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don-o-saur

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SUMMER 1978

This fanzine is published whenever feasible by Don C. Thompson, whose new address is 940 Mariposa St., Denver, Colo. 80204. And the new phone number is (303)571-4604.

DON-o-SAUR is available in trade for other fanzines, for artwork, for letters of comment, for money, or for whim. Single copies, for those who insist on payin', is 50¢; or you can get a six-issue subscription for \$2.50. Please, no 12-issue subscriptions for a while. I think DoS will continue indefinitely, but don't bet \$5 on it.

Press run this issue is about 600, done entirely on offset.

This issue is dedicated to Carolyn, with undiminished affection.

My apologies for the absense of a letters column, or even a list of IAHFs. I beg your forgiveness on grounds that this

issue has been put together under rather unusual circumstances. All letters received will be acknowledged, one way or another, eventually!



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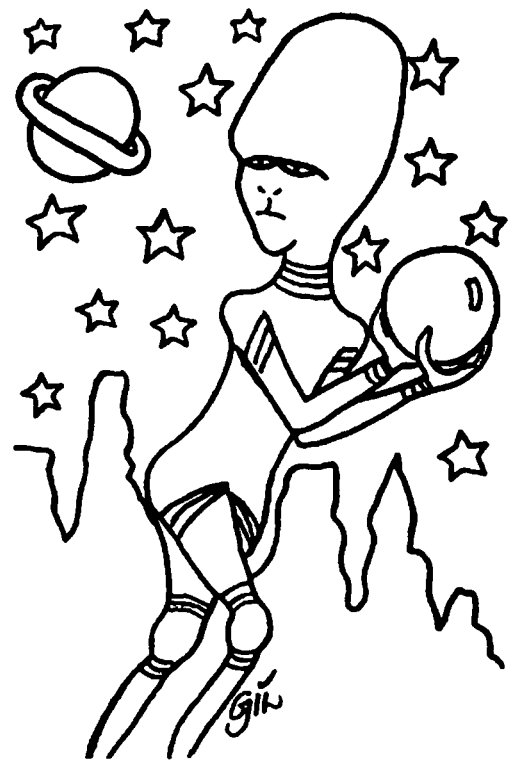
(and that's all)

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A Time of Changes

*(With a polite nod
of acknowledgement and
thanks to Robert Silverberg)*



seem to recall one time, back in the '50s, when two or three different SF magazines, within a two or three month period, ran two or three separate stories, all entitled "Green Thumb," by two or three different authors. (Well, I just now looked it up, and I was close. Actually there were four Green Thumb stories in a period of a few years; but two of them, both called "The Green Thumb" appeared in the same month -- February 1953 -- one by L. Sprague de Camp in F&SF and the other by Poul Anderson in Science Fiction Quarterly. The two others were "Green Thumb" by Clifford Simak in Galaxy July 1954 and "Green Thumb" by James Gunn in IF, April 1957).

That was pure coincidence, the editors argued; and I suppose most cases of title duplication are unintentional. Mine isn't. I am acutely aware that Silverbob not too many years ago wrote a powerful and memorable novel called A Time of Changes, and I was even thinking of it, sort of, when I decided on a title for this discourse. Specifically, I was thinking of the range of emotions that the novel so successfully evoked, and which can be replayed in my emotive being even now simply by repeating the title, even though I've forgotten most of the plot details.

I could probably write a whole long discourse on the emotional impact of certain titles, quite apart from the content of the story they go with. I wonder if other people have favorite titles, as distinguished from favorite books or stories, like I do?

"Time Considered as a Helix of Semi-Precious Stones;" "The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner;" "The Skylark of Space;" "Remembrance of Things Past;" "You Can't Go Home Again;" "A World I Never Made;" "Stranger in a Strange Land" . . .

Someday, just for fun, I may compile a complete list of my all-time favorites, along with whatever deep and hidden reasons I can discover.

However, that isn't really what I want to write this discourse on. For now, I must write in rather personal and specific terms about my own time of changes.

Yes, must.

I don't really have any choice in that matter. I've got to write

this, period. Of course, I could write it, then burn it or bury it among my other papers, and write something else to distribute to DON-o-SAUR readers. I could do that. Maybe I should, and spare you whatever embarrassment or sense of voyeurism you might get from the peek that I so often seem to give you into my private life.

I decline to do that for the same reason that I have declined to spare your sensitivities in the past when I have written about life and love and death and disintegration in personal terms. The reason, to reiterate to veteran readers and to explain to new ones, is that DoS exists primarily, not as a medium to inform readers of what's happening in the great world of SF, or as a forum of debate over the great issues of our time, or as a display case for fan artwork; its main purpose is not even to provide me with the egoboo that comes from Hugo nominations. It serves some of those purposes, of course, but none of them is central to its existence.

The main function of DoS is still what it has been from its inception as a lowly apazine -- to provide me with a forum for writing about whatever I happen to feel like writing about, whatever is uppermost in mind, in whatever way I feel like writing about it.

Maybe you have to be a professional journalist or perhaps a writer of fiction to fully appreciate what a sinful supreme luxury it is to write to please only yourself.

And maybe it's selfish and self-indulgent of me to insist on writing to please myself, and maybe I feel a bit guilty about it, but let's not go into all that. The fact remains that DON-o-SAUR is what I've said it is, and nobody says anyone has to read it.

And that, I think, is more than enough explanation.

I don't know where to start in talking about the changes.

Maybe it doesn't matter. I should be able to just start writing about anything, and if I keep on writing, I will very soon be talking about what is uppermost in my mind.

Let me tell you first a little about my present state of existence. That will raise a lot of questions, and in trying to answer them I will little by little fill in enough details so that you'll be able to discern a picture. Then we can worry about sharpening the focus and highlighting the background.

To begin with the obvious, if you've looked at the colophon you may have noticed that I have a new address. I no longer live in Westminster, but in Denver.

I have a house in one of the oldest neighborhoods in Denver. The house itself is so old that the indoor bathroom adjoins the kitchen and was apparently the pantry to begin with. The original bathroom still exists, too -- a solid brick edifice out in the backyard. All the houses on my block and for several blocks around have those structures, now in use as storage sheds, presumably.

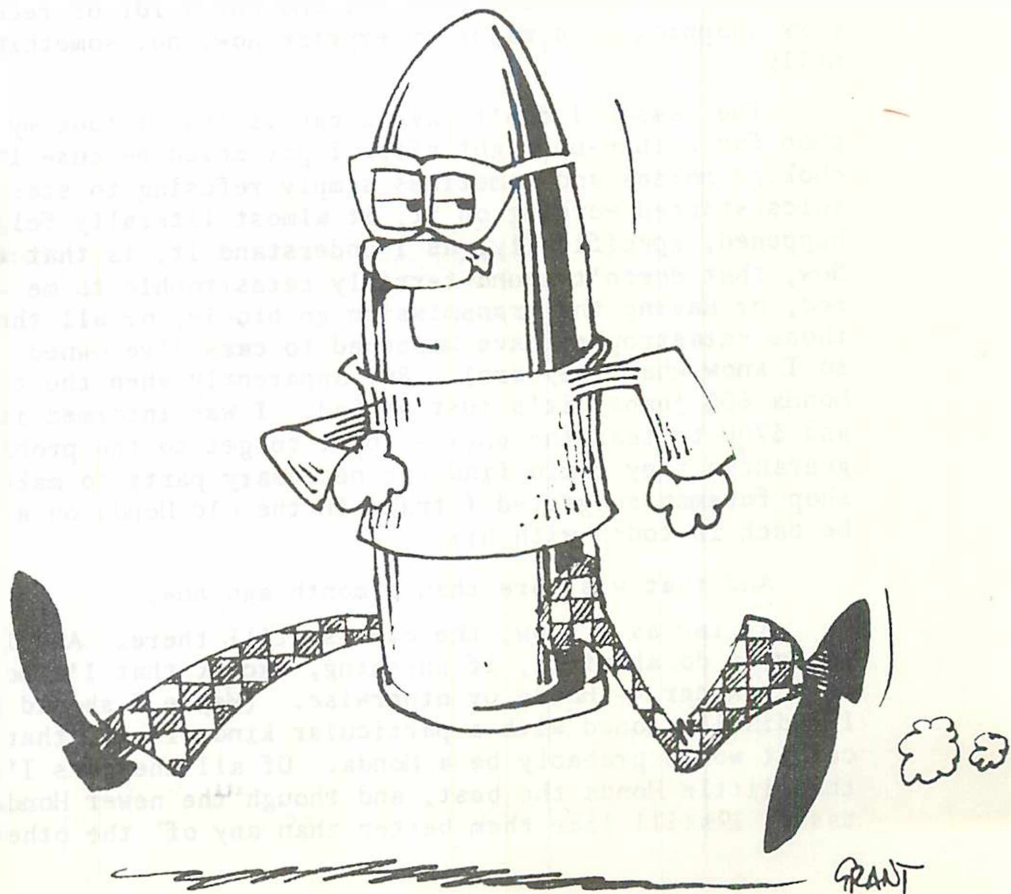
A number of my friends have cautioned me that the Near West Side, a predominantly Chicano neighborhood, is a notoriously "tough" area, and

they tell me there's a better-than-even chance that the house will be broken into and robbed some night while I'm at work. They may be right about the risk of burglary. The Denver inner city IS supposed to have a high crime rate (though the suburban crime rate is rapidly catching up, and in 20 years our house in Westminster was never broken into though we were very careless about keeping the doors locked. This place has dead-blot locks on the doors and strong new clasps on the windows, and I do use them). I think what my friends mean by the neighborhood being tough is simply that it's impoverished. A large number of houses in the area stand empty, with windows broken or boarded and the lawns running to weeds and bare dirt. There's a lot of broken glass around -- on the sidewalks, in the streets, in the yards.

