

An **idea** Ahead Of Its Time

Interlino Express

Thank you for letting me have a wish from an old chicken in your life. This sounds like meat for a fantasy western: a U.S. Cavalry outpost that's secretly been converted to the worship of a giant toad god. Can James West and Artemus Gordon get to the bottom of it before the toad god's acolytes divert the Colorado and turn the Arizona Territory into swampland? **It is particularly infamous and disgraceful for a Minicon where "Tereso" is a guest to produce such a complete abomination of a document.** When I was in my 20s, I thought I had to eat the Cheeze-its. **If you publish a giveaway (fanzine), you have to finance it yourself. Even a simple issue can quickly eat up six or eight dollars.** It's so thick. It's so hard. It's so good. **What if the hokey pokay really is what it's all about?**

Anon. sig file, Emma Bull, Terry Dowling, Pamela Dyer-Bennet, Francis T. Laney, Michelle Lyons, & Geri Sullivan.

Idea #10

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Additional art credits:

Steve Stiles: inside front, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 21, 24, 26, 42, 46, 48, 49

Additional credit and thanks to...

Jeff Schalles: scanning (300/600 dpi & Gestefax 456), color changes, mimeo maintenance, snow shoveling, doctors' visits, and faith

Karen Cooper: copyediting that which I had ready to show her, PEZ, and enthusiasm

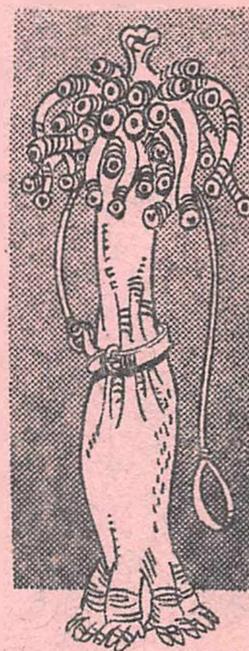
Steve Stiles, Kathy Routliffe, Sean Wallace, and Mike Scott: patience

Glenn Tenhoff: official *Idea* logo artist. Accept no substitutes

David Langford: interlineation, p. 31

Garth Danielson, feather artists, collators, and other Minneapolis fen who find themselves helping in the last few weeks of production

Fred A. Levy Haskell: Official Happy Deadwood



A Fnarg's Best Friend

Idea Volume 2, Number 10

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Geri Sullivan, Editor

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Time Traveling

Welcome to the All-Steve-Stiles-Art issue of *Idea*. Cover by Steve Stiles. Articles illustrated by Steve Stiles. LoC column illos by Steve Stiles. Fillos by Steve Stiles. Even an article by Steve Stiles, illustrated by wosname, Steve Stiles.

Back in 1994, around the end of May, Steve sent me the mini-portfolio of *Wind in the Willows* illustrations printed in *Idea* #9. He went on to mention an illo idea that could perhaps make a decent cover. I've always enjoyed Steve's work, and holding so much of it in my hands at one time got me thinking. Why not an entire issue spotlighting a single artist? I'd seen enough depth and variety in Steve's work to get excited about the idea — excited enough to dare mentioning it to him.

It's really rather rude (by Minnesota standards) to say, "thanks for the portfolio, I like the cover idea; say, why don't you do the whole issue?" He'd already offered a lot; I responded by asking for more. Lots more.

Steve sent the initial packet of material to me that October. I still didn't have *Idea* #9 out; he was well ahead of schedule. It's taken me two more years to realize just how far ahead of his time Steve was

Unlike certain faneditors.

I could blame the dog, or the Internet. I could bemoan the failure of my gigabyte hard drive, and the failure eight months later of its replacement. Just because you have reasonable backups doesn't mean you don't lose weeks in the process. But nobody really cares why an issue is late.

In my last editorial, I talked about all the people who were moving. Since then, far too many others have moved beyond this Earth and, like the rest of fandom, I haven't found this easy to accept or deal with. I took a closer look at it last summer when Jack Targonski's father died. I went out to Pennsylvania to lend a helping hand. And I began to understand just how hard and wearing it is to both bury someone and begin the process of settling an estate. The trip was too much of a dress rehearsal for what I'll face when my own parents die. As Jack said when I boarded the plane home, "It's been awful. It's been good, too. We got a lot done. But mostly, it's been awful."

It's be awful for a lot of us lately. I wish everyone reading this who's been touched by grief an extra measure of sunshine, love, and joy. They don't take the grief away, but they can help counterbalance it.

Back in the summer of '95, Brit Trip3 brought me more than the usual helping of fun. A delayed flight out of Minneapolis gave me an unexpected evening with Jack, Bob, and Kathy in Chicago, which was welcome even though it meant I missed Thursday night at the Yorkshire Grey. Jim Young was the first fan I saw in the UK; lunch and a tour of the American Embassy was a delight, once the guard decided I wasn't a terrorist and let me through the door (sans camera). Then it was off to Precursor, a welcome visit with Chuch and Sue Harris, and six consecutive nights at Intersection, where I partied harder, longer than ever before in my life. Really. It was fun to discover I *could*, 'though I've shown little inclination to do it again just yet. When I arrived on Walter and Madeleine Willis' doorstep the night following the convention, I was still a wreck. And that was after a day full of quietly dozing on the trains and ferry between Glasgow and Donaghadee.



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If I don't have your signature on file, please send a decent tiff or sign a pocsard and snailmail it when you email your LoC. Thanks!

Walter came along to Portstewart, where we visited with James and Peggy White, and James treated me to a long-promised mountainous confection at Morelli's ice cream parlor. He treated himself to one just as large, and Walter, too. There would have been plenty for all of us had we split just one Tropical Delight, Irish Sunrise, or other half-gallon of ice cream and topping disguised by its harmless-sounding name. Funny thing, though; I don't remember any melted ice cream remaining in the bottom of the tilted, oversized brandy snifters that doubled as serving dishes. Of course, we had to stop and rest on the walk home. And Walter and I showed little interest in food the rest of that day.

All too soon it was time to head back across the Irish Sea, but I capped off the trip with a party at Rob Hansen's and Avedon Carol's. Less intense as those six nights in Glasgow, but enough fun so I have pictures to embarrass Martin Smith with. Not a unique accomplishment, but a gratifying one.

Jumping ahead a year, Toner and L.A.con III offered their own brands of fun. The Vegas fans' sense of hospitality could easily be overwhelming if it weren't so easygoing. I only hope they'll have patience with the rest of us as they venture to more out-of-town conventions and discover that chips and M&Ms are the typical consuite fare rather than the eight different homemade soups, laden dessert tables, hors d'oeuvres, and Tammy Funk's infamous never-to-be-made-again Deviled Eggs. Kudos to Tom Springer, Ben Wilson, and the rest of the Toner crew for offering up a weekend of fannish relaxation and drawing in people I see all too rarely, like Shelby and Suzanne Vick.

How can I write even a little bit about Toner without mentioning Rotsler and the delight he took in giving me grief? I'll never know what possessed me to confess that as a youth I spent a couple years perfecting the art of the silent fart. But confess I did, and within Rotsler's earshot. Toner was soon thick with fart cartoons. The roars of laughter were anything but silent, and I was laughing right along with crowd. Beware anyone who thinks this is an open invitation for more fart jokes; Rotsler showed up at the Worldcon and handed me a blank graduation certificate from the "Geri Sullivan School of Unobtrusive Gaseous Emissions" and instructed me to present it to whomever I chose. And he gave me the master, so the number of graduates is hypothetically unlimited. This is the only warning you will receive.

Relaxing at Toner was just the break I needed before diving into L.A.con and the 20-hour setup of the fan lounge, mostly done while we were open. As Don Fitch said Thursday evening, "I don't think I've worked this hard, this continuously, since the winter of '52 in Korea." The lounge was a convention-long success, and while I can't say I partied even one night like those six in Glasgow, it was deeply satisfying in a different sort of way. And I hope I never forget the \$735 shopping run Doug Faunt and I made Saturday afternoon to pick up additional supplies for the lounge, focusing on alien food for the James White Book Party scheduled for the next day. The party was cosponsored by Tor Books, NESFA Press, and L.A.con III. Tor turned us loose with a rough shopping list and a wad of money. Doug and I went a little nuts. We started with alien vegetables, then turned to Scotch eggs and sushi in the deli case. I forget when we picked up the whole smoked turkey, or exactly what filled all three shopping carts. (But I'd sure like to find more of that hazelnut bheer.) Claire Eddy and Teresa Nielsen Hayden, inspired by the raw materials, went a little nuts themselves, artfully arranging trays of sushi interspersed with gummi worms and other alien delights. The fan's reactions were ever so satisfying: people looked at the food and either recoiled in horror or dove right in. One fan's nightmare was another's delight.

In between the two Worldcons, I worked hard on Minicon 31. But Minicon didn't provide the fun of Intersection or the satisfaction of L.A.con III. In short, I burned to a crisp Saturday night of the convention. Four months passed before I thought of something I might enjoy if I were to attend Minicon 32. I've since bought a membership, but am approaching the whole thing with a bit of caution, and am planning to be out of town (enjoying Corflu and related travels) beforehand to avoid at least some of the temptation to work on some last-minute crisis or another. Looking forward to Minicon 33, I'm impressed with some of the community-building things its exec group is doing. I look forward to seeing the effects of certain decisions on both this year's convention and the next. But I think it will be awhile before I'm ready to be anything more than mildly involved in running Minicon.

Maybe that will leave me a bit more time and fannish energy to publish more issues of *Idea*. Gotta make a dent in those 100+ cases of Fibertone in the basement, doncha know?

See you on the funway.

- Geri Sullivan

PASSING THROUGH DOGPATCH



By Steve Stiles

I was going through a dry patch, a freelance slump, sometime in the fall of 1990, and since work had been coming in fairly regularly for the previous year and a half, I had gotten complacent. This sudden evaporation of three promised assignments (not to mention two publishers) left my usual zenlike psychological equilibrium in a sweaty, convulsing state. Of course, slumps happen and I quickly fell back on the strategies that had gotten me through previous unexpected famines; namely a lot of blind, unreasoning panic, eventually followed (and cured) by long sessions at the drawing board, working out the usual sure-fire proposals and art samples guaranteed to launch the entire comicbook industry into yawping swoons of adoration. Oddly enough, none of these proposals and samples have ever gotten me anything like an immediate response — most of my freelance gigs usually come right out of the blue — but the work sure does fill up time that might otherwise be spent in worry. Something would turn up; it always did.

Even so, despite all this cocky confidence, I was rather surprised when I received an unexpected phone call from California; my caller was a William Hochberg, and his father was a lawyer for many top cartoonists and their families, including Al Capp's. It developed that Hochberg had managed to persuade Capp's widow, Catherine, and his brother, Elliot Kaplan (of "Abbie an' Slat's") to give him permission to attempt to revive *Li'l Abner*; would I be interested in submitting some samples, strictly on speculation?

I was completely stunned. This was lightning totally out of the blue! Al Capp's *Li'l Abner* has long been one of my all time favorite comic strips. Doing *Li'l Abner* would be the equivalent of a musician doing Carnegie Hall! Just considering a shot at that, no matter how remote, made me go out of focus for a few seconds. Even with all this in mind, I managed to break out of my electrified petrification to ask the first question that plopped into my mind:

"Is this going to be *good* Capp or *bad* Capp?"

Hochberg chuckled. "I know what you mean. Don't worry about it — I'm a liberal."

At this point I'd like to pause and explain, for those who aren't familiar with the history of the strip, that one of Capp's specialties was taking potshots at all those morons who make life difficult for the rest of us — corrupt politicians, brutal cops, greedy capitalists, and warmongering generals. So it was a bit unexpected, in the mid sixties, when he began taking a Limbaugh-like aim at American hippies and student radicals — who were against corrupt politicians, brutal cops, greedy capitalists, and warmongering generals. I had been something of a "hippy" myself during those years and I knew that I and most of my friends bathed regularly, for example. Nor had we ever rolled any little old ladies. Granted, the so-called Counterculture was a proper target and deserved some satire, having its own fair share of frauds and hypocrites, but Capp's bludgeoning attacks on Woodshuck Nation struck many as unfair and heavy-handed and he began losing his traditional readership in droves.

I have a few theories about Capp's reactionary decline. The contrast between between the wine, women, and song days of his youth and the weed, free love, and psychedelic rock of the '60s might've produced a kind of culture shock resentment in the now much older Capp. There might've been a bit of jealousy involved, too. There's a critter in *Li'l Abner* called The Bald Iggle; to gaze upon the Iggle is to be compelled to tell the truth. (Naturally this throws all of American society into complete chaos!) In one sequence, an aging critic of the Younger Generation is being interviewed: "All they're interested in is fun, fun, FUN! Now in MY day..." (in waddles Iggle) "When I was young, all I was interested in was FUN! Really, the only thing I have against the younger generation is that I'm too *old* to be one of 'em!! SOBI!"

Then again, illness might very well have soured his outlook. By that time Capp was suffering from stomach problems, emphysema, and a form of lupus. Walking on his artificial leg had become agony.

Back to the phone call. Hochberg went on to explain that he had been contacting other artists to submit samples as well. In cartooning circles this is called a "bake off." The results would be judged by the Capp family and a jury of impartial cartoonists. Fair enough. I certainly had the time to do the two or three strips Hochberg was asking for, and even though the whole proposition looked like a long shot, I knew I'd be kicking self-ass for decades if I backed out and the revival took off.

A few days later I got the script for three days' worth of continuity. Disappointingly, the humor struck me as weak and forced, but I decided to go on with it. Long shot or not, I'd always admired *MAD*'s Bill Elder for his ability to mimic other artists' styles, so I pulled out everything I had on Capp in my collection, studied the techniques and got to work. A few days later I mailed off the sequences.

I won the bake off. According to Hochberg, the jury had consisted of, among others, Elliot Kaplan, Mell Lazarus, William Stout, Scott Shaw!, and Sergio Aragones. *Whoa!*

Now that the whole project seemed a bit more real. I considered some ramifications. There was syndicated cartooning itself to think about; over the years newspaper strips had diminished in size as they



*Lenin's October Revolution grew
To a torrent from a trickle.
In collective farms he praised the charms
Of a WIDOWER'S HAMMER AND SICKLE*

by Eric Needham

had diminished in importance. Once cartoons had been considered a major selling point for newspapers, but a newer breed of editors and publishers now just used the strips as filler between advertising supplements. The field stank, and only a few high-powered talents like Bill Watterson seemed to be able to work around that. Since panels were now *only a bit larger* than postage stamps, it would be a drag to master a fine style like Capp's only to see it reduced down to such an extent; I'd have to work on simplifying Capp's style while somehow retaining his strengths, and even if I succeeded, it seemed a shame. More primitive artists, like Gary Trudeau, managed to keep to the four panel tier in their dailies, but I noticed that when strip sizes first began to shrink Capp had been forced to eliminate that fourth panel, which had really compressed the room for humor. And now panel size was even smaller.

I also realized that time had passed and changed; we were now in the glorious nineties and the oldtime biddies of the McCarthy era had been replaced by today's biddies, those censors from both the right and the left; on one hand we have the Pat Robertson/Moral Majority types, and on the other, the Politically Correct anuses. Of course, newspaper syndicates and editors are well known for their fearless support of freedom of expression, but consider some of the elements in *Li'l Abner* humor: Well-endowed women in skimpy li'l outfits, ugly looking Native Americans, stupid poor people, foreigners with broad accents, and lots and lots of haid bashin'. Man, we'd be raw meat for those pit bulls, and lucky to last six months!

On the other hand, it's always enjoyable bugging prigs.

When Hochberg's script arrived, I wondered even more about us lasting six months. The writing still struck me as forced, stilted, and unfunny. It was maddeningly ironic; almost any of my friends, it seemed to me, could've done a better job, and here the one person in a position to revive *Li'l Abner* lacked a sense of humor! We'd be pilloried in the fan press; *The Comics Journal* would skin us alive!

Still, I would be drawing *Li'l Abner*. That whole prospect seized control of my brain and then goosed it. Drawing *Li'l Abner*! Even if the whole project went down in flames, even if I never again accomplished anything more significant than a Rorschach test, I'd have the certainty of at least winding up as a footnote in the history of cartooning.

But there was something else besides the thrill of temporally stepping into Al Capp's outsize shoes, and that involved my relationship with my late father, which had been awkward and strained at various points in our lives. We just didn't get each other at times, something to do with the generation gap, I suppose. In later years I'm glad that we grew closer, and yet there was one gap between us that never was bridged; my father's non-recognition of my career. There was something he didn't like, something suspect, about artists, and although he never came out and *said* anything (which was another problem), the disapproval was clearly visible, hanging in the air between us like a great cloud of rancid New Jersey smog. He wouldn't acknowledge, or even look at, anything I drew — fine art, cartooning, comicbook stuff, you name it. And since we never talked about the situation, all I'm left with are suspicions. Did he consider my ambitions too impractical? Too "arty"? Dangerously unmasculine? Bizarre? Or all of the above? I'll never know.

There was, however, something he used to say before I gave up attempting to show him my early attempts: "*Why can't you come up with something like Li'l Abner?*" (Jeez, why didn't I think of that!).

Well, now not only would I be doing something like *Li'l Abner*, bighod, now I would be *doing* *Li'l Abner*! I would be satisfying both of us; talk about psychological closure!



*The Mona Lisa's secret smile
Which hints of gay adventures
Could be more daring if she were wearing
WIDOWER'S PORCELAIN DENTURES*

by Eric Needham

(Maybe I could even stop kicking kittens! Maybe I could get rid of the Rubber Ducky in Vaseline collection!)

And so, even though I felt apprehensive about the quality of the script, I worked up about two weeks' worth of daily continuity and mailed it in. Looking at the art now, years later, I have to wince, but I think I could've come up with a passable Capp style after a few months of solid work. By this point I had gotten another, paying, assignment so that my time was pretty tight when Bill decided to rewrite about 25% of the script. This required me to reletter, and sometimes redraw, entire panels. As far as I could tell, the revisions were not an improvement. When second and third rewrites came in, I began to feel pretty harassed.

A few months went by. From time to time Hochberg would call to tell me about various nibbles. During this same time period the third attempt to revive POGO had gone belly-up, which I took to be a bad sign. Some syndicate people were saying the same thing. I abandoned all expectations and mentally wrote off the project. It had been interesting and Bill had sent me about ten years worth of Capp's material, which I had thoroughly enjoyed, so it hadn't been a total loss.

And then a syndicate picked up "our" *Li'l Abner*. It was The United Feature Syndicate, and they had gone so far as to have pasted their indicia on each daily. The strip would be published in southern and midwestern papers, as well as papers in the Philippines, Australia, South Korea, and some assorted Third World countries. My weekly earnings wouldn't be astronomical, like, say, Charles Schultz's, but the figure quoted was *much* more than I had ever earned before, a nice juicy sum. (Dad would've been proud!) All that remained was getting the contract and, if things checked out, signing it. I began to mull over the possibilities — one night I even had a dream about General Bullmoose in Moscow. Maybe I could find a way to do the actual writing myself. Maybe I could eventually get Dan Steffan in to help — and force him to do overtime! Hell, if the strip got to be a big success, I'd subcontract the whole thing to Steffan and retire to the Bahamas, sipping Singapore Slings at the seashore while listening to all those new CDs! A whole new way of life was opening up before me! *Drool!!*

POP!

I was rather surprised when I received an unexpected phone call from California; my caller was William Hochberg and he sounded bitter and angry. He was calling to inform me that Julie Capp, daughter of Alfred, (who had expressed no interest in all the previous proceedings) had suddenly decided that she didn't like the idea of *Li'l Abner* being revived, and had talked her mother into withdrawing permission for the project. I rather wish she had come up with that back in December — before I did all that drawing. Considering my own feelings about the script, I suppose I *really* can't blame her. But, but... but...*sigh!*

Later Bill was kind enough to send me a nice kill fee, which was unexpected and unasked for; truly a gracious and considerate gesture. Still, things didn't feel quite the same for the next few weeks when I had to get back to walking on the ground again.

These things happen in freelancing. I keep telling myself that over and over again. Besides, there may be a life after death; if our plans had been successful Al Capp might very well have been the first person I'd meet after I had later shuffled off through them Pearly Gates.

Do you suppose they have lead-lined baseball bats in the Great Beyond?



