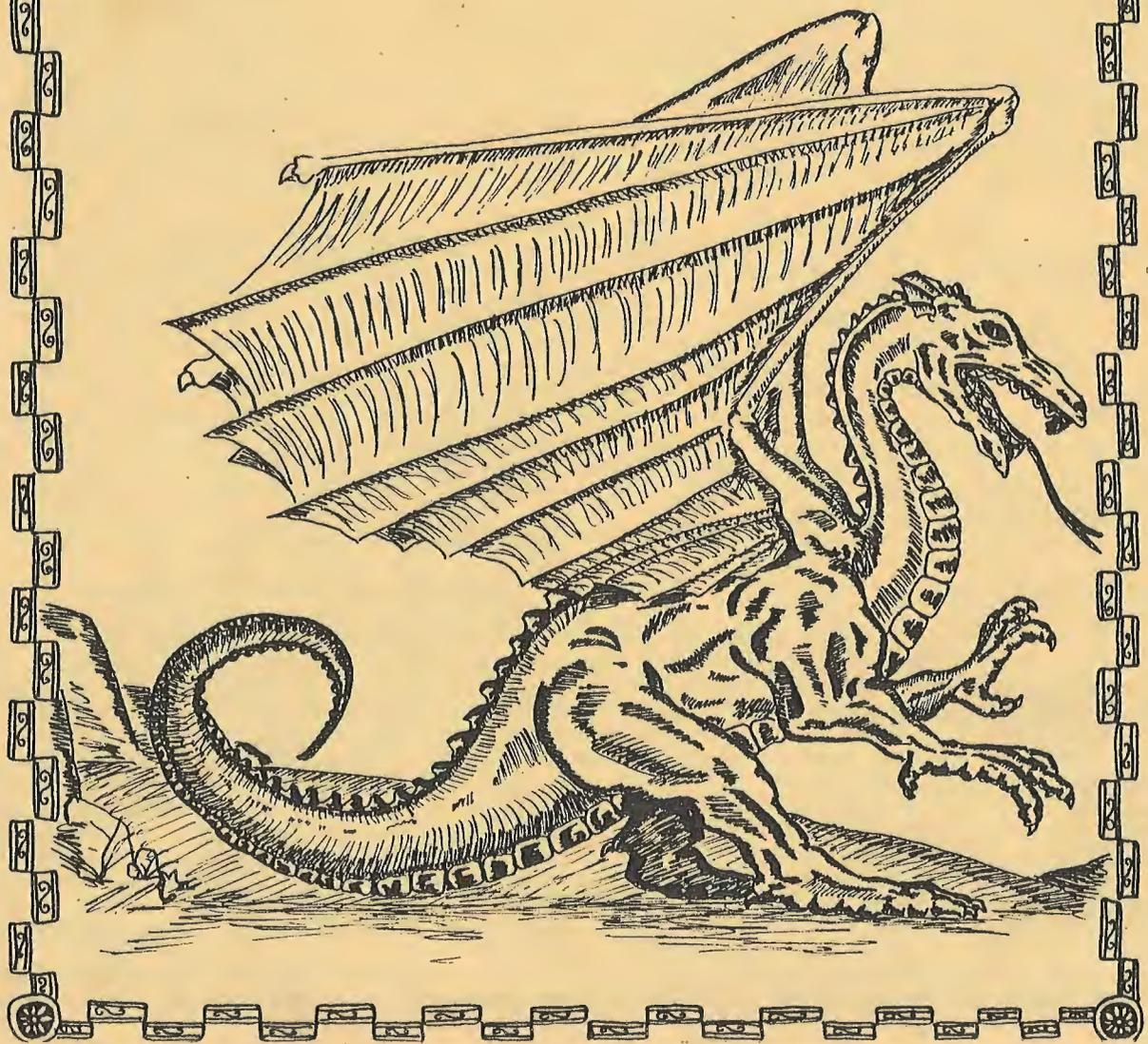


Lightbeam

NUMBER 37

DECEMBER 1982



TIGHTBEAM

DECEMBER, 1982

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+++++TIGHTBEAM is the letterzine of the National Fantasy Fan Federation, and is published for the membership of the N3F and selected trades. Currently, TIGHTBEAM is published four times a year, with deadlines for submitting material being the last day of February (next issue), May, August, and November. Please send material to the editor of the NEXT issue.+++++

COMMENTS FROM THE EDITOR:

Not a single article or overt book review this, which is fine with this Tired Old Fan, but which I suspect would upset Ingrid if the trend continues to nextish. Also a slimmer number of artists than my lastish. Fortunantly, they make up in quality what they lack in quantity, but I'd still like to see a wider variety of styles. I've been very generous in my comments to individual LoCs this time, so won't belabor those topics here beyond noting that the stratification of hard SF/soft SF/Fantasy turned up as a recurring topic, from some unrelated approaches.

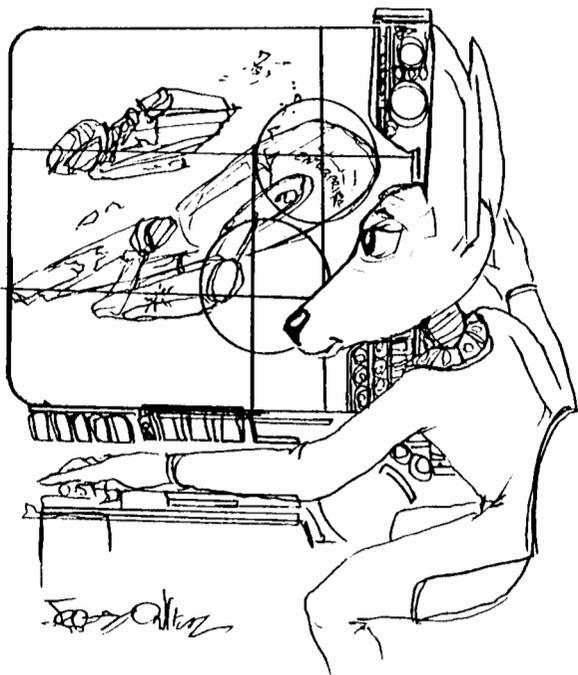
But there are a couple of items of

N3F business that should be discussed, yet no letter even mentioned them. Actually, one is too recent to have been previously mentioned. First, the October issue of TNFF carried the notice that a referendum would be held on a proposal to create a 'joint membership' for husband-wife (or equivalent) combinations. This has been a recurring question, and hotly argued in the Directorate. But the main argument was not should, but how. As the lone dissenter on the Directorate vote to pass this measure, I did so only because I disliked the form, but it is the form that passed, and so I now intend to vote for it, and urge you to do so as well.

