

DON-O-SAUR 52

Dr. Jeckel Mr. Saurus

BRUNN
00
R
3
8

Don-o-Saur #52

OCTOBER 1988

This perzine is published against all reasonable expectations by Don C. Thompson, of 3735 W. 81st Pl., Westminster, Colo. 80030. The phone number is 303-429-3750.

DON-o-SAUR is available through D'APA, FAPA, APA-69, PEAPS, to certain select attendees of MileHiCon XX, to as many names on a 10-year-old mailing list as are still accessible, and to almost anyone who asks.

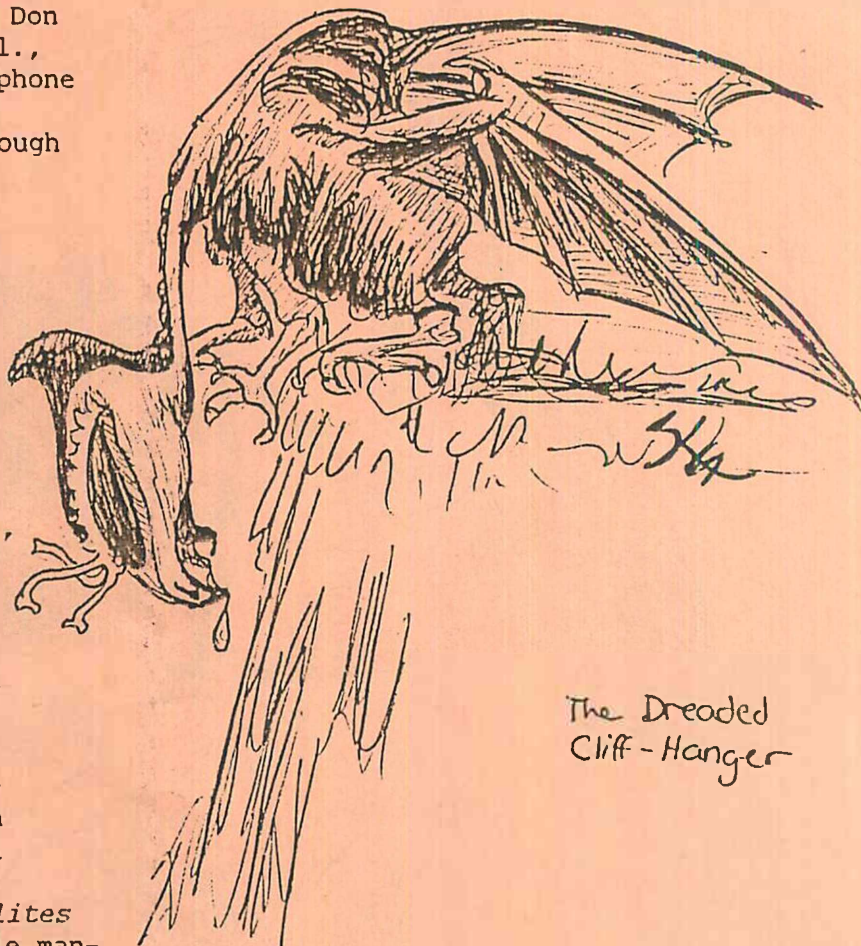
It is NOT available for money, by subscription or otherwise.

Press run this issue is in the neighborhood of 400 copies, but that is just an estimate at this point; don't try to hold me to it.

This zine is composed on a Leading Edge Model D computer, using LEWP, printed on an Okidata Microline 390 Printer (24 pin) and reproed on a Gestetner 2130Z photocopier which resides in the basement -- all this a far cry from the long-ago issue of *Don-o-Saur Coprolites* done on my Hermes 3000 portable manual (the one I took to Australia in 1975), and reproed by hektograph.

This issue is dedicated to Carolyn, as was No. 51, but it would probably have never come into existence but for Linda Nelson, as will be explained.

Begun 3:30 a.m. 8/22/88
Finished 10/17/88



The Dreaded
Cliff-Hanger

Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Intro & Rationale | 3 |
| Adventures in Time-Binding and Family Update | 7 |
| Guest of Honor Speech ... | 17 |
| DON-o-LOCS | 23 |

Art Credits

| | |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| Front Cover ... | Brian Cooper 1988 |
| Back cover | Alan Jones 1978 |
| Page 2. . . . | Sarah K. Swider 1978 |
| Page 22 | Kevin Dillon 1975 |
| Page 29 | Russ Parkhurst 1978 |
| Page 37 | Wm. Rotsler 1978 |

Contents copyright 1988 by Don C. Thompson. All rights revert

INTRODUCTION and Rationale

The more things change, the more they stay the same.

The last issue of *DON-o-SAUR*, as a very few people may recall, appeared in July of 1978, and the lead-off discourse was titled "A Time of Changes," and indeed things were changing for me, rapidly and dramatically. I had just moved into a new house, surrounded by 8,000 books and magazines, just separated from a marriage partner of 27 years, and was on the verge of resuming my misadventures in alcoholism, which had been suspended for the previous 11½ years. I was 50½ years old and looking forward to at least another 50 years.

A lot of things have changed since then, rapidly and dramatically, but I still seem to be pretty much the same person, 10 years older, five years dry, living in yet a different house, surrounded by 15,000 books and magazines, but for the past seven years back with the same woman I married more than 37 years ago.

In 1978 I was teaching full-time, working at the Rocky Mountain News three or four days a week, with no financial worries, editing DASFAX (monthly newsletter of the Denver Area SF Association), publishing a perzine (at increasingly infrequent intervals), contributing monthly to D'APA (Denver Amateur Press Association), serving as co-chairman of Penulticon and of the Denvention II Bidding Committee. I was looking forward to being Fan Guest of Honor at Westercon 31.

In 1988, I am several months retired from the teaching profession and several years out of the newspaper game, with an adequate pension from three of four different sources, thus no financial worries. I have edited DASFAX (again) for the past five years, write a monthly science fiction column for *The Denver Post* (that does not count as newspaper work), contribute to D'APA, FAPA, APA-69 and PEAPS. I'm looking forward to being Guest of Honor at MileHiCon XX, but am not a member of ANY con committees.

In 1978, I timed the completion of *DON-o-SAUR* 51 so I could distribute it at Westercon 31; it contained my Guest of Honor speech.

With careful planning and precise timing, *DON-o-SAUR* 52, containing my Guest of Honor speech, will be ready for distribution at MileHiCon XX.

In 1978, I apologized for the absence of a LoC column and promised that letters to DoS 51 would be at least acknowledged, sooner or later, one way or another. In 1988, I hope to fulfill that promise. Those LoCs still exist, and I think I know where they are; and I believe there were some LoCs on DoS 51 as well. Turn to the back of the zine and see if there isn't a letters section. SF fandom has always been known for its attempts at time-binding.

Look, I'm not doing this zine as a 10-year commemoration of anything. I had long since abandoned any intention of ever producing another *DON-o-SAUR*. I considered it extinct and had created another perzine, *FROM THE RIM*, to take its place. It never did. The format was different. The feel, the tone, the mood, the degree of reader involvement...all were totally different.

But I'm not doing this issue of DoS because I considered FTR a failure.

I mentioned Linda Nelson as a causative factor, and said I would explain.

Linda Nelson is an energetic and extremely competent young woman, a fairly recent member of DASFA, founder and guiding spirit of the Dream Buccaneers, a group of energetic and bubbly young fans whose creativity thrived under her leadership; the group has lapsed into inactivity since Linda's departure. Their loss is DASFA's gain.

Last year Linda volunteered to chair MileHiCon XX and to inject some new blood and new ideas into the committee. I didn't even wonder why I was not asked to be a member of the committee. It seemed self-explanatory. But after it was announced that the theme of MileHiCon XX would be "Dinosaurs and Other Old Fossils," I was not totally astonished to be named Fan Guest of Honor. (Not asked, just named.)

The MileHiCon Pro-GoHs are Jack Chalker and Connie Willis, and the Emcee is *Wick/Yermakov* Simon Hawke, none of whom can be considered either dinosaurs or any other kind of fossils (whether young, old or middle-aged).

So it obviously became a matter almost of logical necessity to name me Fan GoH, in order to give the announced theme some semblance of credibility.

I doubt very much that Linda had me in mind when she settled on that particular theme. I'm not even sure it was her idea. I doubt very much that she knew about *DON-o-SAUR*, and it's quite unlikely that she ever saw a copy of it. (After all, she was but a child when it discontinued publication.)

It's understandable, isn't it, why this issue of *DON-o-SAUR* has become inevitable?

I think I need say no more about that.

This would be an excellent opportunity, I suppose, to respond to the questions I hear at my infrequent appearances at major cons: What have you been doing with yourself since Denvention? Have you gafiated? Are you still pubbing? Are you doing any writing? Will you ever revive *DON-o-SAUR*?

DON-o-SAUR

Well, the answer to that last question is right here, and some of the others have been touched upon, but I'm willing to go into a bit more detail. They can be summarized briefly:

I'm still active in Denver fandom, have never even considered gaffiation, get to big cons occasionally, write that monthly book review column for *The Denver Post*, publish a general circulation perzine sporadically, am in several apas . . . What more does anyone want or expect? (I also play in chess tournaments with fair frequency, something I didn't have time to do ten years ago.)

"But now that you're retired..."

Well, yeah, there's that; with the abundance of free time at my disposal I should be able to get those novels written that I've been thinking about for so many years, publish a 120-page genzine every two or three months (like Lan does), get to at least a con a month, and in short make my existence known in fandom once again.

Sounds good to me. I'll get right on it -- just as soon as I finish the latest (really rotten) novel by Arthur C. Clarke and Gentry Lee and the half a dozen other books I have to read for my next column, and as soon as I build one more set of book shelves so I can get the living room floor navigable again, and as soon as I get all my old pulp magazines put in plastic bags and the hardcover book jackets in plastic folders, and as soon I type up the locs for the latest issue of DASFax, and just as soon as I balance the books for the Lakewood Chess Club and run off a set of tournament schedules (did I forget to mention that I'm secretary-treasurer of the Lakewood Chess Club, a job I agreed to take seeing as how I'd have so much free time in my retirement?), and certainly just as soon as I send out the latest batch of press releases about the new League of Women Voters publication (did I forget to mention that I am State PR co-chair for the Colorado LWV, a job I agreed to take to help fill the long empty hours of retirement?), and after I take a nap, having exhausted myself on non-essential projects.

Ah, naps . . .

If there is one really significant change that has taken place in my life over the past ten years, it's my sleep pattern.

It does seem to me that back in the glory years of *DON-o-SAUR*, when I was teaching full time and working practically full time on the newspaper, plus being more obviously active in fandom than I have been lately, I was able to get by with no more than four or five hours of sleep a night and a half-hour nap in the afternoon two or three times a week.