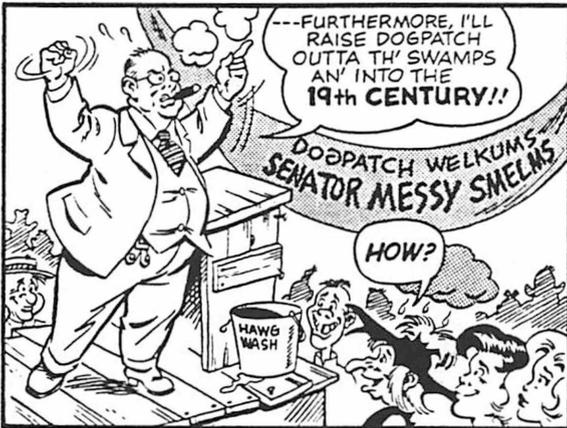
*Diogenes lived inside his tub,
The lovable old sceptic.
This brilliant Cynic kept it hygenic
With WIDOWER'S PINE ANTISPETIC*

by Eric Needham

L'I' ABNER

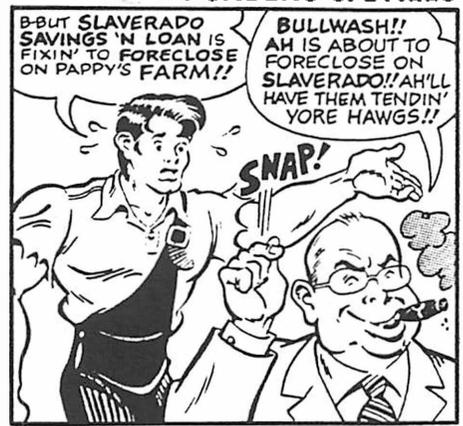


HOCHBERG & STILES



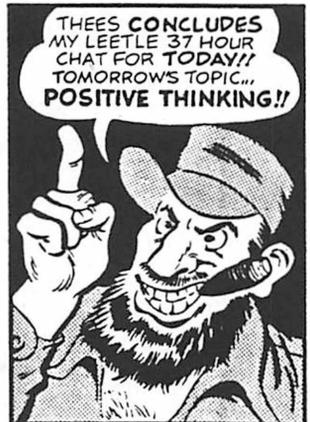
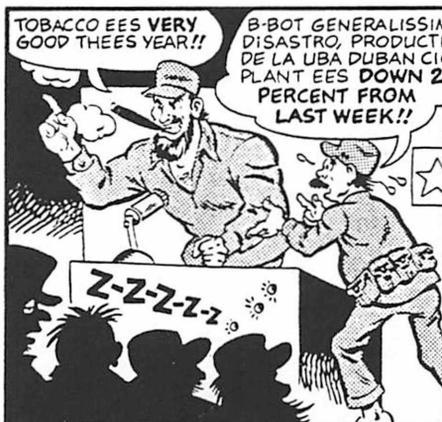
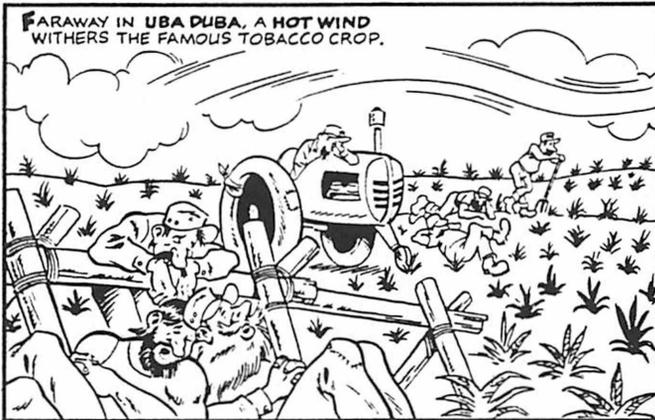
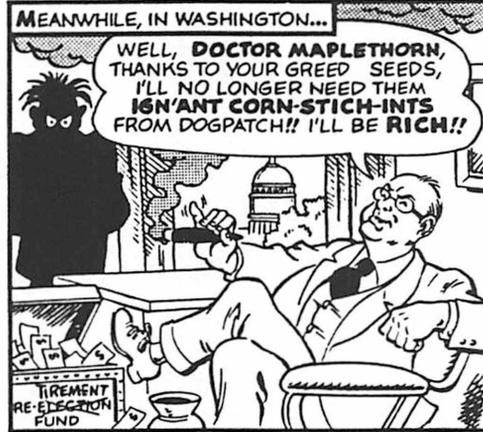
LIL ABNER

HOCHBERG & STILES



LI'L ABNER

.. HOCHBERG & STILES



If It's Too Loud, You're Too Old!

by Jeff Schalles

I've blown up a lot of high fidelity components. I almost never buy new ones, I like old ones that were at the high end of the art when they were new, but the lower end stuff can be useful, too. Until it blows up. Components come naturally to me, at times magically, from garage sales and audio store trade-in shelves and classified ads. Sometimes I blow up the speakers, sometimes the amps. This last time, red-lining an old Cheap Trick tape, the \$20 Kenwood yard-sale receiver locked on 10, one of the speakers fried its coil, shorting that channel on the amp. Now in my studio I'm using a hefty 25-year-old Scott receiver to drive my oldest speakers, big home built 3-way boxes with 15" woofers. They started out in life in my parents' 1957 Magnavox console; the speaker mounting boards are the only original parts left. This system rocks big time. After more than 30 years of this, my hearing is just fine, thanks. I think it's all the vitamin C I take. Keeps your tissues elastic. You heal fast, too. So, I left the blown Kenwood sitting atop the Scott as a decoy for the next times the studio thieves come through. I've been lucky so far—they're stealing small expensive electronics stuff, and there was nothing in my studio that interested them.

A year and a half ago I began renting a music studio in North Minneapolis near where I work. It's in the (former) Capt. George H. Mallon VFW. My landlord bought the old brick tavern-type building and carved it into dozens of small studio spaces. It's not very warm in winter, it's not real secure (I've been broken into twice) but it's cheap. I shared practice studios in New York with the bands I was in, but when a band broke up I'd lose my space. Now I've got my own. There are a lot of monthly studio spaces in this town, there's an awful lot of bands here. Way more bands than places to play but a lot of recording going on.

It's the Minneapolis sound. Music is a way of life.

I've been playing drums in rock bands longer than I've been in fandom, which has pretty much become forever now, and I'm not done with either yet. I haven't played in a band since the awesomely catastrophic final War Pigs show (the bass player split the singers' head open with a thrown bar glass) in New York at 8BC in 1986. Josh and Winston and I, the core of *Intensive Care*, jammed a bunch more times after breaking up, including the Saturday afternoon of the New York Corflu in 1990, over in an



Stilles

hourly practice studio in Jersey City. The next year Josh visited Minneapolis and Nate Bucklin brought over his amps and the three of us rocked the Toad Hall basement for an afternoon. A year after that I jammed with some guys in a bar one night and auditioned with some guys in St. Paul, but then my gear stayed in its road cases for several years. The doumbek years.

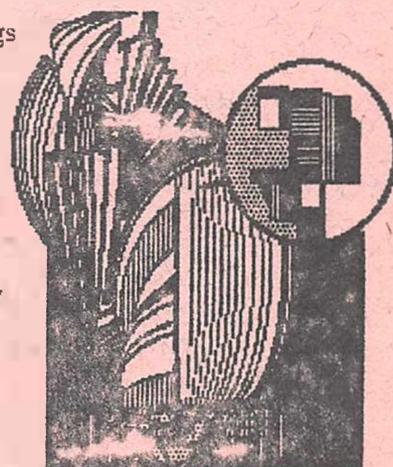
Moving up here put me in the midst of an underground cabal of world-class acoustic folk players and listeners that intersects slightly with filk but, thankfully, isn't. I'd never heard of "music parties" before moving to this odd little isolated metropolis-on-the-prairie. Filking amused me somewhat in the '60s and early '70s, but I tiptoed around its growing fannish constructs, along with costuming and gaming, in the intervening years. Folk was OK, I've listened to it for years, but it wasn't what I played. Then one night Al Standish, Reed Waller's drummer, loaned me his ceramic doumbek at a music party at Fred and Susan Levy Haskell's, saying, go ahead, just play it like a drum set. I did and it was. I found I could sit around and jam with these guys, but only occasionally did I get my edge back.

I spent 8th-12th grades in the high school marching band (in the 7th grade I gave football a try.) All day long, for the last two hottest weeks of the summer, and every day after school all through the fall, I marched around the football practice field with a heavy snare drum bouncing on my knee. Actually, the first year I played the cymbals, the rookie slot. I played in the concert band, dance band, pep band and a never-ending series of rock bands. I had an edge, one you get by playing a lot. I also took weekly lessons from a really great teacher, a talented music student, Dave Chorba. Those August band camps left me with ridges of thick calluses on my fingers that didn't completely fade away until the early 1980's, near the end of the seven or so years when I had no drum set. I sold most of my first kit in 1974 to help pay for my bicycle trip across Canada. I figured at the time I could always get more drums.

Anyway, for the last few years in Minnesota I've been having fun at these music parties—cool parties where acoustic musicians play together and the audience brings them beer—feeling the comfort of being in the pocket with some good players, playing on the small conga I bought and on the big doumbek Geri gave me. Occasionally, but not always, managing to pull off some subtle riff. I'm not really a folkie, remember. Hot dog indiscretions don't go unnoticed, at least not by the other drummers in the room. Now when I enter a music circle where Steve Brust and Robin Anders are drumming these two wise guys greet me in unison with a one-bar rendition of a particularly bad riff I let loose with a long while back, a really long while back, and then go back to what they were doing. (Real drummer joke. Just like high school marching band.)

Last year at Minicon, on my way to the invited-circle music party upstairs, I dropped by the public drum jam in one of the Atrium rooms. There was that throbbing primal sound again (is Minicon the only con that attracts a giant weekend-long drum jam?) and I sat in for a while. They needed a bass line and I had my big doumbek which has a fine deep doum but every now and then I'd let loose with something a bit more interesting in the rim-shot vein. Though there is officially no one in charge, the young fellow who seemed to be more in charge than anyone else (he was handing out flyers with his phone number, offering lessons) came up to me as I was getting ready to head upstairs and said "hey, you're really good, why don't you stay a while longer?" That felt good.

In New York I could work 2nd shift and still be in bands. Practices and gigs start late in that town. Up here on this frozen forsaken wind-blasted prairie, still working 2nd shift graphic arts production but in a town where they lock up the liquor at 1:00 AM, I haven't really even looked for a band. Not that I have a lot of spare time anyway. But it has been real useful for me to be able to go over to my studio and emit some high-decibel pressure waves just on my own. In a building full of rock bands, turning up to 10 is not a problem. Morning day and night you can be as loud as you want. My drum kit is there, always set up, and a heavy-duty wood and rubber practice pad too. That sits right in front of the big speakers. The plan has been to work out regularly on the practice pad and regain my mastery of the 26 Standard Drum Rudiments (as adopted by the N.A.R.D.)



Stiles '95

My favorite has always been No. 21, *The Single Paradiddle*.

The National Association of Rudimental Drummers is like a secret brotherhood, keeping alive the beats and cadences of John Philip Sousa's era. The 26 rudiments, the Triple Ratamacue, the Flam Accent, the Nine Stroke Roll and all the rest, are, to the drummers that learn them early, a solid body of memorized riffs that can be subtly brought into play with great control and precision. The All American version of the tightly codified rhythmic traditions found among drummers all over the world. The listeners think we're making this stuff up off the top of our heads. Some of us are, actually. But I've seen a lot of bands and I always know when I'm watching a rocker with a N.A.R.D. card in his wallet. There's this crisp tightness, these little crackles of lightning and finesse, though it's more often seen in fusion than in rock.

* * *

"When in doubt...roll!" — Bill Bruford (*King Crimson et al.*)

* * *

So lately, in bursts, I whip out 16th-note paradiddles on the pad to full tilt *Megadeth*, *Man 'O War*, and *Mötörhead*. This is encouraging. Anytime I can make it to the studio two or three days in a week I feel like I move ahead a notch. This is more gratifying than practically anything I can mention in mixed company.

I've played in a lot of bands since 1965. In high school, in the south hills of Pittsburgh, Tim Bomba, now a music producer out in L.A., and I, were the core of a series of bands. By junior and senior year we had a band, *The Alliance* that played around in high school gyms, held its own at a bunch of battles-of-the-bands and, finally, in 1968, got to be the featured band on local PBS television station WQED's coffee house show, *The Place*. We played other people's music, covers, but Tim kept us moving forward into harder and louder stuff, until by late 1968 we were playing Vanilla Fudge, Cream, Blue Cheer, Jimi Hendrix, Steppenwolf. The kids in the Perryopolis High School gym didn't know what to make of us.

My brother let me use his reel-to-reel tape deck to record those bands. I still have those tapes. Every ten years or so I've copied them to cassettes, hoping to preserve the fading sounds as long as I can. I should have a CD burned.

Tim and I went off to different colleges and fell out of touch. By my sophomore year at Grove City College I was in a heavy rock band, *Jane*, playing "Louie Louie" at fraternity parties every weekend in the party halls outside Grove City and Slippery Rock, Pa. In my following junior year at Grove City I'd gone through deep spiritual transformations (we're talking 1970 here, all right?) and I was playing in a proto-new age jazz band doing Paul Winter Consort type stuff. We played one bar and they threw bottles at us.

Then Tim called.

He had put together a big frat party band that had a horn section of music majors from the University of Pittsburgh and singers and a guitarist from Tim's school, Carnegie Mellon. But he couldn't find a reliable drummer. I said I'd be right down. We practiced on the Carnegie Mellon campus and gigged almost every weekend. It was a long drive for me in my 1964 VW bus, 60 miles from Grove City to Pittsburgh, but I did it for the entire winter and spring that year. We ended the gig in a recording studio, laying down six tracks, Tim and the horn section guys got tapes for class credit. I have another tape I still treasure. But in the excitement of that spring I got kicked out of the jazz band for missing too many practices.

Oh well.

In January of my senior year my guitar player from the *Jane* days asked me if I wanted to replace the drummer in his Allman Brothers country-rock cover band, *Wheelhorse*. This turned into the most fun I ever had before or after. *Wheelhorse* was the house band for the animal house fraternity of Slippery Rock State, the TIKs. We played for them and other fraternities every Friday and Saturday night that spring. Our practice space was in the basement of the Swamp House, a famous pad in the notorious student rental housing on the edge of Slippery Rock, a big party house. We'd be jamming in the basement and the party

would be going strong upstairs. Back then I could still drink beer and all that stuff and play all night. We were campus gods. One night I brought a friend who liked to tape bands down to the basement and he made me a reel-to-reel tape that still haunts me when I play it. All of my old band tapes are a bit spooky to me. I wonder if after I die anyone else will ever listen to them before they lose their magnetism and crumble to dust.

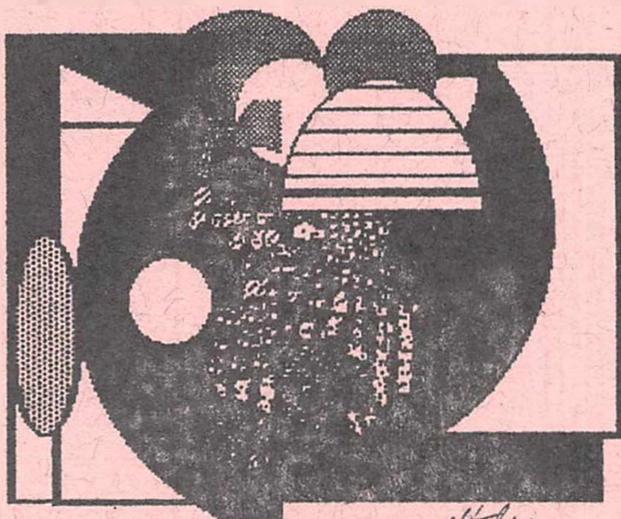
Slippery Rock is 15 miles south of Grove City. I was living in an equally notorious party house in Grove City, the Barmore Alley, driving a 1966 Ford Fairlane, found a party wherever I went, and somehow I still got a college degree. Whoohah!

That spring we agreed to do Spring Party Weekend for the TIKs. They had reserved part of a resort over in Ohio for the entire weekend. We had to rent a Ryder van to get to the gig, but the frat guys gave us a free room and free keg beer along with a couple hundred bucks. It was warm and rainy, we were in a remote wing of a sprawling private resort. There was a party room where we played and they danced and it got real wild. Their John Belushi-like wild man whirled about in his bath robe playing air guitar with a splintered 2x4, he kept passing out and his pals would carry him off and an hour later he'd come gyrating back into the fray. At one point he was down on his knees, head inside the bass drum, singing the words to *Gloria* into the bass drum mike. What a putz. We were having so much fun playing for these guys we even gave a free concert on Saturday afternoon. I noticed a bunch of young girls hanging around just inside the patio doors of the party room.

Our evening's work was to do four sets, 40 minutes on and 20 minutes off. During the third and fourth sets I noticed the young girls hanging around the back of the room again. By the end of the last set we were pretty worn out. The frat boys and their dates were still going strong, but we were allowed to stop and we headed for our room. What followed was just like any Flo and Eddy scene from the Edgewater Inn, a warm wet spring night, an obscuring haze. The young girls came up to the ground-level sliding patio door. Our room overlooked the lake, and there were a number of cabins across the road down by the water. These kids were high school secretarial club members from Cleveland, and they were staying in the cabins. It was Saturday night and they just wanted to hang out with the band. Before we knew what was happening, there were 20 of them in the room. One or two sipped our beer, but mostly they were just shy and curious. We were zonked from two days of playing and partying. To tell the truth, exciting as it was (and it *was*) I wanted them to go away so I could sleep. Then there was the knock at the hall door. I went to the peep hole and there was a uniformed house dick, a hotel manager, and a school marm with steam coming out of her ears. "Security, open up. We hear those girls in there!"

Eiiiiieeee! Luck was with us: the raiders were amateurs who didn't watch enough police shows on TV and didn't have the patio door covered. In a matter of seconds the kids slipped quietly out and we opened the hall door and innocently denied there'd been any girls in our room, no sir, no ma'm. The school marm was turning purple and sputtering. We shut the door, shut out the lights and went to bed. Fifteen minutes

later four of the young ladies slipped back inside from the patio. There were four of us in the band and we had separated the box springs and mattresses from the two double beds (a trick I'd learned from conventions) and one of the young ladies quietly crawled in with each of us. Just to snuggle, really, it's true, I swear. The singer annoyed the rest of us for a while with his whining "ah come on, please, wontcha, please please please?" but then he was snoring and just before dawn the girls quietly slipped away, so ending one of my most astonishing, and dangerous, adventures ever. O.C. and Stiggs take note. *Wheelhorse's* last gig was for the TIK graduation party at the Oil City Holiday Inn. We were hot that night, it was the best I ever played in my life.



My last band of that period, the *Jeff Pierce Group*, was me, Jeff Pierce, and the bass player from *Wheelhorse*. Jeff wrote all the songs. It was country and blues and we played a couple bars and... ta da... a trailer park opening. That was my last gig for a long time.

So I had no drums in the late seventies. It never felt quite right. In 1979, working in a government agency in Washington, D.C., my boss and I had a meeting with a couple of IBM word-processing system salespeople. One of them, Dave, mentioned being from Pittsburgh. After they left I noticed his last name on the business card, Chorba. I called his office that afternoon and asked him if he'd ever given drum lessons. Yes, he was my old teacher. One late night just before I left the D.C. area, Ted White took me over to Rupert Murdoch's house. Ted played sax, Rupert keyboards, I played a little drums, but it was late and hard to keep the noise down in Rupert's basement. I was sharing a house in Maryland with a college friend and his family then; Dennis was the drummer who replaced me in *Jane*, 10 years before.

Moving to New York in 1981 put me in touch with Susan Palermo, an extraordinary and bass player in the New York City girl bands *Cheap Perfume* and *Snatch 22*. She introduced me to Josh Ribakove, a bright creative young guitarist, and Josh desperately needed a drummer. Somehow, mysteriously, every drummer he'd auditioned turned out to be unreliable. Even better, I had a car. I bought a set of drums from Susan's old drummer, Brenda. I still have those drums. The bands Josh and I put together were *Killer Bunnies*, *Intensive Care*, and *War Pigs*. We gigged and recorded a lot but never fulfilled my dream of playing CBGB's. Josh played there several times in one of his other bands *Panty Raid*, though. Now he lives in Binghamton New York and publishes a local music tabloid, *The Music Press*. I remember the spring evening the *War Pigs* piled into my 2-door '70 Chevelle and we plastered posters all over Manhattan for our gig at *The Dive*. How much fun does a guy deserve? Halfway through the *Intensive Care* period we auditioned a singer, Valerie. Two weeks later she moved in with me and stayed for a couple years.

I remember Susan and Josh and I jamming in a studio in Queens one winter night. Across the street was a biker bar with a lot of action going on, and I was waiting at the studio entrance to let Susan in. I was out on the sidewalk and drunks across the street were throwing bottles at a small dark haired lost looking woman who came over to me, saying softly, "please hold my knife" and I looked down at her bloody hands and the huge bloody switchblade and bottles were breaking on the wall beside me and just then Susan pulled up in her dented 2-door '71 Pontiac T-38 and we hustled inside. I think I taped that night on cassette but I don't know if I've ever listened to it. I recorded most of what Josh and I did on cassette boomboxes.

One night after an SF book signing party I was walking down Lexington with Brad Balfour and we ran across some people he knew. While Brad and the woman talked about rock journalism, the guy and I started talking about music. I proudly told him all about *War Pigs*, and he said yeah, he was a heavy metal drummer too. Later I was a bit humbled when Brad told me I'd been chatting with one of the drummers from *Blue Oyster Cult*.

I ran into Tim Bomba again in New York. His mother gave my mother his phone number. He was producing bands and traveling a lot. He came down to *Intensive Care*'s studio for a practice one time but didn't offer to sign us. A couple more years without contact passed. Then one day Valerie and I were in a pet shop on Steinway Street in Astoria and the clerk, a musician Val had been recording with, said "a producer named Tim Bomba has our tape and really likes it a lot." I called Tim, got his girlfriend. He was in London. Val moved out of my apartment, I moved to Minnesota. Never talked to Tim again in New York, but I recently found him on the web and we exchanged E-mail. He was producing bands in the Twin Cities a few years back, but not anymore.

So there continues to be an interwoven series of common threads to my life. Music is but one of them, though it may be the most important. I wasn't born to the "never look back" way of life, and I try to take responsibility for my actions. This can slow things down a bit; I make mistakes, I get distracted, and sometimes it takes years to see any progress. But it never occurs to me to stop doing what I'm doing. None of this, not even fandom, is just a... "hobby."

Toad Hall, February 1997

PARTY ON, DUDES!

A Visit With Ukrainian Fandom

by Sean Alan Wallace

Never in my whole life would I have thought of visiting Kiev. Not only did I get the chance to see this ancient city in the winter, but I also managed to visit Ukrainian fan. To my young American eyes, and unused to meeting foreign fans, everything was new, different, an adventure, a step into another world. The purpose of my trip originally had been to spend two weeks with my parents who had hunkered down in Kiev for business reasons, but from the second I stepped off the airplane, it struck me. The stark trees far in the horizon, the biting wind, the feeling that I was definitely not in Kansas.

From out the window of the company car I stared until all I could see was white, white, white, a blanket of snow dominating the land with its whiteness. Kiev was bitterly chill, with snowflakes falling intermittently around the clock — the roads were icy, the buildings rearing to the skies like massive trees, while construction cranes loomed out of the fog like giant pyres of steel. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, many building projects were stopped altogether and now hundreds of cranes stand unused, rusting as the buildings around them remain unfinished, empty skulls staring windowless in the distance. A dark, grim vision of the future straight from 'Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome,' only more so, face to face.

For the entire first week, I was too sick even to really notice my surroundings. I stayed indoors for most of the time, listening to "Music Radio," a radio station playing American and European music around the clock. When I was bored of American music, I switched on the telly and watched American movies dubbed over in Russian, and somehow managed to follow the movies. The biggest item on the telly, however, for most Ukrainians were the Spanish soaps, which I avoided like the plague. All the while, the weather itself was cold, wet, dreary, and it seemed to mirror my cold, and looking out the window wasn't much better. This was no winter wonderland, that's for damn certain. But once the cold cleared out of my system, I went out and braved the weather to see Kiev in all its glory.

For days I saw the sights, the statues, the Golden Gate (in ancient times an actual Gate into the city), the marketplaces, and yet my trip wasn't complete. And then it happened. My first brush with Ukrainian fandom. It began innocently enough with a phone call, a week into my vacation. Brave enough to face any dangers I might encounter, I called an e-mail buddy, Boris Sidyuk, over the phone. After a short conversation, we decided to hook up in front of my parents' apartment building and an hour later, we met under a gloomy sky limned with grey and white.

