



MICHAEL 2, June 1978, is edited, written and published by Mike Bracken, 1810 Ramada Blvd., Collinsville, Ill 62234. It is available by editor's whim only. MICHAEL 1 was published in late 1975 or early 1976 and only two copies ever found their way into the postal system. All of my copies are in a box somewhere in Tacoma, WA waiting to be shipped to me, and I have no recollection of what it looked like or contained. But it was, and is, my very irregular personalzine.

6/3/78 -- CROSSROADS

I've come to a set of crossroads in my life. One road leads to success and fortune, and the other leads to poverty and endless years of "making ends meet."

I'm twenty, have been married three months, have started my second new job in five months, have received a moderate sized settlement in a malpractice suit, and am sitting on the verge of becoming a "professional" writer.

Since my mother died I've tried to set myself a series of objectives: by the time I reach a certain age I hope to have accomplished a certain thing. Each of my goals are appearing and are being conquered right on schedule, and some are far ahead of schedule. Marriage, however, was not one of the things on my roadmap of the future. It was a silent, shadowy thing that sat somewhere off the edges of the map.

Karin and I had shared a class in college, but we didn't actually meet until a mutual acquaintance set us up on a semi-blind date. I find it hard to explain what it was that drew the two of us together, considering that in many, many ways we are totally opposite: she comes from a decidedly upper-middle class family (bordering on rich) while I come from upwardly mobile white trash. She's outgoing and hungers for frequent social contact. I can go, and have gone, for many days without seeing another person and without caring to. She's neat and precise, and I'm haphazard. She's fashion conscious and I just wear clothes to cover my body. The differences are nearly endless, but I think the similarities are what helped bring us together. The most important is that we were both only children, and I feel that only children have a little something special that people from large families will never know of nor experience.

Our marriage came to pass on March 11, 1978 after six and a half months of intense soul-searching and getting to know each other. In that seemingly short time we went through every possible emotion together--from absolute elation to abyssimal failure, and we pulled through it all. Since the marriage we've felt many of the same emotions and have come through them all no worse for the wear.

Much of the emotional turbulence has been caused by my job changing. In November of 1977 I quit school and my job on the newspaper there. The decision to leave was one filled with a combination of anticipation and dread. I had nearly stopped attending classes to work and my grades were sliding rapidly downhill (I withdrew in time to save a high GPA, however). At the same time the job was giving me increasingly less satisfaction. I seemed to be giving more than I was getting. The staff was undergoing major changes and the people I had to work with were not people who I respected or even liked. (Since that time many of the newspaper's better staff members have told it to blow a goat and left.) I was glad to leave, but at the same time I didn't know what to expect in the outside world, and I had no idea how long it would take to find a job.

I finished printing and collating KNIGHTS 19 while I was job hunting and finally, five weeks after I'd left school, and just as I was bordering absolute desperation, I found a job as the in-house printer for a St. Louis-based brokerage firm. During the five months I was there I learned quite a bit about running an offset press, and I got to know some very nice people. What I received for my efforts, however, was slave labor plus benefits. While my co-workers and my supervisor were good people, and while the job was one I enjoyed, it was not one that payed me what I

cause of that, and without really knowing what the Right to Work movement will really do, I kind of hope it passes.

The Right to Work movement supposedly hires college students, at \$3 an hour, to solicit signatures on the Right to Work petition. The college students may or may not care if the petition actually garners enough signatures to make the ballot, since to a good portion of them it is probably little more than a job. But they get ac-costed, and I've heard union members brag about the way they intimidate the petitioners.

I work for a printing company in St. Louis and one of the many jobs we do is the paste up of the local postal workers union newsletter. The editor of this distinguished rag, a fat old guy who resembles nothing more so than a circus clown, has stood around while we were working and, in his high, squeaky voice (his vocal chords must have stopped growing when he was thirteen) has bragged about how he and three other union members scared off a young petitioner. He went on to say that it looks like the petition has already received enough signatures to put it on the ballot, and he expressed regret that he could no longer "harrass" college students.