A second referendum is currently being considered by the Directorate, to allow a

shift of frequency between Tightbeam and TNFF. This amendment, if it passes the Directorate, will simply be to change the Constitutional minimum frequency of TNFF from 6 issues a year to only 4. This does not mean that we could not continue to put out 6, or even 12 if we had the funds and a masochistic enough editor. But the consensus of the current officers is that we cannot currently afford more than 10 issues per year of both zines combined. If the measure passes, we would then, unless printing and/or postage costs drop, simply switch the frequency of the two zines, dropping TNFF to a quarterly schedule, while increasing Tightbeam to bi-monthly. As a strong supporter of this proposal, I want to stress that there is no intention of decreasing the total number of zines published over the course of the year any further than they already have been. Indeed, if a cheap enough printing source can be again found, we might even be able to consider returning to 12 zines per year.

Owen K. Laurion ((okl.))



((In the June issue of Tightbeam, I accidentally cut off the tail end of a letter from John Wayne Burt, together with my answer. My comment then is now forever lost, but pulling the original letter from my files, here is the missing portion of that letter.okl.))
John Wayne Burt: "...From a writer's point of view the

loss of the prozines would be a disaster. The prozines provide the unique opportunity for a would-be writer to establish a reputation for himself before moving on to novel writing. That was how masters like Heinlein, Asimov, and Pohl got started; Asimov was writing short fiction for ten years before he wrote his first novel in 1950. The magazines give a writer the chance to try different forms, styles, viewpoints, and themes in an effort to determine which ones are best suited to his talent and temperament. The prozines cater to material from short story length to novella length; most mainstream publications restrict fiction pieces to about 5,000 words; anything of novelette or novella length has to be sent to some literary quarterly -- and you have to give it away to such a zine. If the prozines go, SF writers will be restricted to novel writing -- except for the material they might sell to the original anthologies, which market is rather limited.

Before I close perhaps I will offer a comment on the question that prompted this letter. Maybe fandom can survive the loss of the prozines. When discussing SF stories, fans seem to devote most of their comments to a writer's novels rather than his short fiction. I seldom hear anyone talk about the latest story he has read in ANALOG or F&SF; most of us read these zines, but we don't seem to discuss their contents very much. Then again, maybe the prozines keep us alive in the interim between the novel we read last and the one we are going to read. They do me.

((Are you saying that the prozines are just places for future novelists (the novel being the perfect literary form) to practice? Why, if the stories in the prozines are just experiments, rather than the finished and polished pieces of work I've always taken them

for, it's no wonder noone bothers to read them or discuss them. I don't talk nearly as much about my haircut when it's a \$2 special I got from a first-term student at the barber school, either. And I guess the large number of prozine stories that later turn out to be simply episodes of full novels bears out your claim.

Fanzines serve as training grounds for semi-pro writers, semi-pros serve as training for professional writers, prozines serve as training grounds for novelists. The poor mainstream novelists don't have any of those opportunities, so I guess we must produce the best writers in the world in our getto. okl.))



I review books for 3 SF Clubs here in Ontario & have at present 3 short stories somewhere out there hoping to get published. Two of the best books I've read and reviewed this year were 'The Selkie' by Charles Sheffield and 'No Enemy But Time' by Michael Bishop.

I'd like to make a comment on Jeff Kasten's letter in TB - Sept - end of the second paragraph: "Writers thus pad out what should be shorter works." I believe the problem is that the publishers will publish anything (if I can get mine published, then anything can). There are far too many incredibly poor writers writing full length novels & far too many publishers who publish junk. In the last 2 years, out of the approx. 6000 titles published only about 100 are worth reading.

The problem is thus - take the E.T. character - I can almost guarantee you that you'll see at least 20 books of the same theme coming out next year. I use as my example DUNE - there are over 250 books out almost identical in theme & character development - not one of them worth the money. When & if we, the readers, decide it's time we've had enough of garbage writers & editors then the SF/F field will improve & the quality of writing likewise.

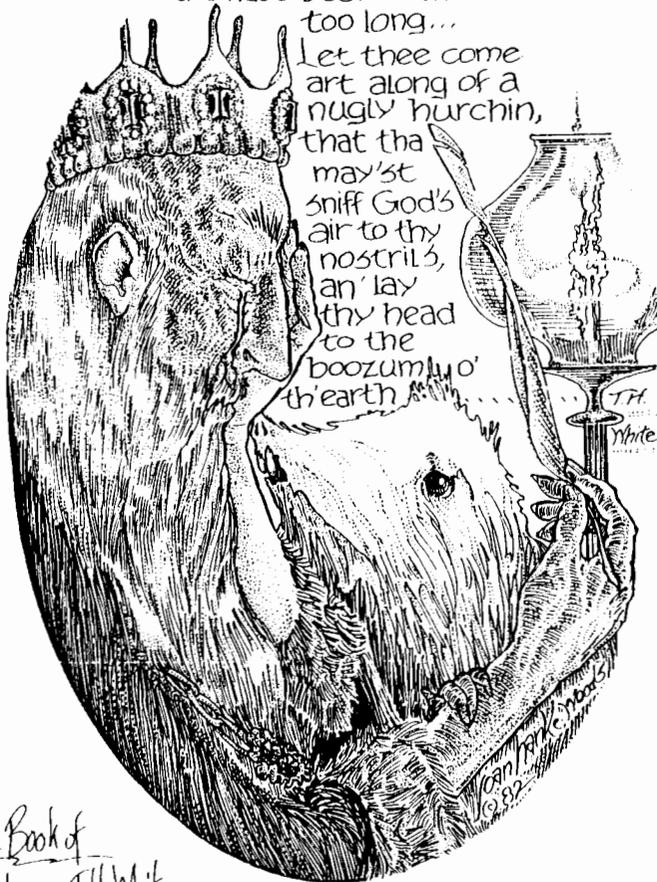
((While I will agree that, with persistence, anything can get published, I'm afraid I disagree with almost everything else in your last two paragraphs. While there are a few vanity publishers with incredibly low standards, the major publishers can only produce so many books, and so chose only the top Nth percent of what they get. This certainly doesn't mean that they are omniscient, but it does mean



Richard W. Weilgosh: "Just recieved my first copy of TB & enjoyed it very much. I'd like to thank all those who've written to welcome me to the N3F - thanks. I'm sometimes slow in answering these letters, as I've a lot to do & I lost a month after my wife & I came back from our week in Chicago & Worldcon - I caught pleurisy & was bedridden for almost 3 weeks. So my correspondence was way behind, as well as my book reviews and writing.

that there will at least be a preponderance of decently written works published, and that most of the real dreck will never see the light of bookstores. And don't forget that not everyone likes the same thing. You say that only 100 were worth reading, but obviously someone (at least some editor) enjoyed every one of those 6000. and I'd bet that, nationwide, you'd find at least 6000 people who would not like a single one of your hundred favorites. Would you dictate their reading to them? okl.)

nay,
 Meäster...
 tha hast been within
 too long...
 Let thee come
 art along of a
 nully hurchin,
 that tha
 may'st
 sniff God's
 air to thy
 nostrils,
 an' lay
 thy head
 to the
 boozum'yo'
 th'earth...