On the other side of Mariposa, across from my house, is one of those unbelievably drab public housing projects that seems to go on and on, block after block. The tract is broken up about half way between my place and the Metro State College campus by a very pleasant four-square-block park, the scene of some well-publicized confrontations between Chicano activists and the police in years past. I have been reminded that the Rocky Mountain News, which is only about a dozen blocks away, and where I work three to five days a week, has never been popular with the Denver Hispanic community, having been accused again and again, sometimes with considerable justification, of ignorance, bias and indifference. I don't go out of my way to let my neighbors know where I work. If any of them are interested (and I can't tell that they are), they've probably been able to figure out that I teach at Metro, from my briefcase, the way I dress, and the direction they see me walking. I don't worry at all about that. Metro has a good reputation.

Most of the houses on my side of Mariposa are occupied either by retired people or by young couples with very small children, and I believe much the same pattern prevails on the others side of the street, except that there are a much larger proportion of fatherless families. There are no gangs of young street toughs in evidence.

The house I live in has been recently renovated. The outside brick has been painted a ghastly shade of



yellow-orange; inside, the plastered walls have been freshly painted a dull white, and the warped and rickety flooring has been covered with inexpensive but clean and new carpeting, a dull dark orange that doesn't begin to match the outside but probably wasn't intended to.

The ceiling is 12 feet high; that's one of the main reasons I took this house, even though it doesn't have a basement, and I've made good use of the vertical space, with book shelves going all the way up to the ceiling in some places. But there's still quite a bit of wall space available for expansion of the book and magazine collection. Already, however, the inside of the house looks more like a book store than it does a normal dwelling--though that seems perfectly normal to me.

The reason I wanted a basement was that I thought it would be necessary for my offset press, but this house has an enclosed back porch off the large-ish kitchen. Those two rooms absorb the printing equipment and still leave a little room for cooking and eating and such. A dining room and living room of about equal size are connected (do I mean divided?) by a wide, high archway; and off each of those rooms is a small bedroom. There's a front porch about the same size as the back porch, but it isn't enclosed. There are hooks for a front porch swing, and I do want to get a swing as soon as I get a chance.

I have one slight problem about buying things like that nowadays, however. Not money. The problem is transportation: I don't have a car. I suppose it's possible to buy things by phone or mail and have them delivered, but it's been so long since I've been involved in that sort of transaction on a regular basis that I don't (honestly!) remember how it's done. I'm saving an enormous amount of money, just by not being able to hop in the car on the spur of the moment and dash out and buy a lot of records or books. Even grocery shopping is a major enterprise now, not something to be undertaken casually.

The reason I don't have a car is that I took my little '71 Honda to the shop for a tune-up right after I got moved because it was making gasping, choking noises and sometimes simply refusing to start. When the garage mechanics started working on it, it almost literally fell apart on them. What happened, specifically, as I understand it, is that the timing chain jumped. Now, that doesn't sound terribly catastrophic to me -- not like throwing a rod, or having the transmission go blooie, or all the wiring burning out (all those catastrophes have happened to cars I've owned, at one time or another, so I know what they are). But apparently when the timing chain on a 1971 Honda 600 jumps, it's just as bad. I was informed it would cost between \$600 and \$700 to tear the engine apart to get to the problem and that there was no guarantee they could find the necessary parts to make repairs even then. The shop foreman suggested I trade in the old Honda on a new one. I told him I'd be back in touch with him.

And that was more than a month ago now.

As far as I know, the car is still there. And I don't know yet what I'm going to do about it, if anything, except that I'm not going to trade it in on a new car -- Honda or otherwise. (Maybe I should add, so you don't think I'm disillusioned with a particular kind of car, that if I were to get a new car it would probably be a Honda. Of all the cars I've ever had, I liked that little Honda the best, and though the newer Hondas are too big for my taste, I still like them better than any of the other new cars).

For a month and more I walked nearly everplace I went, but just recently, as soon as school was out and Doug had moved back to Westminster from Boulder, I talked him out of the bicycle I'd bought for him last year and which he hardly ever used. That expands my mobility enormously and adds a whole new dimension of excitement to my life. Bike riding in Denver is an adventure, and I may write about it in more detail sometime -- if I survive. (I'm exaggerating, of course. I'm sure the hazards of bike riding are no greater -- probably less, in fact -- than those of motoring; it just feels more hazardous).



Sooner or later I may find it necessary to get some kind of four-wheeled transportation again, but I'm really hoping I can manage without a car. So far I've done okay with just my feet, the bike, the Denver bus system, and (twice, only) by bumming rides with friends to concom meetings. Well, once I even had to call a taxi in a semi-emergency situation. The only major problem that presents itself, and which I'll have to solve soon, has to do with the mailing of DON-o-SAUR. But the post office is only about six or seven blocks from here, and while I might not be able to stuff 500 copies of DoS into my back-pack, or carry them in my arms, still I might be able to use a push-cart or a hand truck. Or, more likely, I can borrow Carolyn's car, or Bruce's or Claudia's.

The Denver bus system (actually the Regional Transportation District or RTD) is probably not the greatest in the world, but it is free during off-peak hours (under a federal test program), and for anyone with infinite patience and the genius-level I.Q. necessary to figure out the schedules, it is possible to get most places via public transportation.

I use the buses no more often than necessary, but about once a week I have been catching the Denver-Boulder bus, looking important with a bulging briefcase. I get off at the corner of 74th and Federal in Westminster and walk the six blocks to 7498 Canosa Court. There I empty my briefcase of dirty clothes and gather up a supply of clean shirts, socks and underwear, sheets, etc.

Often my visits have been on days or evenings when Carolyn is working at the library, so I spend part of the time messing around in the debris of my room, which is still cluttered with fanzines, piles of prints, posters and original artwork, my rolltop desk, a few file cabinets, and lots of just plain junk that I haven't been able to decide whether to keep or throw away. Steve Larue, a friend, a DASFAN and a fanzine freak (except that he won't pub), has assigned himself the task of organizing my fanzine accumulation so that it will look like a collection; but it's taken him a while, what with school and all, to get to it.

I usually manage to pack up a few odds and ends that I know I'll want or need, and sometimes I even manage to throw away a few things. But I soon give up in despair, take a short nap or watch a little TV, which has become quite a novelty for me. I have a radio, a record player and a cassette deck, but no television in my new place. I don't miss it much, and I don't find much to watch on the Canosa Court set.

When Carolyn comes home we have lunch or a snack together, visit and exchange news, maybe watch a little more TV, especially if it's time for

the weather program, which Carolyn always tries to catch; and then we load up the car and drive to my place, where Carolyn helps me unload and I help her reload the car with empty boxes. Carolyn takes a quick tour of inspection, noting the progress or lack of same since her last visit.

She usually doesn't stay long. Possibly she feels a bit oppressed by all the books stacked so high in all the rooms. There are actually fewer books than there were at Canosa because I gave away quite a few and even threw away some, but at the other house they were scattered throughout a much more spacious dwelling and didn't seem quite so prevalent. At Mariposa, there's simply not much room for anything but books. Or it could just be that the Mariposa place, while it's starting to feel like home to me, does not at all feel like home to Carolyn.

Before she leaves, there's a little farewell ritual that we go through. I kiss her goodbye; we embrace; we cling to each other for a while. We kiss again. We reassure each other that we're probably doing the right thing, and philosophically we note that, right or wrong, we're pretty definitely committed to follow through on the separation -- for a while, at least.

Then, after a final embrace and a final kiss, Carolyn leaves. I watch the car pull away and then I turn back to the seemingly endless task of shelving and arranging books.

Things change, even as I'm writing about them. The situation I've just been describing will be solidly in the past a month or more before you read about it. The people who have bought the house on Canosa Court (they're Spanish-surnamed, and for irrational reasons I feel good about that) want to move in on June 9. I will have to clear all the rest of my stuff out before then, and Carolyn will have to do her moving.

Carolyn's parents have a house in Westminster; it's a big house, up on a hill, with a clear view of the mountains and of the downtown smog. Carolyn (and Doug, at least for the summer, until he goes back to Boulder for school) will move into the Hollister house. The Hollisters have bought themselves a small place in Sun City, Ariz., except that it's really Carolyn's. (I should have warned you that this gets complicated, so you would be paying closer attention). Carolyn gets the money from the sale of the Canosa Court house, as part of the separation agreement. She'll clear something like \$44,000. Her parents' house in Westminster would be appraised somewhere in the \$100,000 range. The house in Sun City cost closer to \$30,000. So, Carolyn will be buyer and owner of the Sun City house and will just be a sort of unpaid caretaker of her parents' Westminster house. This could be a very temporary arrangement, or it could turn out to be a very long term one.

Even though Carolyn and I are on very good terms, even though the tensions and bitternesses that led to the separation in the first place have been pretty much worked out, circumstances conspire against us getting back together right away. For one thing, there's just the momentum of events -- the pendulum swing of life that operates with just as much inexorability as any mechanical device possibly could. That sounds vague, abstract, a bit mystical, so I'll bring it down to one specific, concrete--and obvious--circumstance. Carolyn works at the Westminster library. It's a part-time job that could easily become a full time one eventually. She wants to live close to the job, and in addition to that, she has been involved in West-

minster civic and political affairs for 20 years, and in the League of Women Voters. She is an authority on Adams County problems. She is a member of the Denver Regional Council of Governments. By moving to the inner city, she would render that wealth of background knowledge and experience useless.

For myself, I have grown sick of commuting after 20 years of it, and even sicker of suburban

life in general. For reasons that I don't need to review here, I have felt guilty for a long time about being a suburbanite. I feel much more comfortable inside myself living in the city than I ever did living on its outskirts.

I don't try to peer into the future, except on a purely speculative basis. Anything can happen. Certainly a year ago, or even seven or eight months ago, I would not have been so rash as to predict that Carolyn and I would soon be separating. So I don't know; but at this point I will not be so rash as to predict that we will soon be getting back together.

All right, I said I would be raising questions, and I'm sure I have. I think I have even answered some of them. But it's clear even to me that the big question has been carefully avoided.

