Madison, Wis. Bruce is a student; always has been, probably always will be, in one form or another, although he is very close to getting his master's in philosophy from the University of Denver, and I don't know that he has any definite plans to get a doctorate; but I find it hard to imagine him stopping short of that. Carolyn normally reads a book with utter decorum and imperturbability, but she chortled all the way through Roger Zelazny's *Doorways in the Sand* because the character of Fred Cassidy, in his 13th year as an undergraduate, could almost have been based on Bruce, with a few minor alterations; Bruce doesn't have any eccentricity quite corresponding to Cassidy's acrophilia. The main difference between Bruce and Fred, though, is that Bruce does work to help pay for his schooling. He has also managed to qualify for financial aid, teaching assistantships and such, and he has accepted generous loans and gifts from his Hollister grandparents. But since about his second year in college, he has refused to be financially dependent on his parents. It was his form of rebellion.

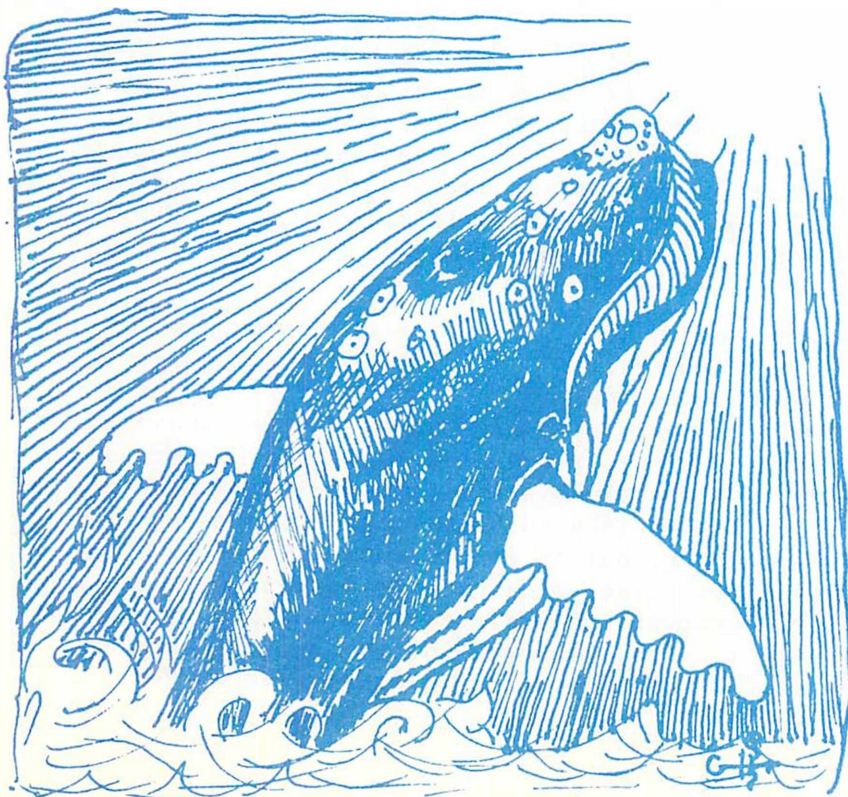
Bruce's work is with puppets. When he was 19 he spent nearly half a year on his own in San Francisco. He survived by living and working with a communal printing plant that turned out underground comix mostly; but he also did a lot of unpaid work with a world renowned puppet theater whose name I can't think of. So that when Bruce returned to school in Denver, he possessed at least the rudiments of two valuable skills -- printing and puppetry. He was able to get print-shop jobs in Denver with fair ease, and used them for some of his college years, but he was much more interested in the puppets. He built his own puppet stage, made his own puppets, wrote his own shows and performed them whenever and where ever he could -- mostly in backyards and at SCA festivities. (Oh, Gawd yes, he is deeply into SCA, and that's partly my fault, though I haven't been involved in it for years.

but I'd rather not get into that just now). Bruce worked for a while with a Denver professional puppeteer who put on Saturday matinee shows for children, using one of the old small neighborhood movie theaters that used to be sprinkled throughout Denver.

It folded, but a couple of years ago . . . Have you heard about Casa Bonita? Do you know what it is? I think it started in Denver but is becoming or has already become a chain of family-entertainment-restaurants. In Denver it took over what used to be a department store in one of the older shopping centers and tore out the insides and . . . redecorated is the wrong word. It *landscaped* the interior. The restaurant tables are camouflaged among huge piles of boulders, clumps of trees and bushes, in grottos and dim-lit caverns and passageways. A brook wanders, slurping and burbling, through the place, finally cascading from a high cliff into a large tree-shrouded pool into which handsome divers leap, from the heights, at periodic intervals. Little dramas are enacted upon the cliff, with the sheriff in pursuit of a bandit and one or the other of them getting shot and plunging into the murky depths of the pool. Sword swallows and torch-jugglers perform. Musicians stroll through the crowd; magicians do tricks. Around the edges of the restaurant area are other entertainments: There's a caricaturist who will do quick sketches of anyone. Or you can get your picture taken in genuine sepia-tone simulated tin-type--but only if you're wearing a suitable historic costume, provided by the photographer. (Carolyn and I took advantage of that for our 26th anniversary, because Bruce got us a discount on it. In the picture I am Abraham Lincoln and Carolyn is Mary Todd). In another corner, the puppet show alternates with cartoons and silent movies. Bruce is the chief puppeteer.

Last year, Bruce almost got married. The date had been set. It was to be a major SCA event. Carolyn's mother was working with Elaine on the costumes and starting to get all excited about the eventual prospect of becoming a great-grandmother (and Carolyn herself, I think, may have been anticipating grandmotherhood just a bit, though I don't know of any young couples nowadays who have their firstborn 10 months after the wedding, like Carolyn and I did. I know some who have their first one before the wedding or a few weeks or just a few months later, but mostly the wait is a matter of years).

The anticipation was all in vain anyway, because Bruce and Elaine decided to skip it. They had been living together, but about a month before the wedding date, Elaine moved out and went back home to Grand Junction.





Just recently, anyway just this year, just since breaking up with Elaine, Bruce has fallen in love again. And just very recently, within the past month or so, he has moved out of the house in Denver's Capitol Hill area where he'd been living for about five years (it was an actual real live "hippie" commune when Bruce first moved in, but the hippies got jobs, had children, were married, etc., and moved on, leaving Bruce and June, a woman a few years older than he, in sole possession until Elaine moved in with them; and not long after Elaine moved out, Claudia joined them). And Bruce has moved into the house that Susan, the new woman in his life, is buying on the west side of town, in a much more middle-class neighborhood.

So I don't know. Respectability, marriage, eventually grandchildren. All eminently possible, but I for one am in no more of a hurry about any of them than Bruce is.

I wonder if anyone reading this has interpreted Bruce's somewhat Bohemian lifestyle as a form of rebellion? Not so. It would be more accurate to describe it as his way of being a dutiful son. Bruce is living very much the way I might choose to. When he was still in high school, Bruce and I had some long talks about Bohemianism and the beats and beatniks and the hippies, and from those talks I'm sure Bruce was left with no doubt as to where my deep and secret sympathies lay. Bruce did not leave home as an act of defiance. Far from it; it was much more like a chore of charitable wish fulfillment.

I'm going to tell of a little incident that reveals better than anything I can think of, Bruce's essential nature. It may sound like a bit of unbearably sentimental schlock, and I would almost prefer not to include it, but it also happens to tell a great deal of what you need to understand about Claudia, and since I'm going to be talking about Claudia next, I will tell this.

Claudia was born Dec. 17, 1953. We had survived Mauston (Wisconsin; I've written about that previously, but it was longer ago than I thought--DoS #39, dated December 1974!) and had been settled for only a few months in Dubuque, Iowa, where I had the important-sounding title of night editor of the Telegraph-Herald. We were living in a small one-bedroom apartment in a hilly part of town. Bruce was less than 2 years old, but he talked a lot (that's one of his major lifelong characteristics; he has been a non-stop talker from the age of about 10 months on. But I don't remember that he said anything at all when we brought Claudia home and installed her



in the crib that had been set up for her. (Strange, but I don't remember that bedroom being crowded, even with the double bed that Carolyn and I slept in, the cot for Bruce and the crib for Claudia). Bruce stood silently for a while with me and Carolyn and Carolyn's mother, admiring the new arrival. He was holding on to my hand but after a while he let go and charged into the living room and dashed back immediately carrying his favorite toy, a rag doll. He elbowed his way through the adults' legs, back to the crib, and he thrust the doll through the bars, trying to place it in Claudia's hands. It was his gift to her -- a gift of the Magi, sort of.

Okay, so I said it was sentimental. But it does show you Bruce in all his characteristic impulsive generosity and affection. And it gives you one of the key facts of Claudia's whole life.

It has been very difficult to say anything much about Bruce without saying a great deal at the same time about Claudia. And it is virtually impossible to say anything at all about Claudia without at the same time saying a lot about Bruce.

Claudia grew up literally basking in Bruce's adoration, and naturally enough she quickly came to think very highly of him.

Some time when Claudia was in fourth or possibly fifth grade, I was the lucky parent who got to go to school on open house day and have a conference with her teacher. Usually Carolyn and I both went to those affairs, or Carolyn went alone and I escaped because the conferences were too early in the morning or too late in the afternoon on days when I had to go to work and had to sleep late from having worked hard (and more than likely having done some pretty hard drinking, too) the night before. This time, for some unimportant reason, I went alone. I was expecting to hear the usual almost dull stuff about what a good student Claudia was and how sweet and well-behaved she was, and I thought it would be over quickly. But this time it wasn't that easy. The teacher expressed concern that Claudia wasn't doing as well as she should be, considering her obvious ability and intelligence.

"She may just be bored," I suggested. "If the work is too easy for her."

"No, I don't think it's that. She seems interested enough. It's more as if . . . it's hard to explain exactly. It's as though she were deliberately holding herself back. Does that mean anything to you? Can you think of any reason why she might be . . . "

Yes, that meant something to me. I knew instantly exactly what the problem was, but I found it impossible to explain it to the teacher or to convince her that my analysis was correct.

"It's because of her big brother," I said. "You've never had Bruce? Bruce and Claudia are very close. They love each other. Neither of them would ever do anything that would hurt the other or make the other feel inadequate or inferior. Bruce has been having a little trouble in school lately, I think, and so apparently Claudia is managing to have a little trouble too, just so he won't feel bad. Claudia may be actually a little smarter and quicker than Bruce and so sometimes she does have to hold herself back."

The teacher pursed her lips in a school-teacherish grimace and shook her head firmly. "I just can't believe that. I have brothers myself and believe me, any time I could do anything better than they could, I did it,



and I darned well let them know about it. No, I've never heard of a brother and sister being that considerate of each other's feelings."

I shrugged. "All I can say is that you don't know Bruce." The teacher shrugged and we talked of other things for a while.

Fortunately, Bruce never had much trouble in school from then on, and neither did Claudia.

I wouldn't want to give the impression that Claudia ever became emotionally dependant on Bruce, or vice versa. They remained very close and considerate and affectionate, but Claudia developed a strong vein of self-sufficiency while Bruce has always seemed to need a large number of other people to interact with. So I think it was no more than mildly traumatic for Claudia when Bruce moved away from home. High school obviously wasn't as much fun for Claudia without Bruce, and so she managed to cut it short, graduating at the end of the first semester of her senior year (thereby depriving her younger brother of the knowledge of her exact class ranking; see, Bruce finished 11th in his high school graduating class, and Doug was ninth in his, but he doesn't know Claudia's ranking. It's never bothered Claudia, but it is important to Doug--really important--to know exactly where he is in relationship to everyone else at all times. I'll be saying more about Doug a little later on; this paragraph is supposed to be about Claudia).