Not any more. Well, I seldom sleep more than four or five hours at a time, but I seem to nap more often during a 24-hour period than I used to.

Typically I now get out of bed at about 8:30 or 9 in the morning and spend the early part of the day with household chores (aka library maintenance).

But don't ask me to do anything like outdoor yard work; Carolyn has long since given up trying.) By about 2 or 3 in the afternoon I'm ready for a nap on the waterbed; that typically lasts from 45 minutes to an hour and a half. In the evening ... well, if it's Monday or Thursday evening, I go out to play chess; if it's Wednesday evening, I take Carolyn out to dinner; if it's Tuesday evening I get to an AA meeting, if it's Saturday evening there's likely to be a DASFA function. If it's a Friday or Sunday evening I either read or watch TV if there's anything on TV worth watching, which there seldom is. (Well, I manage to read a lot during odd moments the rest of the day, too.)

By 9:30 or 10 p.m. most evenings, I'm ready for another nap. I stretch out on the living room couch for that, because by then Carolyn is ready for bed and I know I'll be getting up again in a few hours, and I'd disturb her when I crawled out of bed again at 1:30 or 2 a.m.

From then until about 5 a.m. is when I'm able to get some real work done. It's when I used to grade papers, prepare tests, etc., for school and it's when I get letters written, press releases done, columns prepared and apa contributions put together. It's a time period that is almost guaranteed interruption-free, and I have come to treasure it. By 5 o'clock I'm finally ready for bed, and that's when I actually take my clothes off and join Carolyn under the covers until 8:30 or 9 o'clock, when I get up and start over again.

I think the pattern has something to do with old age. And a bad back.

Speaking of that bad back, I finally got around to having a routine physical checkup under the Kaiser HMO plan that I'm under in retirement, and it turns out that the back is probably the least of my woes, and that I may (well, that I DO) have more problems than I suspected. I had naively assumed that, other than the back and a chronic infected sebaceous cyst on my butt, I was essentially a healthy old fart, not having had any alcohol-related aches and pains for five years now.

That's almost true. That is, my blood pressure is nice and low and my cholesterol level is by no means alarming, and my heart and lungs are sound, with no noticeable kidney, liver or pancreas damage from the drinking.

But there was that ugly looking mole on my lower chest that I'd sort of been noticing and wondering about for the past couple of years.

The doctors noticed it, too, and they got me in and sliced it off and had it biopsied.

DON-o-SAUR

And sure enough -- cancer. Melanoma. That's the bad kind. Tough to treat; the only thing they know to do is cut it out. Surgery.

I don't know yet when or how extensive or how debilitating the surgery is going to be. I have an appointment Aug. 30 with the surgeon who is to make those determinations. The doctor who took the mole off did say that a skin graft might be necessary. The thought gives me the queasies.

Scheduling surgery could be complicated.

Carolyn and I (and our daughter Claudia and son Douglas) are leaving the first of September for New Orleans (I'll be at Worldcon; the others will spend most of the time on a Mississippi plantation tour), and from there Carolyn, Claudia and I will fly to Virginia to visit relatives in my father's home territory that I haven't seen for some 35 years. Curt Phillips has invited me to visit him in Abingdon, which is not too far from Russell County, and Curt may take me to visit Nelson Bond in Roanoke.

I'll be back home on the 10th, and that's the weekend that I have to get *DASFAX* finished and in the mail. Should be no major problem.

If I can get the surgery done, say, after the 14th (because that's when my next *Denver Post* column is due) and enough before the 24th so I can function, things should work out OK. The 24th is Colorado League Day, and I'm scheduled to give a brief presentation on "How Not to Write a Press Release." (These are just things for me to keep in mind when I talk to the doctor on the 30th -- memos to myself.)

Adventures in Time-Binding And a Family Up-Date

I didn't realize what kind of time-trip I was embarking on when I found and opened that box of locs on *DON-o-SAURS* 50 and 51 yesterday. I spent a good part of the morning examining the letters, one at a time, sorting them into four separate piles -- one for 50, one for 51, one for locs on earlier issues, and one for mail that had nothing to do with *DON-o-SAUR* at all.

In order to understand what some of the mail was about, I found it necessary to open issues 50 and 51 and lightly scan the contents. The two issues were themselves nearly a year apart. Number 50 appeared in August 1977, 51 in July 1978, and as my mind was going back and forth between them, and between the zines and the unpublished letters, the present seemed to disappear, and I had the giddy feeling of actually being back there in '77 and '78 again, caught up in the emotional and mental turbulence of those times. Issue 51 was particularly wrenching.

DON-o-SAUR

As I reread "A Time of Changes," I seemed to be back once again in that makeshift "office" I'd set up in the cramped living room of the book-crammed house on Mariposa following the separation from Carolyn, staring at the sten-cils in the Selectric as I tried to justify and explain the course I'd set for myself.

The fact that that great adventure in independence ultimately led, through the harrowing perils of renewed alcoholic debauchery, to the rather comfortable situation in which I now find myself, was the major consolation of returning to the present. (I would certainly not have wanted to be stuck back there, or required to go through it all again.)

I have fought down the less-than-overwhelming temptation to try to recapture with words the tempest of those times. When I get around to the loc-cols in this issue, it'll be necessary to put the letters in context; then I can hope to convey something of what I was feeling when the letters first arrived, and when I reread them a decade later.

Or maybe not. Maybe it's best to let the letters speak for themselves.

Meanwhile, here's a task that comes easily to hand, and toward which I feel prodded by the tone of some of the letters and even more so by the flow of current events. (What I'm saying, I think, is that I'm going to do this because I want to.)

In D-o-S #50, I had a sort of discourse on child-rearing, which served as an opportunity to brag about my kids. I told what they were doing at that time and a little of how they'd gotten to where they were.

This is an update:

Carolyn and I have three kids: Bruce, born Jan. 21, 1952, in Madison, Wis.; Claudia, born Dec. 17, 1953, in Dubuque, Iowa; and Doug, born May 10, 1959, in Denver.

In August 1977, Bruce was 25, a graduate student at the University of Denver, going for a master's in philosophy. Claudia was 23, also a graduate student at DU (library science). In fact, as I recall, Bruce and Claudia got their masters' degrees at the same time, the following year. Doug in 1977 had just graduated (with high honors) from high school and was about to start at the University of Colorado College of Engineering.

Bruce at that time was contemplating marriage and various other, much more abstract realms of philosophy; Claudia seemed determined to avoid any kind of emotional entanglements; Doug was preoccupied with numbers.

If you're guessing that momentous events have shaken them loose from their chosen paths, you'd be dead wrong.

DON-o-SAUR

Bruce did get married, in 1978. He now has two sons: Robin, born in October 1980; and Brendon, born Feb. 11, 1983 (which happens to be Carolyn's birthday as well as Bruce's and Sue's wedding anniversary).

I have gotten used to the idea of being a grandfather and Carolyn glories in being a grandmother. Just last spring, Bruce finally got his Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Colorado. Starting almost immediately, he will be teaching (Museum Ethics, among other fascinating subjects) at Texas Tech in Lubbock. He has taught there during summer sessions four or five times previously, and with his new doctorate, the school was able to offer him a full (but limited to only one year) contract.

His wife and kids are NOT going to Texas with him, at least not just yet, so Carolyn will have the boys for a while yet. Bruce hopes to get a position with Louisiana Southern University in Baton Rouge. If he gets that, then the family will move.

Claudia did not get married, of course. Neither did she get a job as a librarian -- at least not right away. Jobs for librarians (especially those with library degrees, it seems) are exceedingly scarce and low paying. So Claudia worked for about five years researching real estate titles for a small company in Denver.

Finally, at some financial sacrifice, she got a position with the University of Wyoming Library in Laramie. That must have been in 1984. She has attained a supervisory position in the Archives and seems firmly entrenched, and she loves Laramie and likes being near her Grandpa Bert, my father.

She's also fallen in love with Western history and even wrote a novel based on the Jesse & Frank James-Younger brothers' exploits. Nick Yermakov's agent tried hard to sell the book for Claudia but finally, after about two years, had to give up. It's OK -- Claudia's writing another.

For a couple of the years Claudia was working in Denver, she was living with me. That may well have been the most emotionally trying time of her life, because some of her stay with me was during some of the worst of my drinking period. I know it was distressing for her to see me in such pathetic condition, because she finally told me so. She stayed with me though, taking care of me, in a sense, in her quiet way, until Carolyn and I got back together.

Douglas seems to have never thought of marriage either. As far as I can tell, he has as little interest in women as Claudia has in men. Doug got his electrical engineering degree in 1981 from CU (just a bachelor's; he's the only one of the kids who didn't go on for at least a master's, but we forgive him) and started working immediately for Bechtel, having turned down offers from IBM and a couple of other big companies, and having even passed up the interview opportunity with Texas Instruments.

His starting salary, as I recall, was about what I had finally worked up to after nearly 15 years as a journalism professor. Doug started at the Bechtel main office near L.A. but was soon assigned to work on the Palo Verde nuclear plant that was being built near Phoenix, which pleased his Hollister grandparents (Carolyn's parents), because they had a winter home in Sun City and therefore got to see a lot of him.

The Hollisters have since moved back to Denver permanently, but Doug lingers on in Phoenix long after the completion of Palo Verde and the dispersal of most of those he worked with.

In fact, he's just about the only Bechtel engineer left; the plant is being run by Arizona Public Service. But Doug's happy. He seems to have taken root in Phoenix. He owns a house and a condominium and a \$12,000 sports car.

Since I'm talking about the family, let me say just a little more about how things are with Carolyn and me, and about our parents, and then I'll get on to some of the Important Issues of the Day.

My parents first, okay?

My father is 87. He returned to Laramie a couple of weeks ago from a long car trip with my sister, Laura, and her husband, Oakley, to Detroit and Virginia. He's doing quite well, except for some painful problems with his left eye, which he's now lost the sight in entirely, and some stiffness in his back and arthritis pain and weakness in his legs. But he gets around, obviously.

My mother died in November 1985 at the age of 85, of congestive heart failure. She had been in a heart-breaking decline for several years, following an illness that had kept her in a near coma for several months. It wasn't really Alzheimer's Disease, though it was indistinguishable. My father had taken care of her at home as long as he could, but she'd finally had to be put in a nursing home, and she went rapidly downhill from there.

Carolyn's parents, both about 82 now, are in remarkably good health and spirits. For more than eight years, they had lived in Sun City in the winter and in Westminster during the summer, in the house that Carolyn and I now occupy. I still think of it as their house, though they started transferring title to Carolyn's name back in 1978, when Carolyn and I separated, thinking we were headed for a divorce.