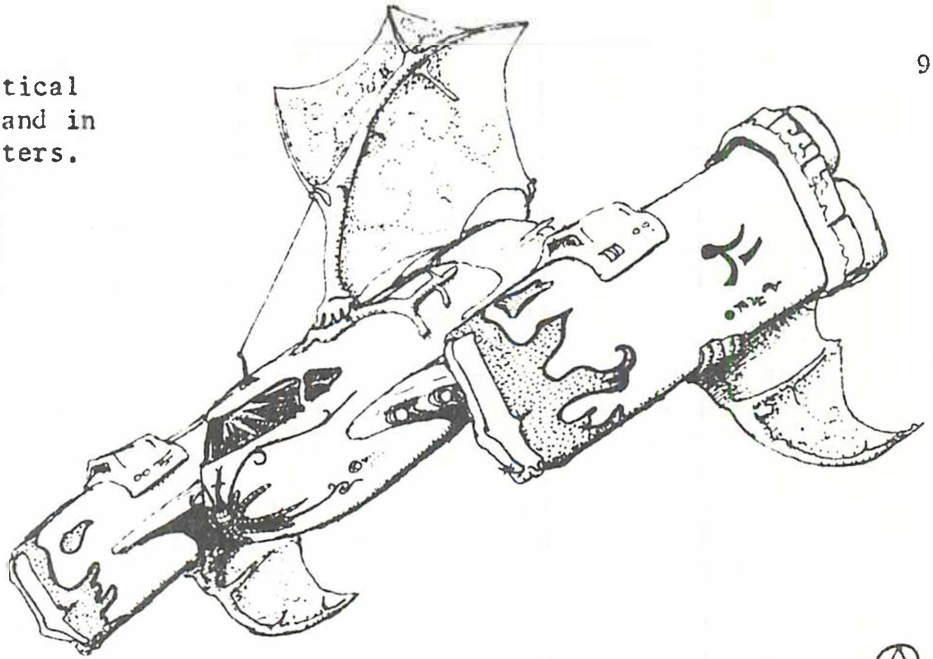
WHY? Why and how did the separation come about at all?

I'm not sure I want to try to answer it; I'm not sure I should. I'm not even sure I can. Still I guess I have to try.

Several years ago, in an early issue of DON-o-SAUR, I made a point of mentioning, almost casually but not quite in jest, that Carolyn and I were basically incompatible. That was true then, it's true now, and in fact it was something that we'd noticed even before we were married. It never seemed to matter very much; it was just one of those interesting peculiarities of a marriage, and in fact it was kind of fun to list our dissimilarities from time to time. Actually, they can all be summarized in a single phrase:

Carolyn tends toward conservatism and I tend toward radicalism.

That is an oversimplification, and a detailed listing of the many ways in which our different tendencies find expression reveals a large number of apparent contradictions. Just for example, I am a keeper, an accumulator, a collector, a packrat. I hate to throw anything away on the off chance that I may someday find a use for it. This, I think, is gener-



ally regarded as a conservative trait. Carolyn, on the other hand, is what I consider downright radical about throwing things away. Whatever pangs of regret or spasms of depression she may be experiencing in the breakup of the marriage, she claims to have gotten a sense of pure elation in going through the Canosa Court house, room by room, cleaning them out of furniture and fixtures and books and pictures and general junk, throwing away, or giving away to anyone who would take it, load after load of stuff I could never discard so casually or jubilantly. Now, I don't mean this in an accusatory sense. Carolyn has been very, very careful not to throw away anything that she has thought might possibly be important to me. And anyway I had already moved most of my treasures before she started the cleaning out process. I was feeling sort of sorry for her, after I got moved out and she was continuing to live in what I regarded as the empty shell of a house on Canosa, but she insisted that she did not find the hollowness and barrenness at all spooky or depressing. She seemed to take genuine delight in surrounding herself with more and more open space. (Not by coincidence, the title of her contribution to A Women's APA has been "the open space.")

I think that on a psychological level Carolyn's desire for simplicity, open space and cleanliness, and my inclination toward clutter, confusion and diversity can be construed as conservative or radical manifestations, but I won't insist on the point or try to document it in detail. The fact remains that in spite of some very strong basic agreements and similarities, Carolyn and I have (and have had for a long time) some equally basic disagreements and dissimilarities.

Personally, I have been enormously impressed by the compromises we have made over the years and the lengths to which we have both been willing to go to avoid confrontation. In politics, though Carolyn and I have both been registered Democrats all our married life, and though we have sometimes been able to back the same candidates and the same local issues, just as often we have not. (Well, on local issues, my tendency has been to let Carolyn do the work of examining and analyzing and making a decision, and I have simply followed her advice in the voting booth. If I'd been left entirely to my own inclinations, I probably would not have voted at all in most of the city council, school board, and bond issue elections). But I have, to avoid confrontation, voted in elections I wasn't interested in; I have attended precinct caucuses and county assemblies, and I have even worked hard in human relations councils and in a citizens' group that was pressuring the county commissioners to set up a public housing authority... I have attended League of Women Voters luncheons with the Legislature, and any number of meet-the-candidates coffees. (Maybe not any number; actually a fairly small number. One of the fringe benefits of working nights at the Rocky Mountain News was that I was provided with a valid excuse for not attending a lot of those functions). Some of all that political activity was extremely interesting. Some of it was stimulating and at least educational. I developed a profound liking and respect and admiration for some of the people who were also involved in the same activity.

I never had the feeling, ever, either then or now, that anything at all useful was being accomplished. The more I saw of politicians and the workings of politics and the manipulations of citizens' groups, the more it seemed to me that all this was essentially pointless and futile, an elaborate charade, a harmless game provided by the real powers to keep po-

tential meddlers from making too much of a nuisance of themselves. That feeling wasn't based just on first-hand observation, of course. I also read a lot, and I also have a natural predisposition to paranoia.

If I have made compromises and concessions in the area of politics, Carolyn's efforts to develop a genuine interest in science fiction and SF fandom have been even more impressive. She has never been contemptuous of the literature of SF and has actually read quite a bit of it. In fact, back in the early days, when I was writing fiction and it looked for a while like I might be able to sell it regularly, she read a lot of it, right along with me. She was never a fanatic in the same sense I was; she didn't have to read it. Her approach to it was always that of an English major and a librarian--critical and analytical, but she was impressed by some of the finer examples. Still, she always preferred non-fiction--history and biography particularly--some of which I read too, but never with the breathless excitement and sense of wonder that I got from SF.

One might have expected that the greatest test of Carolyn's tolerance was when I started becoming a serious collector of the SF magazines, but that wasn't exactly true. We both had a certain number of books to begin with, and the book accumulation grew steadily, rapidly, and with a sort of organic profusion. ("They propagate," she would say). Then, when I sold a story to GALAXY, she could understand (with an effort) why I wanted to get all the issues of GALAXY, and by the time I sold a story to IF and had to collect all of IF, I was already working on a complete collection of all the digest-sized SF magazines. It was only when I started bringing home huge stacks of dusty, musty, malodorous pulp magazines from the '30s and '40s that she tried to raise serious objections. It was with considerable trepidation that I first started collecting the pulps in earnest, and I'm not sure what my course of action would have been had Carolyn's objections been even a little bit stronger than they were. As it was, it worked out as another compromise. I continued collecting, but I did put in a lot of time and effort getting the dust off of and out of the magazines and drying them and fumigating them. And there were certain areas of the house where they simply were not permitted. They were confined generally to the basement, and not even all areas of the basement. It became necessary ultimately to build an additional room onto the house because the magazines were pushing the books up from the basement, and Carolyn would not permit the living room to be totally lined with even books. She insisted on keeping some shelf space clear for other kinds of decoration, such as candles in the shape of owls, for instance. And she liked to have some shelves with nothing at all on them. That seemed to me an abomination, but to her they were a fragile symbol of the open space that she longed for.

Still, considering the strength of Carolyn's desire for simplicity and order and my compulsion to accumulate and clutter, it seems amazing how little friction there was over the books and magazines. I really thought that a marriage that could endure that kind of strain could endure anything.

The real test of Carolyn's patience and tolerance and willingness to try to acquire an interest in something she wasn't really interested in came when I started getting deeply involved in fandom.

There was no problem as long as it was merely a matter of going to DASFA meetings once a month. Meetings she knew about. She went to her meetings

be among its original contributors. He had to explain to me exactly what an apa was. It was no coincidence that I took the title of my apazine--Don-o-Saur Coprolites--from a sort of pointless but amusing story that Avram Davidson told in his GoH speech. I wanted to be fannish, and so far all I knew of fandom was Westercon 24.

My development from the most callow of neo-fans into an actual BNF was slow and, for many months at a time, virtually imperceptible. I did the required reading: Moskowitz and Warner and the other Advent publications; I subscribed to LOCUS and to SF REVIEW just before its demise, and I acquired copies of ALGOL and OUTWORLDS and ENERGUMEN and GRANFALLOON; but I wrote my monthly entry for D'APA with no thought that it would or could ever become anything like a real fanzine. But doing Don-o-Saur Coprolites became more important to me, increasingly central to my existence. It became virtually a compulsion. I would shove all other work aside each month when it came time to think about my D'APA submission. And I became increasingly hooked on cons. Not that I got to very many at all; but addiction is measured not by the massiveness of the dosage, just by the fact that dosage is needed. I went to WorldCon 30 in L.A. in 1972, and I drove to Bubonicon 4, and I made it to Westercon 26 in San Francisco in 1973. And of course I was always involved in the MileHiCons.

Carolyn shared none of this strange and wonderful fannish development with me. Well, some of it. Though she was never involved in the planning and preparation of MileHiCons, she was willing to attend them with me, and she enjoyed such things as the costume show (she once even did a belly dance in the costume show); and she would help with registration and attend some of the panels, but she had no enthusiasm for the parties, which for me were the heart and soul of the con. And she was totally mystified by my absorption into the quagmire of fan publishing.

Once, after I had purchased the mimeo and had started spending many hours a month producing what was on the brink of becoming DON-o-SAUR (but before I had gotten the offset press and started spending twice as much time with it), Carolyn was in my room, watching me labor with the machine. During a pause in its clatter, while I was changing stencils, she said, "I know this is a lot of fun and games for you, but you wear yourself out with it, and it takes up so much time! You could be getting a lot of serious writing done."