Book of
 Arthur T.H. White

[Arthur with Lyo-lyok's feather, and friend hedgehog]

Harry Andruschak: "I have recieved the latest TIGHT-BEAM. Far too tired to do much of a loc, since I now do Aerobic Dancing and Exercise 5 days a week on top of everything else. It has helped to bring my weight down to 143 pounds, and should be 140 pounds by Thanksgiving. That is where my new doctor wants it. Quite a drop from 180 pounds. But I do feel hungry a lot of the time. And have a lot of sore muscles. And clothes that will never fit again, and have to be thrown out and replaced.

Kathryn Agel: "Ingrid did a beautiful job on the September issue of Tightbeam. The green print is a nice touch, and is super easy to read.

Ingrid asked for ideas on who the "Other" in Revenge of the Jedi might be. I feel that it could be either Han or Leia. Leia is gutsy enough not to be afraid of anything and is probably well able to handle the Force. Han's personality is also strong enough to master the Force without succumbing to the Dark Side of the Force.

I prefer novels to short stories - novels allow you to become involved with the characters. This is the reason why I read series, and why I look for sequels to books that I have previously read. I don't think that I am the only one who feels this way, either.

((Actually, the "Other" is Leia's daughter, the result of some enthusiastic campaigning on Dagobah when she was first running for the Senate. //If all I want are characters, I'd read mainstream. I read SF for ideas, and for visions of the future to inspire me, and sometimes to reassure me that there really can be a future out there. Novels, and especially series, can often run those ideas dry. Not all do, and I enjoy most series that I have read, but so often they could have been handled as well in a short story, without wasting so much of my time. okl.))

Tony Davis: "Just recieved the June '82 ish of Tightbeam ((Sept.3))--gracias. Hope you have been getting "Probe"--if not, drop me



a line. A few fun illos in the issue. Was intrigued to see the article on Japanese SF--we recieved the same article a short time ago and published it along with a translated Japanese SF short story in our August '82 issue of Probe. On the book review front--everything seems to be reprints these days with a few exceptions (e.g. "Friday" by RAH--arrghhh). SFSA's "Best of South African Science Fiction" sold out on its own merits it seems but we ended up selling more through the book stores than to members (sigh). One politically-oriented monthly magazine published a review and we ended up with requests from other parts of Africa and Europe. We held our annual convention last month--great fun as usual--couple of hundred people--films and so on. We had an SF play by a local troupe; "Mutatis Mutandis" a talk on nasty viruses by a leading virologist (à la Andromeda Strain); an astronomer on "Our Violent Universe"; and the local marketing rep from Atari on all the video SF games. Other newsfronts--we are finally compiling master lists of our sf library (about 1000) titles for our members to pick 'n' choose. Other than that, not much more news other than we are patiently awaiting the arrival of assorted SFish films: "E.T.", "The Thing" and "Blade-runner" (which I understand isn't all that close to Dick's original work but fun to watch). All the best for now.

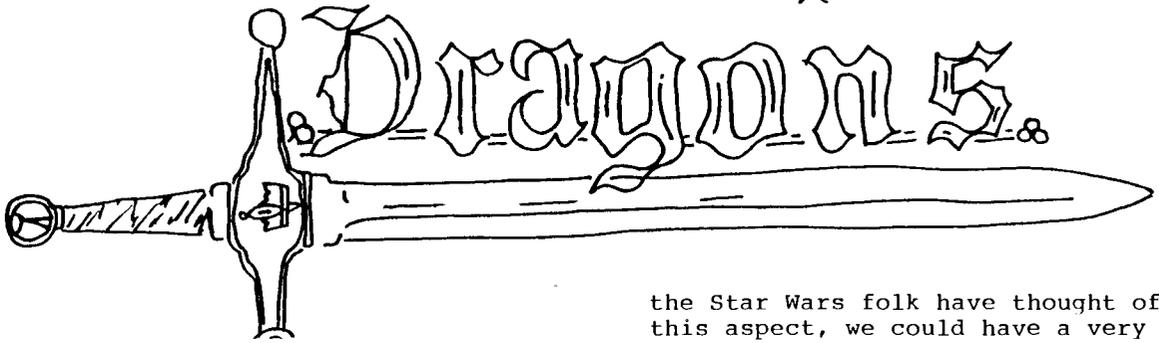
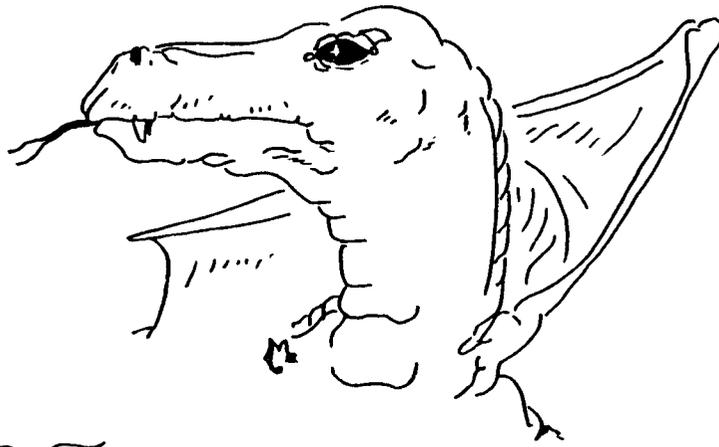
((Tony's not a Neffer, but I sent him that ish of TB because I said some nasty things in it about South African Fandom. While I appreciate the report and view it gives us of Fandom in another part of the globe, I was hoping for a somewhat more subjective type of response. okl.))

Margaret Monroe: "I recently got Tightbeam, and would like to comment on various letters.

Jeff Kasten: You raise some interesting points. I plead guilty to not reading any of the 4 true prozines regularly, but you ought to consider why people don't read them. Too often I have found depressing stories, when what I wanted was something more cheerful. I realize I am missing some very good stuff, but I can't see spending money on something I don't usually enjoy. Now there was a very cute story in F&SF couple of years ago - "The Brave Little Toaster" - which I really enjoyed, but such seem to be so rare. I'd read the Big 4 from the library, but they're hard to find. I would, however, consider their demise to be a very bad thing. I do not think original anthologies could possibly pick up much of the slack. And how on earth could anyone expect pros to be interested in fanzines? They cannot pay at all; and their artistic and literary standards are, of necessity, much lower. The fanzines exist to give us sci-fi fans a chance to share our thoughts, stories, and art; even when our talents are rudimentary or mostly underdeveloped. Remember, everyone, very, very few of us come into this world with our talents as well-developed as Mozart's. (Don Franson, please take note.) After all, there are a number of pros out there who can't write their way out of a paper bag. In fact, I'll be the first to admit that many of my favorite sci-fi authors are far from being really good writers: they are wordy, and their styles are undistinguished. But I like their ideas and characters in spite of it. Not everyone can be a Shakespere or Milton or Hemingway, but that is no reason for a writer to keep from sharing her/his ideas with the world. This would be a poorer place without McCaffrey's dragons, Norton's many and inventive alternate worlds of imagination, Kurtz's Deryni rituals, or Bradley's Free Amazons and Darkover society.