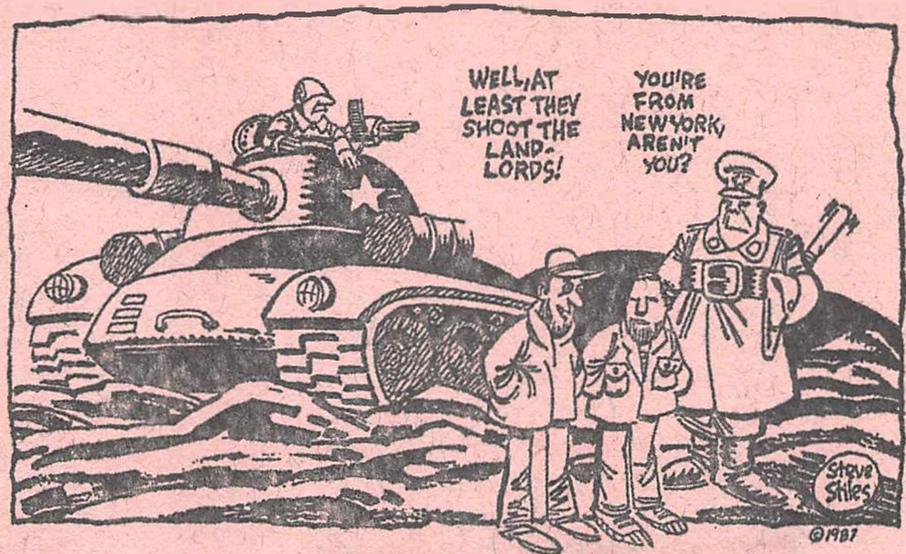
Boris is the proud president of the local science fiction club in Kiev, *The Zoyany Shlyah Club*, which translates roughly into *The Milky Way Club*, and has done much to further science fiction in the Ukraine.

He was a short stocky man who appeared to be in his late twenties but I was later assured that he was indeed thirty.

WITH JOSEPH NICHOLAS IN HAMPTON COURT MAZE



He sported a long ponytail, which was hidden beneath his cap, and wore glasses that covered nearly all his face, it seemed. He carried a sack full of fannish goodies, including a copy of his fanzine, *Chernobylization*, a nicely done 'zine with various articles written in English, and a letter column full of LoCs from such fans as Joseph Nicholas, Steve Glover, Lloyd Penney, and Alan Stewart. Unfortunately, *Chernobylization* momentarily died in the early '90s due to money difficulties, but Boris hopes to resurrect this impressive 'zine in the near future.



We chatted for a while on the street and then off we went. Having a preference for walking, Boris and I meandered the snow-covered streets of Kiev, silence dominating most of this ancient city. In an attempt to find wine for the party later we walked into stores and stood outside kiosks, while the snow continued to fall above us. Giving up on looking for wine, our destination finally loomed in front of us, a great maw in the earth, an entrance straight into hell, while Dante's inscription ran through my head, "*Lasciate Ogni Speranza Voi Ch'Entrate!*"* The subway was dark and busy; to a certain degree, I was nervous. Jumping on a train, I was jam-packed like some poor sardine, trapped in a speeding bullet full of people who didn't speak English and who, bundled up in furs and boots, resembled walking, talking bears. Our final stop opened up into a market which contrasted nicely to the silence of Kiev, as Western music blared loudly in the chilly air. From a train packed to the ceiling we stepped into a bus and managed to squeeze our way through the masses, to stand still like some poor popsicles in the fridge.

And then we were there....

Boris' apartment building, a rectangular monstrosity of stone and steel, stretched for more than a city block. The silence was overbearing as we walked up to the building and waited for the elevator to come back down. All the while I stared at the apartment doors, doors with more locks than I've ever seen on any American door, and wondered briefly how bad the crime rate was around here. Once inside Boris' apartment, I got a better idea of how the normal Ukrainian lived. It was basically a two-bedroom affair, with a small kitchen, a bathroom, and a hallway. He lives with his mother in these troubled times, and later it was she who helped put together the lunch/dinner.

Stepping into his room was like any other fan's personal temple to sf — the mounds of books, fanzines, letters, tapes, etc. I engrossed myself with looking around while Boris left to scoop up some other members of the club. Fanzines which I had never seen, much less heard of appeared as I ruffled through mountains of paper. If this wasn't Nirvana, it came pretty damn close (actually Nirvana would be a week spent going through Vinç Clarke's 'zine collection). Boris' book collection was a mix of Russian and English science fiction, nearly a thousand strong, peering out and down from the bookshelves, the largest collection of sf in the entire Ukraine. In the corner, a massive computer stood sentinel, from which Boris contacts other fan, a link which breaks down all barriers and allows him to be one with fandom.

Ten minutes later, Boris' friends arrived, and to the general eye were a motley crew of fans, tho' it was interesting to note that all were in their late thirties. The most striking of them all was Alexander, better known as "The Great Slow King." With his two long ponytails and hairy beard, he bears an uncanny resemblance to the Japanese religious fanatic. Boris and I were tempted to label our party as an actual convention: East-European conventions tend to be rather small, perhaps 10 to 200 people. Unfortunately

*Trans: Abandon all hope, you who enter!

we had only seven people at hand. We all sat down for lunch/dinner which consisted of various items: a wonderful egg salad, a dish of mushrooms, a dish of sausages. It was topped by a bottle of wine and the feast began with a hearty cheer: "To Fandom!" To fandom...

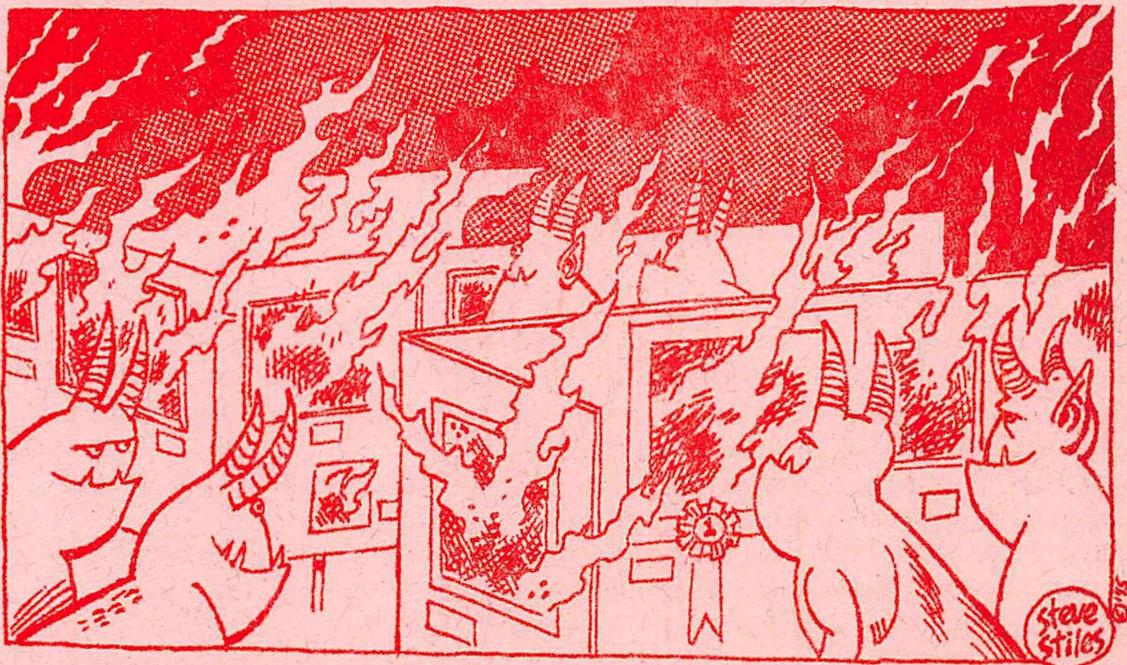
Unused to wine (or any alcohol for that matter), it burned all the way down my throat and managed to tickle my stomach. For the rest of the party, I drank one cup of compote (stewed fruit juices) and eight or more cups of hot tea. I felt a little out of place, while the others were dunking down wine like water — they must have finished at least seven bottles by night's end. The discussions ranged from "what a crazy and stupid government" — this applied to any government at hand — to the lack of funds (the lament of fen everywhere), and the latter half of the night was dominated by the talk of nuclear warfare and defense. This was particularly interesting in that Ukraine still holds 300 nuclear warheads in its arsenal, and there were several arguments as to how many were actually needed, who was the threat, etc. Once in my stride, I attempted to speak whenever possible; unfortunately because I could not speak Russian and only three spoke English, we were somewhat at an impasse. I tried as best as I could to remember their names at the time, and managed to say them correctly, but save for a few, later forgot them. However, I had many an interesting conversation with a lovely lady, 'Lee,' who knew her subjects well and was a delight to speak to. For hours we talked about Ukrainian/Russian fiction and discussed our favourite authors. She resembled, to a certain degree, Lois McMaster Bujold, whom I saw at Marcon last year.

The evening fare was completed with potato dumplings topped with onions, and we finished the night with cake (a messy affair — try imagining picking up a slice of marshmallow/mousse sandwiched between two layers of pastry.) The rest of the long night was devoted totally to discussion and wine (I stuck to my tea). Before I left, Boris gave me a number of items, including a copy of R. Graeme Cameron's *Space Cadet Gazette* and then instead of using the subway, we stepped outside and flagged down a car.

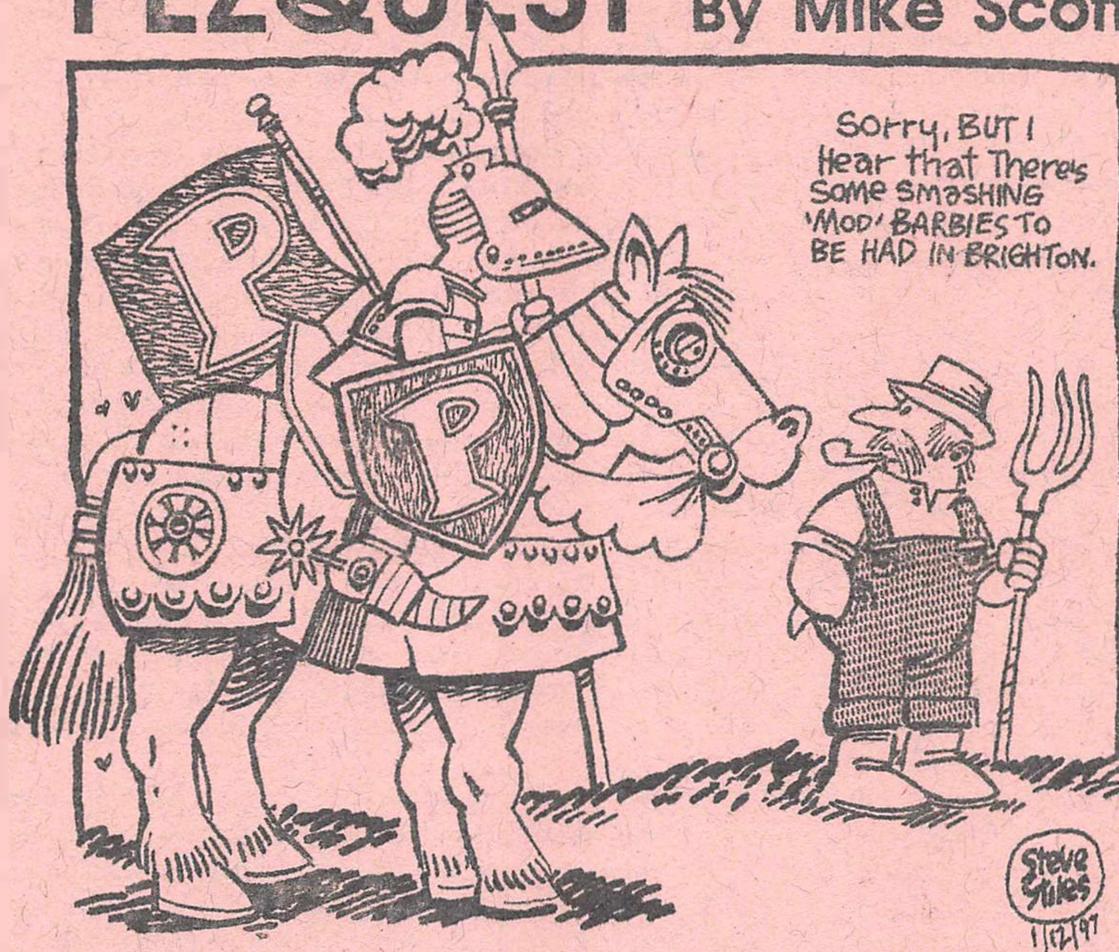
Apparently because so few people own cars in the Ukraine, many cars will actually stop for hitchhikers and for an agreed price will bring them to their destination. Three of Boris' friends joined me in the car, and off we went. I was dropped off first, and still full of fannish energy, spent the rest of the night reading and re-reading their fanzines, re-creating in my mind the wonderful time I had.

I was glad to see that fandom was thriving in the Ukraine, and hopefully I can see Kiev in the summer, when, according to 'Lee' all the acorns blossom and cover the landscape with flowers — a fitting end to winter. And perhaps, the next time I come, Boris and I can scrouge up a few more fans and call it "SupperCon"....

Hellcon: The Art Show



PEZQUEST By Mike Scott



Obsession is a strange thing. Some people are obsessed by great music, or good deeds, or strange sexual practices. And some people are obsessed by small pieces of cheaply made plastic. Indeed, the only thing sadder than such an obsession may be getting drawn into it at second hand, as was recently my fate.

I published my first fanzine recently (*Zorn*, available for the usual 2 first class UK stamps or US\$1). Copies of the first issue or two sent to Geri Sullivan, the esteemed editor of this august journal, elicited a copy of *Idea* #9 in exchange. I was intrigued by the LoCs on Ted White's piece from #8, "Nightmare at Con Francisco." and emailed Geri to ask how I could get a copy. She replied that she'd send me a copy and I should send her something interesting or desirable or wacky.

I said that that was a lot to charge for a back issue, and got a reply containing the following warning: "It's only fair I give you one small warning — if by some bizarre chance you were to find a 99p card of PEZ Body Parts (some have been found at the Welcome Breaks on the motorway) and were to send it my way as the wacky thing, Karen Cooper and I would immediately flood you with £50 or more and orders to scour the motorways buying us more, More, MORE! This is a fate you probably want to avoid." Truer words than that last sentence were never spoken.

Being of a foolhardy disposition, I said that I scour the motorways anyway, as my annual mileage is over 35,000 miles, and how many did they really want. In reply, I received a vast outpouring of exhortations and encouragements from both Geri and Karen, originally addressed to Chuch Harris. They really wanted £50 worth. This flood of email contained far, far more than I ever thought I needed to know about PEZ Body Parts, and it is now my sad duty to share this rather trivial knowledge with you.

PEZ are sweet dispensers, stick-shaped and about five inches long, with rudimentary feet at one end and a head at the other that you lift to dispense a sweet. Not being shy of a marketing opportunity, they are manufactured in a wide variety of designs to appeal to sad and obsessive collectors. For the especially monomaniacal, they also manufacture eight different sets of Body Parts which you can attach to your PEZ

dispenser to give it a body, arms, and bigger and better feet. You can get an ice hockey player, Tarzan, Robin Hood, a knight in armour, a skeleton, a maid, a woman with pearls and a nurse.

Geri and Karen, PEZheads that they are, had a deep and burning desire to own two or three complete sets each. The only problem with this idea was that PEZ Body Parts cost \$7.99 plus tax each in the USA. They really do know a marketing opportunity when they see one. A friend of theirs, Dean Gahlon, who was in the UK for Intersection stopped at a motorway service station (which appears on available evidence to have been Corley, on the M6 south of Birmingham, but was definitely a Welcome Break) and bought Karen a couple of sets of Body Parts that were available there for 99p — around \$1.60, including tax. This seemed like a more reasonable price. The British are evidently too sensible to pay £5 for something so trivial, tacky, and useless. Hence the outpourings to Chuch Harris that were copied to me, and the warning in Geri's email. On six complete sets, that UK price is around \$400 cheaper than the US price.

So, following my foolish and unguarded reply, I was now committed. I did a quick dry run on the way to work one morning at Birch services on the M62, with no great hopes as it's Granada not Welcome Break, and indeed I found nothing. But in a few days I was driving down to Caterham, south of London, and thence to Novacon. There are lots of service stations between Chester and London. I told Geri that I was on the Quest, and not to expect any progress reports until after Novacon.

So I set out at 6:30 on Thursday morning, as I had a four hour drive to an 11 o'clock meeting, and it seemed best to allow an extra half hour for PEZquesting. A bit before 7 o'clock, I joined the M6 just before Knutsford services. I was too early, and the shop was closed, which was a complication I hadn't considered. What the hell, it was Pavilion not Welcome Break, and there was another Pavilion at Hilton Park anyway. Next stop, a bit after 7 o'clock, was Sandbach. Also closed. Luckily, it wasn't a Welcome Break either, but a Road Chef.

7:20 saw me at Keele, my first Welcome Break, and it was open. Furthermore, it had PEZ dispensers and refills, with Batman or Spiderman heads. No Body Parts, unfortunately. Still, it was sufficiently encouraging that I crossed the bridge to the northbound half, which had Wonder Woman dispensers but still no Body Parts. Still, it was confirmation that Welcome Breaks did stock PEZ. Encouraged, I drove on.

7:45 at Hilton Park, another Pavilion. It has quite a big shop, but no PEZ. Just south of Hilton Park, the Birmingham traffic kicks in, and it was exceptionally bad that morning. I took a detour the wrong way around Birmingham to avoid the infamous Spaghetti Junction — and anyway, this way I could get in an extra service station at Frankley on the M5. Another Granada, and still no PEZ.

And so onto the M42, with no services, and thence to the M40. Warwick was next, and it was my next Welcome Break. Surely here I would find the fabled cache of Body Parts, and stop having to break my journey every few miles. Sadly, it was not to be, as Warwick was a PEZ-free zone. It had quite a small shop, and I noticed that a fair proportion was given over to Christmas stock, which was presumably not the case back in August. Perhaps this was the problem. Anyway, another Granada was next at Cherwell Valley. No PEZ.

Despite having nearly 100 miles of motorway to go, this was the last service station. The southern reaches of the M40, and the M25, are remarkably short of service stations, though it's not as bad as it used to be when you could drive from Telford to Brighton, over 200 miles of motorway, without a single service station. But I digress.

The next day, I was driving up from Caterham to Birmingham for Novacon. The shortest route backtracked the way I'd come on Thursday, but I had plenty of time, I wasn't paying for my own petrol, and there were lots more juicy service stations on the M1, with the added bonus of Corley at the bottom of the M6 to finish off. The game was afoot again.

Unfortunately, Toddington (Granada), Newport Pagnell (Welcome Break) and Rothersthorpe (Blue Boar) yielded no bounty, and I was so keen to get to Corley that I skipped Watford Gap, another Blue Boar. Corley, like Keele, had PEZ. Sadly, even less than Keele — it had refills of the sweets only, on both sides of the carriageway.

I'd now been to every Welcome Break that I pass at all frequently, with no success. I could have given way to the despair induced by this final crushing blow, but Novacon beckoned. However, this isn't a Novacon conrep, so we will draw a veil over the events of the convention.

When I got home, I emailed Geri and Karen to report failure and suggest that I should try the Welcome Breaks again after Christmas when they might have restocked. But I was now being haunted by PEZ Body Parts. I kept stopping at motorway service stations to have another look. I dived into disreputable looking toyshops on the off-chance that they might stock PEZ. I was being overcome by the obsession, and it wasn't even my obsession. Collector's fever is highly contagious.

So on the way home from work one day, I made another detour, this time to Toys'R'Us north of Warrington. In the door, I turned right and was in the confectionery section immediately. And on my left, the Holy Grail. Rack upon rack of PEZ Body Parts, at the slightly higher but still very reasonable price (compared with the US price, you understand, and still vastly overpriced really) of £1.19 (which includes tax, as do nearly all UK prices). I picked up the requisite six of most designs, but fell half a dozen or so short, and got an extra Tarzan for some reason. Success at last!

I reported this success to Geri and Karen and received another outpouring of email, this time of effusive thanks and shipping instructions. I was also promised a complete set of back issues of *Idea* I ended up taking two sets out of their packaging and airmailing them for Geri's and Karen's instant gratification, and said I'd go back and complete the sets before surface mailing the rest.

Two or three weeks later, I duly returned to Toys'R'Us. I hadn't considered that this was two or three weeks closer to Christmas. Toys'R'Us is no place for sane people in the run-up to Christmas.

It might be survivable if they didn't let kids in. As it is, it was a purgatory of screaming kids and harried parents, with long and slow queues at the checkouts. The checkout I chose was by the emergency exit, and every minute or two someone who didn't want to buy anything pushed it open and went through, setting off a shrill beep. In between, all the kids who'd noticed the cool noise experimented to see if they could reproduce it, with an high level of success. I was only there for ten minutes — I've no idea how the checkout staff stay sane.

Despite these trials and tribulations, I picked up the remaining Body Parts. All I have to do now is get to the post office to mail them to Geri and my brush with PEZ will be over.

But, I still catch myself looking for them in service stations. I get this twitchy feeling that maybe I should buy a PEZ dispenser. They're quite amusing, and just one couldn't hurt. They're much cheaper over here than they are in the US. If I'm not very careful, the bug will strike, and I too will be an obsessive PEZhead. The moral of this story, if it has one, is that you can't take up an obsession at arm's length, and you should strive only to take up those with which you feel comfortable.

Now where did I put that address for PEZ Collectors Anonymous?

Postscript: Geri has just sent me an email saying "Dare I mention they've just released six more Body Parts sets in the UK? Karen is going to Spain in May, so other avenues of acquisition are available, but if you'd like to renew the hunt I can send you descriptions...."