No reply seemed possible, so I gave a helpless little shrug. It was around midnight. Carolyn went on to bed, and I followed, hours later.

I went to several cons by myself while I was a total unknown, just another anonymous neo, except that I was about 30 years older than most of the other neos.

DISCON II was special for me because I was beginning to be known in fandom by then. I'd been sending out DON-o-SAUR to an ever-larger number of fans and was getting some (what I considered) astonishingly enthusiastic response to it. At DISCON II, I met a lot of the people whose names I knew from their letters to DoS or from the zines they sent me in exchange for DoS. And I felt for the first time in its full intensity, that warm glow of belonging to fandom.

Carolyn did go to DISCON with me, and we took Doug, making a sort of family vacation out of it, spending a few days with my sister Polly and her

tential meddlers from making too much of a nuisance of themselves. That feeling wasn't based just on first-hand observation, of course. I also read a lot, and I also have a natural predisposition to paranoia.

If I have made compromises and concessions in the area of politics, Carolyn's efforts to develop a genuine interest in science fiction and SF fandom have been even more impressive. She has never been contemptuous of the literature of SF and has actually read quite a bit of it. In fact, back in the early days, when I was writing fiction and it looked for a while like I might be able to sell it regularly, she read a lot of it, right along with me. She was never a fanatic in the same sense I was; she didn't have to read it. Her approach to it was always that of an English major and a librarian--critical and analytical, but she was impressed by some of the finer examples. Still, she always preferred non-fiction--history and biography particularly--some of which I read too, but never with the breathless excitement and sense of wonder that I got from SF.

One might have expected that the greatest test of Carolyn's tolerance was when I started becoming a serious collector of the SF magazines, but that wasn't exactly true. We both had a certain number of books to begin with, and the book accumulation grew steadily, rapidly, and with a sort of organic profusion. ("They propagate," she would say). Then, when I sold a story to GALAXY, she could understand (with an effort) why I wanted to get all the issues of GALAXY, and by the time I sold a story to IF and had to collect all of IF, I was already working on a complete collection of all the digest-sized SF magazines. It was only when I started bringing home huge stacks of dusty, musty, malodorous pulp magazines from the '30s and '40s that she tried to raise serious objections. It was with considerable trepidation that I first started collecting the pulps in earnest, and I'm not sure what my course of action would have been had Carolyn's objections been even a little bit stronger than they were. As it was, it worked out as another compromise. I continued collecting, but I did put in a lot of time and effort getting the dust off of and out of the magazines and drying them and fumigating them. And there were certain areas of the house where they simply were not permitted. They were confined generally to the basement, and not even all areas of the basement. It became necessary ultimately to build an additional room onto the house because the magazines were pushing the books up from the basement, and Carolyn would not permit the living room to be totally lined with even books. She insisted on keeping some shelf space clear for other kinds of decoration, such as candles in the shape of owls, for instance. And she liked to have some shelves with nothing at all on them. That seemed to me an abomination, but to her they were a fragile symbol of the open space that she longed for.

Still, considering the strength of Carolyn's desire for simplicity and order and my compulsion to accumulate and clutter, it seems amazing how little friction there was over the books and magazines. I really thought that a marriage that could endure that kind of strain could endure anything.

The real test of Carolyn's patience and tolerance and willingness to try to acquire an interest in something she wasn't really interested in came when I started getting deeply involved in fandom.

There was no problem as long as it was merely a matter of going to DASFA meetings once a month. Meetings she knew about. She went to her meetings

and I went to my meetings, and there was nothing to get excited about. But I started hearing about cons--conventions. Science fiction conventions! I very much wanted to go to a real one, especially after we'd had a couple of tiny demonstration-type cons in DASFA.

The Society for Creative Anachronism--SCA--was started in Denver by some of the same people who were active in DASFA, and I got caught up in some of its formative activities, and in fact the rest of the family -- Carolyn, Bruce and Claudia, but not Doug -- also became interested in SCA, and they have remained involved right up to the present while I dropped out long ago.

The only reason I mention SCA is that I could talk Carolyn into attending Westercon 24 in San Francisco over the Fourth of July weekend in 1971 only because some SCA events were scheduled as part of the con. And Carolyn enjoyed the SCA things, the Court of Love, etc., and she even went to a few of the panels and programs; she was tolerant but less than wildly enthusiastic. She spent most of one whole day taking a bus tour of the city and being sick. Her overall impression of the con was that it was scarcely worth the trip.

For me, on the other hand, Westercon 24 was a major turning point in my life. It was a revelation, my first clear glimpse of a new and utterly fascinating and delightful world. In a sort of blinding flash, like Saul becoming Paul, I was born again.

For the very first time, at Westercon 24, I saw famous SF writers -- Poul Anderson, Larry Niven, Fritz Leiber, Avram Davidson and Randall Garrett, to name just a few-- walking around, sitting with fans, singing, getting drunk, just as though they were ordinary human beings. The legends came to life. It was in the Huckster Room at that Westercon that I met and talked with Forrest J. Ackerman for the first time.

That Huckster Room blew my mind. I had never seen so many SF books and magazines, and so much SF paraphernalia of all kinds in one place before. I had never been able even to imagine such a thing. And I had been told what to expect. Some DASFAns, after all, had been to cons already. It was Caz's and the Beetems' and Gail Barton's and Judith Brownlee's descriptions of the cons they'd been to that made me so eager to get to Westercon, but the reality far surpassed the second-hand accounts, and I was entranced. It took a powerful effort of will to get myself away from the Huckster Room to see any of the other attractions. Like the Art Show. I had exactly the same problem there. I had never even dreamed there could be so many gorgeous, imaginative, utterly fantastic representations of the SF vision.

And the parties, though they were nothing so special maybe by con standards, were still not quite like anything I had ever experienced before. It was at a Westercon 24 party that I first met Frank and Anna Jo Denton, and Bob Vardeman, and Bruce and Elayne Pelz, and I don't know who all else.

I had just bought a movie camera and more film than I thought I could afford, and I had also purchased a cassette recorder, and I took all that equipment along and shot several hours worth of Super 8 film and I recorded everything, either on film or sound. It has just occurred to me, while I was writing this, that I should still have the film of the SCA court and the costume show and futuristic style show, and the Art Show and Huckster Room--and the belly dancing, of course; and I think I have the cassettes of

the Guest of Honor speeches and the panel discussions. And lo, an audacious thought descended upon me--one that could simplify my life just a bit. I have just today written the Westercon 31 people about it. In only about two weeks, I have to give a Guest of Honor speech at that con and I haven't done much thinking about it until recently. Why can't I, I asked myself, as part of my GoH presentation, show snippets of that film from Westercon 24? It could easily cut 10 to 15 minutes from the talking time of my speech. So if the Westercon 31 people go along with the idea, that's what I'll do -- show instead of tell.

That's irrelevant to this discussion. Those of you who don't attend Westercon 31 will be spared the presentation (though not the spoken part of the speech (as you shall discover in a short while). So forget I said anything about the film and the cassettes. I was just thinking aloud.

The main point is that Westercon 24 was a watershed event for me. My life has never been the same since.

It was only a few months after that con that Paul Angel, frustrated in his desire to join Slan-apa, decided to form his own apa and asked me to



be among its original contributors. He had to explain to me exactly what an apa was. It was no coincidence that I took the title of my apazine--Don-o-Saur Coprolites--from a sort of pointless but amusing story that Avram Davidson told in his GoH speech. I wanted to be fannish, and so far all I knew of fandom was Westercon 24.

My development from the most callow of neo-fans into an actual BNF was slow and, for many months at a time, virtually imperceptible. I did the required reading: Moskowitz and Warner and the other Advent publications; I subscribed to LOCUS and to SF REVIEW just before its demise, and I acquired copies of ALGOL and OUTWORLDS and ENERGUMEN and GRANFALLOON; but I wrote my monthly entry for D'APA with no thought that it would or could ever become anything like a real fanzine. But doing Don-o-Saur Coprolites became more important to me, increasingly central to my existence. It became virtually a compulsion. I would shove all other work aside each month when it came time to think about my D'APA submission. And I became increasingly hooked on cons. Not that I got to very many at all; but addiction is measured not by the massiveness of the dosage, just by the fact that dosage is needed. I went to WorldCon 30 in L.A. in 1972, and I drove to Bubonicon 4, and I made it to Westercon 26 in San Francisco in 1973. And of course I was always involved in the MileHiCons.

Carolyn shared none of this strange and wonderful fannish development with me. Well, some of it. Though she was never involved in the planning and preparation of MileHiCons, she was willing to attend them with me, and she enjoyed such things as the costume show (she once even did a belly dance in the costume show); and she would help with registration and attend some of the panels, but she had no enthusiasm for the parties, which for me were the heart and soul of the con. And she was totally mystified by my absorption into the quagmire of fan publishing.

Once, after I had purchased the mimeo and had started spending many hours a month producing what was on the brink of becoming DON-o-SAUR (but before I had gotten the offset press and started spending twice as much time with it), Carolyn was in my room, watching me labor with the machine. During a pause in its clatter, while I was changing stencils, she said, "I know this is a lot of fun and games for you, but you wear yourself out with it, and it takes up so much time! You could be getting a lot of serious writing done."

No reply seemed possible, so I gave a helpless little shrug. It was around midnight. Carolyn went on to bed, and I followed, hours later.

I went to several cons by myself while I was a total unknown, just another anonymous neo, except that I was about 30 years older than most of the other neos.

DISCON II was special for me because I was beginning to be known in fandom by then. I'd been sending out DON-o-SAUR to an ever-larger number of fans and was getting some (what I considered) astonishingly enthusiastic response to it. At DISCON II, I met a lot of the people whose names I knew from their letters to DoS or from the zines they sent me in exchange for DoS. And I felt for the first time in its full intensity, that warm glow of belonging to fandom.