Claudia was a runner-up in the National Merit Scholarship program, and she was getting all sorts of attractive offers to go to school in all sorts of attractive places, nearly all of which had very unattractive tuition rates, even with their own scholarships and financial aid programs. Claudia finally decided (as had Bruce) to attend Metropolitan State College, in Denver, where I teach. I don't think the fact that I teach there had anything to do with their decision. I mean Metro is not like some colleges that offer tuition discounts to the children of faculty members. But it is the least expensive college in the state, not just because the tuition is low to begin with but because student fees are very low and there are no dorms or fraternities; Metro is strictly a commuter college. And the quality of instruction is no worse than in any comparable institution -- depending a lot of course on what branch of knowledge the instruction is in. Bruce and Claudia were careful to keep out of my classes and so they found the educational offerings quite adequate. Bruce started as an English major and was seduced into philosophy; Claudia was a history major who almost but not quite yielded to the blandishments of the music department, but her minor in music consisted of about as many hours as her major in history. Her master's will be in library science, since she doesn't want to either teach or try to make a career of singing.

Actually, Claudia was not content to spend all four years at Metro. On her own initiative and through her own machinations and largely though by no means totally at her own expense, she spent her junior year at the University of Aberdeen, in Scotland. That was a valuable and maturing experience for her, but she also found out for the first time what homesickness is, and I know she was happy to get back. (And we were happy to get her back, too).

It has just now occurred to me that I can, after all, give some very excellent and valuable advice about child-rearing. It may not be quite foolproof, and it may not be easy or even possible to follow, but what

do you want for nothing? This is the best advice that I know of: Take care that your children are equipped with a full set of grandparents. Just that will ease the burden on both parent and child by at least half (and a fringe benefit is that if the kid does turn out rotten, there are more culprits to spread the blame around among). It isn't essential that your children be the only grandchildren of at least one set of grandparents but there are some advantages if that's true, and it helps even more if those grandparents are -- how shall I put it? -- not suffering financially.

Carolyn is an only child. Her parents were students and teachers during the Depression. They are of the generation for which financial security is almost the epitome of the American Dream. It took George Hollister 11 years to get his doctorate, with an interruption for World War II, and he worked diligently thereafter to scale the heights of the academic edifice at the University of Wyoming. He achieved full professorship, wrote papers and published books (elementary school arithmetic workbooks that get used up and have to be reordered each semester; it's the only way to go -- the royalties just don't quit). He made careful investments. He retired several years ago as a teaching administrator, with a comfortable pension which, along with the royalties and investment income, has enabled the Hollister grandparents to be generous indeed to their rather limited supply of grandchildren. They paid at least half of Claudia's sojourn in Scotland; they're financing Bruce's master's degree from DU (that's an expensive school). However, they are not indiscriminately generous. Claudia will not be able to rely on them automatically for her master's, since she had Aberdeen instead. But still . . .

Somebody is getting impatient; I can tell. I haven't even said very much about Claudia except in terms of schooling, and I still want to say a few things about Doug; and why don't I hurry it up so I can get on to whatever else it is I'm going to do? Okay, okay.



I have already mentioned one of Claudia's most significant characteristics -- her emotional self-sufficiency -- but it is so important that I have to mention it again. Bruce is a lot like me in at least one respect: Women are very important in his life, in every way; I doubt that he could like in a world without women. I know I couldn't, or wouldn't want to.

Claudia is different. Bruce always had girl friends, almost from infancy, and in high school he kept trying to find a suitable male companion for his little sister so she wouldn't feel left out at the parties and things he insisted on taking her to, but she was never interested, and Bruce never let her feel left out anyway.

Come to think of it, there



was one young man, when Claudia was 15 years old, that she liked a great deal. It was all too obvious to me what his primary interest in her was, and when he took her out on her first real date, I suffered a severe case of fatherly apprehension. He was older than she by several years, and he was so goddamned good looking and smooth talking and amusing that . . . But they were home before I had a chance to develop a strong case of the worries. Claudia had broken off with him very firmly and efficiently, explaining to him that she was much too young still for the kind of relationship he had in mind.

I've never worried much about her since then.

Claudia has had a number of admirers, some of them fairly persistent, and she had endured them with varying degrees of patience but has never given any noticeable encouragement. You've probably seen the feminist bumper sticker: "A woman without a man is like a snake without a bicycle." I think that's close to Claudia's attitude. She seems quite determined to become an old maid librarian, But that's what her mother had in mind before she met me.

I haven't said enough about Claudia yet. I haven't said anything about how beautiful she is, or how beautifully she sings and plays the guitar, or . . . But I'm going to leave her for a while now and tell you about Doug.

Doug was an only child, too. Well, in a way. He was born May 10, 1959, five and a half years behind Claudia, seven and a half years younger than Bruce. That constitutes an unbridgeable generation gap. So Doug was never really close to either Bruce or Claudia, not in the same sense that they were close to each other. He liked Claudia a lot. At a very early age, Doug went through a period of violent and uncontrollable temper tantrums. Claudia, better than anyone, could soothe and calm him and restore his good humor. In fact, she did such a fine job of it that somewhere around the age of 4 or 5, Doug achieved such a comfortable state of emotional tranquility that he's seldom departed from it since. No, I'm sure that's not quite true, but he is and has been for a number of years now an exceptionally quiet, even-tempered, totally un-flappable young man.

Doug had us worried for a while. Until he was about in second grade, I was almost convinced that he was actually retarded or had suffered some kind of brain damage at birth or else was just naturally not very bright. Of course, we had been spoiled by Bruce and Claudia, both of whom were prodigies, walking and talking before they were a year old, conversing on almost an adult level by the time they were 3 or 4. We didn't know; we thought that was normal. Doug was at least 18 months old before he tried to walk, and I was beginning to think he never would talk. He was very slow about it. I have no specific memory to support my contention that he was talking in numbers before he was in words, but I'm quite sure he was counting before he was speaking sentences. In addition to his difficulty learning to walk and talk, and his terrible temper



fits, Doug seemed to have poor physical coordination. He kept bumping into things, and he would stumble over his own feet and fall down. Also, he enjoyed pain. He never cried because he was hurt, and he would take some pretty hard bumps and bruises and scrapes; and sometimes he would deliberately misbehave, and then smile while he was being spanked.

For each of the three kids, I made a conscious decision to stop spanking them at a certain time in their lives. With Bruce and Claudia it was about the age of 5 or 6, and it was made because spankings were no longer necessary; by then it was more effective to reason with them, to persuade them. In Bruce's case, sometimes just the threat of a scolding was enough to achieve results. For Doug, the decision had to be made much earlier and on quite different grounds. What's the point of punishment if it isn't perceived as punishment?

When Doug was in first grade, he was having so much trouble that we put him in a special education class run by the county, and they tentatively diagnosed him as a case of mixed brain dominance and gave him a series of balancing exercises to help him decide whether he was going to be left or right handed. To my amazement, it worked. He settled on right-handedness and it actually seemed to solve most of his problems. He quickly caught up with school work, and even though he's never given the impression of knowing how to talk (still doesn't; in fact, he speaks so seldom, and so softly, and so tersely that if that's all you had to go on, you might not think he's very intelligent), he at least learned to write well enough so that from second or third grade on he got consistent B's and A's in all the language skills classes.

I'm sure he has never gotten less than a B and seldom less than an A in any of the math subjects. Even when he was having trouble with everything else, arithmetic was no problem.

The essential thing to understand about Doug is the way his mind works. It doesn't function the same way mine does. Some people (most people? I don't know; a lot of people, anyway), think in words. Some think in pictures, some in abstract concepts. I suspect that some geniuses think in music. And some people, seemingly normal in most other respects, think in numbers or mathematical symbols.

Numbers are Doug's native language. He's managed to learn the languages of words and pictures, and music, but I suspect that he still translates them all into numbers in his thought processes.

I thought for a while, when Doug was little, when I wasn't sure that he was smart, and when it was obvious that he didn't mind getting hurt, that he might develop a real interest in athletics or sports of some kind. He never really seemed to mind the lack of siblings to play with. There were lots of kids his age in the neighborhood, and he would spend hours with them, playing football or basketball or baseball, whatever was in season. But I noticed after a while that Doug would be spending even more time after the games, with pencil and paper, figuring the statistics, batting averages, ERAs, yards gained, percentage of passes completed, etc., and ranking all the players in order of proficiency. And he was scrupulously honest in ranking himself. He was never much interested in being the very best at anything. So long as he was somewhere in the upper half



or one third he was satisfied, but it never seemed to upset him unduly if he found he was in the bottom third of something, and I'm sure it never occurred to him to cheat a little on the statistics to make himself look better.

Doug's interest in sports on TV was (and is still) on that same order. I can watch a football or baseball game on TV and become engrossed in the action, admiring the precision of a pass play or the accuracy of a throw from center field to home plate, and I can get to care, momentarily, about the outcome of the game. Doug watches to see whose batting average changes and which way, or to figure out before it's announced whether a running back has exceeded his average of yards gained per carry.

Statistics of any kind have always been Doug's primary obsession. He is the only kid I know of who reads almanacs for entertainment, and for the past 10 years at least he has had to have the new almanacs just as soon as they're issued each year, which fortunately happens to be around Christmas time. He also has to have the Guinness Book of World Records, but just about any kind of book of records or statistical data will suffice to keep him absorbed for many hours.

When he was in grade school and junior high, he would hurry to get his homework finished so he could devote as much time as possible to the games and diversions of his own invention. These, for the most part, consisted of long columns of seemingly random numbers, painstakingly compiled at a table in the middle of the living room with the help of record books and almanacs. They were all meaningful to Doug and he would be happy to explain them to anyone who had the patience to listen or the ability to understand. Not many did. Even grandparents have a limited attention span.

That living room table (or a succession of different living room tables) has always been Doug's favorite working spot -- not counting his marble game race track that was set up in the basement for several years and for which increasingly accurate birthday-present or Christmas-present stop watches were required.

Doug was a thoroughly socialized member of the neighborhood gangs right up through junior high school, and then, as though overnight, with the onset of adolescence, the gangs dissolved to be replaced by a younger generation; Doug's closest friends developed individual interests--in cars or in girls, or both, for the most part--and Doug spent less and less time chasing around outside and more and more time hunched over the table, turning out those endless columns of numbers. (Carolyn had long since learned that if she inadvertently threw out the wrong batch of what she took to be scratch paper, she would receive a hurt and sorrowful look of reprimand; but Doug had also learned to be somewhat careful about leaving his valuable papers scattered around.

Doug loved high school, particularly the advanced math courses and the homework aspect of everything else. Unlike Bruce and Claudia, who were caught up in the extracurricular excitement -- debate, play production, music groups, dances, parties, drugs, general rebellion (Bruce was instrumental in getting the school district's hair and dress code repealed and was almost kicked out of school for growing a moustache) -- Doug totally ignored all that, except for marching band, which he was in as the preferred alternative to taking gym classes.

But he revelled in the homework. He found he worked better early in

the morning, so he would go to bed at 9 p.m. and get up at 5 a.m. and study two hours before going to school. Even with the turmoil of approaching graduation and the challenge of planning a college career, Doug stuck religiously to his study schedule, refusing to deviate much from it until the very last day of school.

Observing him hunched over the table, working his pocket calculator and writing down the numbers just a week or so before graduation, I commented: "Hey, isn't it nice of them to give you high school credit and straight A's, and let you graduate with honors and get a CU scholarship and all that good stuff just for doing what you would be doing for fun anyway?" Doug glanced up at me, grinned, nodded and returned to his work.

Doug got his very first job this summer, washing dishes at a pancake house on the edge of Denver, a few minutes drive from home. It was hard for him at first; he would come home exhausted, with his hands covered with tiny burns that threatened to interfere with his piano playing. (Good heavens! I've forgotten to mention that he's been taking piano lessons from the same teacher for about 10 years; he has become very good. In marching band he played trombone, not piano, in case you were wondering. Obviously I can't tell everything). He soon mastered the job, reducing it somehow to its arithmetical components, figuring out the exact order in which things had to be done and the exact time each operation should take for optimum results. He said he never got to be as fast as his supervisors would have liked, but he gave himself good marks for punctuality, attentiveness to the details of the job, and, after a while, not breaking too many dishes.