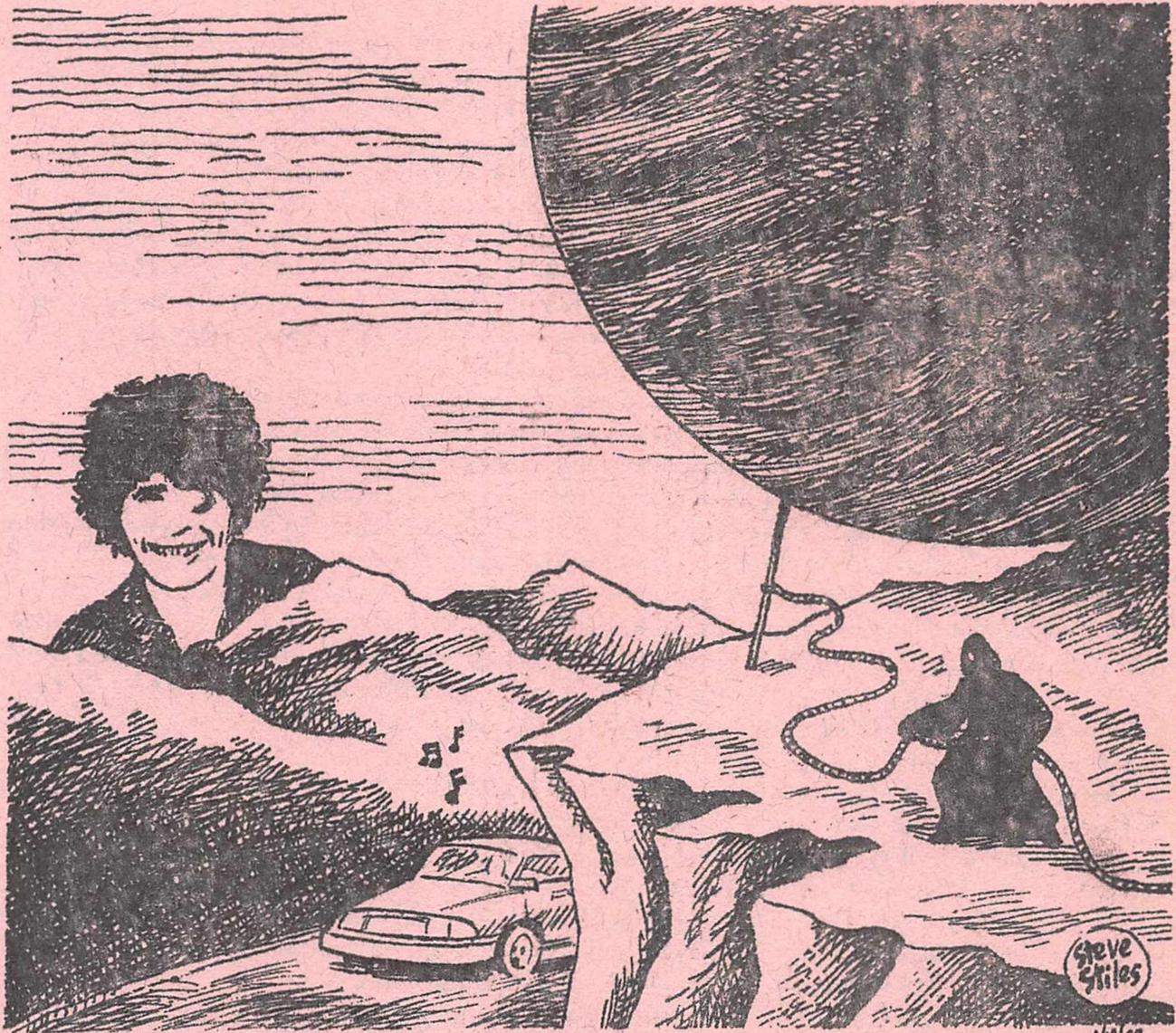
The horror begins again....

Editor's Note: For the record, "normal" PEZ dispensers cost less in the US than they do in other countries. The trick is that there are two PEZ companies: one in Austria and the other in Orange, Connecticut. Each releases some different dispensers — and Body Parts are not distributed in the US; they are available only through collectors or stores headquartered in Canada, which accounts for their horribly inflated price here. There's also different packaging on all non-US dispensers. Thus, most any PEZ dispenser sold outside the US is of interest to American collectors, with special things like Body Parts being of keen interest. If anyone else is interested in back issues of *Idea*, well, you know what to do. — gfs

Copyeditor's Note: My trip to Spain netted no Body Parts, but I found a few Tykes I later resold for \$15 each. The current hot item is the stencils found in refill packs. Five have been spotted in Australia, a sixth has only been seen in Switzerland. The Internet is the greatest boon to PEZheads since the pocket change I had as a kid. But that's another story.... Mike, you can dive in headfirst by sending sub pezheads to <maiser@cbs-engineering.com>. Tell 'em me and Geri sent you. [sic] — Karen

Origin of the Hummels.





MY TRIP TO JUPITER BY KATHY ROUTLIFFE

In the summer of 1994 I became mentally ill. I lost control of my thoughts and my emotions, and became extraordinarily, almost hopelessly, unhappy. I regained my equilibrium only with outside help. It lasted briefly, but it was real, and it seemed a very long time to me. By the time I could say with reasonable accuracy that I was no longer incapacitated, I'd discovered a number of things. Without prioritizing:

- I discovered the terror of living alone on a flat plain inside my own head.
- I discovered that one's salvation can also be one's damnation.
- I discovered the tyranny of silence, and the sexuality of loneliness.
- I discovered touching is easy, talking is hard, and both are keys to the kingdom.
- I discovered the way to Jupiter.

And I discovered you can come back from Jupiter, but never completely. There will always be the time before, and the time after.

I've seen these walls and I've walked this floor

I don't know for certain that anyone in my family suffered mental illness, but I suspect my maternal grandfather was manic depressive. I also believe the alcoholism in my father's family sits in the same church, if not the same pew, as other chemically-induced madnesses.

I grew up prone to fits of imagination, choler and melancholy, but those didn't appear likely to alter my life in appreciable fashion.

More (or equally) important, my family — my mother, grandmother, brother and grandfather — loved me and I loved them. The family was unusual but no more so, I suspect, than is any family once the curtains are drawn.

It was a good one. Whatever our singular or collective demons, we all assumed families loved one another, and proceeded therefrom. We were more apt to hug and touch, comfort and seek comfort, than many of my friends who seemed to believe that "family" is a euphemism for strangers who share the same genes. I looked with incomprehension upon them when they asked why I still kissed my mother goodnight at the age of 16. They looked upon me with the same incomprehension.

I think I'm dumb...maybe just happy....

Puberty hit, and I fell in love with a string of boys who didn't love me. I grew melancholy, but put it aside and grew older. I wanted to know God. And I loved him greatly, until I realized he might not be there. That scared me, but I couldn't do anything about it. Melancholy swelled again. I put it aside and grew older. I watched my grandfather, warped by an illness we didn't even suspect, become a stranger as he railed at and insulted my mother and grandmother. I watched our home poisoned with hurt and confusion. The pattern repeated: I put it aside, and grew older.

Melancholy is a kind of spiritual humidity, and it nurtures the opulently bloated things that grace most humid places. The first thing to grow in me beyond its proper span was the little person who lived in the back of my head. We all have one — didn't the Freudians name the imp? Mine, for some reason, wanted more of my head than was proper. I couldn't do anything without knowing that someone was watching. If she was watching, there must be something to watch. So I joined the imp in her task.

When you watch something — television, an eclipse of the sun, your lover in action — you're never sure it's real. Even if you're sure it is, you still can't quite convince yourself it's good. I couldn't, at any rate. (Chemical) nature or (Calvinist) nurture? I don't know. But in the end I was certain I never did anything good. I knew I was putting on a show — I was watching it, wasn't I?

Sex felt really good, and I was responsive. If you come from a loving family, your instincts steer you in the right direction. But of course, since I was watching myself do it, it probably wasn't real, and it certainly wasn't good.

I discovered the imp, the critic, and all attendant upon her, sometime around the age of 19. I agonized. I put it, and her, aside. And I grew older.

Looking back, I realize I was simply buying the Triptix to Jupiter.

She couldn't believe what she heard at all

I came to Chicago. I met Bob, I got married. I found rock and roll.

I found music early, but rock and roll ... I fell in love, hard and true. More than I could believe or understand, actually. It must have been inside me all the time.

Bob talked about the rush of walking onto stage and hitting the big E. I felt my diaphragm speak to me, my head buzzed with an amphetamine jiff when the drums exploded and the high thin whine of a lead snaked over the muscle and blood of power chords.

The words were strong. Twist and shout, got a hold on me, get some satisfaction, kick out the jams, walk on the wild side, feel my heart beat. Blood, sugar, sex, magic.

I used to live alone before I knew you

We were in love, we were poor, and we weren't stable. It was a marriage made in heaven, and somewhere, two other people were very lucky we hadn't met them.

Over a decade of high ambition, lost chances, porous bank accounts, mental and physical pain, we stayed together. We learned a lot about each other. Perforce, we entered the exciting, and advancing, field of blood chemistry imbalances. It took time and heartache, but Bob recreated his life with the help of big and little pills. While he did that, I hung on. I hung, and hung, and hung, and when asked, I told people I was just a garden-variety neurotic. I was only an honorary member of the Brain Crips' Society.

I didn't have time for anything else, not with taking care of Bob and Andy, who had come along in 1984. I made it work, with a lot of help from Bob. I was certainly not a model mother. All the frustrations and insecurities of motherhood were daily staples for me, as I hung on and hung on, and dealt with a spirited, intelligent, ornery child.

There came a day when I stood in my shower and thought about walking out the door and going to some Nebraska town where I could get a job washing dishes in a diner, and live in a room in the back. Of course, I couldn't leave Bob and Andy in the lurch. I'd have to kill them. I thought about doing it with a gun, quickly and painlessly, while they were asleep.

The thought lasted about 15 seconds. I immediately talked to Bob and called the neighborhood community mental health clinic. I was scared and disgusted — thinking about offing one's self is one thing; killing other people quite another.

I got a reasonably friendly and thoughtful counselor, and a prescription for Prozac. Both helped, but I wasn't at ease with either. Despite years with Bob the Brain Crip, I refused to believe any of that stuff could apply to me. But I dealt with it. I hung on, I put it aside and grew older.

Love myself, better than you. Know it's wrong

Enter the alchemist, just about this time. The little minx who lived in the back of my head got her degree in chemistry, then mixed inborn melancholy and years of "put it aside and grow older" with a pinch of mid-life crisis and steeped it during a time of relative calm.

Music was the catalyst.

A long time ago Bob introduced me to the music of Tim Buckley, skewed folk jazz artist extraordinaire. He's 20 years dead, of an overdose in L.A. in 1975. I could go on at length about him, but won't except to say, listen to "Starsailor" and "Greetings From LA"; we can have a real good chat.

Before Buckley died, he fathered a son who also became a remarkable singer and musician. I ran into word of Jeff Buckley by accident, but was intrigued, and took in a show of his in July 1994. It was pretty damned good.

The show rekindled my interest in his father, to whom I hadn't listened for a while. And something happened.

I can only look back at it now and marvel. With the relative clarity of hindsight, I think of what followed that concert, and visions of lava fill my head, brutal and consuming. Better yet, advancing ice, slow as centuries, irresistible, lethal.

I think disasters are experienced alone. No one is inside your head as you fall over the precipice, or jam the needle into your arm, feel the flame, sink into the ice. Others may surround you, suffering their own disasters. But you are alone.



At some cold pole of my childhood, the ice began its advance. In the summer of 1994 it reached me. I sank into the ice, oblivious as I did. Those rescued from freezing tell of the comfortable silence that surrounds them, the false warmth of imminent death. I became enclosed in ice and, at first, I did not know it.

I listened to Tim Buckley's CDs. I made tapes of them, so I could hear his otherworldly voice in my car. I listened and listened, catching vibrations in his voice, reacting to them as if he had spoken them to me, was sitting next to me in the car.

I knew that was illogical, but it seemed harmless enough to play with the idea. What if I really was hearing his voice in a way others weren't? After all, magic is the act of discerning the real truth in words — perhaps I *could* discern the power of his voice, and gain something from it.

Gradually, I became uninterested in listening to anyone but Tim.

If we had to leap directly into disaster, no one would do so. We walk, step by step. By itself, each step is unnoticeable.

There was some moment — I can't say exactly when, because I think it was a momentary epiphany only later to be followed by longer experiences — when it seemed a great relief to abandon the underpinnings of logic and embrace the conceit I had built.

Imagine this of yourself; that — after years of hanging on, putting things aside because they were of no use, of growing older and being responsible because that's what was expected of you — you heaved a sigh of relief and let go.

It wasn't completely easy because, in the back of my head, the imp finally decided to earn her keep. She whispered this was not a bright thing to do.

I ignored her. She had caused me nothing but grief. Still, conceding the truth that even stopped clocks are right twice a day, I agreed not to tell anyone else about what I was thinking. Of course, that wasn't right either, but after years of her belittling me, she was lucky to get any consideration.

Besides, there is something wonderful about keeping a secret. A secret belongs to no one else. It is your own. It doesn't belong to your mother, or husband, or boss, or child, or acquaintance or friend. No one can take it away from you. It, too, is magic; it is the word not spoken, that bides its time and grows in power.

Of course it was crazy, and that meant perhaps that I was crazy, and it was best not to let anyone know that. Crazy is not good. It's bad. And weak.

The ice around me got thicker. I grew more comfortable.

I took pains not to let people see how many tapes I carried in my purse. I took equally great pains not to play Buckley at home.

Some things did get through the ice. One day as I drove about on my job, I began to cry uncontrollably because Tim was dead. I almost swerved off the road. I was in one world, and he was in another, with barriers between that I could not bridge.

I didn't want to be in this world without him.

Why did I feel this way about a dead man? I didn't think about it then, but in retrospect it's worth puzzling out. Buckley's voice was deep and strong and pure. He looked like an angel. He had soaring intelligence. He was brave enough to go to the edge and look over. He was what I wanted to be. From where I stood in the ice, he was also the angel I hoped would notice and comfort me, to assure me I was worthy of being loved. I think we all yearn for recognition from the angels. I just allowed the yearning to grow too powerful.

I had a conversation with Bob one night, about destiny, time travel and parallel time lines. We explored the possibility that one could travel back in time to save someone — Buckley, say — from overdosing. Would the world in which he lived be ours, or a newly-born branch universe?

In the shower that night, I played with the concept. Somehow it seemed I should be able to do it, if I just found the right combination to reach the doorway into time travel. I didn't say anything about my musings to Bob.

I didn't say much of anything to Bob from that point on.

At work, I talked with people. It was enjoyable, to the extent that it was a respite from the painful ecstasy of driving alone in my car with Tim singing to me. The company of my office colleagues was palliative, allowing me to regain enough emotional strength to continue my conversation with Buckley.

I had begun to perform for Tim as I drove from assignment to assignment. At first I thought I was just indulging in a role playing game I had played on a smaller scale for years (with help from the watching imp). But the game progressed. I decided there was a statistical chance he might see and hear me from his point on the universal spiral. Finally, I ~~knew~~ he could. The question was whether he would heed me, avoid that fatal overdose, and therefore change history.

I worried: would he simply be alive on a parallel time line, or would I have the chance to see him?



I'm on a plain. I can't complain

At home I made meals and, with difficulty, talked of my day. I worried about Bob's headaches. I looked at him with a sort of heartfelt, but faded, love.

I had absolutely no interest in making love to him, until I discovered I could fantasize that he was Tim. Then the sex was fabulous. (Possibly the only good side effect of going to Jupiter. Bob may have had the most sexually active summer since he and I met.)

I didn't want to talk about my sadness, or the fog that settled over me more and more as days went by. I didn't want to talk about the small confusions the fog generated, the inability to decide when to clean the house, how to balance daily tasks, whether or not I should pick something up when I dropped it.

I didn't marry a moron. Bob knew there was something wrong. But it seemed right to me that I not tell him anything, even when I knew it was wrong. From the center of the ice, I despised my silence.

I tried, sometimes, to compensate, by grabbing his hand and holding it very tight.

Sometimes I would come over and hold him, trying to get away from the cold, to smell and feel a human who was in my own continuum. Looking back, I am grateful to my family for cultivating that need for touch. It became one of my few connections with normal life during the summer of 1994.

Mostly, however, I retreated to the bathroom. Since I had already established the rule against playing Buckley at home, I took my long, long showers with the bathroom radio boosted to distortion. I played nothing but rock and roll. It cut me enough that I could feel. Perhaps it was both blood transfusion and fix. (Or are they the same thing to an addict?)

If there was anything outside the reality of Tim, it was rock and roll. I let hot water sluice over me and waited for the music to snarl into my nervous system. I needed much, much more than AOR stations. Even XRT — possibly the hippest, most intelligent, commercial rock station in the country — wasn't always satisfactory. I tuned in to local university stations to find speed metal and other brain-jamming varieties when XRT bogged down with Pink Floyd or the Dead.

Younger, angrier music was what I sought. I needed to feel young again, and I didn't let myself admit that I was making myself old with madness. I flinched from my age, realizing that, when young men who might once have eyed me on the street now saw me, they saw their mothers' friends. I was lucky: some people seek youth in things for which they have no intrinsic love. At least I cared for what I found.

The world around me eventually began to flicker, although I walked in its illusion very well. I was a disciplined actor, after all.

But the sadness... I find it hard to explain just how sad I was.

Sadness is not a concept. It does not *feel* like a knife. It is a knife. It does not *feel* like a weight. It is a weight. It is a living thing. It is fertile and rich, because it feeds off you.

Sadness draped my shoulders, sadness sat in my stomach, sadness clogged my throat. It greeted me in the morning and drained me of strength throughout the day.

I grieved for Tim, I grieved for myself. I grieved because I could not find the door to his world, because the laws of physics weren't being broken despite my best efforts. I grieved because my world was grey and I was useless.

Waiting for the festival

My only escape was sleep. Every night I fell into bed with relief. Every morning I got up and tried to look around the corner of the day for something to rescue me.

Months later, I wrote a poem, trying to explain that feeling. Chopped and edited into paragraphs, it still is as accurate as anything else I can say. In part, it goes: "I say it is coming. I feel it in the pit of my stomach... This is mine. My treasure. My fear... Oh please, let it come, so I can touch it, reach for it as it holds out its arms for me like a new lover.

"I am so lonely and I want to see new eyes with new eyes.

"There will be cures for cancer, I assure you. There will be a new heaven, a new earth, believe me. There will be a summoning of lost friends. Rectifications, absolutions, a stirring of fire from fingertips and toes and the hairs on our heads. All this will come.

"But I can tell you no more..."

I found myself yearning for something that I didn't know, or hardly knew. For something good to happen, for the Lord to return, for peace to break out all over the world, for *something*. I called it waiting for the festival.

I think all of us long for the festival. That's what our stories say heaven is, after all — an unending festival of comfort and joy, of safety and reunions with all we love and have ever lost.

As I waited in my frozen limbo, as the cold flared from comforting numbness into pain, I whirled about, seeking the festival in a dead man, in rock and roll, in the eyes of men who never even looked at me. I did not seek it in God, and I didn't talk about it to Bob, because the one might not exist and the other... I had already promised the imp not to say anything.

All my life I'd waited for the festival; sadness and loneliness had apparently made me willing to pay the broker any price for the tickets. Even if the festival was on Jupiter.

Dance me through the panic

Ultimately, however, I could not live on Jupiter. No one can — there are untold numbers of us out there, trying to buy return tickets with triptylenes and monoamine inhibitors, Thorazine and Haldol.

I was working at my desk one morning when Bob called me. He asked how I was doing. I was silent, as had been my recent wont. Then terror and sadness combined in a paroxysm of rebellion. I told the imp to stuff our little bargain.

I said I was feeling very, very bad, very unhappy.

Sometimes I remember the rest of the conversation, and sometimes I can't. But it seems to me now that I spoke very slowly, fighting the instinct to swallow my own tongue. I managed to squeak out something about how embarrassing this was to talk about. Bob, wisely, waited.

He and I had been with each other for 13 years at that point — sometime in late October, 1994 — and I think that helped. I can't keep anything from him. As annoying as this was at the best of times, and as unacceptable as it had seemed in the middle of my delusions, it was impossible to avoid. The watchword in our home has been communication, and it has served us both well.

The problem was someone, I said; I couldn't stop thinking about him — it was stupid, I interrupted myself again, it was really stupid.

Was this about Tim Buckley, Bob asked. As I've mentioned, I didn't marry a moron, and Bob had been in my purse often enough to notice the tapes.

If it had been a relief to give up my sanity months before, it was even more of a relief to acknowledge its absence. Yes, this was about Buckley, I said.

He asked me what I thought I should do. I said this seemed to be a job for my shrink. Not a counselor, not a clinical social worker, my honest-to-god medical doctor-type psychiatrist. He allowed as how that was a good guess, and I made my appointment.

I find it interesting that my memories of the next few weeks are much more foggy than those of the weeks preceding. Perhaps it is because I shy away from the lack of clear-cut and immediate solutions. Getting back to Earth was by no means a smooth trip.

For one thing, if I remember correctly, I wasn't honest with the shrink the first time I saw her. I simply said I was very, very depressed. She suggested we increase the dose of Xanax I had already been taking for my long standing low-level anxiety. Perhaps, she reasoned, that would be all that was needed. But upping the level of that mild sedative did nothing. I was still caught in the circular trenches of obsessive thought.

I think that's when Bob put his foot down. I had to tell the shrink what the problem was, or I'd get nowhere, he said. So, once again fighting the urge to swallow my tongue, I told her I kept thinking about this dead singer.

Having assured her that I wasn't hearing Buckley's voice in my head, telling me to blow people away or drop myself off the side of a building, she still opined that perhaps I was a touch beyond common garden-variety neurosis.

She referred me to a clinical psychologist because, she said, she wanted to see if I was suffering psychosis. That almost stopped me in my tracks, but curiosity won out.

(In a touch of irony I certainly appreciated, the gentleman was actually a casual Tim Buckley fan. As he looked over my chart, he said, "The doctor writes that you're obsessing on a country singer?" "Country? No, Buckley's not country." "Tim Buckley?" "Yes, you know him?" "I've got an album or two of his. What is he doing these days?" "He's dead. Been dead since 1975." "I guess that's why he hasn't been doing anything.")

I filled out a 500-question true-false test with such attention-getting statements as "I sometimes want to hurt animals" and "I believe that the people around me want to kill me." We talked. I got the first Rorschach test of my life. The psychologist took notes while I told him what I saw — and, since I've seen pictures in every tree branch or tile pattern I've ever looked at, I saw lots of pictures. He only looked nonplussed once, when I said one blotch reminded me of a squashed Bill the Cat, being watched over by a clown and a large baboon. At the end of the session he looked over his glasses and said "If it's any help, you're not floridly psychotic."

I went home and told Bob I was a pastel psychotic.