I agree with Mrs. Beeson that prozines are essential.

William Goodson:Thanx for info on



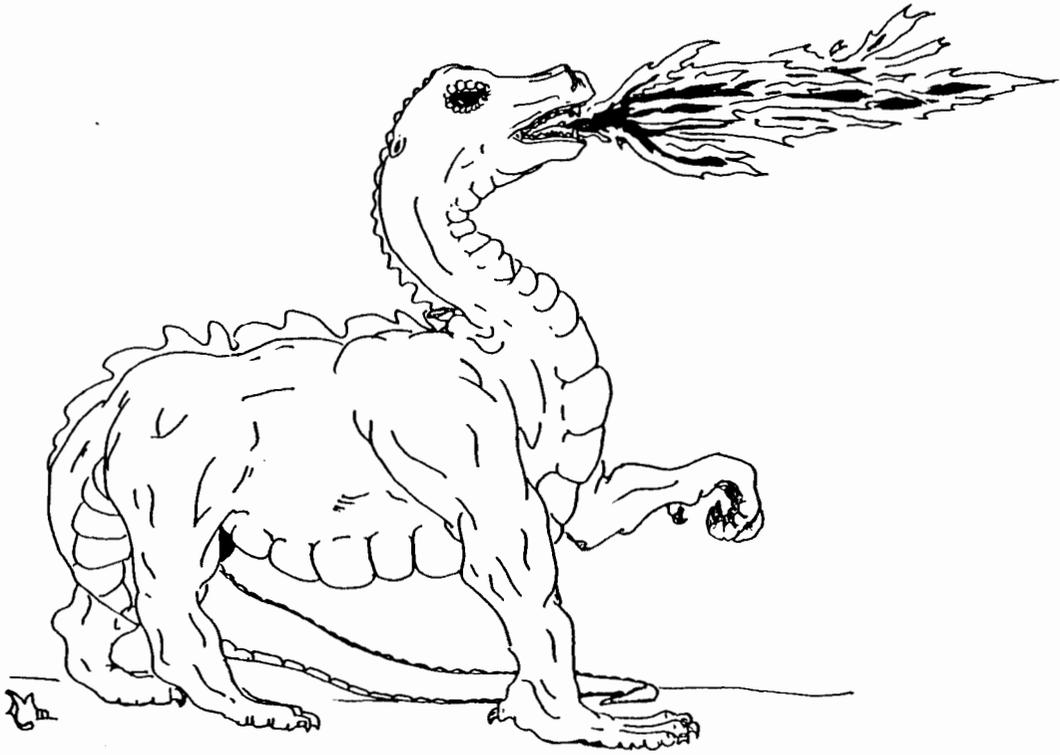
"Project Spacewatch"; methinks I'll send them a small donation. // I, too, would enjoy (in "Jedi") seeing Leia vs. Emperor's daughter, and Chewie meets a bad Wookiee.

Hmmm... Anent "the Other" in the Star Wars saga...Darth Vader??? Don't laugh! Perhaps he could be "seduced" by the good side of the Force. Maybe he could get tired of being hated, and bored with his power over others. I mean, after a while it all becomes so predictable, and it is no fun anymore to savage others. Besides, what do you think goes on in his meditation chamber? To truly meditate, you must get your ego out of the way, and be a calm & passive, but alert, observer. You must be totally open to whatever comes, and when Darth Vader uses the Force, he must sooner or later realize how small his powers are in comparison to the Force, and that it could be using him! He also, sooner or later, must confront his existential loneliness, which is all the worse because of the evil he has done, which has alienated him from other humans and humanoids. If he matures psychologically, and if

the Star Wars folk have thought of this aspect, we could have a very fascinating picture in "Jedi". What would a matured Vader be like? Hmmm... I wish the moviemakers would try that aspect, but I don't think they will. (Or have - the shooting is done.)

Paula Crunk: I'd prefer to keep things the way they are with TNFF and TB. I'd hate to see a drastically shortened letters section, and I still want to be informed about the various parts of the N3F, even if I only participate in the Round Robins. I do not agree that we will soon be without printed-on-paper works. Economics: computer time is incredibly expensive, and so are computers. Sure, around here, in the affluent Menlo Park/Ather-ton/Palo Alto area, a number of people have them, but most people simply can not afford them. Heck, it's all most people can do to pay for food, clothing, and housing. (I go to thrift shops because I can save a lot of money that way, and we are not rich. The sandals I'm wearing cost 50¢; the dress, about \$5, and they are both in excellent condition and look good on me.)

Young folk often play Dungeons and



Dragons, and that could lead to their reading SF. // I, too, prefer novels, but I just can't get over Fredric Brown's *marvellous* short-shorts. ("Placet Is A Crazy Place" is one of my all-time favorite sci-fi stories.)

Allyson Dyar: I think Bova's comments are not worth commenting on. I wouldn't dignify them with a reply. Fandom is fun, isn't it? (My boys, especially my 12-year-old, think I'm wierd, but that's a function of their age. When you're 12, you want to be accepted and want to be like everyone else, because your expected lifespan of 70+ years seems like 700 years; but when you're 40 - as I am - life is too short to be *fun* *serious!*)//I hope your husband gets transfered to the States soon. You, of necessity, are limited to letters and writing zines. I go to a few local cons, but I also go to fan group meetings, which are fun.

Diane Thome: I agree about some *excellent* sci-fi not coming off well on film; there is simply no way *any* conception of a look for a character or era in SF can satisfy more than a

few people. It's sort of like trying to put voices to comic-strip characters: they never sound like what you think they should sound like.//I *really* liked Star Trek 2. The best lines in ST2 were given to Khan, I think. I kind of hope K survived, too. And I *loved* the way Nimoy said that line at the very end: "...Where no man has gone.....Before." It gave me goose-bumps.

To all: keep writing letters; I *love* the interchange of ideas. And keep the art coming, even if you know you're no Titian or Rembrandt.