In spite of his single-minded absorption with numbers, those squiggly little marks that mean almost nothing to me, I like Doug quite a bit. For one thing, he likes the same kind of music and the same kind of movies that I do, and so we have gone together to a few good rock concerts and a lot of SF and horror movies ranging from terrible to great. Moreover, Doug has come closest of the three kids to developing an enthusiasm for the literature of science fiction. And that's strange in a way because for a long time all he ever read for entertainment were his number books. When he was 13 or 14 he happened to read Robert Silverberg's "A Happy Day in 2381." He asked me for any other stories that had a lot of numbers in them. I wasn't much help, but Doug started doing some reading on his own, looking for that kind of SF. About a year and a half ago, he happened to pick up the Burne Hogarth Tarzan of the Apes -- the first volume, which ends half way through the novel. It was the first time, to my knowledge, that Doug had become enthralled with a story on anything other than a numerical level. I didn't have the rest of it in comic strip form, but I gave him the Grosset & Dunlap edition, which he read quickly, and then went on to devour all the rest of the Tarzan books, in order and in record time, and most of the Mars books too before he reached a saturation point.

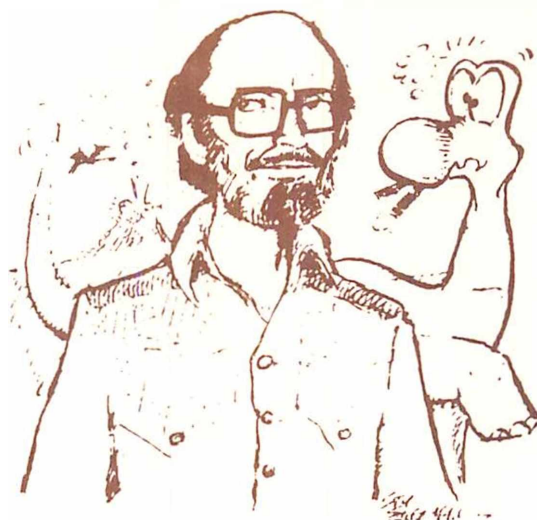
Doug will be going to Suncon with me and Carolyn in a couple of weeks.

When he gets back he too will leave home, moving into a dormitory in Boulder as a first-year student in the University of Colorado College of Engineering -- a field in which, alas, Metro doesn't have much to offer. (Doug has decided that a major in electrical engineering and a minor in business administration best suits his capabilities). I don't think he'll have much trouble.

I just wonder if I can get used to going to rock concerts and movies by myself. I suppose so. Life is full of that kind of adjustments.



# Introduction to a SPEECH



So much for my refutation of Clarke's Law #425. Gina is probably right in the long run, but I am an incorrigible short-term optimist, and that is what I am hereby changing the subject to . . . gradually.

I am going to print the speech that I gave as one half of the guest of honor at Autoclave; and then I will tell a little about Autoclave itself, and then a little about Westercon, and then I'll print some letters, and that will be it for my special 50th issue.

But first . . .

That's a picture of me, up there in the corner. Did you recognize it? (I'm the one at left). It even looks like me. Stu Shiffman outdid himself. The picture was used in the Autoclave program book, along with a sort of introduction to me, written by Carolyn (the introduction to Don D'Amassa was written by Sheila, and the introduction to Jon Singer, the "toaster," was done by Lynnette Parks). Then I, and Don and Jon, who had both been similarly honored by the Shiffman pen, were given the original drawings, nicely framed, as a souvenir of the con. That's as nice a gift as I can think of. The Penulticon committee is now planning to do the same sort of thing for its guests of honor, Frederik Pohl, Leigh Brackett and Bruce Pelz.

The little introduction by Carolyn was sort of a pleasant surprise, too. It was supposed to be an absolute secret, but Carolyn carelessly blurted it out when she got the letter from Leah Zeldes, asking her to do it -- her first impulse being to flat refuse to do it, perhaps on grounds that she couldn't do me justice, though that isn't exactly what she said. So I knew she had been asked to write something, but I didn't know for sure that she had until I go to Autoclave and read the program book.

I was so pleased with what Carolyn wrote that I'm going to print it here, as an introduction to my speech. Actually Jon Singer used Carolyn's article to introduce my speech, too, but he did it with clever and amusing alterations and interjections. I'm giving it verbatim, just the way Carolyn wrote it:

*The REAL*

DON C. THOMPSON

I expect that many people in fandom believe that they have some acquaintance with Don C. Thompson. Many of them

receive his fanzine, Don-o-Saur, which is correctly described as a personalzine because it is almost always made up of a long rambling personal essay by the editor and lots from readers in response to previous issues. In fact, I believe very few zines are so completely written by the editor himself and generally stick so closely to his own reactions and feelings. Therefore many fans may believe that the true Don C. Thompson has been pretty well exposed. Not so. The wise and temperate, kindly and moderate, elder statesman held up to the reader in Don-o-Saur is not in fact the real Don C. Thompson. The real Don C. Thompson is actually the oldest wild-eyed juvenile neofan in science fiction fandom.

Of course, he reads everything--good, bad and questionable--in the sf line that he can get his hands on, and of course he sees all the movies and goes to all the conventions he can afford, and still has a gosh-wow-boy-o-boy attitude towards all the pros, but there are other less well known aspects to his personality which reveal the little boy who never grew up.

His attachment to security objects, for example. Not a blanket, as Linus has, but his books, his chair, his typewriter, his drinking glasses . . . Now, would you believe a grown man who has to have his milk from the same glass every morning? Recently one of the cats broke his glass. Crisis time! Fortunately, I was able to buy a replacement.

And then there is his inability to say no. Because he can never turn down a friend and is afraid of hurting anybody's feelings, he allows himself to be put into positions where he is serving on four con committees simultaneously and putting out four monthly newsletters besides Don-o-Saur, plus his two jobs and time spent doing other types of writing.

How does he manage, you ask? Well, he saves a lot of time by not sleeping and not doing any chores around the house. Last year, for instance, he spent one hour chopping weeds behind the garage. This year he mowed the backyard one evening.

In view of this irresponsibility and juvenile behavior, how does his marriage survive? Obviously, it is held together by his remarkably tolerant, incredibly patient, and amazingly beautiful wife.

He travels only to science fiction conventions and is especially--one might say pathetically--eager to be a guest of honor. To obtain such an honor he is willing to travel great distances and to stand patiently for long periods in con suites waiting for fans to talk to



him and ask for a copy of his zine.

Such willingness to serve has resulted in his being made chairman of the Denver Area SF Association, to be nominated for fan Hugos for best fanzine and as best fan writer in 1975, 1976 and 1977; to be fan guest of honor at Solarcon in El Paso and at Milehicon in Denver, and Master of Ceremonies at Tuscon in 1976. He was Ranquet pro guest of honor at MidAmericon, and will be fan guest at Westercon in Los Angeles in 1978. He has served on panels at conventions too numerous to mention, and has given speeches without seeking compensation. He has taught classes in science fiction and SF writing, and even pretended to enjoy the work and bother.

In spite of this list of honors, he remains sweet and unaffected, modest and endearing, a credit to his friends, a mortification to his enemies, and an example to us all.

So there is the real Don C. Thompson, with all his faults and virtues plainly laid out for you by one who knows. Would I lie to you?

-- Carolyn Thompson

I thought that was very nice; very generous and forbearing -- except maybe for that bit about my milk glass. I don't see what's wrong about wanting to have my milk out of the same glass all the time. The milk tastes yukky if it's in the wrong glass.

But now, with that introduction, I am going to cut out most of the introductory thank yous and acknowledgements that I used at Autoclave (they'll come later) and plunge immediately into

## the SPEECH

I have to start by reading something from my own fanzine. This is from Don-o-Saur 49, page 16, last two paragraphs at the bottom of the page:

Everybody talks about entropy but no one does anything about it. Entropy is the current American Zeit-geist. Entropy is in. My only objection to entropy (or the pre-occupation with it) is that it tends to accompany and to be used as justification for a prevalent (I wish I'd said pervasive) mood of pessimism and apathy--among students, anyway.

And I'm an optimist. It would take a dozen pages to explain why. Maybe that will be the subject of my Guest of Honor talk at Autoclave.

I've been thinking a lot about this, and the subject of my Guest of Honor talk is:

## AUTOS, ENTROPY AND OPTIMISM

It was going to be just Entropy and Optimism, which I think has a pleasant and impressive enough ring to it, but then it occurred to me that since this is, after all, Autoclave, and since it is in Detroit, and Detroit is as famous for its autos as for its entropy . . .

Ideally, a person making a speech should know at least a little something about the subject, but in this case I am falling 66 2/3 per cent short of the ideal. I know very little about autos--certainly not the kind that are made in Detroit, since the cars I drive are made in Japan or Germany. I know that if you put gasoline in the tank and oil in the engine, the car will usually run. I know even less about entropy. I have been told, or have read somewhere, that when everything is measured accurately, down to the smallest subatomic particle, the amount of energy and exhaust does not quite equal the amount of oil and gasoline that went into the auto. Something has been lost--not just converted into another form, but lost, gone, missing, unaccounted for. And this same thing is going on all the time in the production of any kind of energy. It's the universal principle of Less Comes Out Than Goes In, which is explained in the Laws of Thermodynamics, and that continual gap between matter going in and energy coming out is explained in the Second Law of Thermodynamics.

And with that I have told you more than I know about entropy.

But what interests me about entropy is not the mechanics or mathematics of it, but the effect the concept has on different people--and on entire cultures.

In that excerpt from Don-o-Saur that I quoted, I described entropy as the "current American Zeit-geist." Someone immediately challenged me--said I wasn't using Zeit-geist in the usual sense of the term.

Well, I don't know. I knew what I meant, and if I'd had time I might have been able to explain what I was trying to say.

Zeit-geist: German. the spirit of the time--general trend of thought or feeling characteristic of a particular period of time.

That is what I meant. For people who like to look at history in a certain light, certain periods of history do have certain dominant general trends or patterns of thought, and it's fun to go through history and label the different periods with the appropriate Zeit-geist tags--

- the Age of Superstition, the Age of Belief, the Age of Reason. For most of human history, the dominant ideas have been religious or philosophical concepts or attitudes. They still are of course,





but for the past couple of hundred years these concepts and attitudes have been rooted in scientific theories and discoveries. A big chunk of the 19th century can be said to have been dominated by the thought of Charles Darwin: the theory of evolution. And certainly much of the 20th century has been shadowed by Albert Einstein and the theory of relativity.

Of course it's always easier to tell in retrospect what an age's Zeit-geist is. It could very well be that in 500 years, the 20th century will be referred to as just part of something like the Age of Unreason, or the Age of Anger. I'm guessing that entropy is at least in the running as the current American Zeit-geist, but it won't hurt my feelings if I turn out to be wrong. It's not a point that I am deeply committed to or ready to defend with my life, honor or sacred reputation.

It's just that I have been impressed by how many people--both in science fiction and in the mundane world--have become aware of entropy, just within the past decade or so. It's a favorite theme for some SF writers, including Isaac Asimov. It's the whole point of Asimov's famous little short story, "The Last Question," which has been made into an enormously popular planetarium show, with Leonard Nimoy doing the narration. Asimov's novel, The Gods Themselves, is an entropy story. George Alec Effinger's first book was What Entropy Means to Me. Edward Bryant has edited an original anthology to be entitled ENTROPY. Ed wanted to call the first volume Entropy 10 and the next Entropy 9 and so on, backwards, but apparently the publisher couldn't see the point of that. So it'll start with Entropy 1, and that'll probably be the end of it.

Personally, I am not even much fascinated by the concept of entropy, not in the same sense that I am with relativity and quantum theory. Not that I understand those any better than I do entropy; but there's so much more challenge in trying to understand something like how the speed of light can remain constant no matter how rapidly you are approaching it or going away from it. And that's one of the simpler concepts of relativity. Compared to it, entropy is nothing.