That was certainly prescient. My shrink read the psychologist's report and gave me the findings: I was exhibiting a mild, potentially debilitating psychosis. She prescribed Stelazine, a sort of baby Thorazine, in a treatment she hoped would cut the Gordian knot of my obsession. She also took me off the Prozac I had taken for some time, and put me on a different antidepressant. A few days later, the psychologist called to give me a few of his observations, which were trenchant and only occasionally off-base.

Along with asthma medicine and iron I took for chronic anemia, I was now on five medications, popping 10 pills a day. I didn't own my blood chemistry, I rented it.

For the first few days I watched myself with curiosity, wondering if anything would change. I also wondered if anything really was wrong with me, since the relief of actually admitting my problem temporarily obscured the symptoms.

Bob wasn't fooled. We agreed that, while I was the one inside my skull, his external judgement would be crucial over the next short while. It irked me, but I was grateful for his help even as I chafed under it.

After two or three weeks, I realized the ice was melting. The inability to think of anything but Buckley began, almost imperceptibly, to fade. I regained a sense of perspective, recognized the cyclical nature of what afflicted me.

In itself, that recognition coaxed patience from me, and patience bred strength. The days I woke to grey, formless sorrow were fewer, and I could stand them, knowing the fog would lift. Each time it did, my head stayed clearer longer. I was able to work, and I didn't cry as much. I made a conscious effort to talk to Bob, to keep the ice at bay.

But even as Buckley faded, the true nature of the beast emerged. If the days it reigned were fewer, they were more frightening for being stripped of illusion. I realized I felt as if I was not really here, or didn't want to be, or couldn't be. "Here" being, I guess, in communion with the world around me.

The pressure on Jupiter was colossal, a dangerous thing to forget. In addition to its other traps, it lured me into forgetting that anything but me existed. I forgot there was such a thing as coincidence, I was convinced that everything is done for my benefit, or against it. Madness encourages selfishness almost inevitably, as a desperate method of coping.

Sometime in the fall of 1994, during the painful journey up from the ice, I wrote a poem, something that spoke of acid and sweat and darkness. It was possibly the best thing I had written in years. I looked at it and realized I was still painfully unhappy.

If it had not been for Stelazine, my progress would have stalled at that point. But it didn't, because Bob and I recognized that I needed a better antidepressant to accompany it on its blood-borne rounds. The shrink agreed and put me on a new scrip.

This one finally did the job. Little by reluctant little I saw that whatever festival I wanted to celebrate, I would have to recognize it all around me. *This was my world.*

Sometimes getting better was harder than staying sick.

Don't cry any more. It's over. It's finished. It's completed. It has been paid for

At the end of great storms of grief, we win a sort of exhausted quietude. Make no mistake, it is won, not handed to us. Or perhaps it is bought at great price.

It is worth the price, without doubt. Traveling from lunacy to sanity is like spending your life with mud in your veins and a veil over your eyes, then having some or all of the mud pumped out and replaced with blood, like having the veil at least partly lifted.

In the weeks following my introduction to the new antidepressant, Wellbutrin, I became almost euphoric. I could see and hear, think, and even breathe, in a way that I had really, truly, forgotten was possible. I think that's when I understood I had been sick much longer than I thought.

By Easter of 1995, as I travelled beside the Mississippi north to Minnesota, I wrote another poem about coming back to earth.

But I look at it now and wonder. It is not nearly as good as the poem I wrote in agony, even after multiple, and drastic, rewrites. I wonder if something burned out of me that I might still want.

In all the months I lived without borders, without anchors, I was never afraid. Was that the idiosyncrasy of illness? Was it a symptom of shock protecting me from the deepest, truest knowledge that I was ill?

I was simply not afraid of the illness. In those moments I was not paralyzed with borderless grief, I was intrigued because it was so alien to me, and so seductive. As I put this essay together I am intrigued anew. I don't like that. Some silver-tongued pinhead once wrote "There is a pleasure in being mad, which none but madmen know." Were I to meet him, I'd shake his hand before I blew his head off.

As a sort of inevitable footnote to the entire process, I can't play Buckley's music with the same enjoyment I once had. It's a bit like being afraid to pick at a scab in case it bleeds, or to touch an aching tooth. Just because an obsession is under control doesn't mean it can't flare out of control again. And I have come to the conclusion that obsessions don't ever, really, go away.

You don't ever come back completely. You don't ever forget. Like a veteran of some bizarre 12-step program you realize that, if you take one step backward, the return trip will be three times as hard to resume.

Even as I wrote this, I almost took a step back. It is a good thing that home is a very powerful place. I wish you all a safe journey home.

A quick acknowledgement to Lou Reed. And all my thanks, though they'll never know it, to Leonard Cohen and Kurt Cobain.

Three O'Clock in the Morning

It shines like a stone
all smooth polished with sweat,
the acid stink of which comes from my wrinkles and creases,
my hollows and canyons
and sinkholes.

It shines
because it has been burned.
Burned, eroded, rubbed raw.
The layers split,
and blood oils it further.
Sweat and blood run down the curves and
pool in dark places.

It is sheathed in that fluid,
that poisonous water.
My fingers touch it and burn,
and my tongue burns.
So, too, my eyes, laid upon it.

I rub it across my body again and again.
It slides across my forehead,
where blisters rise and burst.
I rub it across my belly and the skin splits,
again and again and again
as breath clots in my throat and I am astonished
by the sterility of pain.

How featureless.
How blank, how smooth.
So smooth it shines
in the stink and oil
of dark places.

Kathy Routliffe
November 2, 1994

Park LoCk It

George Flynn

P.O. Box 1069
Kendall Sq. Stn.
Cambridge, MA 02142

I note, at various places in the zine, "Strathclyde," "Gordon Ecklund," "Rostler," and even *Bookfark*. Tsk. (However, my favorite typo of the month was in an apazine I just read, which referred to "a minuet of silence.")

As Jeff writes, "typesetting ain't what it used to be." Yep, the place where I work used to be a typesetting shop, but is now Cambridge Prepress Services. I started out as one of three full-time proofreaders, of whom I alone remain; that's still my official job title, but now I do a fair amount of copyediting (for our more sensible customers), a lot of computer operating (well, moving files around), and the occasional bit of typesetting, plus odd jobs. Bu we do still have two typesetters.

It amazes me how much Gary Farber can be himself.... (I speak, of course, as a member of Gary's Fannish Generation more or less, even if I've forgotten most of it.) It's good to have him back.

Kathryn Routliffe's article was impressive. I went to a (40th anniversary) high school reunion a couple of years ago, and enjoyed it much more than I'd expected. "...we would never all have shared the same room in our youth" — yes, that's right on.

Well, I have no pets (and find nothing in Skel's piece to persuade me that I should). However, I do copyedit *Catnip* and *Your Dog*, both from the Tufts School of Veterinary Medicine (for whom we're now working on the design for *Horse!*). There are certainly an impressive number of things that can go wrong with the critters. And yes, they do have articles on dog and cat psychology; Skel is a lot funnier, though.

Gary's critique of Ted's story is a beautiful piece of analysis. It's almost a pity that it appears to be unnecessary, in that (so far as I've noticed) hardly anyone seems to have picked up on the term "New Fandom." Which

is probably just as well. (I have noted tendencies toward Excessive Niceness in my own loc-writing. It's not that I don't have nasty thoughts, but it's usually too much work rendering nastiness right. Besides, it's more fun being subtle.)

"Looks just like pubic hair when a piece gets caught under the Scotch tape on client mock-ups." I see, then you're more accustomed to finding pubic hair there? Fascinating.

Sincerely yours,

George Flynn

I'm most taken with the idea of "sensible customers"—I know they exist; I'm even lucky enough to have some. But I'm reminded to the customer who complained when Jeff corrected '96 to '96. And we won't even talk about this being the decade when quote marks and units of measurement became interchangeable. Grrr.

It was one of my sensible customers who likened the hair from Willow's coat to pubic hair. I wonder what that means.

In the 15 months between the time you wrote this letter and when I typed it into my computer, I received a promotional mailing for *Your Dog*. Does your office also do the output for the magazine's marketing materials? Jeff always gets a kick out of seeing something he worked on show up in our mailbox (he used to get to see full-page travel ads he'd typeset in the Sunday paper). Oh, and thanks for the typo notification service. Apologies to all. — gfs

James White

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Portstewart, Co. L'derry
Northern Ireland BT55 7ND
UNITED KINGDOM

Yes, it's me again, even though my last letter may still be on the way to you. But don't get excited. Nothing of any importance has happened (well, we're having our first gale of the Autumn as we speak), except that I picked up the photos of your and Walter's visit and wanted to send a few on to you at once.

But since this is nowhere near the end of the page, maybe I should LoC *Idea* 9 just to fill up the empty space.

I really liked the layout and production of this issue, especially its visually interesting mix of photographs and artwork that seemed to lead the reader right



"It appeared to have talismanic properties. Wolfgang had catalogued these properties, dividing them into seven main groupings: elemental, dishevelled, yellow, crimped, congruent, dismal and vagabond."

Frank Key, "The Churn in the Muck"

into the 'zine, in the expectation of seeing something new and different on every spread, and finding it. The words — at least, the nice way bunches of them were strung together by the contributors — were as varied and interesting as the pictures.

First off, that was a very expressive cover picture of a dangerously charming dog genius who is still in the juvenile delinquent phase. The grandchildren (the three Larkins, not the two Whites) acquired a new kitten called, because of its funny colour, Fudge, who does the same thing to their living-room wallpaper. The only safe, environmentally non-destructive pets are pet rocks. Do you think Willow could be an organic manifestation, or maybe dogifestation, of George?

Jeff writes about Toad Hall so well that he reminds me of C S Lewis in *Perelandra*, who made me nostalgic for a place I'd never even been, so much so that I want to go and live there, or at least next door. Maybe one day, when I'm old and rich (one out of two isn't bad) enough to buy Minneapolis and have it centrally-heated, I'll do that.

Terry Garey's "Lust in the Material World" was a grabby title for a lovely piece, of writing, not material. Peggy feels exactly the same way when she visits a big wool shop, and even wrote a pome about it that got read on the BBC.

That was a lovely con report by Aileen Forman. I had always thought that gaming table persons were taciturn, steely-eyed — as opposed to steel-rimmed — people who, when the punters are in danger of winning, press concealed buttons to call in the 'heavies.' I never thought one could be so observant, entertaining, and have such a wicked sense of humour. Still, what else can one expect from another Geri Sullivan?

Your con photo spread made a nice break between reports. The one of Vincent was familiar, although the last time I saw it, it was more three-dimensional.

"Corflu Nova" by the anonymous Gary Farber was long, laid-back, enjoyable, and with an original style. I well remember an early production of that Jophan play, with me having a walk-on (well, sit-on) part playing Art Widner playing James White. Gary is right, you know, con reportage should never be hampered by the truth.

R J Berlien's "Polite Person's Guide to Chicago" was very entertaining and interesting, and reminded me of a First Contact situation with an advanced extra-terrestrial culture. Not that the Minneapolis people are extra-terrestrial, at least not all of them, but the same differences are there. And I still prefer Minn to Chi.

"PR#O." Well, it had a lovely, three-quarter page illustration.

Kathryn Routliffe's home-going was sad, funny and, for her, fearful. If one is lucky it can be nice and warming, or a sort of temporal, delayed-action time-bomb. I'm not sure I understand what I mean exactly by that, so don't ask me. As a brief trip down someone else's memory lane, it was very well done. I felt I knew all these people well enough to like some and dislike others.

By "The OTHER Toad Hall" I expect you mean the real fictional one. It shames me to admit that I've never read *The Wind in the Willows*, but from the snippets I've seen on children's TV, the illos caught the mood beautifully.

Skel's advice in "Pets" was great, hilarious and, most of all, useful. It is the thinking of an arrant coward, but I still think a guard rock is the answer. Should an overbearing, over-muscled Rottweiler bully kick sand in its face, it would simply treat it with the silent contempt it deserves.

I especially liked his advice about not dispensing with Jeff until you see how the dog works out. Can Willow make blueberry flapjacks, with that characteristic touch of wheat-germ or, well, do the other indispensable stuff? But it really shouldn't be an either/or situation. You should keep both and make them compete for your favours.

In case you're getting bored with the nice things I've been saying, there is one serious complaint about this issue. Your big hairy son, Chucky, isn't in it. Speak to him like a stern mom, beat him unmercifully about the head and shoulders — don't hurt him, just injure him seriously a little — and remind him that he was writing for *Idea* long before he got hooked on surfing his stupid net.

All the Best,

A note to the readership: James and I have a long-running game of ending letters at the bottom of the page. I've got an obvious advantage, as I print letters to him in 27-point type for easier reading. Considering our respective writing skills, we are perhaps evenly matched. I should perhaps warn you that this game has spread upon occasion to my correspondence with Robert Lichtman. You could be infected by this mere mention of the game. Why don't you write a LoC now and find out?

Willow's talents lie in interrupting Jeff while he's doing "other indispensable stuff." She'd never interrupt him while he's flipping flapjacks; she knows one is for her. Since I'm not inclined to think of any relationships as "either/or," I find it easy to take your advice and keep them both. But I'm not so sure about this "competing for favours" stuff. Can't we all just settle down with our favorite chewies for a nice afternoon's nap? — gfs



William Brieding

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Oddly, I found Kathy Routliffe's piece vaguely erotic. I'm not sure why, exactly, except maybe I always find good writing sexy. Or it could be I liked the person she was presenting to me. Oh, and the needle-nosed boots helped, too.

I've been reading about a lot of 20 year reunions, in and out of fandom. Mostly it seems people have a decent time of it. Basic perceptions are reaffirmed about who we are, where we've been, where we are. I won't be going to mine, because I never attended high school. But that's another story.

I would say Gary Farber dominated this issue.

Gary's loc inadvertently pointed out that Ted's "con report" was printed in one of the nicest fanzines around, published by a very nice person (and let's not forget Jeff, totally cool, very nice guy), with a group of some of the nicest fans around participating.

Gary is blest with the gift of gab. It is only through deflection that he's able to get his barbs in — which is fine; Ted could learn a thing or two about that. Gary's con report (Corflu Nova) told it like it was; but because some instances were fabrication, or lies, he was able to escape rising the hackles, while still able to express how he really feels.

Gary's con report is faanish-art; the embellishment that causes myth-making, gives a deeper meaning and sense to things.

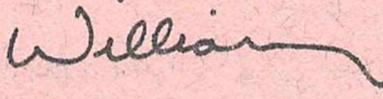
By now Gary will have found out (through Patty herself) that Patty Peters was not particularly popular in high school, though she might agree that she came from a terribly functional family.

Jeff's columns are always wonderful. He's able to impart a prevailing sense of intimacy, wisdom, and humor in everything he writes that makes me wish he were writing longer, pithier opinion pieces of say maybe 6,000 words for each issue. Well, I can dream, can't I?

You continue to publish an extraordinary fanzine, photo-copied or not. (I liked Gary Farber's jab about his crusade to destroy all the remaining Twiltone!) Once more I am indebted to Bowers for introducing us.

And remember, being nice does not necessarily denote that you have to be a milk-toast — just check out Kathy Routliffe!

See ya,



Kathy Routliffe

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It's been a long, hot, miserable summer in Chicago. My last electric bill was \$141 for one month and I expect a similar bill soon. And still the heat keeps up, well into September. I can't decide which I hate more: ComEd or the water-logged low pressure systems spawning like infant mosquitoes in the Gulf of Mexico...here in the city of potholes and patronage, the weather nurtures greasy, sweat-drenched evil of a particularly virulent nature.

Still, summer does bring some joys: ... *Idea 9.*

Before I tell you what a delightful issue that was, however, I must comment on Ted White's piece in *Idea 8.*

I have lately been toying with the idea that fans aren't fans unless they indulge in what I like to call hiss-and-spit. Ted White's piece, well written and funny (and accurate as far as it went, unfortunately) reinforced my suspicions: we (in whatever sense this amorphous, fragmented, sub-society can be called a "we") have never gotten over the adrenaline rush our founders first felt during the '30s when they feuded so mightily over embryonic worldcons and who would be invited to them. Generation after generation, the addition to hiss-and-spit continues.

What's more, it apparently crosses all the boundaries of fandom. I've seen it among 'zine fans, costume fans, fan musicians, con fans, "I just read the stuff" fans and on and on and on ... the intergenerational hiss-and-spit of "Those old farts are so, like antediluvian" and "These new kids just don't understand The True Faith" being a remarkably intense version.

To my shame, I've partaken of hiss-and-spit. When I'm feeling rosy and optimistic, I feel that hiss-and-spit is a necessary part of fandom, proof of our feisty heritage, our dedication to freedom of expression, our insistence on intellectual vigor. When I'm feeling nasty, I lose all patience with everyone (myself included) for giving in to what is actually (let's call a spade a fucking spade) mutated gossip and vitriol.

It is caused by self-ghettoization? I mean, do we map out for ourselves such a small societal space that, no matter how few of us there are in relations to non-fan humanity, we feel obliged to gnaw on each others' limbs like rats in a cage?

(Will I ever learn to write a sentence that lacks commas and features brevity?)

It is just possible that, in each and every fan feud, large and small, philosophical or specific, personal or



*"So Bruce and I, being who we are,
picked up the center of the universe and moved it a little bit."*

Karen Cooper 1/23/97

general, that both (or all) sides are to blame? That both (or all) sides are right? I mean, is it possible fans can learn to say, "I was wrong, I fucked up," "You have a point there," "You're right, you don't have to hew to my definition of fandom to be a fan! Where was my brain when I said that? I'm sorry!"?

Hmmm? I'm blathering? I'm partaking in hiss-and-spit myself? I'm sorry. I fucked up. It must be the heat....

Ah, yes, *Idea 9*. Liked it. Liked it a whole lot. Read every article. (This is not always the case owing, I suppose, to my lack of sticktoitiveness when reading in general.) This issue was delightful. And, no, it wasn't because my thing was in it. I've read that enough to make myself ill with it. (My only comment is that, upon reading it again, I wish I hadn't named people on whom I'd negatively commented, or about whom rumors had been spread. It was unthinking and possibly cruel of me to do so.)

Jeff's articles are always enjoyable, representing as they do for me a glimpse into the world of Competent People Who Do What They Set Out to Do and Enjoy Doing So. He seems to have a bottomless bag of interesting information (see, Kathy, the worth of unplugging the idiot's lantern and actually *reading* again?) out of which he fishes tidbits to decorate his pieces. I now now, for instance, what devas are, what orgone is, etc. I also find much in his articles to make me care about the state of the world.

Terry Garey's piece on material was illuminating. I sew as little as possible, and, apart from enjoying thick old-fashioned velvets and some of the other luxurious fabrics, don't appreciate the nuances of cloth. I was surprised to hear of people who enjoy materials the way some of my friends appreciate wine, or the way I cherish the many facets of rock and roll, and shame on me for being so blinkered. Having said that, I still (don't quite) blush to admit I probably will still confine my cloth-tactile interests to satins, silks, laces, and the aforementioned velvet. Although lamé has some attraction, as does fine calf leather....

The Geri Sullivan of Las Vegas, eh? Ms Forman and her friends appear to have put on an enjoyable con. I'm still amazed at the idea of fandom in Las Vegas, a city I imagine more as a welter of sound stage fronts, or as a sink for magic and statistical anomalies à la Tim Powers' *Last Call*. (Read any Powers book, but especially read that one! You'll never again stay anyplace cigarette smoke circles close to the center of a table. Even if you chain smoke. What a marvelously uncanny writer!)

Would Ms Forman be interested in writing something for you about her day job? I'd love to read her descriptions of the goings on at her casino, the people who come in, the feel of the place (I'm told that Las Vegas hotels don't have clocks in public spaces and are always brightly lit ... is this actually the truth?), etc.

The Corflu and Britfan pictures that reproduced so well were helpful. Now I know how people look, after

having simply read of or heard their names. I was thunderstruck when Bob pointed out the picture of Paul Williams of *Crawdaddy* fame. Am I exposing my fannish ignorance here, or are there others who didn't know that Williams represented a congruence of rock and fandom?

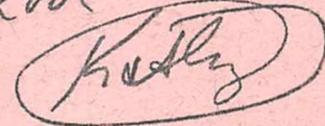
Corflu Nova... I am now presented with a difficulty. Do I praise Gary Farber as having written one of the best pieces in the issue, the one that had me laughing out loud even though I knew naught of that about which he wrote, the one that made me think fannish fields might be worth tilling, the one that made me hope I might meet this person who, until now, has only been a name to me? Or do I just congratulate him on his serendipitous qualities? Well? I await your advice.

(And why do I enjoy the hints of hiss-and-spit in his article when I find it reprehensible in other articles?)

I really enjoyed the Stiles illos. My favorite chapter of *The Wind in the Willows* — why do we so often dismiss classic writing for children as unfit for adult consumption? — is "The Piper at the Gates of Dawn," so I am glad he included an illo of Mole and Ratty's meeting with the demigod. A favorite high school memory, by the by, is of stagehanding for a play based on the book, put on by the drama students at our local university. I will always think of Ratty as a bearded, bespectacled young man whose delivery of the line "I mess about in boats" was flawless.

I snickered muchly at the discourse on Pets by (have I got this right?) Skel. And Ken Fletcher's illos made me guffaw. "Or is it this yellow wallpaper?" indeed. What WAS the name of the evil little Victorian horror story from which that came? Was it simply called "The Yellow Wallpaper"? Who wrote it? Can anyone enlighten me?

As for Bob's piece, I agree with it. And I'm glad I married someone who writes well. Dare I say more without being accused of verbal nepotism of some sort? I like you Minneapolitans, I even share some of your instincts about What Is Nice, being Canadian, but you do push the envelope when it comes to the art of the polite.

Love


Aileen Forman is doing a grand job of writing about work in her own fanzine, *Glamour*. I hope she's making additions to her mailing list while reading this lettercol. Not that I'd object to more on the subject for the pages of *Idea*, mind you.

While most of us know of Paul's musical ties, there are no doubt other fannish connections that have escaped our attention. One of my favorites is that Lee Hoffman made sandwiches for Dave Van Ronk and other

musicians as they prepared for their journey to support the union members during the Chicago Strikes. Leaves me wondering what fans are doing (or even know) about the newspaper strike still underway in Detroit. And LeeH's own *Gardylou* was an early landmark in the folk music publishing scene.

My own education was lacking in my understanding of *Peter Pan* until I saw the statue by that same name in Hyde Park. Pan... Peter Pan! How could I have remained oblivious to that for so many decades? There's wonder and delight in learning no matter our age.