Ingrid Maack: I liked "Hawkmistress" too, and I wish MZB'd write another novel in that line, but she said at OctoCon (Oct. 9 & 10, Santa Rosa, CA) that she was not going to. She thought there was nothing more to say. //"E.T." is *very* emotionally manipulative, but I didn't mind. I *loved* it. "The World According to Garp" was *very* good. 'Roberta' was terrific - John Lithgow should get an Oscar for Best Supporting Actress (yes, *actress!*).

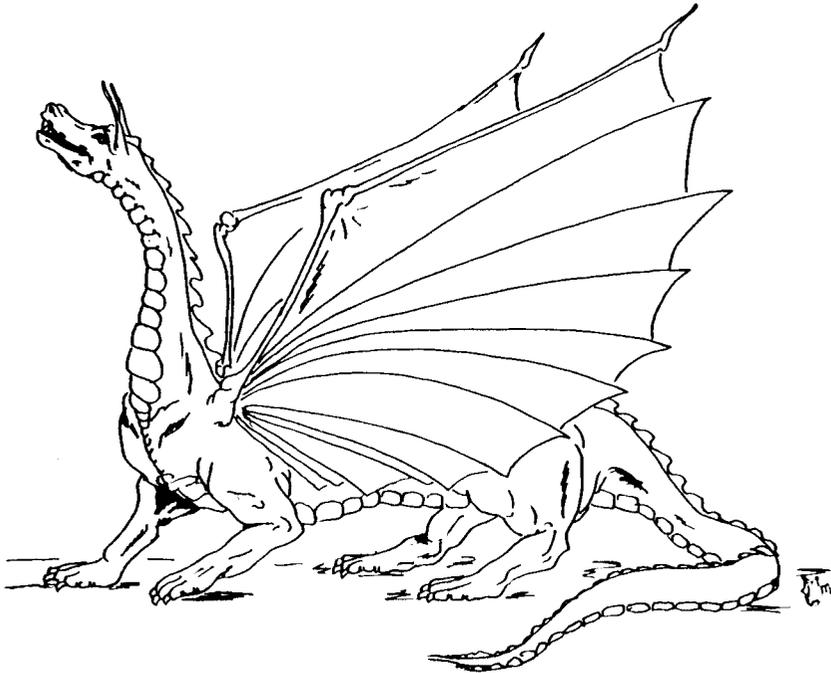
((While I'll admit that a lot of the short stories written today are downbeat and gloomy, most issues of the Big Four have a balance of upbeat and downbeat stories. And each has enough individual flavor that general statements about all 4 are suspect. F&SF has more gloom, IAsfm has an expressed policy of preferring cheerful stories where the good guys win, Analog has such 'hard' stories that good or bad become irrelevant, and Amazing (at least, the only ish so far under its new regime) also seems to do away with good and evil, but does so by going the other direction and getting metaphysical and existential about it. The most depressing (fictionwise), is the one I don't read, that semi-skiffy Omni. It seems to pander to the public misconception that identifies Sci-Fi (a term I detest) with Horror or Doomsdays. Think about it- what does the mainstream see of SF? 1984. Brave New World. Fail-Safe. On The Beach. And the Sad Stephens, King and Donaldson.

But the Emperor's daughter is "the Other"! The Emperor obviously knows and has some control over the Force, only someone who did could have the

respect/fear/obedience that Vader gives him. And since there is evidence of hereditary influence on such control, that puts his daughter in line. And who is more rebellious against a father's ways than a teen-age child? Still, there could be a conflict. The Emperor's daughter trying to seduce Luke to the good side of the Force, while Leia is just plain trying to seduce him. ~~USE THE FORCE! LUKE! DON'T!~~

Computer time, at least on the home terminals, is no longer "incredibly expensive", nor are the terminals themselves. They cost considerably less already than a new car, and how many of us own some form of automobile? And they don't need a tank-full of gas every 30,000 bytes, either. Besides, Science Fiction has always been the literature of the affluent. Notice that there are no fans in Mexico, or Biafra, or Bengla Desh.

The SF to sci-fi (i.e. book to film) transitions may be difficult, but it goes both ways. Stuff originally intended for the screen usually gets raked over the coals when anyone tries to novelize it, as with



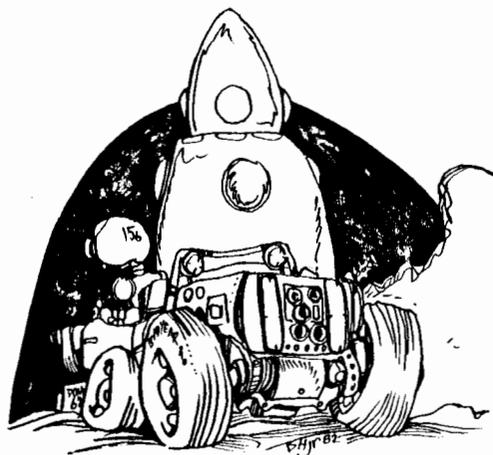
Blish's Star Trek story-izations, for example. Off hand, the only SF I can think of that seemed as good or better after a transfer were Hitchiker's Guide to the Galaxy (excellent in every version yet) and the original Planet of the Apes movie. okl.)

Robert A. Newsom: "Everyone is entitled to their own opinion. Gail Palmer is no exception to that rule. Her comments were interesting if nothing else. It seems that three N3F /WelCommittee/ members got stuck with me. One of those was John Wayne Burt. I have enjoyed his letters as much as those written by other members, even though he started out with a statement similar to the one Gail Palmer wrote that he made to her. I hope that someday I can spare the time to welcome new members myself, and I hope that my efforts are appreciated more than John Wayne Burt's were by Gail Palmer. I would like to thank the members who shared their time and thoughts with me since I joined.

After sorting through all the comments on Ben Bova's quote about everyone becoming involved in the space program, I wonder what the full statement was. If it was associated with the condition of the space program after all the cuts which have been made, I agree that we should do something. If it is no more than to write to those in office about those programs that we favor, then so be it, but if the comment was that we should all be in the space program, he expect more from this poor soul than he should. We are each necessary to the world in our own special way. Each of us have our own opinions, values, and matters of importance that we each face in our own manner.

I have had excellent replies from editors who are also N3F members. My hope for the future is to some year have something in every zine which comes out. This may be madness on my part, but that's my hope for the future.

((A fine goal you've set yourself. Good luck. I think the last time anyone succeeded at it was Harry Warner, around 1945. But with postal rates what they are, it may be possible again within your fannish lifetime. okl.))



Carol J. Klees-Starks: "I recently finished reading my first issue of "Tightbeam" and am compelled to comment on several points brought up in the letter section.

I think I have a slightly different angle to my opinion of Bova's editorial. He might have trod on some toes with his comments, but he seems to be camouflaging his uneasiness with anger and frustration. Who better to direct it at than Fandom, where there are many creative and intelligent minds? Perhaps he thought his words would have more effect on fen than on most mainstream zombies.