The universe is running down, cooling off, losing energy. Order is decaying into chaos. Obviously. Any fool can look around, anywhere, and see that it's true. It doesn't require any knowledge of thermodynamics or physics or mathematics. You don't need any imagination.

And I'm sure it's the very simplicity of the concept that accounts, in part, for its popularity. The other part is that it ties in so neatly with the suddenly developing public awareness of fuel energy problems. It dawned with shocking abruptness on a large number of people that the supply of oil, coal and natural gas is finite, and that if we continue using them at a rapidly accelerating rate, they're going to be pretty much all gone



within a very short time -- relatively speaking. A mere matter of decades now, even assuming that new deposits will continue to be found for a while. But even the most short-sighted can see, now, that fossil fuels cannot be burned up indefinitely. The end is in sight.

And so people are starting to look beyond fossil fuels, to alternate sources of energy--nuclear and solar energy, particularly--and they run smack up against . . . ENTROPY.

Not only is all the coal and oil being burned up--the whole damned universe is burning itself up. The sun is going out. We're all going to die!

Well, yes, of course, but . . . It'll take a while . . .

This is not a speech about the energy crisis. I'm not trying to make a case for nuclear power stations or solar energy satellites or gasoline rationing or strip mining legislation. These are all subjects that I am vitally interested in because the public decisions made about them have a direct impact on the quality of my life. But they are not subjects that I know anything about.

In fact, up to this point, I have been talking in that two-thirds area of my subject matter about which I know nothing -- autos and entropy. I am now about ready to move into the one-third segment--optimism--in which I have implied that I am knowledgeable. And what I'm afraid of is that it may turn out that I don't know anything about it either. We'll see.

Have you seen Annie Hall--Woody Allen's latest film? There's a scene in it with Woody as a young boy; his mother has taken him to a psychiatrist because he won't do his homework. "The universe is coming to an end," he says. "So why bother?"

That's pessimism, the opposite of optimism. And to talk about optimism I've got to talk some about pessimism.

I know a lot of young people like that young Woody Allen, and the thing that irritates me about them is that they are using the perfectly normal fatalism about the long-range disaster (if it is a disaster) as an excuse to be apathetic and indifferent about the short range problems. The whole universe is going to be burned out in a few billion years anyway, so why bother looking for alternate forms of energy now? Why bother doing school work? Why bother trying to make cities fit to live in? Why bother trying to work for such things as equal justice under the law, why bother trying to change bad laws?

There are times when I would like to grab these people by the shoulders and shake them until their teeth rattle -- or until they start thinking the same way I do.

But the most I can do is talk to them, try to reason with



them. And at that point I run into an almost insurmountable difficulty. Because they talk back. And many of them are better talkers than I am. Some of them have the courage of their convictions to a much greater degree than I do; and some of them are smarter than I am.

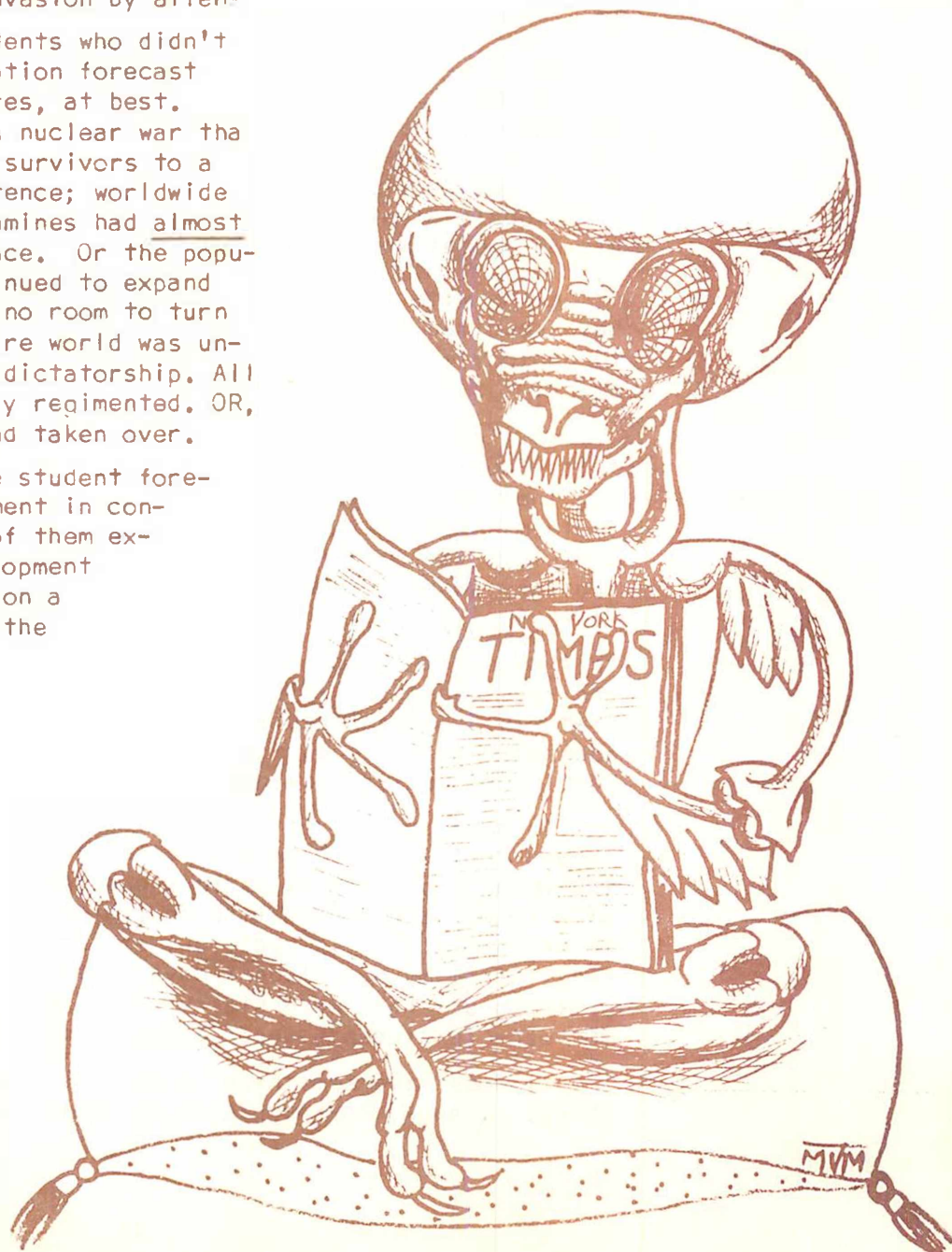
In one of my science fiction writing classes, I had each of the students do an exercise in straight-line extrapolation. On the basis of present conditions and trends, write a brief statement of what things will be like 25 years from now. We'd had some pretty intense discussions in the class even before that assignment, so I wasn't totally unprepared for the results, but I was still shocked.

Nearly half the students had gone ahead and killed off the whole human race--nuclear war, pollution, or invasion by aliens.

All the students who didn't predict annihilation forecast very bleak futures, at best. There had been a nuclear war that reduced the few survivors to a cave-style existence; worldwide epidemics and famines had almost wiped out the race. Or the population had continued to expand until there was no room to turn around. The entire world was under an absolute dictatorship. All life was strictly regimented. OR, total anarchy had taken over.

Not a single student forecast an improvement in conditions. None of them expected the development of solar energy on a large scale, or the development of space colonies or the migration of industry to space. If any of them glimpsed the possibilities of the computer revolution it didn't show in their extrapolations.

"How can you be so pessimistic?" I asked them.



And they shrugged and said, "We're just being realistic. You're overly-optimistic. Things are bad and getting worse. How can you not notice notice it? Just look around you."

I used to work in an office that had a sign: "If you can be cheerful amid all this confusion, you obviously don't understand the situation."

That's how I feel a lot of the time. What am I not understanding? What is it I'm not seeing?

I look around me, and I see the same mess that my students see, I'm pretty sure--the corruption, the pollution, the selfishness, the narrowness, the greed, the misery and the cynicism. I see the same international tensions and the same military decisions that they do--the ones that could, with a little carelessness, lead to the ultimate blow-up. And I think I'm just as aware as my students of the dangers of chemical and biological weapons.

But I see other things too. Along with all the obvious stupidity among public figures, I catch occasional glimpses of intelligence. Maybe it's just my imagination, but I think I can see, now and then, amid all the moral rot and the grasping, narrow-minded selfishness and the cruelty and cynicism--I see some individuals displaying flashes of honesty and generosity and vision--sometimes integrity, creativity . . . and love.

Along with the pollution and the ecological disfigurement that have resulted from the misuse of technology, I see the potential of technology -- if intelligently applied -- to reverse the devastation.

So I ask my students and my other pessimistic friends about this. Do they see any of this? And they tell me they do. That is, that they're just as aware of the positive aspects of life as I claim to be of the negative. And they still believe the bad outweighs the good--and that things are not likely to improve. (Entropy cannot be reversed).

So maybe what it comes down to, to use a standard cliché, is that my students and I are looking at the same glass of water, and they're saying it's half empty and I'm saying it's half full. That would bring it safely back into the realm of relativity, a concept that I'm much more comfortable with than I am with entropy. But I can't quite convince myself that it's that simple.

To some extent, of course, it is a matter of perspective -- though that seems to be a reversal of another cliché: that it's the young who are idealistic and hopeful and the middle-aged and elderly who are the embittered cynics and pessimists. But I think that cliché is badly out of date, because I distinctly recall from my own student days that many of the 60-year-old professors I knew were starry-eyed idealists, and many of the 20-year-old students were jaded, case-hardened cynics.

It does have something to do with maturation, but not everything. I know many people my own age and older who are far more



cynical and pessimistic than the worst of my students. Or, what's much worse, many of those who are optimistic are blindly so -- they really don't realize how desperate the situation is.

I'm running out of time--and I'm afraid I haven't said anything very meaningful about optimism either.

It's frustrating. Because I believe there are good, solid, realistic and even plausible reasons for my basic optimism.

It has something to do with being a science fiction fan; I'm sure of that, though I'm not sure of the exact relationship--whether I'm a fan because I'm an optimist or an optimist because I'm a fan.

I don't know very many SF fans who are out-and-out hopeless pessimists. A few, sure, mostly among the younger ones, but really not many. It's partly because fans are simply more familiar with the potential benefits of science and technology, as well as the potential dangers. And we're accustomed to thinking about the future (or futures) and you can't think about the future unless you can believe there'll be a future.

But there are also intensely personal reasons why I am an optimist. I know what those reasons are, and I would have no reticence in writing about them in Don-o-Saur, because DoS is my personal confessional, in a very real sense. But I do feel highly exposed and vulnerable standing here talking to you about them, and so I'm going to close now with no more than a hint:

What I'm really talking about here -- what I'm really talking about most of the time in Don-o-Saur -- is love. For me, love and optimism are practically synonymous; they almost have to go together. And I don't mean the easy kind of love any more than I mean the easy kind of optimism -- the kind that's possible because you don't know any better.

The kind of love I'm talking about is tough, hard, resilient; and it's something that has to grow and develop and mature.

It works this way: When you've learned love -- of a person, of people, of ideas, of intelligence, of beauty -- you automatically care about them. And when you care deeply enough, you have to hope. But it becomes a very active form of hope.

I think I've raised more questions than I've answered, but I'm going to stop there. Thank you.

# CON-densations

The printed version of the speech is not quite the same as the one that was actually delivered at Autoclave. It's shorter, for one thing, and therefore smoother and more coherent. I ran out of time, before I had to give the speech, to make the deletions and alterations that could have improved it enormously.

I had thought that this time, for once, as a token of respect for Autoclave if nothing else, I could have a speech all thought out and prepared well in advance of the occasion. And I did, in fact, get a much earlier start on it than usual, if you count that comment about entropy and optimism in DoS 49 as the start of the speech, which it was. But it was only a little more than half written by Friday morning, July 22, when we flew to Detroit. So I gave up three or four hours' potential party time that night, as well as shirking my guest-of-honor duties, and disappeared to the room and tried to finish the speech. And then late Saturday afternoon, before the banquet, I put in another hour in panicky seclusion, still trying to bring the speech to an end.