I thought the whole thing was sickening, but the people around me laughed at what he said.

A Right to Work law might not be so bad, after all...

6/26/78 -- KNIGHTS, FANDOM, AND THE FUTURE

Knowing the lawsuit was close to paying off, I've been delaying work on KNIGHTS 20 in an effort to make it the best issue ever. What I hadn't expected is the eight-week delivery on the new Selectric I've ordered. Since I can't actually begin the physical work on the issue for nearly two months, I've been taking the time to carefully consider all the contributions. What I have on hand and what's currently going through various typewriters and ink pens will probably be the best contents I've ever assembled in one issue.

At the same time, the many delays in getting issue 20 off the ground have made the future of the fanzine very clouded. While I don't want to stop editing and publishing, I've discovered that there are many other, more mundane things that I enjoy doing just as much. The past few months have been very hectic ones for the many reasons mentioned above and I find that I've been unable to give fandom the time it takes to keep myself up to date with the "field". I don't intend to ever give up being a fan, but I'm afraid that I will slip slowly into the sunset like so many fans before me have done. I've already flashed in my pan.

There will be an issue 20, do not fear, especially since it will be my fifth anniversary issue. But, unless the next few months find a change in events developing, it may be the last issue of KNIGHTS as it is now known. I've given serious consideration to folding it with the fifth anniversary, and I've given equal consideration to the thought of making a major change in its total concept.

As always, we shall see what we shall see.

What I hope to do with this issue of MICHAEL is to let everyone know that I'm

When we married there were a number of "friends" who thought we'd never go through with it, and who are probably betting it won't last. (I left my job at the college newspaper because of that kind of garbage.) Many of them figured it wouldn't last because of the differences in Karin and my upbringing, and it was/is fairly obvious that many of them have intentionally or un- put me down because I wasn't brought up in a \$60,000+ home with two new cars and a fancy wardrobe. They forget how hard their parents had to work to give them everything they've got. And they don't seem to realize that they may have to work too. They grow up in wealth, and many of them go into Daddy's business or marry the boy down the street and God forbid they should ever drive an old car or have to give up a movie to pay the rent.

I feel lucky. They've never seen a welfare check, or lived in \$60-a-month basements. They've never had to wear a hand-me-down wardrobe. They don't seem to really understand the power of money. To them you have it or you don't. It's as simple as that.

I never thought I could be like them until I started my new job and received the malpractice settlement. I've learned to play the game, but to me it remains nothing more than a game. To them it is a way of life. People who didn't want to go out with us because they were afraid we couldn't afford it are now knocking down our door with offers to go out.

We know who our friends are.

6/24/78 -- THE UNION AND MY QUESTIONS: SHOULD I HAVE A "RIGHT TO WORK?"

I currently drive twenty minutes a day so I can work in Saint Louis, Missouri, and in a few short weeks I will be confirmed as a union member, barring something unexpected. Despite all of the "good and wonderful things" the union can do for me, I'm not really sure I want to be a member. For most of my thinking life I've been anti-union, and even now unions seem diametrically opposed to everything I believe in. I'm selling out, though, because the money and the benefits are too good not to.

Right now a group of people are trying to get a Right to Work law passed in Missouri, and the unions are fighting hard to keep the petition from being signed and the proposition from being passed. As I understand it, though I'm not completely sure, every state surrounding Missouri, except Illinois, currently has such a law, and Missouri is a very strategic state. Winning it means the possibility of winning other states, losing means a possible collapse of the Right to Work movement. The movement has suffered too many loses to bear through another, and from what I understand the Right to Work people are putting everything they've got into winning Missouri.

The unions are calling the movement a "Ripoff" and are distributing bumper stickers, hats, and buttons that proclaim such. They happen to be the least effective political messages I've ever seen stuck on a car or pinned to a shirt. It was three months from the time I first saw a "Ripoff" bumper sticker until I realized what it really said. Printed in very tiny white letters on a black background are the words: "Right to Work (for less) is a" and then, in gigantic red letters that look as if they've been torn in half in the word "RIPOFF".