It isn't that we're ignorant. Many people aren't scientifically skilled because of the widespread apathy of those involved with the unenviable task of education. The gross lack of science requirements in our schools is making us a nation of scientific illiterates. In my home city, the city council wanted to insure a fresh supply of workers for the local industries. They didn't give a damn about student aptitudes for anything other than assembly lines. This can't be an isolated situation. I'm afraid there are thousands of cities and towns which are smothering their students in this way. America is swiftly changing from a manufacturing to a service-oriented nation, but many people want things to remain unchanged. As a

result, the children also catch the general apathetic attitudes of their parents. Our universities are under strain to find science professors--the job isn't lucrative enough to attract those people who are highly skilled. After less than two years of employment after receiving his BS, my husband now makes more money than his professors do after years of training and teaching. How can teachers continue to educate the next generations if things continue on this course?

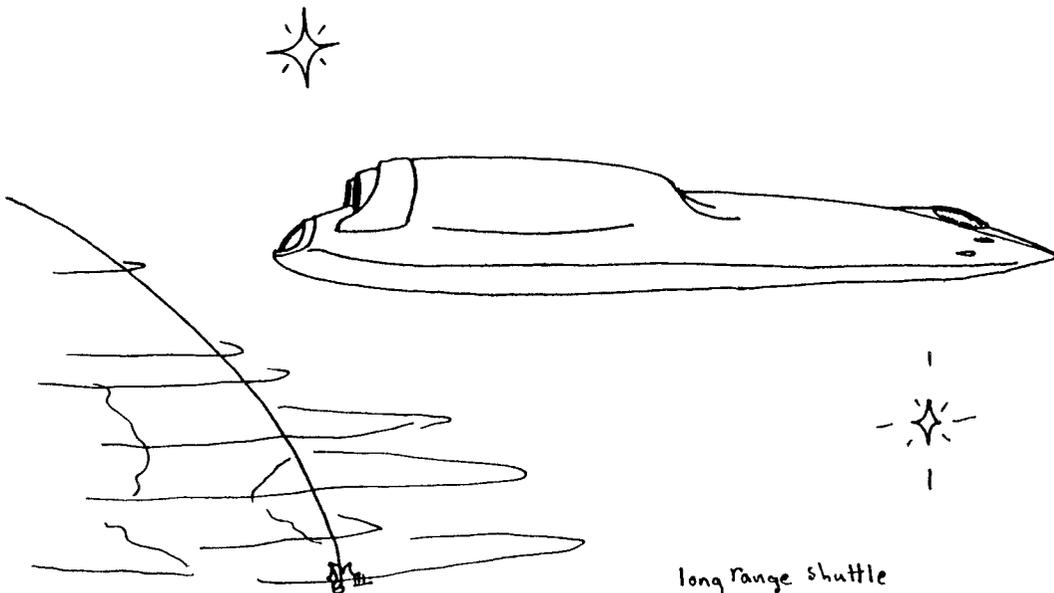
I can see why Bova said such stinging things; if we don't become at least a little more aware, things will get much worse. I know some people who could read Bova's editorial and remain unmoved...turn the page. I've met some intelligent (exceptionally so) people who squander their time and talents on daydreaming. There's nothing wrong with fan activities as a hobby, but I know some who live, eat and breathe this recreation. Other countries--especially Russia and Japan--are leaving us in the dust where educating their children is concerned, while test scores for many of our students are declining. I'm frightened enough by this trend to have begun educating myself further, and I have changed my

major from English to Biology. It will be a challenge I'll be proud to meet. It sure beats stagnation.

As to Ingrid Maack's editorial comments: Reagan's riding high on the Shuttle Program, at least. He's not stupid enough to completely throw away one of the only aces in his hand. It reminds me of Nixon, who got a political boost from the Apollo Project even as he was cutting NASA's budget. In a similar manner, Reagan did cancel construction of the fifth shuttle. Supposedly a large insurance company and several other companies were going to invest in a conglomerate which proposed to buy the fifth shuttle, but their contractual demands exceeded what the government was willing to give.

I consider writers to be more in a class with artists and musicians. Saying that writers are "JUST AS important as doctors, lawyers, etc." is like comparing bagels and bicycles. They're too dissimilar. So, for that matter, are doctors and lawyers. Importance is relative to the situation. Reading is for education and entertainment, where as a doctor's attention does neither of these.

Only one complaint. If the editor wishes to comment upon a point brought

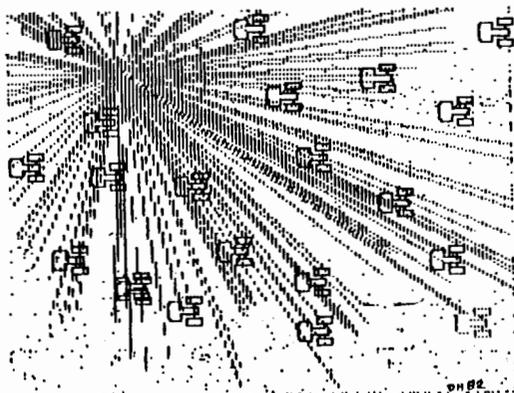
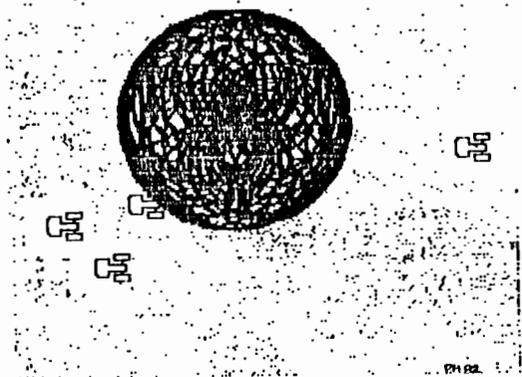


long range shuttle

up in a letter, he/she should be courteous enough to wait until the end of the letter. The letter's author should be given complete freedom to express his/her opinion without interruption or immediate contradiction.