Carolyn gave them the \$45,000 that she'd gotten from the sale of our house, and they used that to buy the place in Sun City, meanwhile selling this one to her. It was a complicated transaction, and I confess that I wasn't paying much attention to the details at the time, being preoccupied with the problems of living alone for the first time ever.

When Carolyn and I decided, in the spring of 1981, that the separation just wasn't working out satisfactorily for either of us and that we actually needed each other, she moved in with me in the house downtown (that's when Claudia moved out) until Denvention was over, at which time we both moved here, into the Hollister house, after her parents had gone south for the winter.

For several years, from '82 until '86, we shared the place with her parents during the summers, and the arrangement worked out amazingly well, despite occasional tensions (especially when I was still drinking). It's a four-level house, built into the side of a hill. On the top level (where I'm writing this on my new computer), is the master bedroom, with adjoining bathroom and shower stall; George's study; a small sewing room (which I have used as a pulp magazine storage vault almost from the beginning of my tenure here); and the south-facing sun porch and deck providing a superb view of the mountains and downtown.

The porch and deck have been a prime attraction of the annual DASFA Christmas orgies, but in general this level was Hollister turf, and even when they weren't here, I seldom spent much time up here. It's only been in the past few months (after installing the computer up here, I guess) that I've started to really feel at home this high up in the house.

The next level down contains the kitchen and the living-dining room. The front door into the living room is attainable by a flight of steps. The back door, through the kitchen, opens into the back yard, which consists of a relatively narrow lawn and garden area with a steep hillside of rock walk and shrubs beyond. Carolyn and her mother shared the kitchen, we all shared the dining room, but essentially, when they were here, the Hollisters ruled the living room.

Carolyn and I lived on the ground level. It contains the smaller of the two bedrooms, a bathroom (with tub-shower) and what was originally the "family room" with a fireplace dominating the west side. A door on the south wall opens into the garage, directly under the sun deck and porch. The fireplace is invisible now behind bookshelves.

In the basement, beyond the furnace, water heater, laundry facilities and copier, is MY room. I've never thought of it as an office or a study or as the library; it's just my room. It contains my roll-top writing desk; a typing desk combined with a former end table to hold my Olivetti-Systel II word processor (that is, the desk holds the huge Olivetti which is both keyboard and printer, and the end table holds the monitor); two file cabinets, a stereo system (occupying most of a wet-bar counter); and a maze of book shelves and book cases.

What little wall space isn't taken up by books is covered by SF and fantasy posters and artwork, as is most of the ceiling and door. It is unmistakably a fan's room. It was a spartan student's room when Doug

DON-o-SAUR

had it (his Grandpa George finished the room special for him), but Doug was in his final year of school and living in a dorm in Boulder when Carolyn and I got back together, so things worked out conveniently.

A couple of years ago, Carolyn's parents sold their place in Sun City (leaving Doug there to do his own laundry!) and moved permanently back to the Denver area, into a seniors' cooperative condominium in Englewood.

A lot of their things still remain in this house, simply because the condo doesn't have room for all of it, but for the most part they have cleared out. (Though they will be sort of camping here, taking care of the three cats while Carolyn and I are in New Orleans and Virginia.)

After the Hollisters moved out, Carolyn and I really didn't intend to stay here very long. We agreed that this house wasn't right for us. Neither of us enjoy yard work, and while there's not a big lawn here, there is a small garden and a lot of landscaping shrubs that should be cut back from time to time.

Carolyn does some puttering around in the yard because I won't, but that doesn't mean she likes it. We both would rather have a place where the yard work is nonexistent or taken care of by "the management." Also, Carolyn thought the house was too large for just two people.

I argued that it was becoming much too small for the growing number of books and magazines, the supply of which has increased dramatically in the past four years, since I've been writing the review column for *The Denver Post*. The weekly flow of publishers' copies varies from a trickle to flood, but it never seems to stop.

"So get rid of half the books," Carolyn argued.

Really, I DO get rid of some books. I get a number of duplicates (because I pick up books that go to the *Post*, also) and I take them to DASFA meetings and sell them, donating the proceeds to the Building Fund; and I donate books to the Westminster and Adams County Libraries. But still more come in than go out.

We tried to sell this house. We honestly tried, tacitly agreeing to postpone a decision about what to move into until we were sure of selling this one. For a full year we had the house listed with a Realtor and we tried to keep the place clean and attractive for the visitors who occasionally dropped in with the agent.

During the year, from about February 1987 until February '88, we were looking at places to move to, just in case. I was looking big, Carolyn small. At one point we agreed that the ideal would be side-by-side condos, one to live in and one just for the books. It looked like

DON-o-SAUR

there might be a good chance of picking up two for the price of one at a HUD auction or something.

Nothing ever came of it, selling or buying, so the details don't matter. The house simply was not going to sell at \$120,000 and we didn't want to go any lower, so we took it off the market. I started putting up more bookshelves and Carolyn took up gardening.

Sept. 12, 3:16 a.m.: Back from New Orleans, via Abingdon, Lebanon and Honaker, Virginia. Back from the past, except there seems no way to really get away from the past; certainly no escape. All we can hope to do is bind the past to the present and the future. I'm working on it.

I've heard that Nolacon was a mess, chaotic, inefficiently run, disorganized, etc., etc. Well, yeah, I suppose.

A convention of Baptists was still in progress when Nolacon attendees were moving into the Sheraton, and a convention of criminal justice specialists was starting while ours was winding down, and I noticed that the program schedule was being constantly changed, and it was inconvenient having the masquerade clear over on the other side of the French Quarter, but what the hey, I don't go to a con for the programming or the masquerade (though I did saunter over to this masquerade and did not regret seeing what I did of it; I was 45 minutes late getting there but the show was 45 minutes late starting, so I was content; but I got bored by the sheer professionalism of the costumes after the first 25 entries or so and left, taking a stroll through the Bourbon Street carnival atmosphere back to the hotel.

The highlight of the con, for me, other than meeting a good many ghostly personages from my past, was the Dealers' Room. It wasn't big, but it was well stocked with the pulps I was looking for. I found the two issues of *Captain Future* that I was missing and snapped them up without hesitation for about \$10 each. The major coup, however, which did indeed involve some hesitation, was the acquisition of seven early *Astoundings* -- April, June and December 1930; January '31; and October, November and December 1933. My collection of *Astounding/Analog* is now complete, except for recent years.

Whee! What do I do now? That thought, more than the high cost, is what made me hesitate about buying the final missing issue, but I then thought of that little mole on my chest and its possible implications and decided to splurge.

As always, I neglected to write down the names of the people I met and talked to at the con, assuming I would have no trouble remembering them all, and now I'm not at all sure I do remember.

There was Lynda Bushyager, whom I ran into soon after we'd arrived and then never saw again, and the same with "Lan" Laskowski. It was a

real thrill to see Judy Tockman, a very special friend from the earliest days of DASFA.

Laurainne Tutahasi was the main reason I made the effort to get to the masquerade; she'd given me a hint in the lobby of the Sheraton about her Roger Rabbit costume, which I did consider the highlight of the show -- what I saw of it. Willie Siros has worse medical problems than I to. I talked with Allyson Abramowitz long enough to get her new address.

Among the others I encountered (some only briefly): Harry Andruschak, Arthur Hlavaty, Bernadette Bosky, Art Widner, George Inzer, Peggy Rae Pavlat, Ross Pavlac, "Caz," Ira "Mitch" Thornhill, Ned Brooks, Bob Madle, Richard Brandt, Elst Weinstein, Deborah Carlen...

And many others.

The real journey through time was the visit to the Appalachian Mountains of Virginia, my parents' birthplace, an area that my father, now 87, still makes an almost annual pilgrimage to from his home in Laramie.

I have many vivid memories of life there in the 1930s, when my father would be laid off from the railroad and would take the family back to the house and little patch of land he owned on Lewis' Creek in Russell County, almost in the shadow of Big A Mountain, near his father and his sister Edith and younger brother Jack and their families.

What I recall most vividly, I think, is the feeling of being totally surrounded by the high, dark, densely wooded, thickly vegetated hills, a feeling of being cut off from the rest of the world, from civilization.

When I lived there, we had no indoor plumbing, no running water (though there was a pump in the front yard), no telephone, no electricity, no newspapers, not even a radio. A rail line and a dirt road ran past the houses along the creek, but the passage of either train or cars seemed a rare event. The nearest town, Honaker, difficult to find on even a good map, seemed a vast distance away.

I was amazed, during my first visit back there in 35 years, not by how much things had changed but by how much had remained recognizable. A two-lane paved highway has replaced the rail bed, and the old road bed has gone to bush and grass, but the hills are the same, except even steeper and greener than I remembered, and the white frame house that I lived in with my parents and two sisters for several summers and at least one full school year back in the '30s is still standing across the highway from my grandfather's totally rebuilt and remodeled house.

Surprisingly, the houses seemed larger rather than smaller than I remembered. I can't account for that. I was able to show my daughter

the exact spot near the pump where the cow kicked my little sister, Polly, when she was about 2½ or 3 years old and I maybe 5½.

We visited the people who own the land, living in Granddaddy's house, but I didn't ask to re-enter the house I had lived in. I knew there's be nothing inside that I remembered, or would want to.

As for the people that I knew back then ... well, far too many changes have taken place. Most of those people are dead, including even most of the cousins that I knew well; and only a few of the survivors still live in Russell County.

We stayed with my cousin, Omer Thompson, a couple of years younger than me, and whom, frankly, I recall only dimly as a child; he wasn't one of the cousins that I played with regularly; he was one of the "young'ns."

I had one of those blazing, humiliating insights that leave you shaken when we visited the mountainside graveyard where some of the Thompson ancestors are buried, dating back to the 1780s. Omer's parents, my Uncle Jack and Aunt Ola, are buried there side-by-side, and I discovered to my chagrin that I had never known the real names of either while they were alive.

Uncle "Jack" was really Omer -- not Omar and not Homer, but Omer, which is why he named his son that. (Jack was a nickname acquired at about age 10 when he was working with loggers -- "loggin' Jack" as young Omer explained). Ola's name was Leona, and the blinding insight had to do with the name of her daughter, one of my very favorite cousins, Onalee, a name I'd always vaguely wondered about. But Leona, Onalee... It seems obvious enough now.

But I'm still not sure why it was Aunt Ola. (I'd better ask my father about some of these things, while I still can.)

Onalee and her younger sister, Jean, are still alive and well, I'm happy to report, though not living in Virginia. I even met them again briefly last year when they came out to visit their Uncle Bert in Laramie.