Advice... you want advice on how to respond to Gary Farber? At the risk of raising the level of hiss-and-spit in these very pages, I throw this out as an exercise to the readership. It's not fair that I hog all the fun.

As for the source of "The Yellow Wallpaper," we'll have to leave that as another exercise for the readership. A 20-year-old memory tells me I own a book by that title, purchased for the Philosophy of feminism course I took at Michigan State. But when I try to recall the author, I can think only of Rita Mae Brown's *Plain Brown Wrapper*, purchased for the same course. *The Yellow Wallpaper* I'm remembering was an Oriental tale, so not likely to be the one you've got in mind anyway.— gfs

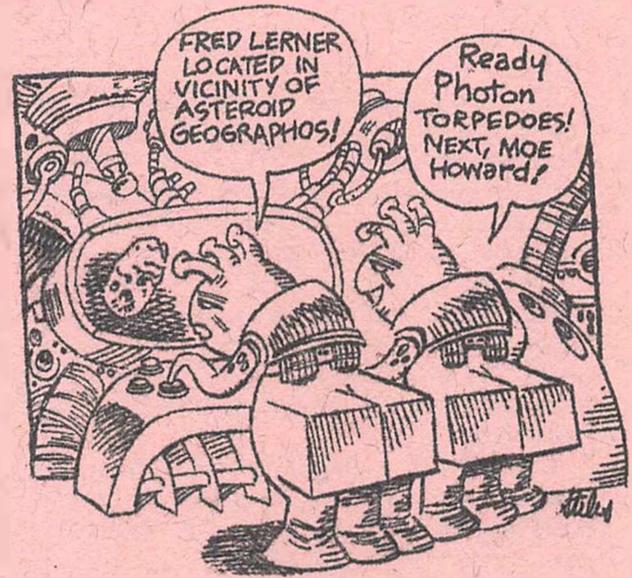
Fred Lerner

5 Worcester Avenue
White River Junction, VT 05001

For me, the high spot of the issue was Kathy Routliffe's "You Can Go Home Again." I've never had any desire to attend a high school reunion. I was only too happy to see the back of the place, and there are only four or five classmates that would walk across a room to talk to. But Kathy's account of a high school reunion in Nova Scotia made me wonder what it might be like to spend an evening with a fondly-remembered group from my own teenage years: the members of the Evening Session Science Fiction Society at City College in New York.

I've written about that club, which was my introduction to Fandom, for *Mimosa*, so I won't say much about it here. And I have kept up with several of its members, so it's not as though it's all a part of my remote past. What I miss most about the club is the shared enthusiasm for science fiction. SF had not quite become respectable in the early 1960s, and its imagery had not penetrated far into the American consciousness. Neither *Star Trek* nor paperback Tolkien had emerged to spread an interest in science fiction or fantasy among a mass audience. There was definitely an element of "we happy few" that could not exist in today's SF-saturated America.

A lot of that was simply the enthusiasm of youth, and none of us would be able to recapture that. It's the "shared" part that I recollect most fondly. Today such a large part of Fandom makes or augments its living from SF that a science fiction convention is as much a place for doing business as it is for celebrating a shared,



enthusiasm for the literature. It's perverse to mourn a loss of innocence when we spent so much of our youth hoping for the sort of recognition and prosperity that science fiction now enjoys. But I suspect that I'm not the only long-time fan to remember fondly a time when science fiction was our own little secret.

I can't pass up the opportunity to tell my PEZ story, though I imagine you're more interested in artifacts than nightmares. When I was six or seven, I consumed one afternoon entirely too much lemon-flavoured PEZ. After I went to bed, I spent a harrowing night being chased across much of the Solar system by a spaceship full of "square-assed Mercurians." I remember nothing about their physical features or personal habits beyond what their name suggests, but my dream was quite explicit on that point. I imagine that "Tom Corbett, Space Cadet" or "Rod Brown and the Rocket Rangers" must share with the manufacturers of PEZ some responsibility for my nightmare. But I'm at a loss to explain their anatomical peculiarity.

Fred Lerner

While it would be perfectly obvious if they'd been "rectangular-assed Mercurians"? I've had a PEZ nightmare of my own, but the closest thing to a stinal element in it was the 1950s PEZ Space Gun I held in my hands for most of the dream, only to discover it was a fake like all the rest of the PEZ dispensers I was looking at.— gfs

Irwin Hirsh

26 Jessamine Ave.
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AUSTRALIA (in 1999)

So, Wisconsin has a State Muffin? I wonder to what degree does the muffin chosen have to do with whoever sits at the head of the Governor's breakfast table? (And is there an official State Muffin-Making-Franchise?)

The photos on page 13 and 16 are sufficiently weird in that I have a similar set of photos from the KTF meeting Wendy and I attended in December 1987. In fact, the first time I flicked through this issue, I wondered what you were doing with my photos. There of the photos are almost exactly the same as those that sit in our photo album — the one of Vin4 on page 13, and the ones of Langford&Hanna and Kincaid&Hansen on page 17. (Though neither Judith nor Paul were at that Dec. '87 KTF meeting, nor, as-it-happens, in my photos of the event. In their stead are Wendy Hirsh and Chuck Harris.)

It was strange reading a Corflu Nova report after the earlier report on Corflu Vegas. But this bit of scheduling didn't distract from my enjoyment of Gary Farber's report. There are some delicious lines in there. Though once or twice Gary went on a bit too much for his own good. Like in the paragraph that links the two columns on page 18. There I was, enjoying Gary's building up to revealing Arnie Katz's utterance and he goes and puts in his parenthetical aside and otherwise sidetracks and wrecks the flow. Who fucking cares how it is that Gary came to accurately report Arnie's words?

Gary asks what's up with Brad Parks. Well...he words for For, or GM, or Honda, or...one of those companies that made The Motor City what it is today. His current crush is with Hong Kong — sees all the films that come out of the colony, and so on. Unless Something Happened Brad and his wife recently had a holiday in Hong Kong. They are the only people I know who have gone to the place as a holiday destination in itself (as distinct to stopover on the way to or from Europe or Japan or....)

I'm unlikely to ever write an article about attending a high school reunion since ERA School, the high school I attended, doesn't exist anymore. Not that a prerequisite for a reunion is that the school should still be around; it is just that visiting one's old stomping grounds would be a strong motivation to be thinking about a reunion, as well as the best facilities from which to organise the event. On the other hand, the legacy of ERA School lives on through King David School, which Adrian, my oldest child, attends. Not many people know about the connections, mainly because in the spectrum of educational philosophy ERA School was extreme left while King David is somewhere just left of center. But back in the days when King David was being formed the school council approached ERA's council for assistance in putting into place its educational policy. The mother of Adrian's best friend tells me that she used to play truant from her school in order to visit friends at their school. She's most impressed with the connections between the school she would like to have attended and the school to which she sends her children.

I'm with Vicki Rosenzweig on the idea that a Good Ol' Boy can't be restricted to just Southern Fandom. I once saw a remark noting that what made Southern Fandom unique was that it is a People Fandom. That

posed the question on how the description distinguished Southern Fandom from those of other regions.

That bunch of 1982 Tolkien and Star Trek calendars would not be as useless as Richard Newsome thinks. He could use them in 1999, 2010, 2016, 2021, 2027, 2038, and so on. There are only 14 calendar forms, which get used in cycles of 28 years. There are 7 leap year formats that get used once every 28 years, while the 7 non-leap year formats get used in a sequence of every 6, 5, 6, and 11 years. For convenience I'm ignoring those cycles that include a year that prima-facia is a leap year but turns out not to be. There next such year is 2100 and I somehow doubt that in 104 years' time Richard will be worrying about which calendar format to stick on his study wall.

Let's see now, R.J. Berlien writes articles for your fanzine, Robert J. Berlien sends LoCs on your fanzine. When he does some cover art for you will we find out what the J. stands for?

Cheers,
Irwin

Skipping school to go to another school? I'm amused. Sounds everso fannish, too.

Please sign your next letter or a pocsard so Jeff can scan your signature. This goes for readers sending elocs, too, including Peter Roberts. If any other readers don't like the exact signature I'm using, just send me a new one with a note. (No, I don't ask Jeff to rescan everytime you write. Even I think absurdity has its limits.) — gfs

Peter Roberts

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Torquay, Devon TQ1 4RL
UNITED KINGDOM

I guess I'd better write a loc before the cute dogs of fandom knee me in the groin.

Your fan photos were interesting but not entirely credible. I know what real American fans look like, and I have my 1977 Suncon photos to prove it. Clearly some of your photos must be fakes. Take svelte, suave, sophisticated Stu Shiffman, for example. According to you, he appears to have eaten somebody whole (possibly his elfin chum Gary Farber, since I don't see him anywhere). But I find this difficult to accept. Stu is just too laid-back for such wholesale cannibalism, and besides, as I recall, Gary used to move pretty fast.

As for Ross Chamberlain, your photo suggests he has not altered position since I photographed him 18 years ago. Merely changing his t-shirt cannot hide an obvious case of plagiarism. If you deny it, then we should be told the truth about this motionless entity named "Ross."

But at least we can agree on Fred Levy Haskell. All our photos show conclusively that he is a cardboard cut-out, apparently available in two handy party-going poses.

Should you be tempted to publish any of your Precursor photos of me (which God forbid), then I should like to make it clear in advance that goblins came and stole all my hair one night when I wasn't looking, and that it's not my fault. The paunch is merely an optional fashion accessory.

So what else? I'm told that Findhorn is a rather sad little place containing a shack, a few old hippies, and some sick-looking weeds... but maybe that's just a wicked lie spread by anti-environmental corporate communist freemasons and the like. However, Jeff's quote from *The Findhorn Garden* strongly suggests that the writer floated away from reality a long while ago.

The Real Truth is that mankind is being callously used by certain plants in their age-old struggle against other plants. In return for a few nibbly bits, wheat, rice, and a gang of other cereals have got a large portion of humanity slaving away on their behalf and are doing very nicely thank you. Even the humble banana is no slouch, and may also possess shape-shifting abilities. I have often suspected that some fans are bananas.

Ask Don West. He knows about these things. Best,

P.Roberts@rbgkew.org.uk

Ross lives in Las Vegas these days, so it's only fair I leave that particular truth-telling to fandom's most eager myth-maker, Arnie Katz. — gfs

Ethel Lindsay

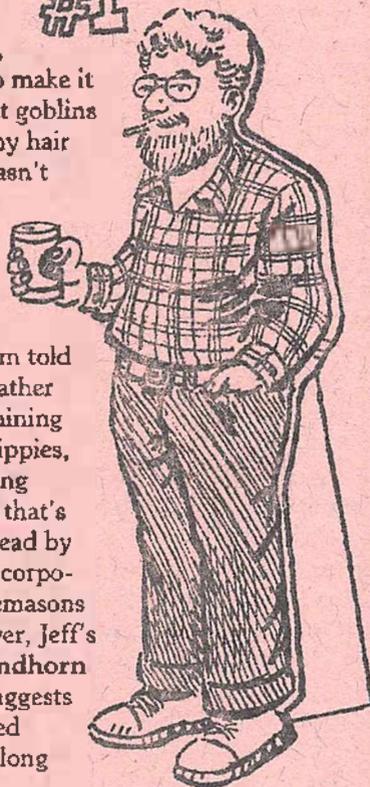
(...sigh)

Someone at Intersection handed me a copy of *Idea* No. 9. I think it was Dan Steffan... but that was rather a hectic weekend for meeting people. I thank you anyway. My first reaction as — how neat... how clear... what a pleasure to read... a far cry from the duplicated efforts I used to publish, The first stencils I used to buy cost six pence!

I really appreciated the photographs. Was pleased to find the name of John D. Rickett as at Intersection

PARTY POSE

#1



(For Party Pose #2, turn Party Pose #1 horizontally.)

his badge had only JDR and I knew that he was not Roosevelt. He did a noble job of looking after the Fan Lounge and, of course, he is the Smoking Fan's Friend.

My goodness... you do have an interesting garden. All I get when I dig are pieces of glass from which I deduce that a greenhouse once stood there.

I have never tried quilting... too long range at my age. I did get hooked on cross stitch embroidery though, so come Xmas everyone got bookmarks. The ones on which I had embroidered the name were the biggest hits... but then everyone likes egoboo.

"Corflu Nova" was a great description of re-entry to fandom and the way you can pick up from where you left off years ago. I feel like that every year I go to the Novacon.

The other Corflu report made amusing reading but many of the names were quite new to me... a little explanation here and there would not come amiss.

Berlien on Chicago v Minnesota reminded me of the chasm between Glasgow and Edinburgh, otherwise it read strangely to me.

I turned with relief to Jimmy White... him I know; sure enough in no time he had me giggling.

Skel's dog tales made me laugh even more than Jimmy, which is quite a feat.

The Steve Stiles folio was great, just great.

As was the whole zine....

Many thanks,

Ethel

I don't know *who* gave Ethel that copy of *Idea*, but I have a good idea of whose copy it was. Dave Langford came groveling after setting his down on a table in the SECC fan lounge. The moment his back was turned, it was apparently claimed as an abandoned copy. This led to a grand photo taken by Vicki Rosenzweig and other fine fannish adventures, so I can only hope that's the copy Ethel received. Saved me postage, too, as I failed to hand her a copy during the convention.

As for comparing cities, there's a reason the first sign I saw outside the Central Hotel was for the Chicago Meatpackers restaurant (and bar, IIRC). Does that mean when I finally make it to Edinburgh, it will remind me of Toronto, Seattle, and home? — gfs

Robert Lichtman

P.O. Box 30
Glen Ellen, CA 95442

Returning to our discussion of who got the best Dan Steffan cover, I'm afraid it's a case of comparing apples and oranges. The styles Dan employed on our respective covers are so vastly different that no real claim of "best" can be made. They are both excellent in terms of composition and handling of their respective subjects. I suspect you like yours better because you've got a definite dog Jones currently, as evidenced by how

readily and at what length you answer pet-related stuff in the lettercol of this issue. [This is not meant to cast a negative thing over said comments, however. While I'm in my "post-pet" phase of life (or at least between pets, but my last was in 1971 — my all-white female kitty, Harlow, whom I gave to Trina and who lived on until the late '80s, though I never visited), I still enjoy reading about people's relationships with animals. It's a bit of a substitute for reading science-fiction, which I largely don't.] If anything further can be said, perhaps it's that I think my choice of paper color on which to run my cover was better than yours. To explain, the blue is just dark enough that for me the dog becomes marginally over-dark. I'd like to see this cover on buff, canary, or even goldenrod. By the way, I chose the copy from the batch you sent me that had the feather entirely in various shades of purple. (I traded with the Burbees.)

The part of your editorial about your not moving coupled with tales of those who are reminded me that I'm not moving, either, and come next January 20th (1996) I'll have lived in my present digs for ten years. The room that used to be my children's bedroom is now a media room. It's full of boxes of fanzines, books and other print kipple, several large bookcases, and more. My oldest son Ben has one corner stacked to the ceiling with his stuff and in another area there are half a dozen boxes and some outriders that constitute the Stuff From My Parent's House. There are two Navajo rugs on the floor — a good place for them because there's no traffic except me — and another on the wall, plus a couple of (east) Indian mirror clothes, a cheap Japanese scroll, and a National Geographic map of "the Americas." The latter two items are left over from the room's previous incarnation. My living room is full of boxes of fanzines along its perimeter. I've got a lot more clothes than I did in 1985, and some bulky furniture I didn't have then, either. In a way I hope I stay here for years to come; the rent is cheap and so far the neighborhood still seems fairly safe. And I won't have to face the horror! the horror! of additional moves.

I know what you mean about how you wish you'd started a database seven years ago to keep track of response to *Idea*. I think of it, too, and actually I had a system back before I had a computer that I abandoned. When my mailing list was on 3x5 cards, I kept notes on each card of LoCs and fanzines received. I didn't transfer this information over to the mailing list file on the computer because of the amount of additional typing it would have entailed, and now I rely on looking past lettercols and WAHF listings to determine who's playing the game. That, and my mail log of fanzines received. Since I'm so subjective — some people I'll allow two issues and if no response then bye, others I carry without response forever — I find it works pretty well.

I love it when Jeff writes stuff like "mutants masquerading as businessmen and their smarmy congressional puppets brightly announce the end of unnecessary, boring, unprofitable environmentalism" and "businessmen possessing no enlightenment and

no honor are in charge of this planet," but I wonder if you get hate mail from any right-wing types who might be on your list?

Jeff's description of digging up your back yard for a garden and what he found reminded me of my own parallel experience nearly ten years ago when I prepared the hundred square foot vegetable plot I still maintain today. In the spring of 1986 I began my excavating work, determined to dig down at least one full shovel's depth and Work The Soil, as they say. Besides broken glass and the remains of household implements, much as Jeff encountered, there was an entire layer of red gravel, a buried patio of sorts, across about half the ground I'd selected. It took a lot of sifting to get rid of it, and even now I still turn up little veins of it that had sunk below my shovel's reach. No toys, but I remedied that in other parts of the yard when my boys in their earlier years discarded broken toy cars and Star Wars action figures. They're awaiting some future archaeologist or hapless gardener. Into my hundred square feet I pumped 600 pounds (a dozen bags) of manure, turning and turning and turning the soil until it was all thoroughly mixed. Every year since then I've put in another 150 pounds of dry shit, so that these days it's a breeze preparing the spring garden after one breaks the soil and pulls out the winter's growth of crab grass and other "weeds." And every year I plant the same garden: four tomato plants, four cucumber plants, and two hot peppers.

By now I've become quite good at it and am always rewarded with a beautiful crop. I freeze a lot of the hot peppers so I can use them out of season to spice up my stir fries and the like, but I don't can or freeze tomatoes. The former is too much work (although I do have a 16-quart pressure canner I got for \$3 at a garage sale in 1983 and *could* do it) and I lack adequate freezer space for the latter. But between all these plants, I do have more than ample supplies of vegetables for me, my friends (particularly Carol for the surplus tomatoes) and the sporadic but ongoing "Farmers' Market" that takes place on the counter to the left of the sing in the front coffee and supply room at work. The cucumbers give out first and I often pull them to gain more access to the tomatoes. (I plant much closer than recommended due to my limited space.) When it's definitely going to hard-freeze — which can be as late as mid-December around here in the milder years — I rush out (sometimes with a flashlight) to pull off the remaining pink and green tomatoes (except the ones with the various blights tomatoes get when the nights get colder and damper) to save them to ripen gradually on a plate on top of my refrigerator, pulled a few at a time from a stash kept between thick layers of newspaper. These aren't as tasty as vine-ripened, but they're better than the tasteless tomatoes that inhabit markets by then. I lose maybe a third of them to mold and rot, but the remaining edible fruit are worth it. I don't know if very many other fans have home vegetable gardens, so I wrote this up in the interests of promoting same — and in expanding the knowledge contained in fanzines.

Terry Garey's Potlatch report is something of a flop for me as a convention report — it only serves as a frame around the real article, and I wish she could have simply jumped right in. Because her main topic, cloth, is fascinating to me. My own interest in textiles goes more in the direction of handwork, such as Navajo weaving (over a dozen Navajo "rugs" of various sizes and styles), Indian embroidered tapestries (some mirror cloth, some not), and tie-dying. Although not a clothoholic myself, I've spent many an hour accompanying various women in my life to some excellent fabric shops and — because I have an interest in textiles — learned an appreciation for, as Terry puts it, the "insatiable lust for cloth." If I had more room, I think I'd have some African textiles. Oh, and Guatemalan handweaving, too.

Aileen's Corflu report had a pleasant chatting quality to it, like something you'd read in *Wild Heirs*. This is Not Bad. Stu's artwork complemented her words nicely.

Gary Farber's Corflu report is a lot of fun to read, but other than observing it would be highly unusual — even unlikely — for Gary Farber to have an episiotomy, no other comment comes to mind.

Bob Berlien's piece about Chicago etiquette was interesting, and Kathy Routliffe manages to make what could be a fairly pedestrian class reunion tale full of people only the author knows into a good read. Particularly liked her admission of ambivalence about the '60s: she's not "into" them, but she defends them. James' piece is truly wonderful, and perhaps even moreso the Ken Fletcher cartoon that accompanies it. You're lucky to have Ken in your own back yard and occasionally successful tapped for a cartoon or two. Particularly liked the aside about Chuch and the Minneapolis in 3073 bit. Steve Stiles' portfolio of drawings for *The Wind in the Willows* was truly wonderful and makes me want to know when the book will be published so I can see the rest of them. (Will any of them appear in color?)

Skel's writing is entertaining enough, but I have to say that Ken Fletcher totally upstages him with this series of cartoons. I particularly like the caption "ominous subsonic rumble" in the last one.

Like David Bratman I would much rather "be in a cold climate doing something fannish than roasting by a poolside in the summer heat." I don't know if we're both "just a fan," but it's definitely something we have in common. I suspect it's not just a "fan" thing, though, because Jeanne Bowman (for one) likes warm weather. But maybe, David, we're both "weird" and Jeanne is "normal" in this regard.

In response to your comment to Redd Boggs about how you "doubt California of 33 years ago exists there today," you are definitely right. California has increased

enormously in population and, as a result, overcrowding; this is particularly evident on the roads around the big cities. For instance, at times much of Los Angeles is essentially undriveable. Another big difference between California then and now is the economic picture.

California was riding high 33 years ago, nearing the peak of its prosperity. Now it's in a state of long-term recession, with its unemployment rate consistently several points about the national average and its economic base seriously strained. It's still a nice place to live, if you have work, but nowhere near as nice as it used to be.

Brian Earl Brown writes about encouraging Central and South American countries to grow hemp for papermaking. Why go that far? Hemp grows perfectly fine in many parts of the United States and used to be a major crop before its association with marijuana gave it a black mark. Hemp paper already

exists, actually, and I checked out its price to see if it could be used for all or part of *Trap Door*. Alas, it's still too expensive.

I'm one of the people in s.f. fandom who has seen (and mightily enjoyed) Steve Stiles' and Dick Lupoff's *The Adventures of Professor Thintwhistle*. I ran into a remaindered copy of it at a Half-Price Books in North Berkeley several years ago and immediately snapped it up. But Steve's right about the lack of publicity its publisher has afforded it; I had no idea it existed until I encountered the small pile of remainders. Short review: it's good. Go find one.