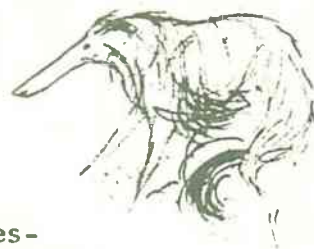
I failed. As you can see from the printed version, I never did manage to bring the speech to a conclusion. I just had to stop when I ran out of time and reached the point where it was obvious that all the real explanations of what I was trying to say still remained to be explained. Very unsatisfying, but I had to let it go at that. There were lots of times while I was working on the talk that I wished I could be working on a much more frivolous and fannish type address, something somehow more suitable for the occasion, but I was stuck with the subject that I'd decided on -- and so was the unfortunate audience.

Actually, the audience endured it with commendable fortitude. And Don D'Ammassa's talk sort of made up for mine, anyway, so I didn't feel too bad. His speech was much more informal than mine, delivered from notes, not from a prepared text, and he spoke a lot more smoothly and entertainingly than I did, and he didn't take up as much time.

Meeting and getting to know Don D'Ammassa was, I would have to say, the real highlight of Autoclave for me this time, although the con was crammed with memorable and enjoyable episodes and encounters -- far too many to relate in the very limited time and space I'm allowing myself here.

I found Don D'Ammassa to be as impressive in person as he is in print. Well, he's not exactly the towering figure that you might imagine from his writing; in fact, physically I tower above him by a foot or so, but he's impressive nonetheless. Brian Earl Brown says that DD reminds him of the Fonz, because of his sideburns and pompadour. DD himself says he looks more like a Mafia hit man. I can't quite agree with either of them, although I can sort of understand what they mean. But if I were to try to type-cast Don D'Ammassa (hell, I don't know for what purpose; let's just say we've got a game going where we try to match SF fans and authors with science fictional characters; any number can play--feel free to join in), I would give Don the role of the Gray Mouser. All he needs is the hood and cape. He is small, thin, wiry,

giving the impression at least of extreme agility. And whether or not he is as physically agile as he looks, it's his mental and verbal agility that make him impressive. Like the Gray Mouser, he can rely on his quick wits and smooth tongue in most situations. Don is one of those enviable individuals with a very sharp and clear mind and a direct neural link between brain and vocal equipment. Rather than by a Fafhrd, Don was accompanied at the con by two faithful companions, his wife Sheilah and their aristocratic dog, whose name I regret I don't remember. It was a Borzoi, if that's any help, and here is a picture of it -- sort of. It's just an impressionistic sketch actually, of course, and I can't even tell you who drew it. It was on a sheet of sketches and doodles that I found in the party suite. The sheet had been abandoned and seemed destined for the wastebasket. If the artist recognizes the work, I hope you'll let me know so I can give credit.



I have to make at least one profound apology in connection with my Autoclave report, but it involves another reference to my speech, which I'm sure you are tired of hearing about, and so I apologize for that, too. The main apology, however is to Dave Romm. I made him work hard on my speech, and then I treated him shabbily -- even more so in the printed version by omitting all mention of him entirely. In the spoken version I at least said something about him, even if it wasn't very nice.

You see, I knew my speech needed some humor to lead into it. It was to be about entropy, sort of. I knew some black hole jokes. If I had wanted to talk about cloning, Ed Bryant could have provided me with all the clone jokes clone jokes clone jokes I could possibly have desired. But entropy . . . I had just never heard any entropy jokes. So very early in the con, I asked Dave Romm (at least I knew who to ask!) to think up a couple of good entropy jokes for me. "Entropy means nothing to me," he replied. And the next time I ran into him, a half an hour or so later, he commented, "Entropy used to mean something to me."

From then on, all during the con, even after the banquet, Dave would sidle up to me at unexpected intervals and murmur such gems of wisdom as "If you think the human race is coming to an end, doesn't that mean you are mis-entropic?" Or: "If you think it's sad that the universe is winding down, you are exhibiting entro-pity." Or: "A dissent from the concept of entropy is called dissentropy." I have wished since that I had used some of Dave's one-liners in my speech instead of simply saying, as I did, that his jokes had grown steadily worse. That wasn't nice.

One of the less significant but still memorable things about Autoclave was the abundance of Randys. Of course Randy Bathurst by himself constitutes an abundance, but there was also Randy Reichardt and to my mild astonishment, there was Randy Kristianson of





Boulder, esteemed editor of the Boulder Outer Space Commentary Organization clubzine. He was spending the summer, more or less, con-cruising. He had been in New York and veered off to hit Rivercon following Autoclave. I felt kind of like a tour guide, "showing" him some of the delights of my favorite con.

Here is an inexcusably brief and shamefully incomplete list of the names of those who helped make Autoclave a delight for me; and if I went into even the skimpiest kind of detail as to the role each person played, this would turn into the kind of long and glowing con report that I've been telling myself I must avoid. All right then, in more-or-less alphabetical order, at least to start with: --

Alyson L. Abramowitz, Brian Earl Brown, Bill Brieding, Bill Brummer, John Benson, Greg Brown, Avedon Carol, Cy Chauvin, Tony Cvetko, Jack Chalker, Jackie Causgrove, Howard DeVore, Larry Downes, Diane Drutowski, David Emerson, Gary Farber, Moshe Feder, George Fergus, Denise Hudspeth, Mike Glicksohn, Fred Haskell, Rusty Havelin, Jackie Hilles (-- all right, yes, I know Jackie wasn't at Autoclave this year, but last year she was, and a lot of what Autoclave meant to me this year was a residue of what it meant to me last year, when Jackie was there; it's known as time-binding--), Ben Indick (--no, he wasn't there either, but some of us called him on the phone Saturday night, and it was the first time I had talked to him, so it was special for me--), Ben Jason, Sandi Lopez, George (Lan) Laskowski, Denise Mattingly, Gary Mattingly, Taral Wayne MacDonald, Seth McEvoy, Karen Pearlston, D. Potter, Ross Pavlac, Dave Szurek, Jon Singer, Janet Small, Suzy Tiffany, Mitch (or Ira, if you prefer; he'll always be Mitch to me, and he is my brother) Thornhill, Laurraine Tutihasi, Victoria Wayne, Joe Wesson, Ann Weiser -- and Leah Zeldes.

Autoclave was definitely the pivotal con of the summer for me. It followed Westercon by about three weeks and preceded Suncon by five weeks. The other cons were much bigger and probably, by whatever standard of evaluation you want to use, more significant; but Autoclave, for me, from a strictly subjective point of view, was more important.

Now, I am not going to report on either Westercon or Suncon. (Well, I didn't really report on Autoclave either, but I came closer than I'd intended; from here on I'll exercise more restraint). I'll make a few brief comments about each con, a few general impressions and a few names, and that will be it.

Westercon had its onerous aspects in that I was so to speak in charge of the Denver bid for Westercon 32 in 1979, and that involved trying to sell memberships and hosting room parties. Fairly early in the con, it became more or less obvious that the majority of voters considered Denver too far away or too isolated or too high, or had various other reasons for preferring Palo Alto as the site of the con two years hence. Once it was clear that the Denver bid was but a gesture, I was able to relax and it turned out to be a very enjoyable con.

It was nice, being in the college dormitory-type situation, without a lot of hotel mundanes trying to figure out what we were up to. The cafeteria-style eating arrangement took a little getting used to, and I

missed a few meals because the concept of eating at a certain time and place at a con, or not at all, was alien to my nature. It's amazing how quickly hunger can force adjustments and adaptations in one's nature; and once the adjustment was made, I rather enjoyed the luxury of not having to make decisions about what, when and where to eat.

There were two major highlights of the con for me, and one of them was strange indeed--one of the few times that a part of the programming has emerged as among the most memorable aspects of a con.

But the Flying Karamazov Brothers were memorable. Fantastic, really, is what they are. Incredible. Magnificent.

The costume show itself was not at all bad, what with the splendidly conceived and executed "Slave Boys of Gor" skit performed by Jerry Jacks, Ctein & Co. By far the popular favorite, and deservedly so.

But still, the highlight of the costume show was the intermission entertainment, which consisted of those previously mentioned Flying Karamazov Brothers. They're a comedy-juggling team, four lithe young men with faces of supreme plasticity, hands that make use of adhesion principles unknown to science, and a sense of timing that borders on the supernatural. Basically, all they do is throw things up in the air, and at each other (and catch them), while telling jokes or rattling off comedy routines (they have several variations, both futuristic and historical, of the classic "Who's on First", for instance); but it's the fluid smoothness and computer-like precision of both the jokes and the juggling that made their act remarkable. The fact that they know enough about SF (and SCA) to have adapted their material to the special audience helped a great deal, too. They achieved a closeness and rapport with the audience, drawing wildly enthusiastic response from even their subtlest nuances, that even seemed to startle the performers a bit. I think they ended up loving the crowd as much as the crowd loved them -- a lot.

The other major highlight of the con was something very ordinary and very marvelous -- the very thing that many fans go to cons for. It was a brief, quiet conversation. I had so many brief, quiet conversations with so many people that it seems arbitrary and presumptuous to single out just one as a highlight; yet there are special reasons why that talk with Jessica Amanda Salmonson will cling to my memory long after most of the others are forgotten. Jessica and I, in an exchange of letters, had been on the verge of what looked like a serious disagreement. A tension was developing between us that could have ripened into hostility. In no more than ten or fifteen minutes of face-to-face communication, we were able to understand each other better (and I think like each other more) than would have been possible through any amount of letter writing.

Gil Gaier was present, and a participant in, that memorable conversation, and I guess I'll never know for sure exactly how much his presence and participation contributed to its success. As my entry in the under-statement-of-the-year sweepstakes, I'll just say it was not a negative factor. I suspect that Gil very often serves as a catalytic agent in other people's relationships.

If I even start listing people's names in lieu of a Westercon report,

it's going to take up more space than I intended, but at the same time, it's impossible to not mention such names as Fran Skene (who was always in control, making it look easy), Bill Breiding, Susan Wood, Carl Juarez, Bruce Arthurs and Hilde Hildebrandt, Merriam Knight (for whom Denver, alas, is too high), Alan Bostick, Eli Cohen, Elst Weinstein, Steve Fahrenstark, Pauline Palmer (who gave me a fascinating pack of dinosaur cards), Tom Digby, Bruce Pelz, Elayne Pelz, Barb Dryer, Don Fitch, Fred Patten, Velma Stevens ("Contessa"--some of whose drawings I will be using), Milt Stevens, Mike Glyer, Jack Chalker, Hope Leibowitz . . .

This is not even a good start. And I'm making no attempt to stick to alphabetical order, simply putting down the names as they pop into my mind. It's no way to do things.

I'm going to stop, and yet I can't quit without mentioning just a few more names. Specifically, I want to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to several people for their work and support in behalf of the Westercon bid. Bob Alvis was a member of the committee, so his efforts were taken for granted but nonetheless appreciated. But Robert Taylor of Austin and Kevin Dunn of Fort Collins had no vested interest and still devoted a lot of energy and enthusiasm to the lost cause; and the same thing is true of the Denver Angels, Helen, Paul and Carol. Carol Angel's taxicab services were especially valuable, and I am deeply grateful.

\* \* \* \* \*

And then of course there was Suncon . . .

I fully intended to have this issue of DoS all finished so I could take it to Suncon, and I damn near made it. About a week before the con, I estimated that I had about a week's worth of work left to do. Unfortunately, there was some other work I also had to get done before the con -- a Penulticon progress report to compile and print, as well as flyers for Penulticon, MileHiCon and Denvention II. I did manage to get all that work finished, but Don-o-Saur had to wait.