It's among the Wilson cousins, my Uncle Clarence and Aunt Edith's offspring, that the real devastation has taken place. The ones I remember are the eldest, Junior (Clarence Jr., obviously, but never called anything but Junior even to this day, and he must be at least 70 now, but not living in Russell County), and then in descending order by age: Charlie (never called Charles), now dead; B.F. (never called Baily Franklin, named for his grandfather Thompson), who died just last year; Patty Ann, who died several years ago; Dot (never called Dorothy), dead; Ruth, dead; Martha, still living, I believe; and Walter, still living.

DON-o-SAUR

There were three others, Betty, Sue and Alice, that I have no memory of at all. The only one of the Wilsons still living in the area is Sue, and we did visit with her briefly in her home in Lebanon but seemed to have little to talk about. She did comment that her memories of Lewis' Creek were mostly unpleasant.

We managed to spend one evening with Curt Phillips and his wife and baby daughter in their home near Abingdon (I drooled over his complete set of *Unknown*, something I've never managed to acquire in all my years of collecting, and he admired the *Astoundings* I'd picked up.) I know I'll always regret not being able to find time to go with Curt to visit Nelson Bond.

4:05 a.m. 10-2-88: The cancer surgery was almost anti-climactic, no big deal. It took place on Monday, Sept. 19, at St. Joseph Hospital, downtown, on an out-patient basis. Went in at 10:15 a.m. and after an interminable wait was finally stretched out on the operating room table around noon.

It took five people about 20 minutes to slice an oval strip of skin from my chest about 4½ inches long and a couple of inches wide at the widest point and then pull the flaps back together and sew me up: No skin graft necessary. They used only a local anesthetic, so there was no grogginess or nausea, though I could occasionally feel a sharp pang while they were working, but nothing agonizing.

I was back on my feet almost immediately and could probably have driven home myself, but Carolyn had done the driving on the way to the hospital and I was content to let her drive home. I never took any of the pain pills we picked up and finally flushed them down the john.

I saw the doctor again in his office a week after the surgery, and he was satisfied with his handiwork. He had the lab report by then: No residual cancer cells found in the excised tissue. He hastened to add that there's no guarantee the melanoma won't show up again somewhere else and that the odds, in fact, are slightly in favor of recurrence.

I'll have to have a thorough checkup about every three months for the first year and once every six months or so thereafter; and meanwhile I'm supposed to keep monitoring myself, watching for any suspicious lumps, lesions or malignancies. Among other things, I'm supposed to check for unusual discolorations of the fingernails or toenails; I'd never heard of that before.

It all seems kind of boring -- a particularly unappealing and uncreative form of narcissism -- but I'll try to cooperate.

MileHiCon is now just around the corner. It's about time I started thinking about my speech, if I'm serious about including it in this issue of DoS -- which of course I am. But speech ... what the hell to

DON-o-SAUR

talk about? Something about dinosaurs, I suppose, and never mind that I don't know anything about dinosaurs.

I didn't know anything about entropy, either, when I made it the subject of my Autoclave speech in 1977. Literary dinosaurs. Fannish dinosaurs. Extinction and survival... Dinosaurs and *Don-o-Saurs*... Origins and evolution... R.F. Starzl as a science fictional dinosaur... I'm sure I'll think of something.

MILEHICON XX GOH SPEECH

I have [or had] no idea what ~~Wick~~ sorry, Simon was going to say about me --if anything -- in his introduction, but I must thank him for not saying more than he did. I suppose I should thank the MileHiCon Committee for naming me their Fan Guest of Honor, although I realize they had practically no choice.

After all, when a con settles on DINOSAURS as its theme and makes "Party Till You're Extinct" its rallying cry, and then picks two such contemporary writers as Jack Chalker and Connie Willis as its Pro Guests of Honor, it has put itself in a terrible bind and has to do something desperate to achieve credibility.

So it selected a genuine fossilized fannish dinosaur -- in fact a *Don-o-Saur* -- as Fan Guest of Honor. But thank you, anyway, MileHiCon Committee.

Some of you have heard of *Don-o-Saur*? It was a fanzine that I published for a few years in the 1970s. It was even nominated for a Hugo one year. I intend to tell you a little more about it, since it's practically my sole claim to fame. Yeah, yeah, I know, I was once a WorldCon co-chair, but I said FAME, not notoriety. I hope to talk about certain other things, too, including dinosaurs, literal and figurative; extinction and survival; origins and evolution; R. F. Starzl and Capt. S.P. Meek. I'll have somebody wake you when I'm finished.

In the interests of brevity, perhaps I could start by giving you all the information I possess about real dinosaurs: I know that Denver now has its own dinosaur -- the *Denversaurus*; its bones have been lying around in the museum of natural history for years and years, and somebody just discovered it and gave it a name. Several years ago, didn't a group of school children lobby the State Legislature and persuade that august body to name a dinosaur as the state fossil or some such thing? My memory is dim on that point; I'd have to look it up. I read recently in *Science News* that the pelvis of "Supersaurus" has been found in a quarry near Delta, Colorado.

There's no clear relationship between any of these facts, as far as I can tell, but they do comprise the extent of my dinosaur lore. If you want concrete facts and tantalizing theories about dinosaurs, I'd

have to refer you to my two grandsons, ages 8 and 5½, who, along with an entire generation of youngsters, are experts on the subject.

I decline to speculate on the causes for the current excitement about dinosaurs, not just among children, but responsible citizens and con committees as well. Last week's DASFA had one of the largest and most attentive audiences I've ever seen at a DASFA meeting. The subject of course was dinosaurs. I don't know. It's not as though we could either save the dinosaurs -- or nuke 'em -- at this stage. One of life's mysteries.

Frankly, and personally, I'm sort of luke warm on the subject of dinosaurs.

But if this is true, I can hear someone muttering indignantly under your breath, how come I named my fanzine *DON-o-SAUR*?

Well, that's one of the things I promised to talk about, isn't it? So I better discuss origins for a while. And evolution.

Look, I didn't really start out to publish a fanzine. I didn't even start out to be a fan. I've always loved science fiction -- and fantasy, too -- for as long as I can remember, and probably even before that. And my personal origins go back to the paleozoic era, so I don't want to talk about that.

But there are certain established, normal patterns of progression for people who have a love of SF early in life. Many of them outgrow it. About as many continue to read the stuff all their lives but don't do much of anything else about it.

A relatively small number become FANS, and of those who do, only a relatively small number remain fans for any extended period of time. The number of prominent lifetime fans can almost be counted on one finger. I mean, there's Forry Ackerman, but where do you go from there? Well, okay, Harry Warner, I guess, and Jack Speer. Redd Boggs. So make it one hand instead of one finger.

The point is that most fans -- and by fan, if we need a definition, I mean a person who expresses his or her love of science fiction by being active in a science fiction club, attending or helping to organize as many cons as possible, or publishing or contributing to fanzines or apas -- most such fans either burn out after a few years or become so skilled at expressing themselves that they become professional editors, writers, artists or organizers.

It's probably impossible by now to list all the famous SF professionals who started out as fans, but a few names spring immediately to mind: Jack Chalker, Ed Bryant, Harlan Ellison, Gregory Benford, Isaac Asimov, Lester Del Rey, Don Wollheim ... and on and on

DON-o-SAUR

It does seem that of the current crop of pros, an increasingly large number manage to omit the fannish phase, or become fans only after they're on their way to a successful career. Connie Willis is a shining example. Simon Hawke. Greg Bear, Gene Wolfe ... and on and on.

We have no way of knowing for sure how many people fail to make a go of their SF writing or editing or artwork and turn to fandom for consolation. Such creatures tend not to become famous. I suspect that many of the failures become so embittered that they turn their backs on the whole science fiction-fantasy field -- or become critics. Or both.

And then there's me. I really wanted -- and tried -- to make a career of writing SF long before I had the slightest interest in fandom. I sold one story in 1954 and another in 1958. And that was it.

I won't say that I wasn't bitter about the short-sightedness of the editors who refused to print my stuff, but I also realized that an awful lot of the fiction printed in the magazines in those days -- and it's still true today -- had bylines that you'd see once or twice and then never again. Some writers simply don't have more than one or two stories in them.

Or they quickly learn that there are much easier ways to make a living.

Writing, for some people -- for me -- is hard work. I have endless respect and admiration for those who enjoy hard work or even don't enjoy it but are nonetheless willing to do the work for the satisfaction of having written something good. For those who find that the very act of writing is easy and more pleasurable than anything else in the world ... I don't know. I can't relate to them at all.

For me it's work, and I am basically a very lazy sort of person. When I was trying hardest to be a writer I was also employed on the copy desks of various newspapers, and in all honesty, I found it so much easier and more fun to polish up other people's writing than to do a lot of writing myself, that there was really no contest. I took the path of least resistance, which also happened to be the one with the larger and more regular pay check.

I seem to recall that I started out to explain why I called my fanzine *DON-o-SAUR*. I haven't forgotten; I just haven't gotten around to it. I'm trying to remember how I became a fan at all. I never became disillusioned with SF, just because I couldn't write it successfully. That's a key point. As a result of my own experiences in trying to write it, I gained increased respect and appreciation for those who did it really well -- like Asimov and Heinlein and Theodore Sturgeon and Frederik Pohl and Clifford Simak. I continued reading.

And I started collecting the SF magazines. That's what led to fandom, but the catalyst was a guy called "Caz" -- some of you know the

DON-o-SAUR

name well. In 1968, 20 years ago, ten years after I'd sold my last story, Caz founded the Denver Area Science Fiction Association -- DASFA, the group that puts on MileHiCon. Caz was also a dealer. I bought a good many books and magazines from him.

He'd been to worldcons and gave some of us our first inkling of what went on at cons. He published a fanzine -- won a Hugo for it. I'd never paid the slightest attention to fanzines before, had no real idea what they were. Frankly, Caz did not inspire me to start publishing a fanzine of my own. *ERB-dom* was almost professional. Maybe too professional.

Even when Paul Angel, in 1971, started *D'APA* and signed me on as a charter member, I had no intention of publishing a fanzine. I didn't even know what an apa was.

How many of you know what an apa is? Well, it's possible, I guess, to live an entire fannish lifetime without ever getting involved in an apa, difficult as that may be for those of us who've gotten hooked to understand.

In simple terms: An apa (amateur press association) consists of a group of people who all agree to write something at periodic intervals and to make copies of their work available to the other members of the group. But instead of everybody mailing their stuff individually to everybody else, they send their copies to one person, called the Official Editor or OE (or sometimes CM for Central Mailer) and that individual collates the different contributions into a neat bundle and distributes them, so that everybody gets a stapled magazine sort of thing containing all the stuff that everybody has written.

It's customary, though not required, for the contributions to be given a name.

And NOW I think I can explain where the title of my fanzine came from. It was not, as I've said that I had any particular interest in dinosaurs, though even then, 20 years ago, I considered myself sort of a fossil -- an old fossil, even. After all, I was in my mid-40s, while Paul and many of the other early members of DASFA and *D'APA* were teenagers. That didn't seem to matter to anyone. I'd already noticed that there's very little ageism in fandom; we were all neos together. I was just as inexperienced in the important things in life as they were, and a good deal more so than some of them.