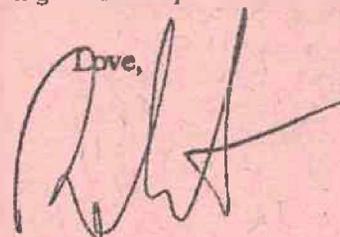
Bill Danner: No, of course the promoters of nuclear power plants didn't mention (or factor in) the high cost of decommissioning the things. The whole nuclear power plant program is a crapshoot for the entire planet — what will happen if vast amounts of highly toxic stuff doesn't maintain containment for the quarter-million years some of it will continue to be dangerous? Nuclear power is neither clean nor safe, and especially not cheap.

Vicki Rosenzweig: You don't have to be from the South to be a member of SFPA, but there's a quota on what percentage of the SFPA roster can be Yankees at any given time. Also, I believe the OE is required to be Southern.

Can't close without mentioning how much I appreciated and enjoyed all the photos you included with the issue, and particularly the ones on the bacover of Toad Hall and its various denizens. Is that a gathering of PEZ dispensers in the lower right?



THE ADVENTURES OF
PROFESSOR THINTWHISTLE

Love,


I admit being a tad bewildered over your comment that reading about people's relationships with animals serves as a substitute for reading *sf*. Animals as aliens?

I agree with you re: paper color, but for different reasons. For me, it's not that Willow becomes over-dark, but that the intensity of the color competes with Dan's lines. IIRC, I quit coloring feathers shortly after sending the packet your way. I took markers along to the UK, but wasn't pleased enough with the results on that stock to continue coloring when there were so many distractions at hand.

I fear my slow publishing schedule does you disservice, as you have described further organization of your apartment in the year since you wrote the above description.

No hate mail, at least not yet.

You have the equivalent of a 10'x10' garden, which you use to grow 10 plants each year. Over the years, you've added some 2,000 pounds of fertilizer to the soil, to good effect. "It's a breeze," you say, *after* you break the soil and pull the crab grass and other invaders each year. It's descriptions like yours that make me understand why people think gardening is Too Much Work.

On your fondness for heat scale, I am "weird" and Jeff is "normal," so it's not gender-based, either.

Thanks for your comments re: nuclear power. Just look at what Chernobyl hath wrought for a partial answer to your question.

My own first-hand exposure to the attitudes of Southern Fandom took place over breakfast in Donaghadee, Northern Ireland. They'd sent the *Southern Fandom Bulletin* or somesuch to Walter, which I took as a good sign. Until I read the fanzine review column, which focused on Southern fanzines. Fair enough, until they reviewed a couple of non-Southern fanzines, explaining that they were included since they might be of interest to Southern fans *only* because they made some mention of Southern fandom, or had articles by Southern fans. As though nothing outside the South could possibly interest true Southern Fans! What a disservice that review column did to Southern fans, and to all of fandom.

That bacover picture showed only 37 of my PEZ dispensers; the collection has now grown to somewhere over 300. Oh, the horror and joy of it all. — gfs

Walt Willis

9 Alexandra Road
Donaghadee, N. Ireland BT21 0QD
UNITED KINGDOM

In *Idea #9* Jeff was enthralling and Terry Garey makes me understand her fascination for fabrics.

OOPs! I nearly forgot to mention the cover for which Dan is entitled to some sort of Award.

Anything Aileen Forman writes is fascinating to me, cos I know so very few Las Vegas Blackjack Dealers, but this example is charming in itself.

Your photo supplement raises the question, how do you manage to take such flattering photos of everyone? It must be because they are so glad to see you, which figures.

Gary Farber's con report was well written and evocative. Berlien seems reasonable but I wonder whether Minnesotan fans would agree. My instincts lead me to favour the Minnesota attitude.

I thought James White's article the best in the issue, but Kathryn Routhiffe runs it close, as does Skel.

Love,

Walt

Full agreement re: Dan's brilliant cover and most of your other comments, too. Minnesota Nice forbids agreement with your thesis about my photographs, as does the fine example set earlier in this lettercol by James White. — gfs

Par Nilsson

Dr. Bex gata 2-110
47324 Goteborg
SWEDEN

Thanks for *Idea 9*, complete with obscure Beatles reference, and boy, did it look good! I was particularly happy for the many Rotsler cartoons, and for the photographs of fans; it's nice to have an image (or rather images) to flesh out the mental picture of the people concerned. Oh, and Dan Steffan's cover illustration was really nice.

Skel's letter/article was my favorite written part of *Idea 9*. He had an enormously entertaining LoC in an early issue of Ken Cheslin's *A Child's Garden of Olaf* (or so I seem to remember), and I've wanted more ever since. Will, now I got it, along with fine art by Ken Fletcher. Gary Farber's piece was good, too.

The Wind in the Willows is one of my all-time favourite novels, so Steve Stiles' drawings went straight to my heart. The original illustrations by E.H. Shepard (for it is he, isn't it?) remain "the real thing," however.

Cheers,

Par

Teddy Harvia

701 Regency Drive
Hurst, TX 76054

Argh! Embarrassed in print for failing to recognize either Jeanne Gomoll's art style or signature. (I do recognize her in person!) Anyway, great stuff by Robert Berlien.

Properly castigated, I looked at the art credits in this issue. Zounds! That Bill Rotsler's art is everywhere. It's good to see it on the plate, literally and figuratively.

Alexis Gilliland's diarrhetic stegosaur with its raised spiked tail raised my eyebrows. I guess that kind of humor runs in fanzines.

What is that thing Bill Kunkel drew in front of the Lady and Tiger doors? It looks like a one-celled germ, in which case it doesn't matter which door it chooses.

Steve Stiles' "mainstream" Wind in the Willows illustrations are excellent. Fan art does translate into the real world.

You should have indicated earlier that you were a dog lover. I just send off a half dozen canine chuckles into exile to obscure fanzines in Australia.

Beast wishes,

The article was great stuff by Robert Berlien; the art was great stuff by Tom Grewe. I can't tell exactly what you meant to say. My fault, no doubt, as the confusion is exacerbated by the long publishing interval. — gfs

Sandra Bond

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UNITED KINGDOM

The art is super (special kudos to Steffan, Stiles, Foster, and Fletcher), and the printing has to be some of the clearest photocopying I've ever seen in a fanzine. Despite the name of the process, trying to photocopy a photo is not the easiest of things to do, and every one in this issue is as clear as a bell. The only graphics person I was less than fully pleased with was Bill Kunkel, and I've always had a blind spot for his art anyway, for some reason. (Example: page 24. At first glance this resembles, to my eye, a giant amoeba wondering which restroom to go into, and thinking of an old-fashioned cistern pull chain. Yet, I know it's really the back of a man's head and the thing in the thought bubble is a question mark, but I had to look at it a while before it fell into place).

Seeing as few American fanzines as I do, it's rare for me to see two convention reports on the same convention in the US, but Aileen Forman's article provided me with a nicely stereoscopic view of the Vegas Corflu when taken in conjunction with Vicki Rosenzweig's bit in *Quipu*. I've never yet seen two reports on the same con that would have made it plain, if you conflated out the identifying marks, that the same convention was under scrutiny; but sure and isn't that half the charm of conreps?

I always wanted to be rich enough to afford just one session in a casino, after having read an enormously fat book in my youth by one John Scarne about just what went on in there, and when I was younger I memorised the rules for blackjack and baccarat so that when that day came I could swan in casually and take my place

without giving myself away as a small-town interloper; but that was far away and long ago, and I've forgotten the lot now, and besides, these days there seem to be far more important things in my life than casino fantasies. I still think Aileen's job must be an above-average source for anecdotal articles, though.

You jerked me into full consciousness (a state I rarely attain) by printing a snapshot of Vinç Clarke in close proximity to the caption "Snapshots of Corflus Past," particularly when closer scrutiny revealed Bridget Wilkinson and Paul Kincaid there, too. Then I noticed the second caption at the bottom of the page. Sneaky, I call it.

I'd have read Gary Farber's Corflu report several times anyway, but I read it one more time than I would have just to be certain that it had no identifying details of place, and then re-read Aileen's to ensure that, you guessed it, it had no dates mentioned anywhere. I don't think it was the same Corflu, but I can't be quite sure. And in any case, the impression I get from what I hear of Corflus (never having been lucky, or rich, enough to attend) is that they sort of carry on from where the previous one left off and in many cases, with the same people; like one meta-Corflu rather than a string of ordinary ones.

But it too was a damned fine report; even finer than Aileen's. It was nice to learn that someone else gets confused when they meet Nigel Rowe. In his, and my, London days, I always muddled him up with Martin Smith whenever I met either of them. (Of course that could never happen now; Martin Smith has been elevated to near-godhood status by the many worship-filled articles penned in his honour by Rob Hansen, so that his face is now known across every continent and at every convention. Besides, Martin's grown his hair long now while Nigel's remains nice and short.)

It was rather horrifying to notice Gary's stated belief that online work should be disbarred from Hugo nomination, for now at least; this implies not only that e-mail is being nominated for awards, but that lotsa people see nothing wrong in this. Well... it goes against the grain, though this may just be sour grapes from someone who's unlikely to have the facility to receive it in the near future, and an argument could be made that it's no more elitist than nominating a story from a magazine or a book that not every fan had the money to buy when it appeared. My gut feeling is that it's wrong, though, and I usually trust my gut, except when it's suffering from diarrhoea.

R.J. Berlien's article puts me in mind of Vicki Rosenzweig's New York lightbulb jokes as related at Intersection. ("How many New Yorkers does it take to change a lightbulb? -- Fuck off, it's the super's job! How many Californians living in New York does it take? -- Fuck off, it's the super's job! And have a nice day.") I suppose that most US cities of any size suffer from rudeness. It's something about living in cities. During my three years in London, not only did I notice the low level of friendliness around me, but to my dismay I started acting that way myself; not saying hi to

the milkman, starting feuds with Avedon Carol (migod, did I not want to live?!) and so forth.

I've already said this briefly above, but Steve Stiles' **Wind in the Willows** artwork was quite superb and made me yearn to own the text thus illustrated. He simultaneously manages to make Toad the figure of fun he should be by rights, and render Pan as a completely serious and rather awe-inspiring figure. And he has the gall to claim that they were tossed off in a hurry! If he keeps on with that vein of false modesty someone will end up braining him with a big stick.

It made me think in the letter column when Steve talked of having all his styli and shading plates stolen while in the army; who the hell would pinch something like that? And what use could they possibly have other than the one they were designed for? Has Steve considered that the thief may have been a rival fan-artist sneaking into his barracks by night rather than a fellow soldier?

In response to Vicki Rosenzweig's letter, I have a personal distaste for convention badges that don't carry the wearer's real name, but this is purely because I am the world's worst fan, quite likely the world's worst *anyone*, at recognising people. For example, at my first Eastercon (1988) I was greeted by a cheerful fellow on the Saturday morning who quite obviously knew me, and equally obviously I didn't know him from Adam... until he spoke, and the accent was familiar, and it was Steve Glover's, and damn, the bastard had shaved his beard off that morning. I think people who do things like that are asking not to be recognised by their friends. And what if — particularly appropriate at a Worldcon — you run into someone whose badge reads, say, "No Through Road" and you pass them by, because their real name, which you'd recognise from 50 fanzine letter columns, isn't on the badge? (I have an occasional paranoid fantasy that behind such badges at every convention lurk famous convention non-attendees such as Harry Warner, Jr., or his ilk, enjoying the con but safe from the horror of recognition.) (There ought to be an article in that little conceit, actually...)

I haven't seen any of the places Gary Farber claims Ted White has used to read the riot act concerning New Fandom, but (from my severely blinkered

Stupid Pet Tricks



viewpoint) I am probably glad that New Fandom exists, because it implies that change is going on, and change is what keeps any society — even one as small and specialised as fandom — vital. New Fandom, I can say with equal certainty, whatever it might be, will not sweep all before it; nothing can ever do that to fandom, which is resilient enough to withstand almost any force. I am also in favour of this phenomenon if it gives Ted White something to write about, since Ted is a good writer when it comes to things fannish, even if he does occasionally take a sledgehammer, or even a piledriver, to a nut.

Jenny Glover's letter on mimeo ink made me giggle, particularly the quote from Charles Stross (not, as you mistyped, Stours). I once wrote a similar thing when I and my then partner took over the editorship of the UK gay pagan newsletter and converted it from photocopy to mimeo to save costs and take advantage of available equipment: "Duplicating is usually done by your editor whilst skyclad, since I already have all the trendy, black clothes I am likely to wear in the next several years." Chuch Harris doesn't seem to have much fun with reproductive equipment, as you might say; I recall the story Vinç tells of how he dropped a teacup into Vinç's duplicator, which resulted in that worthy picking slivers of china from the silk screen and delicate workings for months after.

I may be taking my life in my hands but I disagree with Greg Pickersgill: 'bloody fuckers' is perfectly euphonic, and in fact, the repeated vowel sound could be quite poetic if you didn't know what the words meant. It's true that I've rarely if ever heard those words yoked together, but why that should be I don't know. Hmm. Bloody fuckers. It's a very masculine-sounding insult, isn't it? A woody insult as opposed to a tinny one, as Monty Python would classify it.

This is getting silly. End loc before it gets worse. Please don't take 18 months over *Idea* 10 if you can humanely manage better....

luv,

I found most of the photos a tad dark and muddy for my taste, but my skills are slowly improving, as can be seen in the photo section in *Science Fiction Five Yearly* #10, which went to many of the people reading this. Now if I had a Xerox DocuTech in the basement... (I can hear my son now, "Dream on, little dreamer. Dream on.")

My editorial hand further confused the Corflu issue, seeing how I put Aileen's account of the 1995 Corflu before Gary's report from 1994. It takes close reading and some knowledge of American geography, but one could hardly drive from the Bronx to Las Vegas in 8.5 hours, even if it were Ted White behind the wheel. Besides, had I been present at the Corflu Gary wrote about, could he have possibly failed to mention me in his narrative? <g>

I thought it was Martin Smith's condom collection that was known throughout the fannish cosmos. You mean some fans look at his *face*?

One small correction of terminology: e-mail is usually private mail sent to one person, a small group of people, or to a mailing list. I haven't read the Hugo rules while thinking specifically of e-mail, but it's about as eligible for a Hugo as the hundreds of letters in my personal correspondence files. Online or electronic fanwriting generally refers to material posted to Usenet groups, service provider groups, or the Web. Much of it can be read by anyone with access to the Internet, be it through personally-owned equipment, an employer's equipment, Internet cafe, or local library.

Thanks for the humane out; I had every intention of having #10 and #11 published by now, if not #12. All the usual excuses apply, but if I don't manage to turn this trend around in the next couple of issues, I'll be looking at other publishing options. — gfs

Vicki Rosenzweig

33 Indian Road, 6-R
New York, NY 10034

Listing the sources of your links in alphabetical order is fiendish: I think I know which is from Joyce, but the others could be assigned at random and I'd never know the difference.

I also envy people with databases, but not enough to create one for my mailing list: at the moment (after too much hand-scribbling, terminated only when the cat ate the latest version) it exists as a computer file of names and addresses, in alphabetical order, with no annotations except the X that warns someone that they'll be dropped if they don't respond. For the next issue I'll copy the file, delete anything with an X, and then add some names of people I've heard from since I published the last issue (most of whom got copies with handwritten labels).

Asking friends to pay you in surprises is a nice idea; if a friend ever asks me to take on an editing project, I may borrow it. In the meantime, I've been known to grab con fliers from people at parties and insist on proofreading them and editing them for consistency; I can hardly ask for payment of any sort under those circumstances, but it pains me to see these things done wrong.

I love the idea of roots growing up into the compost heap: it may even reduce the work you have to do, since you can leave at least some of the compost where it is. Oh, for a garden! The problem is, I don't have the money or energy for any of the other aspects of home ownership, ranging from down payments to worrying about the state or the boiler.

I don't sew beyond the level of putting buttons back on and restoring the occasional ripped seam, but I admire nice fabric: thus far I've resisted buying it, because it wouldn't be a collection or a resource, it would just gather dust far from anyone who would do anything with it. But *Idea* is forever tempting me with new ideas, activities, things to spend time on that would be better for mind and soul than computer games.

The author of your con report may be about gafia, but some of us are still about fanzines; hell, if he's not about fanzines, what's he doing pubbing a con report? And I cannot but be amused by someone describing Corflu as being like going back to high school, except it's an alternative high school where you fit in, and a couple of pages later complaining that the 2 AM conversation is one he'd had before. (I happen to think that this is a peril of repeatedly being awake at that hour with the same group of people, but it would also be an inevitable aspect of being back in high school, even an alternative universe high school.)

Steve Stiles' Toad Hall portfolio is as delightful as it is appropriate: thanks!

Disposal costs are seldom if ever reckoned into the price of anything, simply because once it's sold, the company making it takes no responsibility. Sometimes they declare bankruptcy, leaving chemical poisons and radioactive breakdown products in densely populated areas (like Queens, New York). But somehow it's the little things I resent, like the fact that I'm legally responsible for bundling up unsolicited catalogs from the local drugstore and from companies selling useless, expensive toys by mail, so they can be recycled. And then the city budget has to make room for getting rid of them. And neither my time nor the cost of recycling is ever charged to the companies that created the necessity.

I'm not sure there is any such thing as "generally available" fanwriting: by the time the Hugo ballot shows up, the fanzine editor has sent out all her copies, and the online writer's work has been deleted because it's over a month old. In the meantime, we're faced with the odd paradox that online material is seen by more people, but nonetheless has a more limited potential audience: the potential audience for an English-language fanzine includes anyone who can read English, while the audience for online material is limited to those who have access to computers, modems, and often a specific online service, though a larger fraction of the potential audience for online writing may be in its actual audience. Separate categories for "best print fanwriting" and "best online fanwriting" seems like a good idea, but I don't feel like going to the WSFS business meeting to promote this.

Sincerely yours,

Recent surprises include the gift of a half-unicorn head that's now mounted in our dining room. I already owned the other half in a joint-ownership scheme with Terry Garey. She didn't even owe me a surprise, which made it all the more surprising. Judy Cilcain and David Cargo surprised me with a trip to Mystic Lake casino after I worked on their wedding invitations. They supplied the transportation and a couple of rolls of quarters. I was about 14 quarters ahead at one point, but like most casino experiences, they soon disappeared. There was then a third roll of quarters that I had the option to keep or gamble with. In the course of 90 minutes, I managed

to turn \$30 into \$4, at which point I quit and used the "receeds" to purchase two large bottles of Orangina for the party we were having the next night. It was all great fun, even if I didn't fulfill our fantasy of winning big. A grand surprise.

I hope you can imagine how delighted I am that *Idea* is a source of ongoing temptation for you. That's the idea.

As far as the fanwriter Hugo, your suggestion for splitting it raises nothing but questions in my mind. What of the writing in fanzines like *PLOKTA*, *Apparatchik*, and *Ansible*, which appears in both forums? Would such a split only accelerate the speed of Langford's rockets? Would it dilute the effect of fanwriters like Gary Farber, who participate both in print and online? For me, it comes down to the fact that good fanwriting is good fanwriting is good fanwriting, and I'd like to see it judged on those terms, not on the venue of its appearance.— gfs

Sean Wallace

415 Merriman Road
Akron, OH 44303

It must have been Christmas because Ol' Saint Nick dropped *Idea* #8 and #9 on the porch; once I had the wrapping ripped away, I held two nicely done 'zines in my hands. (I wonder what I'll find in the stockings.) As I don't have any virgins at hand to sacrifice to the Great Goddess Geri, here's my humble loc as a substitute:

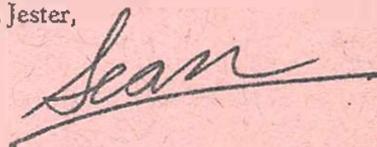
In *Idea* #8, I enjoyed the personal touch of "Wondering Why" and was mildly surprised that it wasn't included in the next issue (shame on you!). The article which struck me hard (sorry to say, the skin wasn't broken) was Ted White's "Nightmare at ConFrancisco." The accompanying illustrations by Dan were terrific, the best being on page 8. I shivered when I read Bob Berlien's "Webs of Terror" but enjoyed it immensely. The words "Suck the Duck" will probably haunt me for the rest of my poor pitiful life. As always, however, the loc department dominated my interest. The worst part of the 'zine though was the paper — it reminded me of the construction paper we used to use in art class — touching it made me want to say "ick." Otherwise, #8 was a success.

Idea #9 was even better than #8 — you discarded the construction paper for a slick coloured paper which really impressed the hell out of me, and the cover was very appropriate, and humorous to boot (what the world coming to?). I'm looking forward for the pictures from *Intersection* and *Precursor*. Of all the articles I read, it was Skel's article which grabbed me by the throat (stop that, you're choking me. Ack Ack). Ken Fletcher's artwork was just purr-fect, and hopefully we'll see more of him in later issues.

More artwork by Steve Stiles, or we'll burn Toad Hall down to the ground! Whoops, #10 is an all Steve Stiles art issue...no, no, Geri, the match is for the cigarette ;-)

I went straight to the loc department after devouring the rest of the 'zine (part of it is still stuck in my teeth). Hopefully when issue #10 arrives on the porch, I will have virgins by the score to sacrifice, but 'til then these locs will have to suffice.

your Court Jester,



You probably don't want to know that Jeff and I gleefully purchased 100 cases of that "construction paper" at a factory warehouse sale and look forward to pubbing fanzines on it for the next several decades. Eight hundred reams... that's not too many. But that's not to say I won't succumb to the temptations of DocuTech repro from time to time. As for "Wondering Why," I love adding personal touches to things until they become more of an annoyance than fun to do. When that happens, I stop.

Toad Hall has proven itself resistant to the firebug tendencies of fans from Canada and the UK, so I think it can withstand any matches you might "accidentally" leave smoldering here. But here's the all Steve Stiles art issue nonetheless. Hope you enjoyed it.

Letters are strongly preferred to sacrificial virgins.

More satisfying, doncha know? — gfs



Richard Newsome

281 Flatbush Avenue #1-B
Brooklyn, NY 11217

I've been thinking about trying some of that paper stock you used for the covers of this issue, but I think I'll pass it by. I think it needs more heft and stiffness, and it has no texture. Actually, I suppose, "slick as a warm ice cube" counts as having a texture, but you know what I mean. Did you run the covers off one at a time on a laser printer, which is the use I believe this sort of paper is meant for? (Let's see now... does it smear? Let's give it the smear test... rubbing hard with a sweaty fingertip doesn't smudge it. How about an eraser? Still doesn't smear, but it does rub the coating off the paper, so I'd better stop.)

Interlino Express — whose name goes with which quote? About half of them sound like they should have come from Laney, e.g. "I only know six fruits"....