Worldcon was already two months ago, and in that time I have managed to get about four pages of DoS done. What happened to delay me was school, the Rocky Mountain News, and almost weekly MileHiCon and/or Penulticon committee meetings. School started almost the instant I got back from Miami, and all my classes this semester seem to require more outside preparation than usual. And more tests and paper grading. The RMN, where I work on weekends, has been extending the definition of weekend to include both Friday and Monday. And you know about concom meetings, don't you?

Well, though, MileHiCon is over with, and it was a success. Roger Zelazny gave one of the most entertaining Pro-GoH speeches (battling a defective microphone with consummate skill and aplomb) that I've ever heard. Bruce Arthurs' talk, a masterpiece of wit and brevity, is being printed in the November issue of DASFax. MileHiCon may have even made a little money.

Now Penulticon is breathing down my neck. IF I give any kind of detailed report about it, or about MileHiCon, or about Suncon -- it's going to be next time.

For this issue, the only thing more you're going to get is a Loccol. It starts on the next page.



Is it just my paranola, or am I really receiving a larger number of sharply critical, rancorous, disputatious locs?

Well, I'll print some of the ones that seem that way to me, and you can tell me if I'm wrong. In the interests of getting this issue finished, at all, sometime, I am not going to stop and argue, however great the temptation. And it is great -- In the first couple of letters, particularly:

DIANE W. WHITE  
635 Oak Lane  
Winfield, IL 60190

Undoubtedly, you will be getting a slew of admiring comments on your Michael Berk narrative, so I don't feel too guilty about weighing in on the side of the detractors. I thought the whole narration sucked. I do not like this brand of treacle when it's done by PROS. You are on my list of writers, headed by Harlan Ellison, to whom I have a desire to say, "Will you stop whining?" Whining is bad form, no matter how creative it is.

Is it true that you teach a course in Creative Whining?

Some of the LoCs were interesting for their dazzling displays of ignorance. I had thought that whining about the evil effects of Christianity had reached its peak years ago, and was now a bad memory, but alas! Philip Stephensen-Payne has failed to get the word.

Marty Levine might consider taking a course in English Literature. He states that he doesn't know where Don D'Amassa gets the idea that men are basically amoral; he further states that given that men are basically amoral the notion that they must obey the law is inconsistent. Levine should take a few years off from whatever it is he does and read Thomas Hobbes's Leviathan.

George Fergus is a semi-neighbor of mine. He lives about 20 minutes away by ordinary automobile, 60 minutes away via my Maverick. Just goes to show you I'm tolerant enough to live in any kind of neighborhood. George can discard the idea of absolute morality if he wants to, but he should not discard the idea of learning a little history. For instance, there was no ORGANIZED religion in the United States during the period of slavery. This is why religion proved ineffective in combatting it. In South America, where slavery was much milder in its effects, the Roman Catholic Church was organized enough to demand its customary place as arbiter of family, marital, and moral life. In practice this meant legal marriages and legitimate offspring, the keeping together of the slave family, and the chance of manumission. Fergus should consult some historians who are good sources for a discussion of slavery, among them Stanley Elkins, Eugene Genovese, and C. Vann Woodward.

LOCs



You, Don, obviously haven't read the case you mentioned as the one in which the Supreme Court declared that women weren't persons. The case is In re Lockwood, about 1895. The court has always been touchy on the women's rights issue and never were the courts dumb enough to say that women weren't persons within the meaning of the constitution. I admit they declared against women again and again, all the while giving eulogies on the wonderfulness of true femininity. This was just obiter dicta. Generally the cases were decided on narrow technical grounds.

The needs of women and their special role in family life was the pivotal point of the famous Brandeis Briefs, and led the way for protection of workers against the "rapacious robber barons." So the issue cut both ways. These days of course people have forgotten that there was a time when women workers would have been glad to be called anything if they could only get laws which prevented employers from working them to death. I guess I go back a little farther than you do, Don.

You'll be surprised to know that I agree with both Ben Indick and George on the subject of drug addicts. Let 'em croak. John W. Campbell, rest his iconoclastic soul, once proposed freedom of drugs. Any and all drugs should be available over the counter like toothpaste. This allows a sick person to treat himself, eliminates a pharmacist's cut of the price, and has the added bonus of killing off everybody crazy or stupid enough to take the wrong drug or too much of the joy juice. This would not prevent anyone from getting a doctor's advice, but it would be just that -- advice. Campbell opined that freedom of drugs would make for a healthier world -- a kind of pharmaceutical Darwinism in which the bright and sane survived and the crazy and stupid would kill themselves off. This is, in my opinion, an ELEGANT solution, not only to the problems posed by the crazies and addicts, but to all kinds of other problems such as overpopulation, the high cost of medical care, unemployment, lack of work for the unskilled, the maid problem and probably even the aggravation of rock music. Speed the day, JWC.

Moving right along, adamantly declining to quarrel, clarify or quibble, here's another letter:

*Buck Coulson  
Route 3  
Hartford City  
IN 47348*

A few comments on #49. To Ann Weiser: Of course I don't intend to change my opinions. If you want other people to change theirs about women, the program is quite simple. (Carrying it out is what's hard). Legislate equality of opportunity, and then make sure it's enforced. Passing the ERA is vital, but it's still a first step. The point is that if you want women to be respected, then they have to do something. Complaining about being oppressed gets you sympathy - sometimes - but it doesn't get you any respect at all. Respect still has to be earned, and to earn it, women must be able to compete equally with men. (Once they are allowed to compete, and educated for it, then the respect will come, inevitably, if slowly, because of course women can perform respectably in any field). Make sure of equal opportunity in education, in hiring practices, in promotion, and you'll get everything else - even a change in language. But it won't come fast, no matter what you do. Look at the suffragettes. They won - eventually. You can win - eventually. But not if you waste your energies on cosmetic "improvements" like language, and lose sight of the main problem. Billie Jean King did more for the cause of

women's rights in one tennis match than all of the fanzine articles that have ever or ever will be published; she proved that she could do the job. (And she also proved that knowing how to handle publicity is more important than knowing how to love) if you're trying to accomplish anything for women).

I'd hardly call Barb and Michael "star-crossed lovers." Barb loved Michael and Michael loved Michael, and since she was apparently going to be equally unhappy whether he was alive or dead, it seems pointless to mourn him. That's the sort of character who gives men a bad name. (I'll bet Ann Weiser agrees with you that his death is a terrible tragedy).

I see Avedon Carol supports my opinions: "Those who don't will refer to you by your old name forever." They will - and they will think of a "chairperson" as a silly name for a chairman, and continue to use "chairman" and teach their children to use it. And those people are the majority of the population, and will stay that way until their ideas are changed, by something besides language. (You can call me anything you want to, Avedon. I don't know you well enough to respect your opinion and so I am indifferent to it). I might mention, though, that I haven't noticed any particular difference between the people who call me "Buck" and the ones who call me "Robert;" some of both are friends.

Legislate equality of opportunity before you change any opinions?? Oh. That's nice. But you wouldn't want to tell us how, I don't suppose? Billie Jean King's tennis match was a cosmetic operation, I thought. If Michael had loved Michael he wouldn't have killed himself. Michael's whole problem (well, one of his big ones, anyway) was an inability to love anyone. Love is much more important than a mastery of publicity, just as a survival trait, if nothing else. (And so much for my refusal to stop and argue).

HOWARD BRAZEE  
129 Ash #6  
Ames, IA 50010

Your discussion of sexism brought a lot of replies. I wonder if these people are the same people who voted for "Houston, Houston, Do You Read?", which is as sexist as anything in print.

James Tiptree Jr. asks us to accept three wild ideas: (1) A spaceship jumps thru time (2) The future earth will consist solely of cloned women (of humans), (3) Astronauts, trained in colleges & tested for mental stability, go crazy over sex. Of these, the third was hardest for me to accept; especially as it seems that the author tried to make it seem that that was the natural state of man. I do not know what experience Tiptree had with men, but her concept of men is just not remotely believable to me.





My question is how did this work first win the Nebula and then the Hugo Awards? I know that mainstream literature tries to put people down and make people appear uglier than life, but do we need to start this in SF? And give awards to this "literate" nonsense? America today loves collective guilt. (Tell me how bad I am for existing, but not for doing crimes e.g. living on land stolen from the Indians is bad, cheating Ma Bell is good).

Maybe I haven't a wide enough acquaintance with other men. Most of my acquaintances have been either college men or members of the Air Force (mostly pilots). While this is how one would describe astronauts, possibly others act as Tiptree indicated. So, I'm asking, do Don-o-Saur readers believe that men are the brutes depicted in this work? Or is it just that SF readers see that if it's insulting, it must be good?

I like that letter because it provides a slightly different focus for the sexism discussion. And it might be interesting to have some talk about an actual SF writer in this alleged SF fan-zine. I have a few observations and questions of my own: When James Tiptree Jr. was a "man," he was widely acclaimed as understanding and compassionate, dealing more effectively with women's problems than any woman could. Now, as a woman, she is accused of sexism. Jumps through time, whole planets of a single sex, and astronauts going crazy (for various reasons) have all been standard science-fictional fare for as long as there's been SF; how come Howard Brazee just now notices that these are "wild" ideas? Until very recently it was difficult to find SF stories that did not, on some level at least, insult women; why does Howard reserve his indignation for one story that he considers insulting to men?

More letters: A change of pace might be welcome . . .

*Ann Weiser  
c/o McDermott  
5435 S. Kenwood 3W  
Chicago, IL 60615*

I would be interested in hearing, not about drinking, but about stopping drinking. It always seems a miracle: that someone whose every drink proves to themselves that they are not worth saving, then takes the infinitely loving step of saving themselves. Was God useful to you? God is not a hot topic in fandom, but I personally have a good relationship with Her.

WOW! That story about Barb & Michael is just incredible. I'm very glad you wrote it at such length. I hardly know what to say -- except that I wish there was a word other than "love" to describe that kind of consuming obsession. It's also a story that seems typical, or maybe archetypical, of the relations between men & women in our time. You couldn't imagine the same situation but with sexes reversed. No, it's the man who's irresponsible, demanding, childish; the woman who must sacrifice everything for the sake of "love." I'm very moved. I can see that you yourself are more than just an observer, but one who is linked to Barb by an emotion that I am much more comfortable about calling love. Thank you.

I still wish you wouldn't print pictures of naked women.

To Fred Jakobic: If one is responsible for one's own weaknesses, then what would be wrong with legalizing heroin? It would be legal, and each person would be responsible for whether they used it or not . . . The trouble

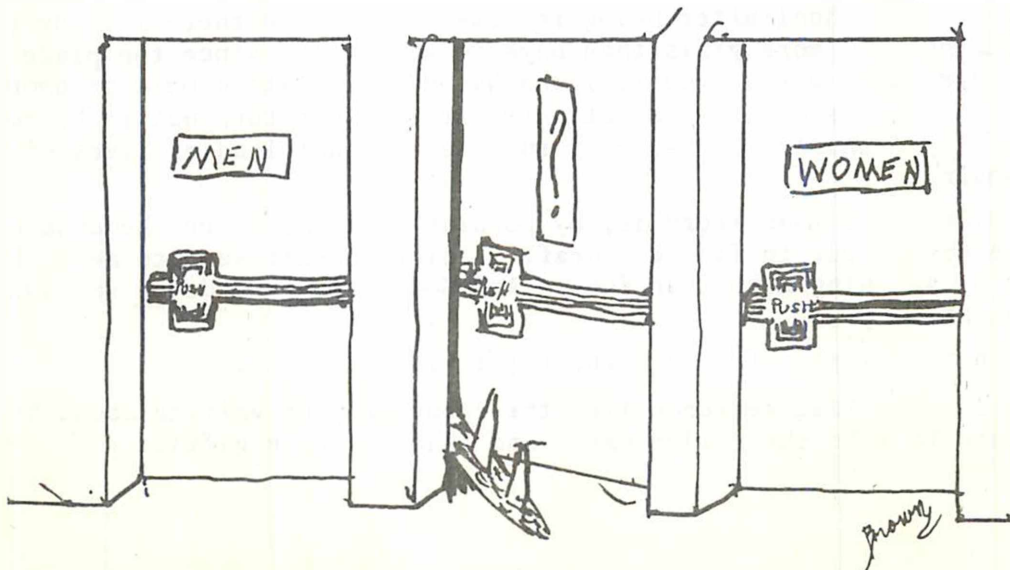
with that reasoning is that people interconnect, all of us. For my 'sister' to be a heroin addict affects me. I can't just say, "Well, she's responsible. It's none of my business."