Carolyn did go to DISCON with me, and we took Doug, making a sort of family vacation out of it, spending a few days with my sister Polly and her

family afterward. But again, during the con, Carolyn spent more time on sight-seeing excursions than she did at con events, and she avoided the parties.

It was at DISCON that I decided to attend AUSSIECON and bought my membership. I'm sure I suggested to Carolyn that she go with me, but it was in full anticipation of her horrified shudder at the thought of making such a trip, and I didn't try hard to persuade her. By then I was accustomed to going to cons by myself, and I have to admit it never occurred to me that maybe I should stay home rather than go to a con half way around the world without Carolyn. I did have certain qualms about it; I could tell that it hurt her, though she tried not to show it.

In the spring of '75 my name showed up for the first time on the Hugo ballot. Carolyn by then, perforce, through sheer osmosis, knew enough about fandom to be impressed by a Hugo nomination, and it did make a difference in her attitude toward my fanac. She became considerably more tolerant and supportive of my efforts with DoS, and I think she even seriously, for a while, reconsidered the possibility of accompanying me to Australia, in the end though, swayed by thoughts of the expense and her propensity to travel sickness, deciding to stay home.

After AUSSIECON, though, Carolyn made a valiant and determined effort to be interested in my fannish career. When I decided to go to AUTOCLAVE and asked Carolyn if she would like to go, fully expecting her to say no, she surprised me by saying yes.

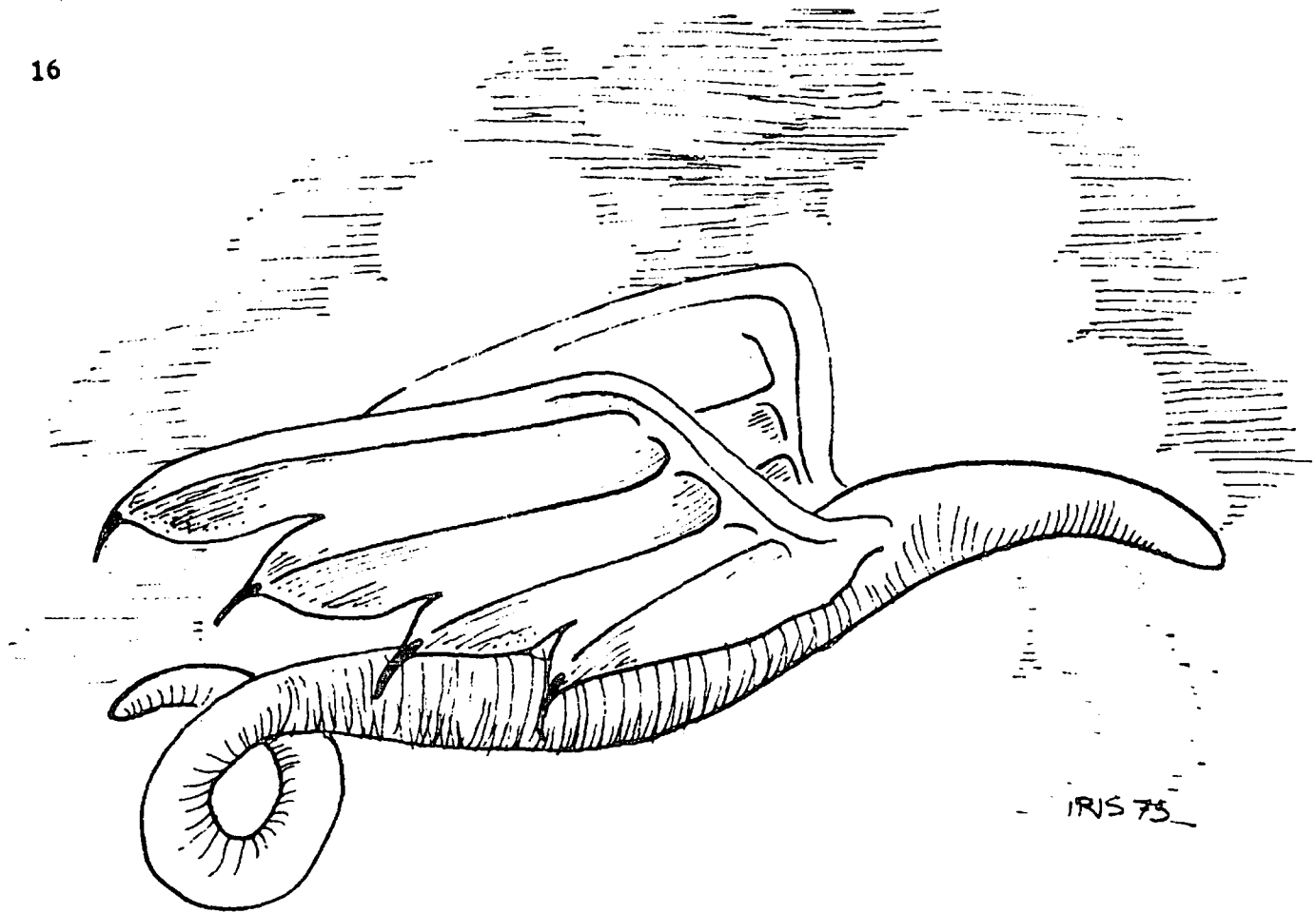
And indeed AUTOCLAVE I, the most magical of all cons for me, seemed to work its magic even on Carolyn, and for a little while there she was caught up in the mellow feeling of kinship and closeness that becomes so important to so many in fandom.

It didn't last. Carolyn made a number of good friends at AUTOCLAVE--possibly more than she was even aware of--and she was persuaded to get in on the founding of A Women's Apa. I had high hopes that she might actually become a fan. But there were negative factors also working their way to the surface.

There was this, primarily:

Because I had been to a number of cons before by myself, because I had been on the Australia trip, because I had been publishing a zine and had been getting letters from various people expressing varying degrees of admiration for me, when I would appear at another con with Carolyn, I would immediately see people (or name tags) I recognized, or they would see me. As often as not, we would embrace and kiss and start an animated conversation, and it might be several minutes or longer before I would think to introduce Carolyn. She not only felt accepted at AUTOCLAVE, there were times when she felt neglected. Carolyn soon learned to simply introduce herself rather than waiting for me to do it, because, though she called my attention to it repeatedly, I found it difficult to break the habit.

It wasn't just that, and it wasn't just that I was being inconsiderate. Carolyn had noticed often before, and had often commented on the fact that fans in general seemed definitely deficient in some of the basic social graces. She developed the theory, independently, from her own observation, that fans are social misfits, that they spend so much time writing letters



and reading or publishing fanzines or associating with other fans because of an inability to function in normal social situations.

What could I say? I told her that she was by no means the first to have noticed this characteristic, that serious fan scholars and historians had pinpointed the same thing from the earliest days of fandom; I suggested, though, that perhaps this was fandom's greatest virtue: That it provided a social milieu in which certain misfits were able to function and to communicate and find acceptance.

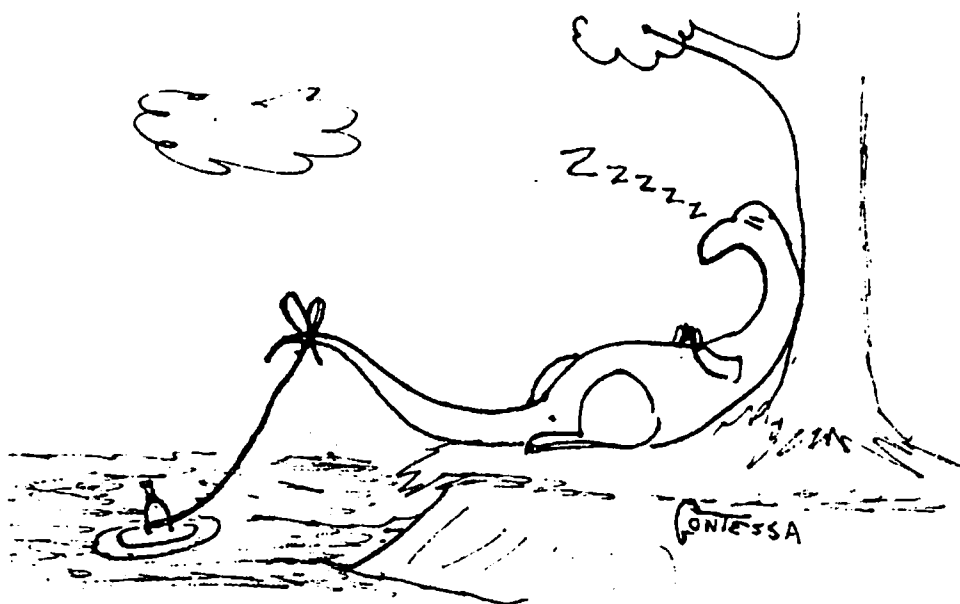
I could have said more but chose not to from a desire to avoid confrontation. But I held privately to the view that fans, even at their worst, their most insensitively effusive or their most incoherent or brusque, or abstracted or morose -- at their silliest -- seemed preferable to many of the glib, smooth, polished, well-mannered political and business types that Carolyn was using as a basis of comparison. It wasn't a matter of intelligence or maturity or character or depth of comprehension. If we had started arguing about the matter, we undoubtedly would both have slipped into easy over-simplifications. Carolyn might have contended that fans are stuck in adolescence, neglecting such obvious exceptions as Donn Brazier and the Coulsons and dozens if not hundreds of others (though I might have conceded the point and argued that the youthful outlook is one of fandom's greatest strengths). And I would surely have made some rash statement to the effect that fans tend to be more intelligent than mundanes, knowing full well that there's no evidence to substantiate such a claim and being fully aware that some fans are downright stupid and many business and pol-

itical leaders are brilliant. The real distinction that I saw (and see) is simply that fans and mundanes live in different time frames. Most people, "normal" because they are the majority, live in the present. No, that isn't it. Damn few people live in the present; they probably constitute the smallest minority of all. Most people live in the past, either recent or distant. With varying degrees of awareness or understanding, they know something of what has happened. Many of them are quite capable of seeing what is, or what will be, or what might be, and they sometimes shift their gaze in those temporal directions. But their focus is on the past; that's what seems most clear, most real to them. With fans, I believe, almost the opposite is true. I say "almost" advisedly because I don't believe all fans live in the future or have their vision fixed on the future. Many do. But many others live in parallel continuums where such terms as past, present and future lose their meanings. Fans' minds are constantly preoccupied with concepts that are all but inconceivable, thoughts that are all but unthinkable, visions that are all but invisible to most ordinary folk. It's no wonder that they seem strange. The really remarkable thing is that fans are able to function as well as they do in the mundane world.