((As one of those who "live, eat, and breathe this recreation" of fandom, I should be offended by your comment, but at the moment I wonder if maybe you and Bova may be right. What good is fandom? I've had people praise my writing skill, but I've never gone

Computer Designs
by David Hebbel Sr.
APPLE III/NEC 8023A
RUN GRAFX 1
GRAPLER1

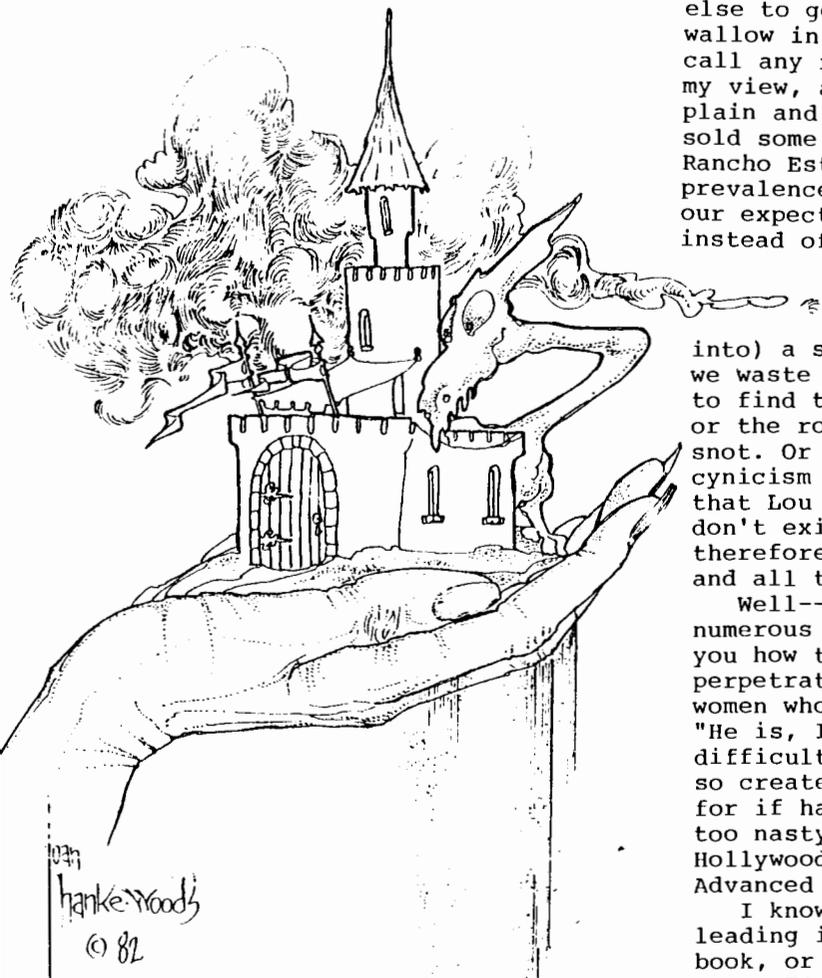


beyond fanzines. If there were no zines to sap my energies, maybe I'd be forced to find a larger way, develop my skills and abilities for more serious tasks. I see no lasting effect coming from fandom, or even Science Fiction. We've conquered space through the efforts of hobbyists in the rocket field, not the SF field. We've revolutionized communications through the efforts of hobbyists in the radio "ham" field, not the SF field. We may have been the first to think of computers, but the electronic hobbyists were the ones to actualize them, and did so in ways Science Fictionists never foresaw. Ecology was a major theme in SF a decade and two ago. But what did we do about it? Someone acted, but it wasn't SF fandom. I'm glad you're trying to do something. I'm glad Andy is still working on planetary probes at JPL, and Bill Goodson is helping Spacewatch, and dozens of others in the NSF are members of L-5, and National Space Institute, and the Planetary Society, and Jaques Cousteau's society, and the Sierra Club, and homebrew computer clubs. These are accomplishing the things that fandom only dreams about. Day-dreams about.

Sometimes a brief comment inserted where it refers, especially in a letter that jumps around to several topics, can be much clearer than a longer comment that appears several paragraphs later, especially if there has been a sharp mood change in between, as in this case. I've seen inserted comments that badly damaged the flow of thought, and other editors that were able to make a letter sound like a two-way conversation by inserts. I'm not as adept as the latter, so I do tend to keep my comments out of the text of the LoCs, but I don't think Ingrid's use of that style reaches the point of abuse. okl.))

Pat Mathews: "This is the first time in weeks I've touched a typewriter (can't you tell?) ((I've already corrected three typos. okl.)) due to cold weather, unheated garage/study, daughter's science fair project, etc.

Have you ever been irritated or misled by the literary convention known as "Hollywood"? I mean the universal happy ending, the assumption that things can be done without loss, that there is a heart of gold under the



surface of every scrooge, that (a favorite in the romances) the coldly contemptuous man who speaks to you as if you were some form of fawning, advantage-taking dog is actually in love with you and will make you a good husband, that the tyrannical boss is really Lou Grant, ...need I go on? Science fiction doesn't indulge in it much, but still there is the largely internal pressure

for the writer to soften the blow. Or else to go totally the other way and wallow in gloom, doom, and despair, and call any ray of hope "unrealistic." In my view, anyone who sees either view plain and swallows it deserves to be sold some oceanfront property in Rio Rancho Estates, New Mexico. Still, the prevalence of "Hollywood" subtly shapes our expectations of the world so that, instead of getting out (or not getting

into) a situation in the first place, we waste a lot of time and agony trying to find the Lou Grant in Mister F. Hart; or the romantic lover in the ice-cold snot. Or we waste more time rushing to cynicism and black despair on learning that Lou Grant and Mister Right just don't exist where we hoped they did; therefore, we cry, they exist nowhere, and all the world is a fraud.

Well---Hollywood is a fraud. The numerous magazine articles that tell you how to cope with the uncopeable perpetrate the fraud. Well-meaning women who would say of Adolph Hitler "He is, I'll grant you, just a little difficult" perpetrate the fraud. And so create the cynicism they so decry, for if hardnosed realism is just too, too nasty, and one can no longer accept Hollywood's version, what else is left? Advanced Harlan Ellison?

I know, this sounds as if I were leading into a critique of a certain book, or books. By a roundabout way, I am. ELFQUEST (the novelization) is, despite its subject matter, remarkably free of Hollywood and, for a wonder, of its converse. Life is real in ELFQUEST, full of joy and pain and fatal mistakes and funny ones, unresolvable conflicts and honest-to-God real clashes, not just bonehead misunderstandings - and its share of bonehead misunderstandings, too.

The elves of the title are descendants of an alien race who landed, or were shipwrecked, on a primitive world inhabited by hunting-gathering humans. The elves are humanoid, but visibly not human; fragile, sophisticated, apparently high-technology people; accompanied by an insect-like pet species and a hobbit-like race of burrowers. The elves, harmless and peaceful, are Hollywood-minded, and immediately run into

terrified hunters who answer them with a club on the head. The elves, unable to defend themselves, flee, use what they can of their psi technology to survive, learn reluctantly to hunt, and live hidden in the forest in a chance-made alliance with the great wolves there.

From Hollywood, they became real; they learn pain, but also joy; death, but also love; their problems and choices are bone-real, and the penalty for a mistake is grim.

ELFQUEST follows the comic series faithfully up through issue 5, leaving room for sequels. I sincerely hope so. Wendy Pini's elves are far more real than some other authors' contemporary humans from a "realistic novel." It's put out by Playboy/Berkeley/Avon/Ace... /ad infinitum for \$5.95 and is available at Cole Books and at B.Daltons as well as other places. (Those are the only ones I visited.)