An interesting red herring seems to be complicating the issue of women and language. For example, Roy Tackett using "femlib," Christine Pasanen saying it's demeaning, and Roy Tackett and Mike Glicksohn replying that it wasn't meant to demean anyone. The red herring is the dichotomy between INTENTION and EFFECT. "If I didn't intend to demean you, then you couldn't be demeaned." "If I didn't intend to anger you, then you couldn't be angry." And so on. This just does not follow. Let's say I'm living with someone. I say, "I'm angry that you take the newspaper to work every morning instead of leaving it for me to read." Does she say, "But I don't do it in order to anger you" -- expecting thereby for me to stop being angry and the discussion to be over? No! She says, "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to anger you. Let's work it out. Maybe we can get two papers, or I can try to read it before I leave." When people hear that other people are sensibly and justifiably hurt by certain language, they should try to change, even though the hurt was not intentional.

Of course no one wants to eliminate the suffix -man. Mailman for men, mailwomen for women.

It's true though that the changes in language are not enough, never enough. The profoundest changes must be in our actions and our relations with each other. We are all on the long road toward higher consciousness of what hurts people and how to change. Not just what hurts women: what hurts "children," old people, non-whites (that's even a racist description right there), gays, people who are physically different (formerly known as "handicapped"), wage workers . . . We are engaged in the long struggle up to a revolution to eliminate privilege. (I might say, "to eliminate un-earned privilege," if all have an equal chance to earn).

My first impulse, when I learned that Ann disapproved of the lilo on page 10 of DoS 49, was to become very defensive. After all, I didn't intend it to be sexist, and was pretty sure that Barry Kent McKay didn't. I selected the drawing and placed it where I did



because it seemed so appropriate in context: the naked woman representing Barb in her total vulnerability, the flame representing Michael, both warming and attracting Barb and searing and repelling her. I was disappointed that Ann didn't appreciate the subtlety of my editing. However, without any prolonged discussion of the subject, with no more than a few words ever being exchanged about it, in fact, Ann and I have done a lot of communicating; and I have come to understand and appreciate her feelings on this matter. I won't promise to never print another picture of a naked woman, but I have promised (myself) to think longer, harder and more carefully about possible reactions the next time I decide to print one. And at MileHiCon, I actually purchased a Liz Danforth drawing of a naked Perseus, for the special purpose of running in DoS in an attempt to restore sexual balance. Watch for it next issue.

J. E. Pournelle  
12051 Laurel Terrace  
Studio City, CA 91604

You needn't be apologetic for telling the story of Michael and Barb, at least not to me. I found it fascinating.

You know, some people are just no damned good. I don't know if it's poor protoplasm, environment, or what. It's the fashion nowadays to say that anything bad happens to people is not their fault; the literature of "social tragedy" in which people are crushed by the Establishment, Society, the Universe, whatever; anything but their own failure to take hold of themselves, to make something happen in their lives. I wonder. It seems to me that almost everyone I have known has a great deal of control over his/her life; that what used to be known as "character" can be developed, consciously built if one wants to do so. My wife, who teaches in a juvenile detention facility (read: "reform school"; "jail"; "snakepit") has much the same view. She sees kids who have really been crushed by the universe -- and some of them not only survive, but become normal human beings, good citizens, just plain people who are not at all remarkable, waitresses, mechanics, secretaries, students . . .

Someone whose parents brutalized him, whose father sodomized him at age 6 and continuously thereafter, whose mother left the father and kept a succession of "friends" around, who never learned to read and at age 13 was effectively alone and on his own; who finds the jail the only place he's ever been where anyone ever gave a damn about him, got him glasses, taught him to read (the kid I have in mind actually went out and broke a store window to get sent back to the school after being released...) -- now there's a boy (or girl, for Roberta has had more girls than boys to work with, since the place was sexually segregated until recently) who has a legitimate complaint about the universe. And yet some of them not only survive, but turn out to be normal people, hardly euphorically happy, I suppose, but not leading lives of quiet despair.

The Michael of your story is, by popular acclaim, a hero because he dodged the draft; but in fact his draft evasion doesn't seem to me to be motivated by anything more than funk. And God help any kids he was supposed to counsel at camp . . .

I do not know your friend Barb, but I wish her well.

(And in that last sentence lies the value of your writing about her: you are able to make the reader care, and that's a rare gift).



We all respect and admire the strong and courageous who are able to overcome adversity and make something of themselves; but must we condemn those who are not that strong? How can we ever know what kind of hell any individual has to go through, and how can we be certain what our own breaking point might be under the same circumstances? Michael was never a hero to anyone except Barb -- definitely not to himself. And I don't know what his motive was for evading the draft.

Fred Jakobcio  
113 W. Ohio Apt. 4  
Marquette, MI 49855

Some people are too weak to help themselves or let others help, but it is always easy to say that. I've not had Michael's problems, and I would have had to have them to experience them, but people make their own problems, and then dig their own holes of despair. It is a weakness in some. You got yourself out of your alcoholism and maybe you had some help, but you did it. It seems to me that Michael had the help and the opportunity but not the strength, nor the awareness to lift himself up out of the hole he dug for himself. He did not know how to climb the ladder. . .

Let's not be too humane to drug addicts. The British system controls, but does not cure, just adds to the problem. The Japanese solution of an enforced or as you put it, of "cold-turkey enforced kill-or-cure withdrawal" would be more in line with my feelings because it is more effective. You would rather, it seems, perpetuate the problem, keep it going, for how long? Humaneness, maybe we have too much humaneness in certain areas of our own society, especially with our younger population of teens and even pre-teens. What good does it do to keep putting an under-age juvenile on probation time and time again, or seal his records against public view? It just allows him to continue his criminal ways without fear and only a little inconvenience -- such as appearing in court, which may be little more than a vacation between crimes.

In the case of drug programs, the more effective, but so-called "in-humane" treatment has my vote. In a lot of areas of our society, this humaneness, and lack of strong enforcement, strong but fair discipline, has led to troubles in, say, our high schools where teachers cannot control, or lack the enforcement powers and backing of authority, to discipline students. Parents are no different. It is never their child, or it is just a children's prank, or he did not mean to do it, or etc., and shall I go on? The courts have been too humane, lenient, too permissive, too lax in backing human rights and too extreme for the criminal element. Equal pay, equal job opportunity, equality because of skin, religion, creed, is fine, but punish the guilty animal, don't pat him on the back, slap his wrist with a probation or a fine; yes, there are exceptions, but I feel our judicial system has gone to the other extreme to protect human rights and the innocent are suffering for it. The police cannot even restrain a prisoner without police brutality being shouted.

Is the "problem" the heroin itself or is it the violent crimes associated with its use and distribution? The number of heroin users in Great Britain is declining, and there is little or no crime related to it. Both the number of addicts and the violent crime rate in the U.S. continues to climb. It's easy enough to talk of "effective but inhumane" solutions as long as it remains a mere

philosophical abstraction. When it comes down to specific cases, particularly if you or someone you love happens to be one of the cases, such concepts as extremism in the protection of human rights can take on quite a different meaning.

I said earlier I intended to print big chunks of Gina Clarke's letter, but there's no room left to print big chunks of anything, so I'll settle for printing a little, but not from the same letter I quoted earlier. This is from a LoC on DoS 49.

Gina Clarke  
Suite 910, 85 Albert St.  
Ottawa, Ontario,  
Canada K1P 6A4

I enjoyed your Untitled Discourse. Well, enjoyed is not quite the word. I found it enthralling, how's that. There's certainly a book there, one that could examine, but of course ultimately fail to explain, the mysterious and exasperating perversity of humankind. It sounds like one of those apparently 'avoidable' tragedies . . . but I suppose that's just the sort of comment you anticipated when you asked us not to make \*judgments\*. Still, it's hard not to. I kept wanting to knock the kids' heads together. "Michael, get yourself." "Barb, for Chrissake, fall out of love." But he didn't, and she didn't, and don't we all . . .

As a sufferer of personal galloping entropy (i.e., I've passed 40), I am interested in your thoughts on the subject, especially as to how you find it not incompatible with optimism. Like, help! I'm getting old! Dying, even. Ditto the universe. So how come I'm laughing? . . .

Great letters. George Fergus handles dope and morals with aplomb but is all thumbs when it comes to sexism-in-language. Like, Jesus Christ, what does it matter what "-ster" once meant, or what some redneck court ruled in 1894. What matters is what "-man" means here and now. And I can't figure out how neutral terms like 'police officer' "tend to legitimize the original ghettoization of women under the 'policewoman' label . . . "

As for John Alderson, well! I am trying very hard not to bite. I'm hanging onto myself (Whee! Oooh! Maybe I've discovered something more fun than setting the universe a-right. Or even a-wry). I am keeping in mind Bob Tucker's words of (possible) wisdom: "I suspect some of them are baiting you." (As an aside, perhaps Bob has offered a clue to fending off personal entropy -- don't jump at every bit of wormy bait you see).

In case John is for real, I'd like to refer him to a local organization, M.O.M., "Movement to Oust Momism," whose object is to "assist those poor sods: the hen-pecked husband, the run-away husband, the hated husband, the sneaky husband, by showing them that fear of their wives is self-destructive and does not help the cause of manhood."

Hey, Jessica, Diane, Avedon, Ann -- somewhere in the cosmos there an alternate universe, as witness such refugees from it as Alderson, Esther Vilar and the M.O.M.sters.\* A universe where men believe in equality but sexist-pig women keep putting them down. And even terrorize the poor sods! Of course, I couldn't trip into an anomaly in the continuum like that; not, it has to be some lousy time-warp that instantly obsoletes my LoCs. ~~Not to mention my Eagles . . .~~

\* and Bob Bloch!!!

John J. Alderson  
Havelock, Vic.  
3465 Australia

Surely Don, a chauvinist is one who refuses to believe an argument could exist against his chosen beliefs. I was at pains to establish a *prima facie* case for women

making the distinction between themselves as "womb-men" and ordinary men, and you blithely go on to say "in the absence of evidence to the contrary ... I suspect it was some neolithic Fowler..." etc. Really, how chauvinist you are!

I appreciated Ann Weiser's letter as she knows what she is talking about as a linguist (though as some of these matters are subject to controversy I take leave to differ, and I like to think I do so as an equal). I doubt for instance that "woman" is derived from "wifman," the word being current of old in parts of the U.K. where Saxon influence was minimal and Gaelic and Scandanavian paramount, but rather that "wife" is derived from woman. However at present I cannot cite authorities.

I doubt if Ann is right in criticising the phrase "Primitive man invented agriculture," supposing that it should read "primitive people"... this introduces into the matter a deeper possibility of error. When an anthropologist writes, "primitive women invented gardening," we know immediately that women did this. To say "primitive man invented agriculture" suggests that the males invented it, which is correct. But to say that "primitive people "...etc. implies that both males and females invented it, which is wrong. We stand in grave danger of distorting history by taking such a sexist approach. Of course anyone, including Erich Fromm, who thinks that . . . man's interests are food, shelter and sex ... is a pretty woolly thinker at the best. On the score of a phrase like "mankind's destiny" or even "man's destiny," I am going to deny that it fills me with any other thought than of a mass of humanity, men, women and children sharing as one in that destiny. If the day comes when we have fragmented the human race into males, females and children, then God help us.

I enjoy talking about words as a study in semantics but to worry about their practical application smacks too much of persecution/inferiority complexes.

I hardly think that Marty Levine, as





a Jew, is likely to know too much about sin, "the Christian concept that they slap on kids even before they take their first breath..." Guilt existed long before that . . . read the Psalms of David for example.