Carolyn never quite saw or else never quite appreciated what I saw as the vital difference between fans and mundanes. Maybe I should have worked harder to ~~make~~ make her understand. I've often thought that our mutual unwillingness to argue about anything wasn't a totally positive attribute. In this particular issue, though, I seriously doubt that it would have made much difference.

So Carolyn never overcame her original distaste for fans in general, and even the Women's APA turned sour on her after a while.

She greatly admired many of the individuals in the apa and had enormous respect for their intelligence and erudition, and the intensity of their convictions. But I think she never felt quite comfortable or at home there. For one thing, she was made to feel like much ~~more~~ more of a conservative than she thought she ought to feel. Among her League of Women Voters friends, because she was a Democrat, because she was in favor of a County-wide public housing authority, because she was a member of the Denver Regional Council of Governments, she was regarded as a liberal. But in A Women's Apa, because she was older than most of the other members, because she was married and had raised her children along more or less traditional lines, because she actually advocated having children, recommending it as a natural and fulfilling experience, and because she had never been divorced, was not a Lesbian, did



not hate her husband, did not hate men, Carolyn was regarded as an arch-conservative. Or felt that she was so regarded.

The break came, predictably, over the question of whether to exclude men from the Women's Apa. Carolyn had argued strongly against it, but the vote was for exclusion, and Carolyn felt there was nothing to do but resign in protest.

"It wasn't just that," she told me later, during one of our discussions concerning the separation. "I'd been having strong conscience-proddings for a long time to cut out some of the fannish nonsense I've gotten involved in and get back to important things."

I nodded. "For me, the fannish nonsense is the important thing."

And that exchange seemed to summarize perfectly one of the major elements in the breakup of a marriage.

But only one.

I'm afraid I've been making it sound like our marriage is another victim of the well-known devastating effects of fandom, notorious for having wrecked as many happy homes as alcohol or gambling.

It isn't that simple. Carolyn is extraordinarily tolerant of fannish nonsense, and if that had been the only problem, there would have been no problem. There was considerably more than that involved, some of it having to do with our basically different outlooks on life, though even that may not get to the central core of the matter -- if there even is one.

However, I am just about to abandon my attempt to trace the sources of my present predicament. (Now, where did that word come from? I wasn't even aware that I considered myself in a predicament; I thought I was enjoying my new freedom).

You notice that I haven't said anything much about love during this discussion. That's a very serious omission, because it's what the whole discussion has been about, really. It would be true in a sense (though perhaps not very enlightening) to say that Carolyn and I are breaking up because we are unable to agree on a definition of love. I could take another five pages or so and explain that to everyone's satisfaction, and I still would not have gotten to basics; I would be concealing as much as revealing.

You might have noticed, not just in this particular discussion, but in previous DON-o-SAURS, that even though love has been one of my central themes always, I have almost never, except in abstract and impersonal terms, written anything about sex; and that is an even more serious omission. Because any truly understandable explanation of the causes of this separation would have to be expressed in terms of sex. I could summarize that whole issue by saying that it too is basically a failure of communication, related no doubt to that mutual eagerness to avoid confrontation that I mentioned earlier.

But in this area I'm sure I have to take most of the blame; for sex is something that I have never been able to talk about freely and openly--and honestly. Or even to write about. On most personal matter, if I

can't talk about them, I can at least write about them, but not sex. (I recall that one of the reasons I was so enormously impressed with REG and Dick Geis in those first few issues was his extreme candor in discussing his sexual proclivities and problems, and I recall thinking: My God, if he can do that sort of thing and get away with it, maybe I can too. And that thought was one of the origins of DON-o-SAUR. However, I found it so much easier to write about other things (some of them, to my astonishment, just as shocking, apparently, as any sexual disclosures could have been), that I never got around to writing about sex, or even trying.

And I'm not going to start just yet.

It could very well be that in future issues I may find it easy and natural to start writing about sex in the same personal and confessional manner in which I have previously written about death and various deep emotions. And I'm sure I will find myself wondering, along with you, what all the reluctance was about, because I know I won't be able to tell you anything more startling or revolting than a lot of the things you already know about many other fans who have been much more forthcoming than I about their sex lives.

But not yet.

There's only about one more thing I want to say in this discourse, and it is partly by way of explanation and clarification, partly by way of apology. Maybe that amounts to several things.

The decision to dissolve the marriage was made in February, following two or three weeks of discussion and development of a catalytic situation. In the February issue of my D'Apazine, AVATAR OF COPROLITE, I reviewed that situation briefly and discussed my feelings about what at that time I assumed was to be a divorce. As an afterthought, without any additional explanatory text, I ran off about a hundred extra copies of AVATAR and mailed them out to a hastily culled list of DON-o-SAUR readers, as a sort of divorce announcement.

My apology is to those DoS readers who should logically have received a copy of the announcement but did not and might have felt slighted thereby. Perhaps I should have run off 500 copies instead of 100 and sent it to all the readers, but that would have taken more time than I felt like I had, because I was feeling a bit rushed just then about virtually everything. I assumed that word of the separation would spread; I did not intend the announcement to be any kind of secret. My apologies again for the ambiguity.

My use of the terms divorce and separation seem to need some clarification, too. In the original announcement I spoke of divorce. In this present discourse, I have been careful to use "separation." The decision that we arrived at in February was for a divorce. That's what Carolyn said she wanted, and I did not protest. However, as we started investigating the financial divisions that we'd agreed upon, it seemed that there might be very practical reasons for not rushing into divorce. In addition, as time wore on and the catalyst situation ran its course and receded, it began to seem possible that Carolyn and I might very well want to change our minds, or that we might not, after all, be able to get along without each other. And so the lawyers were called off and the divorce arrange-



ments held in abeyance, and we decided just to call it a separation.

Now about that catalyst situation itself . . .

Maybe it would be appropriate to simply reprint the February issue of AVATAR, but I think I can summarize it more briefly and clearly here than I did there.

At the DASFA Christmas party, I met for the first time a woman I'd talked with on the phone a couple of times. She was new in Denver, a fan and interested in meeting other fans, so of course I invited her to the party. We talked for a while at the party, and I found it very easy and very pleasant to talk to her. I encouraged her to come to the DASFA meetings. She seemed quite interested, but didn't show up at

the January meeting. But a few days after the meeting, she called and apologized for missing it, complaining that the meetings were too infrequent. I asked if she would be interested in serving on one of the con committees, and she said she might. So I took a load of con stuff over to her apartment one evening and we spent several hours discussing cons--and everything else imaginable. She was a fascinating person. I fell in love. Again. The difference this time was the very strong hint that a physical relationship could develop, given a chance. And I was more than willing to give it a chance.

The relationship, as it happened, did not develop very far and did not last very long, running its full course from great expectation to mutual disillusionment in less than two months.

It was a catalyst, in the strict chemical sense of the word, an active agent, working a dissolution process between two individuals, and then disappearing.

Well, that is certainly a very brief summary, as I promised, and while I have tried to make the situation itself clear, I have deliberately avoided telling you any more than necessary about the other woman involved. Ours was a very strange relationship and it had a strange ending, and I may some time feel compelled to write about it, but for now my memories of the whole thing are strangely vague and amorphous, dreamlike. It was very strange . . .

That's it. I must hurry now to get this issue finished; I want to take copies of it to Westercon. And I still (less than a week before Westercon now) have not prepared a Guest of Honor speech.

But I have a plan . . .

My ideas become more daring (desperate, actually) as Westercon approaches. It's less than a week away, and I do not yet have a Guest of Honor speech prepared. I've thought about it some, and even taken a few notes, but I don't even know for sure what main point I want to make--if any.

My plan is this:

I'm going to write my Guest of Honor speech right now. As part of DON-o-SAUR. I mean, I would reprint the talk anyway, in the next issue of DoS, wouldn't I? So why not print the speech first and actually read it from the zine? It might mean there'll be no lettercol in this issue, and it will probably be less than 30 pages, and if that's what it means, then so be it.

It's a matter of timing. If the timing works out right, I should be able to get DoS printed just before I leave for LA and Westercon. I doubt that I'll have time to get it fully collated. No, there's no room for doubt -- of course I can't possibly get it fully collated. However, I should be able to collate some copies; I hope a hundred, at least, to take along to the con.

And I think it might be kind of a neat gesture to read the speech from a regular typescript and then, at the conclusion, announce that the text will be reprinted in DON-o-SAUR 51, which I then proceed to distribute at the head table.

Well . . . I didn't say it was a brilliant plan. I make no claim that it will dazzle anyone with its cleverness. All I'm trying to do, really, is find a way whereby I can get both an issue of DON-o-SAUR and a Guest of Honor speech finished in time for Westercon; and that's the way that I can think of.

So -- here is a draft of a speech:

A SPEECH

Thank you.

(Make appropriate comments here in response to Jerry Pournelle's introduction. This part scares me. The introduction will probably be full of insults, and I never know how to respond to insults; on the other hand, it's possible that there'll be some praise in the introduction, and I'm even less familiar with the problems of responding to praise. It's probably safer to just let it go with "thank you").

I don't want to overwhelm you with my modesty. I won't pretend that I don't know why I'm here.