Unfortunately, most of the contact I've had with the Right to Work movement has been filtered through union members, and is undoubtedly distorted information. Be-

needed to live. After a few months there I began searching through the want-ads and I sent my resume off to an interesting employer. I wound up with the job I have now: I'm an apprentice typographer for a large printing company. At the moment my duties seem to be the paste-up of two newspapers a night, and a lot of proofreading.

Now only has my new job got me filled with excitement (it's the kind of job I've been working four years to get), but the thought of having the malpractice suit finally out of the way has me relieved. The suit was filed in 1975 when my mother died, and the three years it has taken to finally settle out of court were trying ones. Properly invested, the money could set us up quite nicely. Managed wrong, it could all slide through our hands and leave us nothing to show for it.

I've been earning various amounts of money from my writing since I sold my first short-story to a semi-prozine in April of 1976. Not only have I sold fiction and non-fiction to that same as-yet-unpublished magazine, but I sold quite a bit of my writing to the newspaper while I worked there. In fact, because the work was so easy, I wrote little more than what I knew the paper would buy, much to the detriment of my fiction. While all of this serves to make me a professional writer in the group I spend the majority of my time with, it doesn't seem to qualify by fandom's standards. The majority of my fiction has been making the rounds with the usual rejections, and a fair amount of personal rejections, but no sales. Two stories, however, lead me to believe I'm on the verge. One was accepted and had everything but a contract and a check, and the editor left the company for whatever reasons, and I got the story back. The other story has been sitting with a children's magazine since September of 1977 when I received a letter saying the editors were holding the story for "possible" future use and that payment would be made on publication. It's a fairly well-known children's magazine published by a respectable company, so I feel pretty good about the whole thing. I just wish I had the money in hand.

6/13/78 -- THE GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

When I was first getting to know Karin's parents, I was afraid of them and to some extent I disliked them. They were alien to me, and they belong to the social class I used to be intentionally disrespectful to--the social climbing "one better than the Joneses" near-rich. (Worst of all, I feared people would say I married for money.)

After getting to know them I've discovered that there's more to Karin's parents than the stereotype I tried to force them into. I've also come to realize that they are little more than successful versions of my own parents and our friends.

Karin's parents, and their neighbors, have brought a new social class into this world, and it is one that I am having increasingly more contact with. I am being absorbed into it. The things that made me a few years ago are different than the things that make me happy now, and the move from one social clique to another has helped me discover who my friends really are.

A short time ago I was in a dead-end job with poor pay. I had nothing to my name beyond an eight-year-old Plymouth and a mimeograph. Most of the furniture in our house was Karin's, or was given to Karin when we married. Karin's parents had lived through the hard times and knew what it took to get started in a marriage, but the new breed--the people in our age group--didn't understand these things, and I felt we were put down for not being instantly successful and wealthy newlyweds.

MICHAEL 2-----

still alive and kicking, and to test the waters for a personalzine along the lines of what I have here. My first attempt at a perzine was an abortion (perhaps still birth is a better term). It is possible that MICHAEL may take form as a bi-monthly perzine of small size, and it is equally possible that this attempt may die on the vine.

This issue is being distributed to most of the people scheduled to receive KNIGHTS 20 (as of late June). No money will be accepted and while I like letters, I won't necessarily have a letter column (and with the frequency I've managed to publish the first two issues, who'd want to see their letter published two years out of date?).

KNIGHTS 20 -- fifth anniversary issue -- \$1.50
(due out in late 1978)

Covers by Joe Pearson, with art by Taral Wayne MacDonald, Grant Canfield and others

"Timid Bank Clerks and Other Writers" -- a look back at Clarion I by Grant Carrington. Illustrated by Joe Wehrle, Jr

"More Than a Footnote" -- a history of Fort Bragg Fandom by Mike Bracken

The usual letters, editorial, and assorted other stuff found in fanzines.

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