But by 1971, I had finally been to a real science fiction convention. It was Westercon 24, over the Fourth of July weekend. Avram Davidson's Guest of Honor speech -- or part of it -- provided the inspiration for my apazine title. Davidson told a long and involved story about trying to find a dinosaur coprolite for Damon Knight, having discreetly asked around and learned that Damon had been lusting after a coprolite of his very own for years. Everybody knows what a coprolite is? A fossilized turd, in layman's terms. Okay?

DON-o-SAUR

Davidson said he'd written to the Curator of Palentology at the Natural History Museum in New York, somehow assuming that they had packing crates of the things lying around to give away; and after many months of waiting had received an apologetic yet testy letter from the Director of Vertebrate Paleontology, who explained that dinosaur coprolites are much more rare than Davidson seemed to realize, and emphasizing the difficulty of determining whether or not any particular object was a true coprolite.

Most so-called coprolites, the Curator explained, are mere wind-polished gizzard stones, and he said it's impossible to know for certain that an object is a coprolite unless it's found in the proper place within the skeletal cavity.

What it all came down to was that the museum had no coprolites to spare.

Avram finally went to Knight and confessed his failure. Knight effusively thanked him for his kind intentions and then explained that actually he didn't have to have a dinosaur coprolite.

"Any kind of coprolite would do," he said.

"Damon, what the hell do you want a coprolite for?" Davidson asked.

"Why, I want to use it as a paper weight," Damon replied.

The story somehow appealed to my sense of absurdity, and it was on my mind when I named my apazine *Don-o-Saur Coprolites*. After a couple of years of a gradually expanding circulation and some encouraging feedback, I decided to split the title. I used *DON-o-SAUR* from then on as the title of the general circulation zine and kept *Coprolites* as an apazine title.

So much for origins.

Don-o-Saur evolved to the point where it drew four Hugo nominations and then suddenly became extinct a little more than 10 years ago - that's several eons in fannish reckoning.

Did I mention that I collect science fiction fossils -- the pulp magazines? They disappeared as a literary life form some 30 years ago. Actually I don't see the magazines as dinosaurs; they're the tar pits or dinosaur graveyards. In my home equivalent of the Denver Museum of Natural History, I spend many hours examining the old bones and occasionally I stumble on equivalents of the *Denversaurus* (but so far no giant pelvises), such as R.F. Starzl and Capt. S.P. Meek and Charles W. Diffin and Anthony Gilmore.

DON-o-SAUR

I had to mention some of the names, since I referred to a couple of them at the beginning of my talk. But that's all I'm going to say about them here. I may have to write a book about some of those long-forgotten but once imposing figures. They're the true dinosaurs of SF.

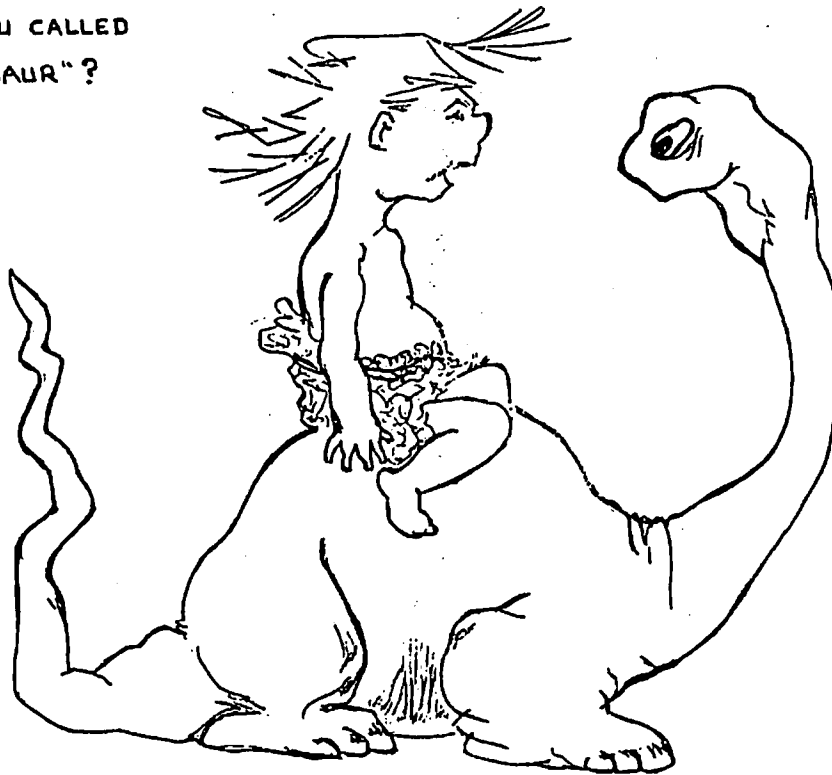
Attempts have been made recently to revive some of the extinct magazines. *Weird Tales* has returned, four or five times, and now in a hardback edition, even. I understand someone wants to revive *Unknown Worlds*. There's even been talk of bringing back actual dinosaurs, through genetic engineering and patient cloning.

And so now we come to the only real point of this talk: I'm not one to fly in the face of a trend. I decided that if literary and literal dinosaurs can be revived, so can *DON-o-SAURS*; and so here, ladies and gentlemen, newly resurrected, is the latest issue of *DON-o-SAUR*. It may not appear any more frequently than the new *Weird Tales*. Its chances of surviving are *unknown*.

And you may have to wait a while for the hardback edition.

WHY ARE YOU CALLED
"DON-O-SAUR"?

'CAUSE THEM'S
ME NAMES —



B

DON-o-LOCS

WARNING:

This issue protected by double locs!

Because after all we're looking backwards through time, I am presenting the locs on issue 51 first, followed by 50. Some of these, as you'll see, are not only time binding, they rather poignantly illustrate one of fandom's favorite truisms: "DEATH DOES NOT RELEASE YOU."

Mae Strelkov

CC 55

5220 Jesus Maria

Cba., Arg. Aug. 23 1978

freedom = no more danger of unexpected pregnancy. The primary purpose of marriage is raising children in security. After that? "Protection from loneliness in old age?" Love is part of it, but one can love in so many ways!

D-o-S 51 is fascinating, like everything you write. Fifty is a big milestone to reach. In marriage, one's children are by then grown up & the most urgent reason for "keeping the family together is shattered. In a woman's case she knows a new

When I was in the States this time (June) I met a former atomic scientist who told me, "The time has come for us NOT TO GROW OLD. A person like yourself can command the body's cells to continue to be self-healing & renewing." I replied, "As I believe in reincarnation, I really want not to be forever my present self, but to wipe the slate clean -- with a new bunch of genes & start all over again. New adventures, new lessons to learn."

Well, it's your choice," he said, not quite approving.

Maybe I'd be willing to live on a good while more this time till my "Encyclopedia of Pre-Aryan World Symbols & Terms" is definitely launched. But there's a lot to be said re "starting anew & afresh" ("born again," literally, as a new baby.)

Your marriage was obviously a very civilized one, but kindred interests & sympathies are necessary for any marriage to endure past age 50 or so. Love is so tricky, yet necessary, too. I wish you luck whatever you decide in the future.

Robert Bloch

2111 Sunset Crest Drive

Los Angeles CA 90046

Aug. 20, 1978

TIME OF CHANGES and equally by your speech. Here's hoping all is well with you.

Many thanks for issue 51. It reaches me, unfortunately, as I recover from an attack of flu and attempt to catch up on a week-long delay in the work schedule. But I did want to tell you that I was deeply moved by your account in A

Ann Chamberlain

3464 Wilson Ave. #C

Oakland CA 94602

Oct. 9, 1978

I've just spent a straight four hours read- in DOS 51. Will you believe, I NEEDED IT? I have oodles of unread magazines, and nothing appealed to me, except DOS.

Ever been to El Cajon? That's just outside San Diego. There is an edifice there housing the Unarius Science of Life. There is a tremendous library, and a Museum, and Ruth Van Norman (she leaves the Van out of her name now). There have been some published articles about

her, but none have done her justice as yet. Most interviewers treat her as an oddity, as if she were a publicity seeker with some perhaps frassulent idea to hook the public on. No such thing: She is closer to the truth of the depth and scope of mankind and his possibilities than anyone else on earth. If she is given due consideration, and the interviewer is capable of extended awareness, some pretty interesting things can be brought to light.

She has very good material to finish that SPEECH with -- scientific proof that it is now possible for people to become aware of HOW to use Thought and Will to be self-regenerating. People insist on dying. But nature renews every cell and tissue of the body now, in cycles, and when you combine this knowledge with the fact that there are electronic particles in the very air we breathe, and also through all things that live and grow, you are almost to The Awakening.

Why are fans always attracted to pictures of huge, ancient reptiles? Because that was the real beginning of MAN, but then he was of giant stature, so the beasties didn't look so formidable.

There's more, but why spoil it for you ... Send for a Unarius Library Listing and pick out what attracts you. The address is:

Ruth E. Norman
Unarius Educational Foundation
P.O. Box 1042
El Cajon, CA 92022

A. Bertram Chandler
23/19 Tusculum St.
Potts Point N.S.W. 2011
Australia Aug. 15, 1978

As always I found the continuation of your autobiography fascinating. But marriages between members of the tribe are no more stable than mixed unions. I could cite a few cases ... All in all, it boils down to the crack made by somebody to the effect that matrimony is a lottery -- with no winning tickets.

Nonetheless, your problems are very similar to mine. Susan reads hardly any science fiction -- although she insists on reading my own output as it comes hot from the typewriter -- and usually I have one helluva struggle, not always successful, to drag her to see a science fiction or fantasy film. The only reason that she finally consented to see *Star Wars* is that there is (hopefully) a strong possibility that *Star Courier* will be filmed and I wanted her to see what can be done with special effects.

It's a pity that I wasn't able to see you when I was in the States this year. I would have had more time at my disposal if I had not been urged to attend the Popular Culture Association Convention in Cincinnati shortly after the Marcon in Columbus. I was in Denver briefly, just long enough for a leg stretch in the railway station whilst on the way from New York to San Francisco.

Which brings me back to Susan. When she travels, she never likes to go to a place more than once. If my U.S. itinerary had included New Orleans she would have come with me. That's one place to which she hasn't been and would like to see. On the other hand, I like revisiting places. I'm beginning to feel that it's high time that I went to Japan again. Susan is trying to drag me to Red China -- but as I don't have any Faithful Readers there I'm not at all keen.

DON-O-SAUR

But wouldn't life be boring if we were all alike. And if we were, what would there be to write about?