A lot of you probably have no idea why I am here instead of you or someone else equally deserving. That doesn't matter. I know, and I presume the people who invited me here have some idea. Now, I admit that their ideas and mine may not be identical, but that probably doesn't

A Bold Plan

matter either. I think that the reason for my having been selected as Fan Guest of Honor for Westercon 31 has something to do with the fact that I publish a fanzine, filled mostly with stuff that I write, AND that I circulate the fanzine to a large enough audience so that it reaches enough people who happen to like both the fanzine and the things I write well enough to have gotten me a Hugo nomination as Best Fan Writer for four years in a row now, and to have put the fanzine itself on the ballot for two of those four years.

I don't think I need to account for the fact that I never win a Hugo (and no, I don't expect to win one this year either). However, I think I know how I could win, some year, if I wanted to badly enough. There's nothing to it. Yes there is, too, of course. First, and most important, and most difficult, it would help a lot if I could learn to write as well as Dick Geis or Susan Wood. That wouldn't be absolutely necessary though. The crucial thing would be to get more readers than Dick or Susan. And that would mean either expanding the circulation of DON-o-SAUR to seven, eight, ten thousand, or else talking some prozine editor into letting me write a regular column. And all that starts to sound too much like work, and if I'm going to work that hard at writing, I'd probably turn to fiction and become a pro and go after one of the real Hugos.

On balance, I find that I just don't need a Hugo badly enough to work for it. As long as I can keep producing a fanzine that is fun and a form of therapy, and by doing that can get occasional Hugo or Faan nominations, and occasional Guest of Honor invitations to prestigious cons, I'm going to be content with that.

I don't really intend to give an entire speech analyzing why I am here giving a speech. There are actually one or two things that I would like to use this opportunity to say -- things about life, and love, and fandom. I don't really expect to get opportunities like this very often, and I don't want to waste this one totally.

But first a commercial.

Jerry Pournelle was at Colorado State University in Fort Collins this spring for a speaking engagement, and since Westminster, where I then lived, is not too far from the Denver airport and not too terribly far from Fort Collins, I cleverly arranged things so I could pick up Pournelle from his flight and keep him at the house overnight before turning him over to the CSU people. My real motive was simply to get him to autograph some books, but it also seemed like a good opportunity for him, since he had the job of introducing me at Westercon, to get to know a little something more about me than what he'd learned from several years of reading DON-o-SAUR. And sure enough, during the course of a conversation, Jerry did ask if there was anything else he should know about me for the Westercon introduction.

And I said, after a thoughtful pause, "Did you know that I'm chairman of the Denvention in '81 Bidding Committee?"

And he said, "Well, I'm a member of the Los Angeles in '81 Bidding Committee."

And I said, "Yes, I know. And I have been authorized by the Denver committee to tell you that we . . . ah, noticed . . . your plug for the L.A. bid in your GALAXY science column."

Jerry reared back, like he does, and in his soft and gently chiding way he said, "YEAH? SO WHAT? IS THAT UNETHICAL OR SOMETHING?"

And when the house had settled back on its foundations and I could hear again, I said, "Oh, I'm sure I'd do exactly the same thing if I had the opportunity."

Well . . .

It occurs to me that I now have a somewhat similar opportunity; and even though Jerry can totally demolish me when he gets back to the microphone -- or before -- it would be downright cowardly of me not to take the opportunity to at least mention DENVENTION.

I'll keep it very brief. All I want to do is remind you that Denver is bidding for the 1981 Worldcon, and that it is a very serious bid. We really expect to win, and we are confident that we can put on at least as good a con as . . . well, as some that there have been recently. Our arrangements with the Denver Hilton are firm, and the hotel has facilities for as large a con as there has been yet. If attendance should go over about 5,000 or 6,000, we might be in trouble, but the trend seems to be for slightly smaller Worldcons rather than progressively larger ones. Any rumors you might have heard about Denver using the Convention Center for the con have been superseded. The rumor might have had some substance when you first heard it, because at a very early stage in our planning we were thinking along those lines, but that was two years ago.

1981 will be 40 years since the first DENVENTION in 1941, and there are still a number of survivors wandering around. We think it would be nice to have DENVENTION II while they are still around, and we hope to have as many of them as possible involved in the programming of the con, and we'll even try to re-enact some of the original events.

We know that winning the bid isn't going to be easy. Both Los Angeles and Seattle have very impressive bidding efforts. But we think there are good, solid, practical reasons -- as well as sentimental ones -- for having the con in Denver. For one thing, it doesn't rain very much in Denver; and you can be darn sure there are no Sasquatches there. (But we'll import some, if that's what fans want). And the air in Denver may be thin (ask Larry Niven), and in terms of pollutants it might not be much better than L.A.'s, but we're making arrangements with the hotel to have extra oxygen pumped in, and if you just stay in the hotel and don't go off hiking into the mountains, we guarantee you'll be all right.

Okay. That's enough of politics. We'll welcome your support if you think you can support us in good conscience; if not, I at least am not going to hold it against you.

On to more neutral matters -- maybe.

I don't know. How do you feel about the prospect of living forever? Or let's not say forever. Make it just a thousand years -- or even 500 years.

You'd think there wouldn't be anything terribly controversial about the idea of extending the average human lifespan into the hundreds or even thousands of years, right? Give anyone a chance to live that long, and they'd grab at it, you'd assume.

I'm not so sure. I suspect that the subject of prolonged longevity could easily become, within the next few decades, one of the most controversial issues of all times. But I could well be wrong about that.

After all, the average human lifespan, at least in industrialized societies, has been roughly quadrupled in the past couple of thousand years or less, and no one has complained. So maybe there'll be no objections when life expectancy is increased by a factor of 10 or 100 or 1,000.

Except that there's a big difference, other than just the number of years involved. After all, in one respect, most of us, most people alive today, are no different from the people who lived a hundred years ago, or a thousand, or two, five, ten or a hundred thousand years ago. We, like them, have all grown up with the idea that death is inevitable--that no matter how careful or how lucky we are in avoiding accidents or various forms of assassination, no matter what diseases we manage to avoid or survive, that sooner or later, somewhere around the age of 75 or 80 or 85 or on up to say 100, we're going to die of "old age." Medical science has performed wonders in terms of reducing the number of deaths in childbirth and early infancy, so that a far, far greater number of people now than ever before can expect to live out their allotted three score years and ten. But that basic three score ten figure hasn't changed much at all. The doctors still haven't been able to push the average life expectancy up to a full four score; and we can all look forward, with varying degrees of acceptance or reluctance, to dying of "old age" if nothing else gets us first.

That situation may be just about to change, dramatically.

You know, when I first started thinking about this speech -- a couple of weeks ago (I've known I would have to give it for about two years, but who can think about anything that far in advance? ((And that question has a great deal of relevance to my subject, too))) -- ...

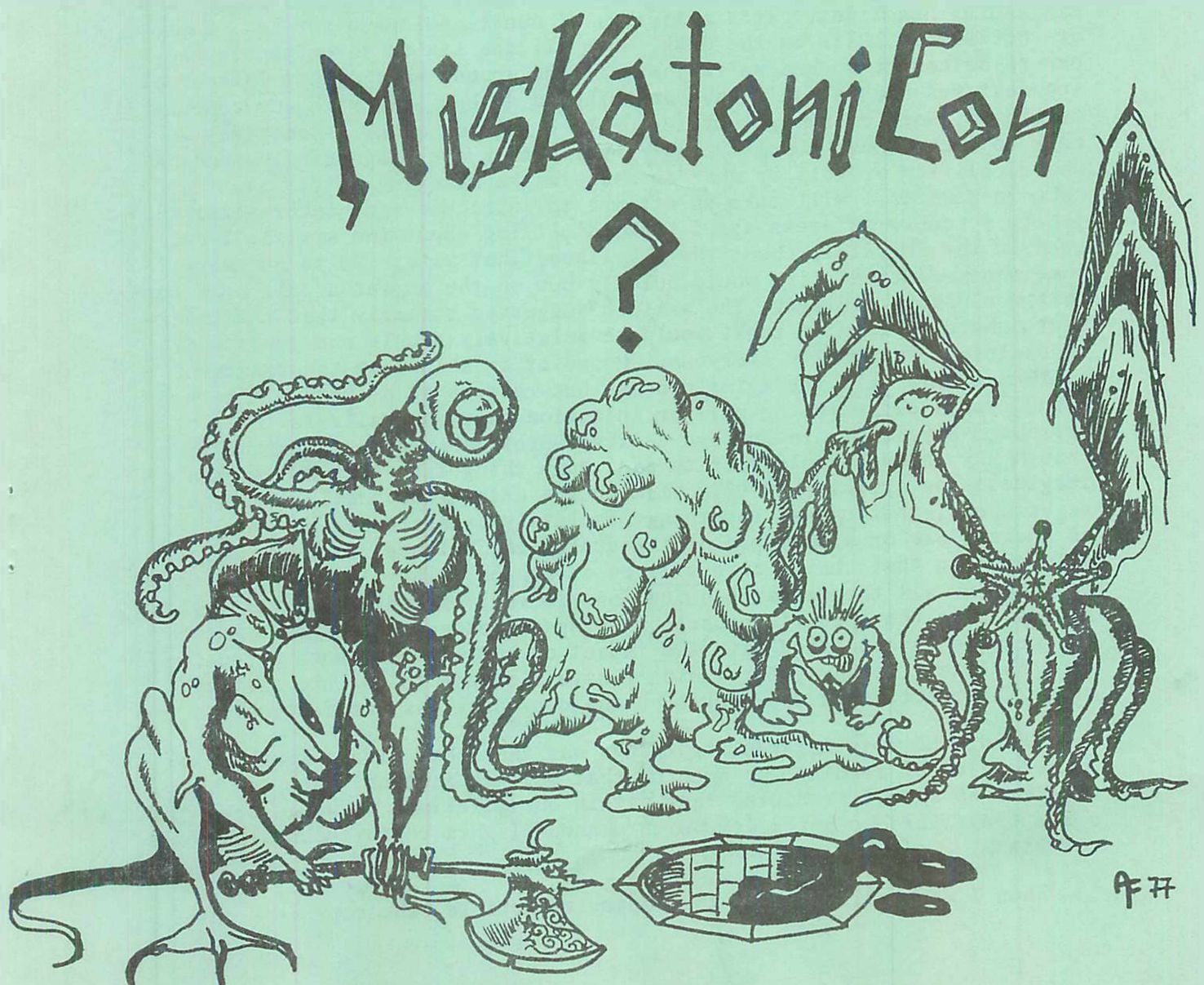
I think I'd better start that sentence over again.