But then a sense of guilt can be a good thing. I think it was John Newton who wrote a very beautiful hymn...no sense of guilt in it mate... whilst captaining a shipload of negro slaves for America. He later saw the error of his way, developed a massive load of guilt and gave up the trade. Without a sense of guilt he would have continued, but the guilt he acquired had to be purged by great repentance. Guilt is necessary, must be admitted before it can be purged. But I see no reason Don, why you should have a guilty feeling about having been an alcoholic, but if you again became an alcoholic, then you would, and jollywell should have guilt feelings. It is after all the giving up of a wrongful action because it is wrongful that purges the guilt. However, you do, only too obviously, have a guilt complex about women, hence falling over yourself in haste to take their part whenever you think the little dears have been threatened. Is this a personal thing with you, or are American boys brought up by their mothers etc. to have a guilt complex about women ... Victorian boys were, you know.

WHY does a discussion of the practical application of words smack of persecution/inferiority complexes??? WHY does a recognition of the fact that women have been victims of prejudice and discrimination imply a guilt complex??? And what does my alcoholism have to do with it??? (I am an alcoholic, incidentally; the fact that I'm a non-drinker doesn't change that).

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

While I'd someday be interested in reading your discourse on your days as an alcoholic, for obvious reasons, I'm glad that things worked out as they did with respect to the history of Michael and Barb.

As difficult as I find it to refrain from making judgements, I shall try to follow your request; with one exception. The one really positive aspect of this tragic story is that it raised the level of my respect and admiration for Don C. Thompson even higher than it had been before. I'm well aware that this would have been the furthest thing from your mind as you wrote it, but your obvious empathy, understanding and willingness to try and help were a very strong affirmation of certain qualities that sometimes seem to be getting old fashioned in today's world.

The fact that you found it necessary to caution your readers against making judgments leads me to believe that this characteristic, which I've mentioned I do possess, is probably a pretty common one. Presented with a reasonably complete account from someone who is traditionally pretty dependable, I suspect most of us would almost instinctively form an opinion of the people involved. Despite your warning, I did that after reading what you wrote. (I will say, though, that I most certainly did not pass judgment on Michael for having committed suicide. I'd be the last to judge someone for acting on thoughts I've so often entertained myself). What caused me to reconsider those opinions was not your exhortation but my own reaction a few pages further on to the letter from Fred Jacobcic. My initial reaction was identical to yours. Until it struck me that what I was indignant about in Fred's reaction to people who seek to overcome their weaknesses and insecurities with drugs (which

include alcohol and hence get me involved personally) was very similar to the way I'd reacted to the story you had told. Despite some differences which may or may not be mere rationalizations I was faced with a contradiction in my own reactions. "Practice what you preach" may be a cliché but it's a damn valid one and there was no way I could dump on Fred if I'd been doing essentially the same thing myself only moments earlier. So once again DON-o-SAUR has made me think out my own reactions more carefully and perhaps come to a little better understanding of myself and others. And perhaps I'll be able to act on that understanding and possibly be a little better person for it. If you still needed any justification for printing what you did that might be part of it.

The letters from Alderson and Weiser show the truly amazing scope of beliefs concerning the entire sexism and language discussion. But sympathetic as I am to Ann's very moving letter I think she is ascribing beliefs to me that I simply do not have. I would never state that anything I'm comfortable doing could not be sexist, for example: I was referring only to the particular matter of words such as "mailman" etc. when I made that comment. I don't recall ever seeing anyone delivering mail in Toronto who wasn't male but when I saw a female letter carrier while I was in England I noticed that I said, "Harry, here comes your mailman" using the sense that Shoemaker points out, "a person who delivers mail." And while I'm aware that there is far too much sexism in our society and while I'm saddened that it hurts Ann as much as it does, I still think there are valid linguistic arguments for the use of words like "chairman" and "mailman" being one of the areas that are not necessarily inherently sexist.

The lettercolumn this time rivals MYTHOLOGIES in the scope and general level of intelligence of the arguments. However, having had my say on the major topics under discussion I shall pass for now.

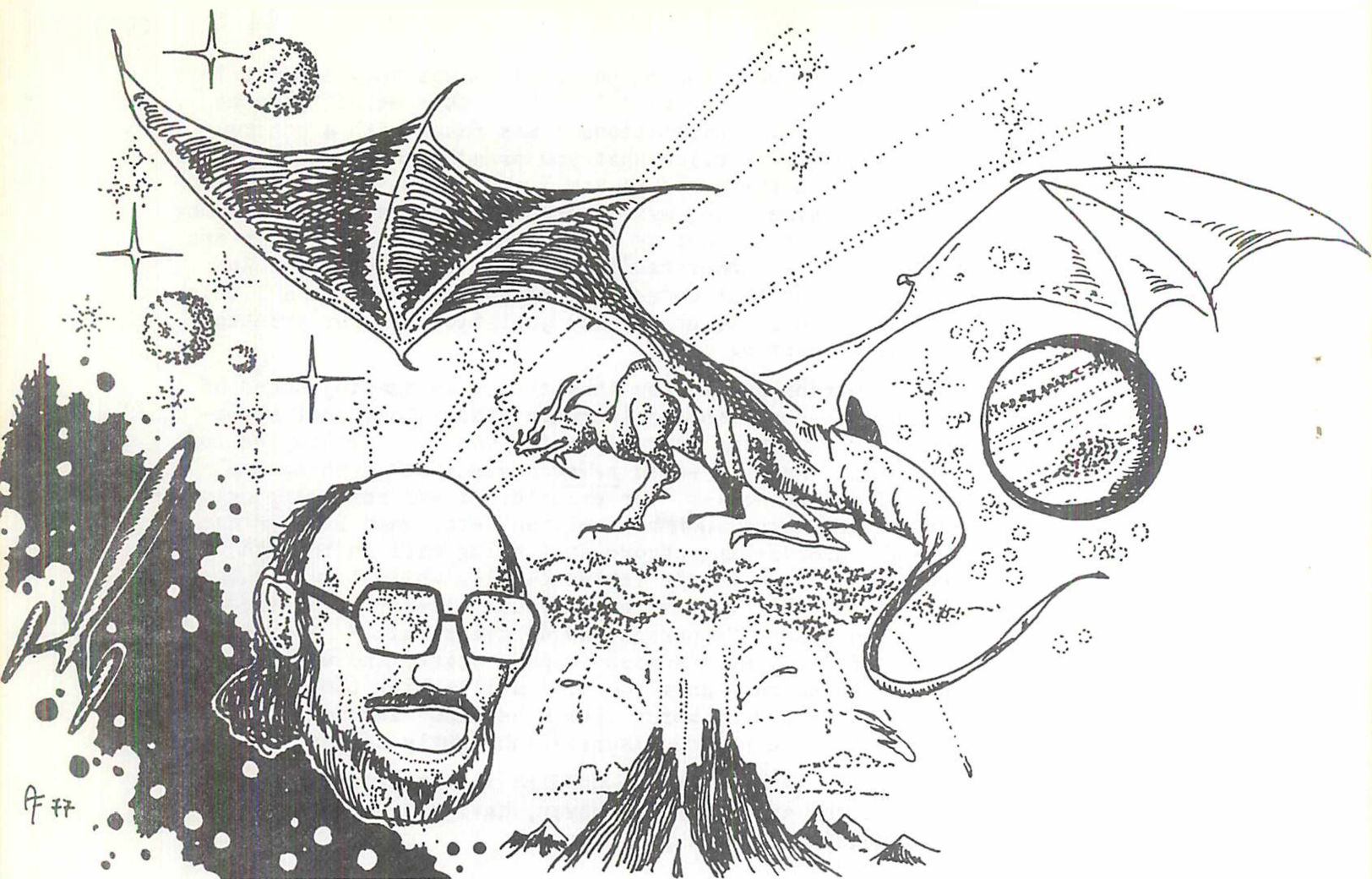
Aljo Svoboda  
2182 Cheam Ave.  
Santa Susana, CA  
93063

Your untitled discourse touched me. I don't think death was really a large part of the discourse as you presented it, though, except as the thing that resolved some of the problems afflicting those two unfortunate people. For me, the discourse was about success and failure as internal states of being, rather than primarily as the fulfilment of cultural expectations. I can't draw any conclusions from your discourse, though, except to echo your admiration for Barb, who must be an amazing, strong person. I hope she wasn't offended by your telling of Michael's and her story.

The letter column I think was pompous, frequently self-righteous bullshit for the most part, which is too bad. I think your parts of DON-o-SAUR are immeasurably better than those of the responding readers, excepting a very few who display, as do you, more tolerance and compassion for feelings than I ever will. In fact, even the con announcements are preferable to the lettercol here.

Have you seen the respellings of "woman" and "women" some radical feminists are using these days because, according to them, the etymology of "woman" is "wife of man"? One spelling, "womyn," seems a bit science-fictional, the other, "wimmin," seems like folksy dialect. But I don't know. The basic idea is a good one as far as I'm concerned--language





should follow stance rather than defining it. I'm a "radical feminist sympathizer" -- that is, I believe the exploitation of women by men is incredibly pervasive. Some people are claiming, as justification, that men are actually completely or deeply dependent on women, but I see this dependency as just one more tool of exploitation, albeit an unconscious one. "Sons" exploit "mothers," when those are the chosen roles in a relationship, as much as "masters" exploit "slaves."

And now I've gone off at the mouth myself, so I guess I should apologize to my fellow overbearing assholes in the lettercol, and let this go at that.

Too bad about that guilt complex, but it makes me feel a little less lonesome in mine.

George Flynn  
27 Sowamsett Ave.  
Warren, R.I. 02885

There is one aspect of the sexism-in-language question that I don't recall being discussed. Now I know women who would be mortally offended if referred to as, say, a "chairman". But I also know others who would be equally offended if called a "chairperson." If one's prime objective is to avoid hurting people (rather than scoring points for one or another ideological position), in such a polarized situation there is virtually no way to accomplish this when addressing a general audience, without engaging in contortionistic language. And the latter can be detrimental to clear communication, which after all is what language is for. So I think the polarization itself may be a worse evil than much of what it is directed against.



Paul Anderson, H.J.N. Andruschak, Don Ayres (possibly what you're talking about is sexual differentiation, which is quite justifiable in many circumstances; sexism, the belief in the superiority of one's own sex, is almost by definition wrong), Sheryl Birkhead, Alan Bostick, Richard Brandt, Denny Bowden, Howard Braze (another one), Bill Bridget (several; and it was a delight meeting Bill at Penulticon), Brian Earl Brown, George Brown (two letters, plus artwork), Lester Boutillier, Ann Chamberlain, Bertram Chandler, Merritt Clifton, Dave Cockfield, Brett Cox, Keith Curtis, Dan Darlington, Carolyn "C.D." Doyle, Graham England, Andrea Ferrari (with that picture on the opposite page, along with a shell from southern Italy, dating from the Devonian period; it was a pleasure having Andy and Sergio Giuffrida stay with us a few days last summer during their U.S. visit), Charneau Flic, Gil Gaier, Bill George, Art Hayes, Ben Indick, Tom Jackson, Lindsay Randall Stuart Koford, Ken Konkol, Rebecca Lesses, Mary Long, Stella Nemeth, Dave Romm, Richard Roesberg, Jessica Amanda Salmonson (thanks for sending "The Politics of Language and Sex." It's excellent, but I can't foresee that I'll be publishing it. The letter was nice, too. Thank you), Mark R. Sharpe, Ronald M. Salomon, Jon Singer, Sheryl Smith (I'm not at all offended by your efforts to talk me out of the Barb book; in fact, I'm much impressed that you've given the matter so much thought. Your reasoning is very cogent and persuasive), David Taggart, Rod Snyder, Ira M. (my brother, Mitch) Thornhill, R. Laurraine Tutihasi, Dr. Alexander Doniphan Wallace, Harry Warner Jr, Fredric Wertham, M.D., and Gail White.



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