Ruth Berman
5620 Edgewater Blvd.
Minneapolis MN 55417
Aug. 26, 1978

So you want speculation on immortality, do you? All right. One: It would be, effectively, a childless society. (Except, temporarily, for emigrants to other planets.) A woman might be permitted, say, to have one child after the age of 500 and one after the age of 1,000; otherwise the pile-up of people alive would make an impossible population burden. However, that's assuming that women remained fertile throughout their lives, and I don't think it's a likely assumption, as (if I recall) the supply of eggs is set at the start. Assuming only the usual 25-30 years of fertility, most women would not be allowed to have children at all, and only a few would be set aside to breed up children as insurance against the possibility of later deaths. In this latter case, there would be a good deal of envy of those few (even discounting the number who, having personal "immortality," would not desire children as extensions of themselves). In either case, the fact that nearly everyone was effectively the same age would make for a considerable degree of dullness and, eventually, stodginess.

However, the stodginess would make it likely that a lot of star-travel could go on, and people who left would not be exiled but could return to visit essentially the same culture. Aside from the fact that population pressure would drive people away, the fact of long life would make it possible for them to get there without assuming the invention of ftl drives, or even a fuel source so efficient and available as to allow near-light-speeds (with time-dilation). The travelers could just sit out a travel time of several centuries. The chief and most durable recreation, for both travelers and those on planets, would be study. The resulting population would probably be very much like a small college town, but without "civilians," and with the population more like the dons than like the student dorms: pleasant, interesting, pedantic, unchanging, sophomoric in humor, plagued with high suicide rate, sometimes wise but more often merely learned. The place of variety-preventing superficiality might perhaps be supplied by intercourse with intelligent non-human peoples, for a while, although eventually (assuming they, too, developed such long lives) they would be perceived as just one of the folks. It would probably be a delightful existence for several centuries, but if, say, death came at 2,000, I think most would be more resigned than angry, and if death effectually never came unaided, a Lazarus Long type who tried suicide would be wished pleasant dreams instead of discouraged.

By the way, I don't think you ever said -- do you plan to print those two poems I sent you a year ago last April? Because if not I'd like them back.

[I am appalled and chagrined at how much embarrassing material I'm finding in these letters. I haven't come across the poems Ruth mentioned; if I ever do, I'll try to either return them or let her know whether I plan to use them.]

Harry Warner Jr.
423 Summit Ave.
Hagerstown MD 21740
Aug. 27, 1978

As usual, your frankness and apparently impartial narrative about your personal life has left me wondering how to go about commenting on that part of the issue. It's a clear evidence of

my ego when I admit that one of my reactions was to find myself mirrored in both partners of your marriage. That is, I can sympathize with both you and Carolyn because there are various elements and tendencies at war within me, and there's no way I can get even a trial separation of one from the other.

For instance, your happiness in clutter and her desire for order. I have both tendencies and this creates all sorts of complications. I keep the downstairs portion of this house and my bedroom in reasonably neat order. But two unused bedrooms are incredible messes, one of them so filled with stacks of books and magazines that it's almost impossible to reach shelves of records, the other with mostly empty pasteboard cartons which I've been lugging home from the mailing room under the illusion that some day I'll sort out and pack away a lot of the books. I get nervous when the neat part of the house gets messed up and I can't think of any good reason why the cluttered part should be put into order.

In FAPA a while back, I speculated that my reason for enjoying *The Odd Couple* involves recognition that I'm both Oscar and Felix. Most of us probably have elements of both characters, and that may account for why Simon's concept was so successful as a play and as a movie and then as a long-lived TV series. I don't know if this has anything in particular to do with your problem, except that your article made me wonder all over again what my life would have been if I'd ever married.

Your method of giving the GoH talk must be a fannish first. The only encore that I can think of would consist of rigging up a large, powerful opaque projector, aimed at a typewriter on the podium, and thereupon proceeding to give the talk not by speaking the words but by typing them out for projection onto a ceiling area.

I've also seen the predictions of greatly expanded lifespans. But it isn't clear to me if the suspension or reversal of the aging process that is under study will include a provision for coping with the brain cell problem. As I understand it, brain cells are different from cells in most parts of the body, for their inability to renew themselves, and it is supposed to be this special defect of brain tissues which causes extremely old persons to grow gradually less capable of thinking clearly. I know I wouldn't want a body which was good for hundreds of years while I gradually became even more childish and idiotic than I am today.

The other thing that worries me about living for hundreds of years is loneliness. After only 55 years, I've already outlived almost all my family, quite a few of the boys and girls I grew up with, most of the people I met professionally during my first years of employment, perhaps two-thirds of all the neighbors I've known in my life, and so on. Even if everyone had access to this long-life serum simultaneously, the survivors in my circle of friends and acquaintances would still continue to die accidentally, some would undoubtedly suicide, others would move away. I feel very alienated already because there has been such an upheaval in the portion of the world's population that I've known. I don't know if I could cope with outlasting most of the rest. This even extends to inanimate things. I feel almost lost in Hagerstown because so much of it has been torn down or rebuilt or remodeled during my lifetime. I don't even feel as if I've worked at the same newspaper company for 35 years, in one sense, because there's almost nothing left from the day I went to work: two employees, two walls, one staircase, a set of scales, a couple of filing

cabinets, and that's about it. If change affects me strongly in my 50s, how could I cope with it in my 340s?

Gene Wolfe
Box 69
Barrington IL 60010
Aug. 21, 1978

Good to see Don-o-Saur again. I don't think I've gotten a copy in two or three years. Not that I blame you for that. I'm not much of a responder. The personal stuff was fascinating. Somehow page 20 wasn't what I was expecting, if you know what I mean. I'd like to hear more about the relationship and Carolyn's reaction -- not of course that you are in any way obliged to tell.

In my experience radicals throw things out and conservatives (like me) keep them. I think that you are a closet conservative.

Have you considered getting a dog? Might help.

[Page 20 of D-o-S 51 mentions my temporary relationship with the young lady who acted as what I termed a catalyst in the temporary dissolution of my marriage. I never considered getting a dog and can still only wonder what it might have helped with.]

R. Laurraine Tutihasi
1217 Majestic Way
Webster, NY 145860
Aug. 18, 1978

As you explained in your opening remarks, Don-o-Saur 51 was quite different from other issues I've seen. I'm glad you explained some of the reasons for the separation between you and Carolyn. I wish you could've gotten around to discussing love. It's such a strange animal, isn't it?

I enjoyed reading your WesterCon speech. Did you actually read it verbatim? And what did Jerry Pournelle actually say in his introduction? Is immortality really such old hat as a theme in SF? I wish someone would draw up a bibliography. It seems to me there could be many different treatments of the theme and different conclusions drawn from them. Immortality as a theme could probably be broken down into sub-categories. The nicest immortality story I've read appeared in a magazine last year (possibly *F&SF* or *Galaxy*). The story used cloning in a new way as a device for lengthening one's life. At an elderly age, one entered a sort of nutrient bath which replaced dead or dying cells in the body by a cloning method. I'd like to live forever, as long as I was assured of eternal youth and there were other people around.

Dan Goodman
1043 N. Curson #7
Los Angeles CA 90046
July 6, 1978

On the contrast between fans and political types: there's a greater degree of overlap than you seem to realize. Several writers are, or have been, active in mundane politics. Sticking solely to those involved in mainstream politics: Jerry Pournelle, Fred Pohl, Tom Purdom and Joe Hensley come immediately to mind. Heinlein, of course -- it shows in *Magic Inc.*, for instance.

Fans who've been active in mainstream politics include John Boardman in NYC, Marty Cantor in L.A., Joan Verba in the Twin Cities, Jack Speer in New Mexico. There are almost certainly a good many more who've been active for brief periods or who have been active much of their lives but whom I haven't heard about.

DON-o-SAUR

Marital breakups in general: I know of two divorced couples who live together. In one case, I'm fairly certain what brought them back together. She needed help badly, and he was able and willing to give it. It required that he move back into what was now her house for the duration of an emergency. He never moved out again.

On your particular case: What seems to me to be important in living together (married or not) is trust. If the trust isn't there, then nothing but inertia can hold the people together. If trust is there, then almost anything which goes wrong can be overcome. (And I just remembered that much of the *Kama Sutra* is devoted to techniques for developing trust.) Mutual avoidance of confrontation sounds to me like a lack of trust.

In case you're wondering, I'm single, and I live alone except for a tomato plant which has been rather neglected lately.

On longevity: I'm fairly certain I'd enjoy living a thousand years or more. I'm 35 now, and with a few grim exceptions I've enjoyed each year more than the one before for at least the last 25. But I don't know WHAT I would do with another thousand years of life. I'm unsure enough what I'll be doing a year from now.

There's a theory (espoused by Herman Kahn among others) that humanity is in the middle of a transition greater than any in history. The last such transformation had the writing of history as one of its byproducts. This one will last 400 years. It began around 1776, and will therefore end around 2176. I'd like to live to see if things work out that way.

Fred Jacobcic
113 W. Ohio Apt. 4
Marquette, MI 49855
Oct. 4, 1978

The longevity theme is as old as time. You make an excellent point which worries me too when you said, "I think 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." As things get worse for the populace, it will be harder and harder to justify the money for results that may be years off and that the populace cannot get an obvious, brick-in-the-face tangible return from.

They are only going to see and worry about the poverty and the money spent in their own backyard, leaving it to the few visionaries to look to the future, to fight for the means to continue researching.

Again, you hit it on the nose with your concerns about the effects of immortality "resulting in an extreme conservatism, a stifling of adventurous impulses." The status quo would become frozen, stagnation will set in, and the decline and fall of homo sapiens would be for real. Unless, of course, as in some science fiction stories, a few adventurous souls, the few odd-balls, non-conformists, would set things in motion again on the road to human advancement and continuing outward movement. As in the title of the John Wyndham book, the human race must always have THE OUTWARD URGE.

Howard Brazee
1405 Pine #1201
St. Louis, MO 63103

I would like to say something about change. People keep saying that while cultures change, people stay basically the same. While that is a comfortable philosophy, it doesn't seem accurate.

(Read Margaret Mead.)

Many people have reviewed John Varley's works and complained that he throws in too many ideas for comfort. I've wondered if that is because he grew up in a younger generation, where as a young child he saw TV space travel, etc., enter his life, and had an education when government was preaching technology. I'm in his generation and noticed nothing uncomfortable about the number of concepts in his works.

Spider Robinson recently reviewed *The Persistence of Vision* and I was interested in his response. Spider is a younger combination of flower child and SF lover. He can be anti-technology while using it. Predictably Spider didn't care for a succession of technological ideas, but with his counter-culture point of view he saw something which I haven't seen written before, that Varley's characters did have development, only it is slightly alien. He overcame the cultural future shock to recognize the emotional differences.