When I first started thinking seriously about this speech, all I could think of was that being Fan Guest of Honor, I really ought to talk about something frivolous and fannish, and that naturally led me to thinking about my own career in fandom. And that didn't take very long, because, honestly, I have not been in fandom very long. I've been a reader and collector -- an addict -- of science fiction for a long time: since the early 1940s. But I wasn't even really aware of fandom, except on a highly abstract, almost theoretical, level until less than 10 years ago, and I didn't become even a neo-fan until... Well, I date my true

birth into fandom from Westercon 24 in San Francisco in 1971. That was the first real con that I'd ever been to, and I was absolutely blown away by it. At one of the early stages in my thinking about this speech, I had in mind to tell in some detail what Westercon 24 meant to me, and since I had taken tons of 8 mm film of the con and had tape recorded virtually everything, I thought I might be able to show some of the film or play some of the tape in lieu of, or as an adjunct to my Guest of Honor speech. I decided ultimately that it would be as time-consuming and difficult to do the film and tape editing as it would be to write a speech.

But for my own edification and amusement, I played some of the tape and ran some of the film. And one of the tapes that I made a special point of playing because it had stuck rather vividly in mind unassisted and I was curious to see if the tape in any way matched my memory, was Don Simpson's Fan Guest of Honor speech. It did.

That was a great speech, if you remember. For one thing, it was quite



brief. But in addition to that it was personal, it was fannish, and it was serious. It was an important speech. Don gave us the secret of the universe and told us how to find the things we wanted. Now I have to admit that knowing the secret of the universe and knowing how to find what I want hasn't really done me much good. I am still neither rich, famous nor good looking, but I don't blame Don Simpson for any of that. It's sheer laziness on my part.

What I got mostly from Don's 1971 speech, listening to the recording of it just recently, was the reassurance that it's all right with Western audiences if the Fan Guest of Honor wants to talk about something serious, something personally important. As long as it's also fannish.

What I wasn't sure of was whether my topic -- the indefinite prolongation of individual human lives -- could be considered fannish. I decided that at least it illustrates the difference between the way fans and mundanes think.

I work on the copy desk of the Rocky Mountain News in Denver, when I'm not teaching at Metropolitan State College. I write sensational and misleading headlines. It's a living. I don't apologize for it. There are occasional lulls on the desk, when all the six or seven people happen to be caught up and we're just sitting around waiting for late-breaking features and we don't have anything to do but play with our computer terminals, work crossword puzzles or talk to each other. Sometimes we talk to each other. Usually the conversations are disgustingly mundane--about politics or golf or what an asshole the managing editor is. But once in a while I will make an attempt to introduce some interesting subject. A couple of weeks ago I started telling about the article I had read in the FUTURIST, about the likelihood that within 20 to 50 years, some pharmaceutical firm would quietly put on the market a pill or a serum that would cure old age. The article suggested strongly that the treatment, whatever form it took, would be relatively simple and inexpensive, accessible to virtually everyone. Moreover it said that the treatment would not only halt the aging process but reverse it as well. A person 90 years old when the pill or injection becomes available could be regressed physically to any age desired--presumably even to infancy, though why anyone should want to do a dumb thing like that I just can't imagine. The article was very firm in its assertion, quoting reputable researchers, that unless something absolutely catastrophic happens, such as nuclear war or a collapse of the ecological balance, it is practically certain that such a cure will be developed. There's almost no way, in light of all the research being done in various medical and biological fields, that the specific causes of aging can escape detection. Much of the article is concerned with the impact on society that such a development is likely to have, but I didn't have a chance to go into that at all. The reaction of the people on the copy desk was interesting.

One of the most interesting things was that they didn't laugh at me or accuse me of reading too much of that science fiction trash, as they did in 1955 when I predicted that within our lifetimes we would see space travel become a reality, with manned flights to the moon almost a certainty.

When I was telling about the longevity article, the copy desk chief,

a grizzled, cynical newspaper veteran about five years my junior, said, "Aw, my God, are they really that close to it? But shit, if it's gonna take 'em 20 to 50 years, that isn't going to do you or me any good."

And I remembered that the article had said this might not come about all at once but rather through a series of discoveries and breakthroughs, that there were likely to be limited extensions of the lifespan -- 20 or 30 years at a time--before the final development. It didn't seem to cheer up the copy desk chief very much. He just grimaced and shrugged and muttered, "Yeah, but 20 to 50 years..."

One of the women on the copy desk spotted an obvious problem. (They didn't believe me 25 years ago either when I predicted that within our lifetimes we would have women on the copy desk. That seemed as impossible then as space travel or immortality). This one woman said, "It isn't going to do anything to help the population problem. There'll have to be really strict birth quotas. In fact, isn't it going to cause as many problems as it solves?"

And I said, "Oh, at least as many. Every solution to one problem creates two or three additional problems. But this is going to happen, apparently, and somebody ought to start doing some serious thinking about what it means. It's going to change everything. It's going to push us into space, for one thing."

"Well, I'll let you think about it," another one of the grizzled cynics said--this one about the same age as me. In fact he was on the copy desk 25 years ago, when I was making my startling predictions of the future. He said, "I don't even want to live to be 800. I'd die of boredom." He would, too. In fact he's dying of boredom now. He's alive at the most exciting time in the entire history of the human race -- and he's dying of self-imposed boredom!

I could almost hear the minds snapping shut around the copy desk. They didn't dare doubt that what I was saying was true -- that they themselves might very well live to be 1,000 years old or more. Science had delivered them too many impossibilities in the past few years for them to believe that anything was impossible. But that didn't mean they had to think about it until it was right on top of them. Not while there's golf and the Denver Broncos and politics and an asshole of an ME to think about.

I've brought up this longevity subject with some of my fans, too, and quite frankly I've found it almost as difficult to get fans to think seriously about as for my mundane acquaintances.

Fans are perfectly willing to think about it and to talk about it but the trouble is they don't want to talk about the practicalities of it, the likely realities. Some of them can give the title, author, date of publication and plot line of just about every science fiction or fantasy story ever written using the immortality theme, and it has occurred to me that it would be a fascinating and maybe even worthwhile project to compile a complete bibliography of immortality tales. And maybe, if I live long enough, I'll do that someday.

But immortality is hackneyed. It's an old, stale idea; the authors

have explored just about every possible ramification of it, and so most fans would much rather talk about some of the newer ideas. The fact that this is an idea that is on the threshold of becoming a reality makes some difference, but not much. Most of the fans that I've talked to about it accept the idea almost matter of factly. They are quite prepared to accept a 1,000 year-plus lifespan, along with whatever problems that might entail. I like what one young fan said when we were talking about this: "Let's hope we never run out of problems!"

One or two of the older fans have pointed out something else: Even in non-fictional terms, this is by no means the first time that scientists or other reputable thinkers have thought they were on the verge of discovering the secret of immortality. (And wouldn't it be interesting if it turned out that Methuselah and those other Biblical characters really did live 900 years?) Ponce deLeon was absolutely serious in his search for the Fountain of Youth, you know. And do you remember Monkey glands? I don't either, really. The fad was a little before my time; but in the 20s or thereabouts the media, misinterpreting as usual, something that scientists had said, popularized the idea that certain glands produced by monkeys held the possibility of providing eternal youth to humans. That never panned out, though it led to some notable works of fiction; and I've been reminded that these rumors of immortality might not pan out either.

Well, sure. The FUTURIST article itself makes the point that any number of things can happen to prevent the development of the elixir. There's at least a thousand ways we can destroy ourselves. If that happens then I'm not going to be interested in living a thousand years anyway.

But I think we have to go on the assumption that the worst possible isn't going to happen. In order to think about the future at all you have to assume there will be a future, right? And that's what I insist on doing.

Okay, let me bring this back to a personal viewpoint.

I turned 50 on my last birthday, back in November; and I suddenly became aware of what a subjective thing age is. Because I'd always thought of 50 as being extreme old age, but when I got there it didn't seem very old at all. And really, the one thing that I most wanted for my 50th birthday was at least another 50 years of life. I honestly believe that the next 50 years (or less, actually; probably closer to 30) are going to be crucial for the human race. Everything seems to be coming together; all our dreams, all our dreads, building up to a crisis point where we're either going to go on ahead, into the future, into space, to the stars (and it seems to me that the kind of longevity I've been talking about would make interstellar travel a certainty). Or ...

Actually, the alternative that I most fear, that seems most likely to me, is not anything as dramatic as a nuclear or ecological catastrophe but just a simple failure of courage on the part of the people and the politicians. I think that policy decisions could be made, enforcing the popular will, that could stifle the research necessary to

provide the breakthroughs we need to ensure the wide-open future I want.

In any case, though, I want to live long enough to know which way we're going to take. If we do turn back, or are turned back by our own weakness or cowardice or stupidity, then I'm sure I won't mind dying of old age at 80 or 90 -- or 110.

One of the things about indefinite longevity that does concern me, and which any number of authors have called attention to in their stories, is the possibility that the hope of virtual immortality could lead to a really morbid fear of death, resulting in an extreme conservatism, a stifling of adventurous impulses. And I would really hate to see immortality lead to increased selfishness and suspicion.

But listen. If you thought I was going to give you the benefit of my advanced thinking on this subject -- if you thought I would tell you that all the science fiction writers have been wrong and that actually this is the way things would be, come the millinium, forget it. I am no better than anyone else when it comes to thinking about something ahead of time. After all, I didn't even start thinking about this speech until a couple of weeks ago.

I still haven't thought of a way to end it.

But I tell you what. Invite me back to a Westercon in, say, a hundred years, as Pro Guest of Honor. I'll finish the speech then.

Thank you again.



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