Terraforming Toad Hall — "The public watches blankly as chunks of the Ross Ice Shelf the size of Rhode Island break off." Well, yeah, but have you ever been to Rhode Island? You can walk across it in a day. Just how long does it take that sucker to melt, anyway? Could a bunch of libertarians colonize it and declare themselves an independent nation?

You Can Go Home Again — Let's see here: "1971 (grade 10, the last year of my stay that anyone had a yearbook. In 11th grade, senior year at Wolfville High School, my class had no energy for yearbook preparation.)"

That would have been 1972? Yeah, uh huh, it was right about then that Led Zeppelin and cheap bags of \$5 an ounce Mexican weed turned most of the high school seniors I knew into glassy-eyed zombies right out of "Night of the Living Dead," so I'm not surprised that yearbook never got done. (If you haven't seen it, the movie "Dazed and Confused" is a pretty good portrait of high school life in that period.)

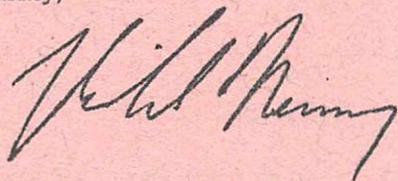
I'd comment on Gary Farber's Corflu Nova report except that, having seen it in manuscript a long, long time ago, I've since forgotten what my reaction was, and it's too long to read through again; but I applaud seeing a good long con report in a fanzine as it seems to be a bit of a lost art these days.

I have to say this: Steve Stiles' illustrations for *The Wind in the Willows* made me think of the Muppet Babies. Is this intentional?

More resemblances: Charles Burbee to a snapping turtle, Mark Richards to the Leaning Tower of Piza, Andy Hooper to Sidney Greenstreet. Based on their photographs, I suspect that either Aileen Forman or Paul Williams will eventually turn out to be the Unabomber.

I am so envious of Jenny Glover having bright green mimeo ink in her possession that I can't feel the least bit sorry for her rug. That's like announcing you've ruined your carpet by spilling champagne and Beluga caviar on it.

Cordially,



That paperstock is called LaserKote. It says not to use it in high-speed laser printers, but it ran fine in the DocuTech equipment. If I had unlimited wealth, I'd stock up on several cases in white to use for photo reproduction, but the teal color proved to be too dark for print, in my not-so-humble opinion.

Garth Danielson is responsible for the fruit quote. Don't think he ever found a fruit dictionary, though. You'll have to keep guessing on the others; clues in this lettercolumn may prove helpful, or at least entertaining.

Like you, I don't feel sorry for Jenny's rug, but I do feel sorry for fandom's loss — we deserved to see every blob of that ink printed sweetly and finely on the pages of fanzines from the Glover family. The rug certainly didn't appreciate the green a hundredth as much as I would have, had I seen it in print. — gfs



David Russell

196 Russell Street
Dennington, Victoria
AUSTRALIA 3280

Ummm about the cover for *Idea #8*; I was guilty of thinking you schlepped an out of alignment cover onto me because I lived in Australia and that's too far away for my complaint to matter all that much. I never even thought of using 3D glasses to get the effect that you worked so hard to achieve. I should have known better that your standards would never slip that far.

Can you ever forgive this stupid small-minded fan?

You're going to get lots of cute pet stories from other fans now that you've devoted yourselves and some of your fanzine to Willow the Water Spaniel. You'll also get a massive backlash from all of fandom's cat owners who will be appalled at your getting a *gasp horrors!* dog instead of another of fandom's world-wide choice of pet, a cat.

I personally, while quite liking cats, have always preferred owning a dog. Quite frankly, reading all these stories on cats in damn near every fanzine has gotten just a teensy bit irritating over the years. I especially dislike the riff on how you can never own a cat. It's as though cat people have this giant hole in their perception of who buys the catfood for this cat that they don't own, or who pays the vet's bill when their moggy gets ill. They do, but they don't own the cat because of its supposed independent nature.

Humph... Try as I might, I can't recall ever having to climb up a tree to rescue my dog from a tree she climbed up and then found she couldn't climb down....

Any photos of fans are much appreciated, they help make the things the fans do on paper more real.

Regards.

David L. Russell

I've always thought complaints gained weight and credence with the distance travelled. Hmm. I must consider the implications of your offhand comment as well as the oxymorons in your letter. Stupid? Small-minded? Fan? The mind boggles. — gfs

Kim Huett

P.O. Box 679
Woden ACT 2606
AUSTRALIA

Found the *Idea* you sent me in the box today. Much excitement 'a copy just for me, all my very own, callooh, calley, the remipedal one smile upon me, oh how could I have every doubted the generosity of the Minneapolis ranarium, tush on me for such thoughts.'

Too excited to write a proper loc as yet, but must make one short comment on the quote column. Was it wise to include something by James Joyce? I mean even I, who am no great consumer of literature, am familiar with that great man's lack of knowledge in regards to fruit. Indeed I'm surprised he was aware of as many as six types. Including that line thus undermines on of the great joys of such a column, i.e. not knowing who contributed what so that wild connections might be made. By including Joyce just a little of that mystery is blown away. Still, I have no great cause to complain as they say down Skel's way 'Better a wee buss than a neah beeld.'

.....
Many moons pass, buffalo cross great prairies...
just as I was finishing the layout of this issue,
Kim's "proper" loc arrived. Here's an excerpt:
.....

Your Pollicle Dog is no shy Spanish tyke,
Because chowin' the lino is what Pollicles like.
For their Castilian forebears were snappers and biters,
And every dog-jack of them notable fighters.
So across the great water, their teeth all in order,
They chewed the new world from border to border.
As as they bit and they ground and they chewed
Word spread of their habit and how it'd cost you.

There are dogs out of every nation,
The Irish, the Welsh and the Dane;
The Russian, the Dutch, the Dalmatian,
All easy their masters to train;
The Poodle, the Pom, the Alsatian,
Are burdens all perfectly plain.
But to those that own a young Pollicle,
Let my warning be perfectly plain:
The act is perfectly pollicle,
And you'd better not do it again.

Would T.S. Eliot have approved I wonder?

You fall into
plebian errors
in your comment!



The same impulses
provoke all art,
small dog!



Silvester

I appreciate quality cloth myself but what I really want is wallpaper. Not any wallpaper, but Ken Fletcher funny animal wallpaper similar to that he provided for Skel's letter-come-article. Or what about a Bill Rotsler version full of those authoratative little figures sprinkling your letter column? Just try telling me a room papered in this way wouldn't be too cool for words. Not only that but in Ken's case it would make for an inspiring view of the living room, eh? Nearly as inspiring as Ken's piece on page 28, which I took as confirmation that giants still walk upon our ball.

Gary's description of Andy Hooper's "This Is Your Life, jophan" rather inspires in a different, and perhaps less healthy, way. I have these visions of a fannish play where the various participants play other current fans. You should be in my head, it's great fun! Andy Hooper is playing Lucy Huntzinger, Moshe Feder is Greg Pickersgill, Joseph Nicholas is Ted White, and Brian Earl Brown and yourself are collaborating as Dan Steffan in a performance that is giving the term surreal a bad name.

Just one last little point, the high roller Aileen Forman is thinking of isn't Cary but Kerry Packer, Australia's ugliest media magnate. He's as near as Australia will ever come to producing its very own Jabba the Hutt.

Kim

Well, if Joyce wasn't a Vegetologist and wasn't a follower of the Fruitarian Heresy, just where *did* his beliefs lie? That's mystery enough for me. As for your sense of "great fun," well, umm, the mind croggles. Couldn't I just have another pint instead? — gfs

Terry Jeeves

56 Red Scar Drive
Scarborough YO12 5RQ
UNITED KINGDOM

The first bit is taken from Terry's general news bulletin sent in response to mail received. Even though it's now rather out of date, you'll see why I printed it by my response. — gfs

On Thursday, September 28th (1995), I fell downstairs and broke my ankle in three places. I was admitted to hospital at 9:00 pm, and operated on the next day. They put two pins in my ankle and encased the lot in plaster.

All went well, except that my water works dried up and I had to be catheterised for a couple of days. The catheter was removed and I was given an antibiotic — Caphredin. Half an hour later I went into a fearful allergic reaction, couldn't breathe, even with oxygen. Had the dose been given me to take at home, that would have been the end of the story, but they got me on an 'atomiser' in the nick of time and gradually, normal breathing returned — except for an intolerable itching

all over my body. Happily this passed fairly quickly and all was well. I was able to celebrate my 73rd birthday in a horizontal position.

I was discharged the following Thursday and now hop around with the aid of crutches. I had a dental appointment a few days later and had great fun getting to and from the chair.

Luckily, we live in a dormer bungalow with bed, lounge, kitchen, and dining room all on the same level. Not so good is the fact that both computers are upstairs and this is the first time I've been able to get up to them to access files, answer letters — and hopefully, work on *ERG*. Progress is by sitting on the stairs and hitching up one at a time, so computer access will be limited for a time until the pot comes off in three weeks.

So, please bear with me if I have neglected LOCing your fanzine or responding to your letters. I'm typing this general news piece to make some sort of response. Please pass the word along and I hope to be back to normal as soon as possible.

Many thanks for *Idea* 9. Right now I'm *hors de combat* having only once got upstairs to run off the above general letter. Hope you'll understand brevity; I have one foot in the air.

Loved the Stiles' portfolio and the excellent con photos. Good cover and super production.

Bestest,



On December 16th (1996), I slipped on the basement stairs and broke my foot, but only in one place. Rereading the account of your hospitalization while my own foot is broken leaves me enormously grateful for my own comparative luck. No cast, no crutches; I'm hobbling around wearing a "post-operative shoe." It looks truly absurd when worn next to my black velvet boot with the satin lace, but it seems to be doing the trick. I took a trip to Chicago and Michigan a few days after the "fall" and was amused to discover that you can pack twice as many shoes when you only have to take one of each. They sure looked strange, jumbled together in my suitcase!

I'm sure I'll be thoroughly sick of the "wooden shoe" by the end of the six weeks I expect to be wearing it; I only hope the bone is healing properly and that further treatment won't be necessary. Jeff says I sound like Christopher Robin and Pooh clomping down the stairs one at a time. Thump, KA-THUMP.

Meanwhile, I know all too well what you mean about having your foot in the air. I hope you're now good as new and skipping along the garden path. — gfs

Richard Brandt

4740 N. Mesa #111
El Paso, TX 79912

Well, surprise, surprise, a LoC from the long-cocooned yours truly, and on an issue of *Idea* yet that has hardly seen these shores, courtesy of the Powerbook

520c and the good graces of Ken Forman, here at Coppercon in Phoenix. (Buzz Aldrin was here! And he signed my t-shirt! I've got a Buzz on!)

Nice cover by Dan, very nice. It's, uh, weird, though. I never knew anyone who had an American Water Spaniel, a name that to me has the same sort of incongruity as high-diving quarter horses or Venezuelan beaver cheese.

On the other hand, my sister visited once with a pet who managed to "dog-ear" some of my books in just the fashion you describe....

Congratulations on your multimedia assignments. In fact, even leafing through the pages of this *Idea* it appeared to me to be a kind of multimedia event, with the photos sprinkled liberally through its hyperfannish text pages. In your honor, we click our teeth as we point to each picture....

I can relate to Jeff's piece; we just went through clearing and restocking our bookshelves, clearing stacks of books that had been gathering dust on the floor... well you realize these things have a smaller scale in an efficiency (sorry, "studio") apartment....

Terry Garey evokes plenty of hot-blooded emotion on a topic that I think would only have left her feeling remnants....

Too bad about your break-in. Can relate. Someone broke into our car and stole the knobs on our radio, leaving one on the parking lot next to the car (what ineptitude! what a dismal example for the thieves of tomorrow! a subsequent intruder had to finish off the job and remove the rest of our stereo), my two grocery coupon holders, and pain of pains, the credit-card holder we'd foolishly left in the car. Oh, we soon replaced most of the cards, and none of the stolen ones had been used before we called in and cancelled them, but that's not the point. I collect credit cards, and I had still in my possession at that time a card from The White House, the original dry goods store in El Paso, which had subsequently gone out of business. Can't replace a loss like that.

Will have to hold on to my card from The Popular. After 93 years in El Paso, The Popular stores (our only upmarket local department stores) will close their doors in November. Being entirely locally owned (by one old El Paso family), they were hit hard by the peso devaluation, and can't shrug this off like the big nationwide chains (two of which, Sears and Dillards, will take over their mall locations). Should probably have written off their downtown El Paso store years ago — running a department store in our downtown seems more and more like a lunatic proposition as years go by — and perhaps they could have made it. Who knows? Damn shame is all.

On the brighter side, Dillards (which has a travel department) upped my credit limit. Then in the mail the other day I received what turned out not to be my "new" Dillards card — but "a" new Dillards card. Not for Richard Steven Brandt, that tapped-out reprobate, but Richard Brandt, that shining monument to credit-worthiness. "Welcome to Dillards!" it announces as it



leaps from the envelope. "Here's a \$600 credit line. Let us know if this isn't enough." Well, maybe I'd better leave things as they stand, no matter how many conventions I need to fly to....

Ahhh, what a delight: reports on two Corflus. Aside from the obvious rejoinder ("Been there. Done that" Ah ha ha), it occurs to be how equally unlikely it seems that one would write enthusiastically about Corflu Nova or so snidely about Corflu Vegas....

Gary touches on one thing that continually amazes me through my tenure in fandom: the way that everything comes around again; even if you thought you had just missed it when you first came in.

Gary does need to get out more though. Tell him I'm coming to New York again and this time he will not escape me.

Well, I read R.J. Berlien's elegantly phrased contribution, and all I can say is, thank God for the lithium in El Paso's water supply.

James White's piece (and KenFletch's accompaniment) are eerily reminiscent of the campaign speeches we started drumming up for the past presidency of fwa ("If I'm elected, there will have been some changes made I tell you....")

You blew all of that Stiles in one shot and you still have enough for an all-Stiles issue? The man is prodigious.

Yeah, well, Skel reminds me of the puppy my brother brought home one time, and how our dachshund — an Old Dog and Tired — had to adjust to its hyperpepped presence. Eventually they got to where we could set their dog food bowls down next to each others'. Except that our old dachshund would wolf down her food in a few gulps, then stand and watch with forlorn envy as that pup continued to nibble away.

One such time, after she had inhaled her breakfast and stood coldly scrutinizing the pup's leisurely repast, she turned her head slightly and emitted a couple of barks in the direction of the window. The pup bolted for the window and stood against the glass at attention, wondering what all the excitement was. The dachshund waddled over to her rival's bowl and started chowing down some more.

I was never so impressed with an animal's cleverness and deviousness. There was nothing outside that window. That dog told a lie!

Well, soon or later the pup was gone, and my mom inherited a pair of enormous chows to make the dachshund's life miserable, so what goes around....

Maybe though before I get down to locking the lockers (Who will watch the Watchmen? Who will lock the lockers? Who will turn out the lights when they leave?), perhaps I had better, ahem, acquaint myself with those earlier issues....

Yours still and always I hope,

Richard Brant

I feel rather luckier in the aftermath of our break-in. I used some of the insurance money from the jewelry losses to pick up two items from a jewelry sale in the Blue Room of the Edgewater Inn in Portstewart, N. Ireland while I was there for lunch with Walter and James in August, 1995. A modern pinky ring with a blue sapphire replaced my NCS 10-year service ring; I've worn it continually since, while the service ring only got worn once ever year or two. I also picked up an antique pin, ornamented with the word 'regard' to replace my grandmother's cameo rings. The new items are fitting reminders of those they replace, and of BritTrip3, as well.

Your mention of downtown El Paso reminds me of recent auto trips down Main Street in Battle Creek, Michigan, and State Street in Chicago. Both had been pedestrian malls for the last couple of decades: they seem much more alive with cars running along them as originally designed.

Willow isn't above trying to sucker me into believing she hasn't been fed yet, minutes after inhaling the kibbles Jeff gave her, and vice versa. I think we've only fallen for it twice. — gfs

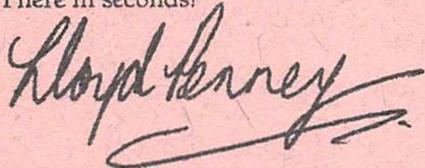
Lloyd Penney

Apt. 1706
24 Eva Rd.
Etobicoke ON M9C 2B2

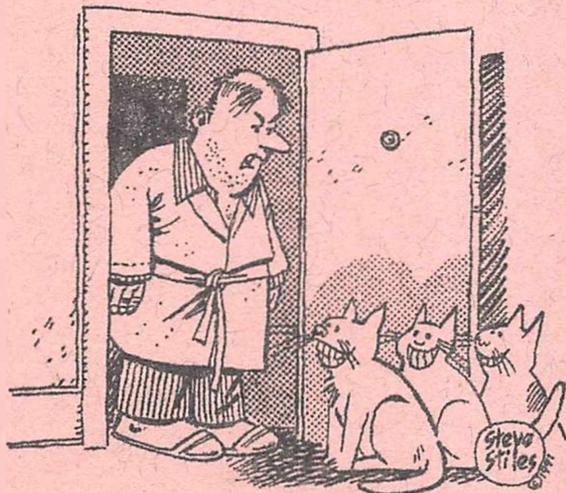
I studied the cover. Silly dog.... It reminded me of an old joke. What did they call the French emperor when his kitchen exploded? Linoleum Blownapart. (Arr, arr, Earth humor.)

Glasgow didn't happen for me, even though we were the Canadian agents for the con. The committee said, "Oh, well," and carried on. Friends who came back weren't too impressed with the con, especially its location, and its distance away from decent hotels. Oh, well, after two non-American Worldcons, I expect L.A. con III to have a gorgeous art show, a huge dealers' room and more fun than should be allowed by law.

Don Fitch assisted with collation? Is there a wormhole between Covina and Minneapolis that Don takes to Get There in seconds?



Much as I enjoyed working on L.A. con III, Intersection was where I had more fun than should be allowed by the laws of the land, or of physics. Your friends' mileage obviously varied. As for Don, well, he is into gardening; who knows what the worms have done to his yard. — gfs

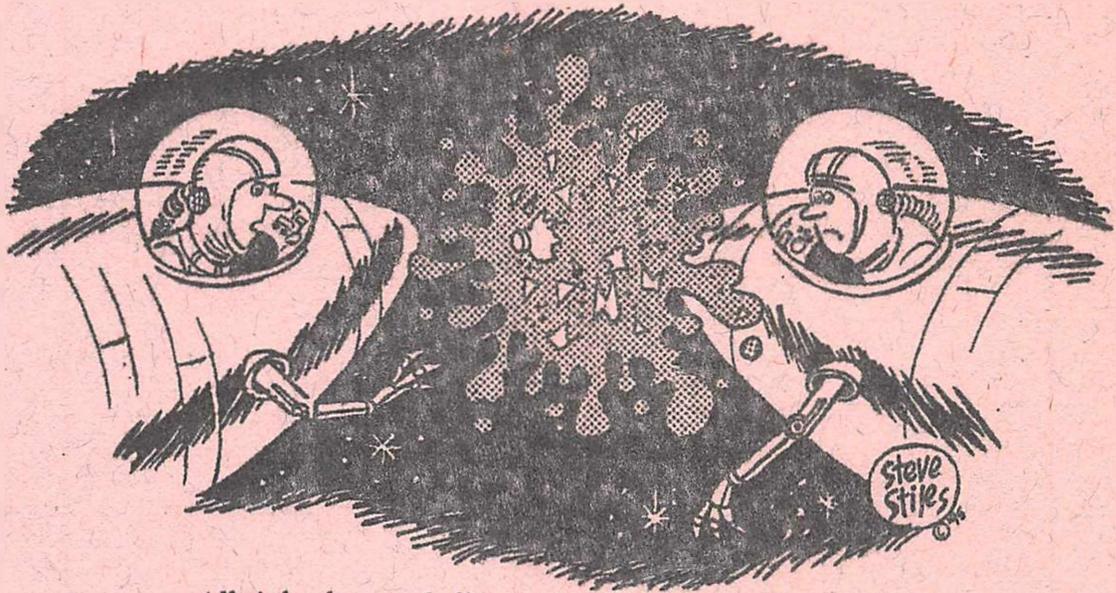


For the last time, this is Not
the Dead Dog party!

We Also Heard From...

Luke McGuff, Ken Forman, who took his hand-delivered copy (via Robert Lichtman) along to CopperCon, where Richard Brandt snatched it away and then used Ken's computer to write his own LoC, Moshe Yudkowsky, Harry Andruschak ("Anyhow, I read *Idea* #9 at work today, during lunch and coffee breaks. Most enjoyable, even if you did WAHF me. And you probably WAHFeD me since I had nothing profound to say. And I suppose that is still the case. I have nothing profound to say."), and Steve Sneyd ("The long meditation by Garber Farber on the Whiteian New Fandom thesis reminded me irresistibly of the old chestnut: 'there are two kinds of people, those who divide people into two kinds of people and those who don't' and even more strongly of the wonderful mixed metaphor (H. Ellison) 'the mad dogs of fandom have kneed us in the groin.'") Steve also sent *Star-Spangled Shadows: Poetry in American SFzines, the 1930s to 1960s*. It's hand-written and not particularly easy to read, but also full of interesting listings, like those for Terry Carr, Rog Ebert, Jack Speer, F. Towner Laney, and other fannish poets. *Star-Spangled Shadows* is available for £1.75 from Steve in the UK, or \$5 check to A. Marsden, NSFSA, 21192 Paseo Amapola, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675-2227.

Greg Pickersgill ("a particularly brilliant piece by Farber, which was not only filled with excellent observations but also made me laugh out loud several times. Excellent stuff, eminently re-readable, the matter of which classic fanwriting is made."), Mae Strelkov (with lots of welcome personal stuff and "Steve Stiles, another of fandom's treasures I've admired. Exquisite art. I love the mice under the moon with their lantern. And the wilder pictures, too. A genius, is he." and "Bob: Why work so hard at 'being a toughy,' my sweet? 'You asshole! You didn't do the dishes again.' Do'em right now, you frigging wretch, or 'Grandma'll getcha if ya don't watch out!"), Tom Foster ("...the next best thing to being there is reading about it in *Idea*."), Murray Moore, who has two unopened tubes of green Gestetner ink that he's saving for FAPA, Lindsay Crawford, David Schlosser, Gary Farber who, in a delightful demonstration of synchronicity, praised Kathy Routliffe's piece as the best in the issue, and Cesar Ricardo T. Silva who sent more illustrations from Brasil.



All right then, to *hell* with the Goddamned Poupon.