I've noticed some of this in my own life. I've moved around through many neighborhoods and schools and was always the kid other children would pick on. However, I had a happy childhood; cruelties were minor. Compare this to the childhood of L. Sprague de Camp or, or back to Tom Brown's schooldays. When I taught at school I noticed the difference is still growing.

What shocks us today and what shocked people 25 years ago? Undeclared war? Open premarital sex? Four-letter words in public? Biased newspapers? A poorly designed gas tank? Such emotional words as Huns, Japs, N-----s, Krauts, even Yanks? You would be shocked to know what you'll accept as normal in another 25 years.

Stan Green
750 Sycamore St. #1
Red Bluff, CA 96080



I really enjoyed Don-o-Saur 51 and only wish I had discovered it sooner. The alien wrestler on the cover looks as if he has a little Italian blood in him. It is not the idea that he reminds me of something I've seen from a spaghetti Western, or a raunchy Italian SF movie, but his hand gesture, which looks as if he may have just given someone the Italian bird.

It is not the cover, however, that impressed me most. It was your writing. You have a way of being personal to the reader without revealing too many secrets or deep emotions which might hinder your purpose. Unfortunately, I can't seem to hit this happy medium in my personal writing, which I plan to expand on in my next fanzine. I wish I could. Since our group missed the first day of Westercon 31 because our VW wagon pulled up lame, it was nice to see that your GoH speech had already been printed in Don-o-Saur.

D-o-S 51 Also Heard Froms

Harry Andruschak, Don Ayers, Alan Bosco, Richard Brandt, Brian Earl Brown, George R. Brown, Bill George, Kathy Hammel, Amy Hartman, George "Lan" Laskowski, Fred Lerner, Mary Long, Sam Long, Steven E. McDonald, Jodie Offut, Russ Parkhurst Jr., Bob Peterson, Ron Salomon, Nigel Sellers, Mark R. Sharpe, Philip Stephensen-Payne, Rick Stooker, Sarah K. Swider, Dave Szurek, Ira "Mitch" Thornhill, and Liebe Wohl and Phil Osborn (on behalf of ALGOR).

Many of the locs on Don-o-Saur 50 (which was dated Aug.-Dec. 1977 and contained my Autoclave 2 Guest of Honor speech with an introduction by Carolyn) dealt with child rearing, entropy and optimism, since those were the subjects I had written about. I mentioned somewhere that my 50th birthday was on Nov. 10, so there was some discussion of age. I'm leading off with a letter that has nothing much to do with any of that; you'll see why.

Jack L. Chalker
P.O. Box 7687
Baltimore MD 21207
Jan. 9, 1978

For my part, I'm going through a problem time right now. Teaching in the city has become a more hazardous and impossible job than police work, and I've had the hell beat out of me at least once this year already (and the bastard's out on probation, of course). For the first time in 12 years I actually don't want to go in and teach, nor is much teaching possible. This has dovetailed with an odd development in another quarter: during Sept.-Nov., MIDNIGHT AT THE WELL OF SOULS was the top-selling non-movie tie-in SF book in the Del Rey line, and all of a sudden I'm into big bucks, editors calling me to write stuff, and the ability to sell books for as much as \$20,000 before writing them. Maybe D'Amassa doesn't like my stuff, but over 100,000 other people apparently do and they're telling their friends. This means, of course, I'm at the point now of deciding whether I have the guts to go full-time writing; it already pays a lot more than teaching, and would be even nicer if I didn't have to do anything else, particularly pressure-type stuff. The trouble is that I love teaching, and until this year's crop, actually felt I was making some headway. I've never been dogmatic or a super-liberal, but while a lot of my faanish friends have sat in their suburban homes and written nice little essays on poverty and helping others I have spent 12 years in the nastiest black ghettos of this port city, where one in three kids will be in jail several times before he's 16 and where one in five of my students will not live to see 25. Just being a white guy who goes in, understands the subculture and relates to these kids (I had a pretty rough childhood environment & it helps -- my limp's from a teenage bullet wound and I have stab scars and all sorts of other stuff) has been important -- particularly since I'm as cynical about government and liberals and sloganeers as they are. I have rarely mentioned what I do because it's more important to do it; to come out and proclaim it is to try and get my gold star or something. But this current crop includes over 70% certifiable psychopaths; it's no longer a blackboard jungle, which was only a pale imitation of the real thing anyway, but a war -- and my generals are increasingly feathering their own nests with the government goodies and couldn't care less if I am murdered in the classroom as long as there isn't sufficient blood to justify a new carpet.

Had I not seen and experienced the fact that I have done some good -- have bailed kids out of jail and seen them wind up getting into college or the military or some skilled profession and making it because somebody spent enough time to show them where the doors were, I'd have been long gone. But although I've had my tragic, and sometimes near-fatal failures, the ratio of success is sufficient. Most of these kids were born into one-parent welfare families, and nobody in their abbreviated family or neighborhood or anywhere else cared.

It's the primary theme of MIDNIGHT AT THE WELL OF SOULS, and some very few people got the message, judging from the letters. I also got from the ultra-leftists in town the comment that MIDNIGHT was "a denial of every leftist principle," which I found fascinating.

We are in an age when label is more important than action. The only label I've ever accepted, other than cynic (on institutions, not people) has been humanist, and that's been rarely applied in its proper sense. The leftists I know are not humanists, they are de-humanists; people are cyphers to them as long as some nebulous long-range revolutionary utopia will come.

So, at any rate, I am loath to leave the salvageable kids I come in daily contact with to the animals and ideologues, yet there is only so much you can do before you get your throat cut. I have no martyr complex.

I am totally anti-dogmatic, both anti-right and anti-left. It's one reason I like DON-o-SAUR so much and like you -- you get down to the one irreducible thing in life ... you care about other people as human beings, not cyphers. You are the first literate person I've met who considers that there is a human being in trouble there, no matter what his cause, principles or orientation; no union or party card check. You care, which is why I read DoS.

I consider you the best writer in fanzines, had have for some time. I only wish I saw more of your own humanism understood by and reflected in the letter columns.

Nesha Kovalick-Walker
1602 Winona Court
Denver, CO 80204
Feb. 10, 1978

I enjoyed what you wrote about your children. It made me think a great deal, both backwards to relationship with my parents, and forward to my relationship with a child which, with luck, won't be born for a couple of years. I don't know -- I think you may well have a talent for parenting. You seem so calm about it, an attitude I've always thought my own folks lacked. Their tension caused me to be an extremely good child and a frighteningly well-behaved adolescent. When I got away from it I made up for lost time. In order, I (1) flunked out of college my first semester (with an allegedly high IQ); (2) took up dope, sex and "bad company" while providing my family with all the gory details; (3) ran away from home; and last but not least (4) had a nervous breakdown. It was only (4) which forced us to build some sort of a real relationship, and now we're all good friends.

I hope that tension will not be there with my own child. Most of Gary's friends married right out of high school and now have offspring, and I can already see which kids are probably going to have problems. I'm not sure that attitude can be cultivated.... I react to children in ways dredged up from my own past, ways I didn't know I still reacted to myself.

I was also quite interested in your Autoclave speech. I'm a rather realistic person and entropy doesn't concern me greatly. Things that remote can't make a pessimist out of me. But a pessimist I am, at 23. It isn't that I think things will always turn out badly, just that I remember there is always a chance that they will, and I ought to plan an option for that eventually to be on the safe side. I think that's something I have gotten from an extensive early reading of SF -- there are many possible endings and you can't count on any of them. I can certainly think about the future without any certainty that there will be one, just as I can read and enjoy Tolkien without any conviction of the objective reality of Hobbits, and study history for six years with a sneaking suspicion that there really wasn't any past.

Why are people pessimists or optimists? I suspect that children are generally optimists and there are then some years in adolescence that decide later attitudes. If things turn out well, one becomes an optimist for all times no matter how badly things may turn out later; if they turn out badly, one doesn't dare to trust again and becomes a pessimist. But there can be some odd combinations of the two. My parents are faithful to a particularly idealistic variety of socialism, and were at the same time given, during my childhood, to making dire predictions on the probability that we would be annihilated by an atomic war or dragged off to concentration camps.

Dave Szurek
4417 Second, Apt. B2
Detroit MI 48201

Fifty, eh? Well, I'm 30 now, and while I don't think or feel any different than I did years ago, haven't adopted a new lifestyle, nor do I feel any stronger desire to blend into the fabric of mainstream society or "grow up" in the sense traditionally used by the brain cops, the sense of entropy in my own life has grown more concrete. Hell, 30 is still pretty much a spring chicken, but when I realize how swiftly the last 15 years have passed, it's freaky.

I've heard it said (believe it or not, I've had it screamed in my face by people who seem to think I've committed a cardinal sin) that anybody who hasn't at least expressed a desire to drop into mainstream society by this age is a lost cause, and if so, I have no regrets.

If I do have a "place" I'll decide where that is, thank you, and nobody else is going to tell me to stay in it on the basis of race, sex, socioeconomic position, number of years lived or any of the other common institutional drivel. If one wants to fancy themselves a mere robot or clearly defined character in fiction, I suppose it's fine, but that's not the trip I care for. On the other hand, should I feel tempted to sit in the park feeding pigeons and putting regularity at the head of priorities three years from now, I might not fight that too hard, either.

Ageism, like sexism, racism and all that, has many faces, and a whole tight structure of its fence. All of these systems are geared toward dehumanization and reinforcement of the concept that surface details have more bearing than internal essence, and I've no wish to collaborate with such views.

I don't believe that entropy and optimism are necessarily incompatible. Each individual life is a study in entropy. I've long operated on the knowledge that I don't know when my own time will come. At age 17, I was characterized as "morbid" due to my awareness that even if the bomb didn't fall, freak accidents were definitely possible, and none of us had advance warning. Yet I don't feel that even then it was morbidity. My cognizance of sudden death was not and never has been a paralyzing agent. I've harbored no death-wish, nor did my attitude bring on fear and loathing. Rather, this overview helped me to better accept the inevitability of death, thereby making my peace with what couldn't be changed and to better appreciate the gift of life and in particular, the moment. One's perception takes on greater perspective when it is fully realized that each breath could be the last. Of course, the response could be either negative, causing the subject to fearfully miss said moment, or positive, leading us to cherish it in the full. I chose the latter at an early point.

Mike Glicksohn
141 High Park Ave.
Toronto, Ont.
Canada M6P 2S3
Jan. 11, 1978

Congratulations on reaching 50, both issues and years. Myself, I'm quite a bit short of both those achievements. Somehow, though, I just can't bring myself to think of you as one fandom's Elder Statesmen. You're too damn young to be that old!

The first part of your discourse was interesting to read but inspires no comment. I'm one of those who has never had even the slightest desire to have children. I'm fully aware that (a) I value my independence too highly or (b) I'm too irresponsible, depending on your point of view. Having taken the necessary steps to ensure that all I'll leave behind me is a collection of fanzines and a trail of empty Chivas bottles, I can enjoy reading about the rewards other people glean from their roles as parents. And it's a delightful change to read of someone who seems to have done a decent job of bringing up offspring! Every day I encounter far too many cases of youngsters who can't abide their parents and I see children who've obviously been raised totally incorrectly. So it was refreshing to read about the Thompson family and discover, as I'd have fully expected, that you're as good a father as your character suggests you ought to be.

I'd forgotten how droll Carolyn's introduction to you was. It definitely deserves reprinting. In fact, I think Carolyn should be duplicated and shared around; it isn't fair that just one ~~old/decelerating~~ faned should have exclusive rights to such an exceptional woman. I'll have to ask Don D'Ammassa to work on cloning her.

About the speech itself, essentially I'm on the opposite side from you. While not actively pessimistic I'm certainly not an optimist. I guess I'm a realist who happens to be basically nihilistic and hence finds it hard to have too many positive beliefs in the world as a whole. (I have no trouble thinking of my own small part of life and the world in positive terms; it's just the big picture I've little faith in.) However I'm not simplistic enough in my worldview to argue that in a billion years it'll all be nothing so why bother. In 24 hours I'll still be here so I'll do whatever strikes me as providing the most pleasure and satisfaction for myself and those I care about. Very self-ish, of course, but I've never tried to deny that. Entropy may be totally irreversible but that doesn't mean we can't form local pockets of resistance that temporarily reverse the inevitable march of chaos. That is what any civilization is, after all. (By the way, trying to connect right and wrong, good and bad, improvement and deterioration to entropy is rather silly. Like suggesting the motion of a particular droplet of water will affect the progress of a tidal wave.)

Don D'Ammassa
19 Angell Drive
E. Providence RI 02914
Jan. 29, 1978

I'm one of those pessimists you mention in entropy speech. I suspect the race will muddle through everything, but I don't see that flashes of humanness in the miasma of our present culture necessarily imply an optimistic solution. To offer the converse (and open old wounds), I would mention that some perfectly decent, intelligent people have adopted such regressive (in my view anyway) attitudes as assuming they can individually judge which laws to obey.

I suspect that pessimism is particularly gloomy at present because ends are in sight. The energy reserves of the earth are fairly well measured and dates have already been estimated for their depletion. The world is pretty

well explored and there is no place to escape to. (Space is not, I insist, a viable solution to this problem in the foreseeable future.) The world becomes increasingly repressive, wiping out decades of progress -- Ethiopia has gone from an inefficient dictatorship to an efficient dictatorship, which means more people get killed; Rhodesia now had apartheid; Uganda has Amin, Cambodia has possibly the worst government on Earth; India has just emerged -- temporarily, I suspect -- from a dictatorship; Israel has an intransigent leader whose expansionist views will undoubtedly neutralize the hopeful changes in Egypt; and I could go on for a long time.

Individual acts of courage and goodness may be personally rewarding to hear about, but they don't change governments all that often.

[I'm not arguing, but isn't it fascinating to note what changes have taken place and what has remained more or less the same over the past decade? Who could have anticipated Gorbachev, for instance?]

Sam Long
425 W. Lawrence #7
Springfield IL 62704
Jan. 15, 1978

Thanks for DoS 50, the isentropic fanzine. It was interesting to learn about your children. Like Doug, I enjoy reading almanacs and such for entertainment, but unlike him, I don't manipulate the numbers much. A good almanac is a mine of out-of-the-way and fannish information. It was in a Whitaker's Almanac (the 'standard' British one) where I learned that up until quite recently there was a legal officer with high precedence at court whose title was Master in Lunacy. The office was abolished in the legal reforms of the early '60s. Also, and I think this is nice, Whitaker's divides the countries of the world into: Britain, the Commonwealth, Ireland, the U.S., and 'foreign countries.'

There was a character in *Evergreen Review* called Phoebe Zeitgeist, as I remember. Have you heard Flanders and Swann's Song of Thermodynamics?

Heat is work, and work's a curse.
All the heat in the universe
Is gonna cool down, cause it can't increase;
Then there'll be no more work, and perfect peace.
(Really?) ((Yeah, that's entropy, man.))

That's only part of it. As for entropy jokes, I have only a short verse:

Higgledy-piggledy
Adiabatically
Rises the parcel of air;
When it cools,

It loses its moisture
Anisentropically
Causing the rain to wet
Wise men and fools.

All in all, a good ish. As usual you've made me uncomfortable and made me think, made me comfortable and entertained me, and made me feel I know you a little better. What more could anyone ask?

Gina Clarke
85 Albert St. #910
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada K1P 6A4
Jan. 30, 1978

No one's happier than me to hear that
Clarke's Law of the Universe No 425 has passed you
by. Perhaps I should draft a LOTU No. 426 -- All
LOTUs are subject to suspension or even, unlike my
memory, total recall.

Except entropy, of course. Nah, entropy too.

Because entropy is merely a statement of cosmic pessimism and as such is only half-true. Not that looking on the dark half of things is all bad. You know the old line, pessimists only have pleasant surprises. Well, that's me and my kids.

To start with, I had the usual bellyful of tales of the tortures of childbirth. The awfulest pain known to humankind, I read somewhere. My pleasant surprise was having only cramps. Of course, they did go on and on -- 48 hours for the first, 36 for the second. But they were, so to speak, quite easy to bear.

And I'd always thought babies a bore. A smelly, noisy bore. Imagine my surprise to find mine a delight. They peed perfume and shat chocolate, and their only sounds were cheerful chuckles and gurgles.

And so it went. Now I've been braced for the horrors of adolescence for some years, but it occurs to me that since my kids are 16 and nearly 19, it's all over. And it was fine! Just a few cramps. And here are two young women, healthy, beautiful, intelligent, ethical, tenacious, with lots of initiative, perfect teeth and a variety of talents. They and I even get along.

Now that proves that entropy isn't the whole story. From the other, and equally valid viewpoint, the universe is every day in every way getting better and better. I mean, that's obvious, if only moderately wonderful people such as you and I can bring forth such overwhelmingly wonderful people as our respective children.

And so with the broader evolution of life in general and humankind in particular. And the progress of civilization. Which, despite setbacks and unproductive sidetracks, is progress indeed. Doubters should go ask someone from the Middle Ages. Preferably someone strung up by the thumbs for disputing the number of angels who can dance on the head of a pin.

Chaos is organizing into order as much as the other way around. Evolution is entropy laughing on the other side of its face.

Huh--even in the individual case, we don't have to fossilize and run down as our year-count goes up. We can progress and evolve, and organize our personal chaos, and -- with our without the help of Lady Clairol -- we can get not older, but better.

You are probably right that Love Is the Answer. For the more evolved the form of life, the more capable it is of love. And in the case of people, the older we get the more capable we are of a "pure" love -- that is to say, one not contingent on what's-in-it-for-me.

[Clarke's LOTU #425 is that "both ends of the stick are short."]

[One of the most personally moving letters I received in response to Don-o-Saur 50 was this one from my daughter, dated on the eve of her 24th birthday.]

D. Claudia Thompson
Something Emerson St.
Denver CO 80204
Dec. 17, 1977

I read DoS 50 with much interest, as you can imagine. Somehow it seems to call for retaliation. There are a couple of points addressed in DoS 50 that I have feelings about. Some interest was expressed in hearing more about your drinking years. Let me tell a story about that time.

Somewhere (I don't know where, I read what someone (I don't know who) said about raising children: when children are young, they accept their parents; when they grow older, they judge them; sometimes they forgive them. Well...

Mama told me this part of the story. Your father was also an alcoholic. When he came home from drinking, Grammie would quarrel with him about it. Loudly. Angrily. Viciously. The children heard the quarrels. They couldn't fail to.

So that, when you started drinking, you swore that your children should never suffer that kind of scene. I know Mama supported you completely in this. We never saw you drunk. We seldom saw you at all. We didn't know. We didn't know when you drank, and we didn't know when you stopped.

The unfortunate part of this was that I never knew my father until I was a teenager. My early memories are entirely of my mother. On the other hand, I never suffered the scars of an emotionally-torn, wracked and divided family. Hell, I thought we were the best adjusted family on the block. In some ways this was a masterpiece of child-rearing. It's not always what you do for your children, sometimes it's what you refrain from doing.

That doesn't mean that my father's alcoholism never affected my life. This is my part of the story. I found out about the drinking, not when I was little and simply accepted my parents, and a little after the age of judging them. I was 16. That's a little old to suddenly find a skeleton in the family closet you had thought was immaculate. Or maybe not. May be it was just the right age for shocking a self-righteous and complacent young woman out of vanity and into tolerance and compassion. Alcoholism is a hereditary disease. I took a hard look at my own drinking habits and said, There but for the grace of god...

I stopped thinking of myself as the child of the Chosen People, the Better Sort, the Mighty and the Good. It occurred to me for the first time that I might be fallible.

So far I have discovered in myself no tendency to alcoholism, but I stopped condemning others who did. I never went too far with drugs, but I recognized that there was no brick wall of invincibility stopping me; I just never had an emotional reason to.

Fate, Mother Nature, may have the right to say, "one more unfortunate, weary of breath, rashly importunate, gone to her death" is no great loss to

the world. It may be true. But I have no right to be callous, I'm not stronger or better or more godly than the dead. Just luckier. My compassion is a prayer for continued luck. My desire to help a prayer for continued strength, and plea for help in my turn if strength fails me.

D-o-S 51 Also Heard From:

Don Ayres, Harry Andruschak, Ruth Berman, Alan Bostick, Lester Boutilier, Ray Bowie Jr., Richard Brandt, Bill Breiding, Bill Bridget, Brian Earl Brown, George Brown, Avedon Carol, A. Bertram Chandler, Allan Chen, P. Lyle Craig, Tom Digby, Graham England, Andrea Ferrari, George Flynn, Ken Gammage, Art Hayes, Hank Heath, J. Owen Hanner, Norm Hollyn, Ben Indick, Mark Jacobs, Fred Jakobic, Wayne Joness, Brod Klinger, Ken Konkol, Paula Leiberman, Rebecca Lesses, Marty Levine, Carole Chayne Lewis, Denny Lien, Eric Lindsay, Mary Long, Barry Kent MacKay, Steve McDonald, Christine Pasanen, Jerry Pournelle, Tim Roaix, Ron Salomon, Mark Sharpe, Rick Stoker, Nigel Sellars, R. Laurraine Tutihasi, Dr. A.D. Wallace, Harry Warner Jr., and Elaine Wojciechowski.





DON-O-SAUR 52