Let me add a pet peeve about fanzines. There is usually no problem when you subscribe - most fanzines will send you the next issue. The better ones will let you know when one is coming up. If you write for them, and get contributor's copies, they will either carry you over an interval of not having written (if you've been with them for a while - Geis is very good at that) or let you know. Though it helps to start out with a subscription; then they tend to assume you have a few issues coming anyway, having paid for them.

But the devil's own curse on those who keep you waiting for the next issue forever, only to find out via grapevine or con that they've published several in the meantime and never told you. Isn't your money as green and desirable as any? Is a postcard too much trouble? Especially since, with any fan quarterly, it's even odds whether the thing is simply late (Starstone, for instance, is really an annual, Susan Schwartz to the contrary), the author/editor/publisher has closed down (Starwind, for another example), or you just didn't get the thing, having neither written nor paid for it. (But, if notified, would be glad to pay - I do understand TANSTAAFFZ.) Of course, I inadvertently pulled that on Keeper's Tower, being left with a stillborn Council I never knew was on the rolls. Jacqueline, my apologies.



((Elfquest must indeed be one of the best books of the year, but I'd deny it being as free of "Hollywood", as you define it. Do any of the heroes ever die? No. In the long run, they never even loose. The bad guys are BAD, the good guys are totally GOOD, and all live happily ever after. For the benefit of those not familiar with the comic version, this is a fantasy novel more than hard SF. The intro about having arrived in a spaceship generations before forms only an introductory chapter in the book, and didn't appear at all in the comic. But it's an internally consistent fantasy, since the only 'magic' are their sharply defined psi powers and a magic 'lodestone', which is magic to them since they don't understand why it works.

Once upon a time, back when Verne and Wells were turning out the first modern SF, or when Burroughs was sending John Carter off to Mars, writers of the genre had to put "frames" around their stories. There had to be explanations of how the author got the manuscript for such a fantastic story, in order to help the reader suspend his disbelief. Today, such a device would seem archaic, and Moorcock is about the only one to still do it. But now fantasy writers use SF "frames". This book is the most recent example, but look at some older works, such as the Complete Enchanter series, or the Dragon and the George. Three Hearts and Three Lions may have been written many years ago, but it still antedates the era of frames for SF stories. And many would consider the ultra-soft SF, such as Darkover (with its magical laran) and Pern (with dragons) to be nothing more than fantasy in SF frames. Why do we need such "frames"? aren't fantasy fans sophisticated enough to suspend disbelief without them? And why do so many fiction authors today use the same frame - spaceship crashes generations before, current population thinks it's native. Pern, Darkover, Elfquest, even the new Little Fuzzy book. okl.)



James R. Madden: "In the October ish of TNFF, I noticed several "fillers" with info about various space support groups such as the National Space Institute (NSI), L-5 Society, OASIS, Delta Vee, Space Studies Institute, etc. Now, I am a member of both the NSI and the L-5 Society; I have found them to be good groups, fairly active, though L-5 is more politically active than is NSI. Back in March of this year, my wife and I attended a regional conference in Houston sponsored by the NSI and even though it was fairly small (about 150 in attendance), we had a grand time. I have enjoyed belonging to both groups though we do not get to participate in very many of their conferences. The whole point of this entry is to inquire as to other Neffers' experiences with these and the other space support groups out there in the mundane world. While I love science fiction, I also feel that I should be making at least some small contribution to the space effort if it is only paying dues to an active group and writing an occasional letter or two. How do the rest of you Neffers feel about that?

Of late, most letters from Harry Andruschak carry maybe one paragraph lamenting the slow demise of the space program. And I was lamenting right along with Harry! But, I think that things may be starting to look up: the 29 October issue of SCIENCE carried a letter from Carl Sagan urging the beginning of a "coordinated, worldwide, and systematic search for extraterrestrial intelligence." This letter was signed by no less than 69 top-flight scientists from around the world. The 12 November issue of the same journal held an article reporting a resurgence of interest in a program of planetary science - i.e., upping the number of missions to explore the solar system. Harry should be thrilled about that second one since a lot of the activity would be taking place at JPL where he works.

Back in June, I attended a technical convention in Anaheim and, as a sidetrip, we took a tour of the facilities at JPL. I kept my eye out for Harry, but I guess we did not get into his area during the tour. I do have to agree with him on one thing; the atmosphere among the personnel at the

time was really down-in-the-mouth as to the future of the space program.

When the fifth flight of the Space Shuttle lifted off this morning, my wife and I were glued to the set. We felt a special attachment to this particular mission. When we were at that NSI conference back in March, we got to meet Colonel Robert Overmeyer, the pilot of STS-5. And, by 'meet', I mean we got to sit and visit with him for almost an hour and a half! This might not seem like much to you, but to us (and especially to ME) it was terrific. I do not think it is likely that I will ever get into outer space, so I have to do my travelling vicariously through the astronauts.

Oops, almost forgot a third article I wanted to mention: the 8 November issue of Chemical & Engineering News had a brief article stating that NASA has contracted with McDonnell Douglas Astronautics to study the question: "Is a manned space station economically justifiable?" A subcontractor is looking into the potential commercial uses of such a station with a strong emphasis on chemical manufacturing (this is my primary interest as I am a chemical engineer by trade). In case some of your friends ask, "What could be made in space better than on Earth?" here are a couple: extremely uniform polymer spheres which could be made larger up in space than on Earth -- these would be used as standards to determine microscopic dimensions of, say, red blood cells; production of biological materials by using a technique called "electrophoresis" (separating components by using an electrical field. On Earth, gravity-induced convection currents interfere with this process).

What, you may ask, has all of the above to do with fandom? Well, this is the sort of stuff we read about back in the fifties or earlier. Today, it is coming true, though not perhaps in the way we might have expected. But I will promise that next time I am moved to write to the NFFF, I will try to restrain my enthusiasm for the space program and restrict myself to fannishness and science fiction.

((Please, don't think that just because we like SF that we're only interested in the Fiction portion. Why, Science makes up fully half of our

interest, and we see little enough of it. Recently, even Andy hasn't been bothering to enlighten us. However, while I am also an active supporter of several pro-space groups, I should note that the articles you mention are all just proposals, not news announcements of actual projects being activated. Carl Sagan may get 69 scientists to sign a letter, but how many have signed letters calling for nuclear disarmament over the past 40 years? When he gets a letter signed by 69 Senators, then maybe I'll think something of it. NASA study groups may be planning more missions, but the latest word I've gotten through the L-5 phone tree is that Stockman is taking the knife to NASA again. Scientists can work miracles today, but they can only do so with money, and the politicians control that. If we want to reach the planets, we don't need more rocket power, or even more brain power; we need to develop palifical power! okl.))

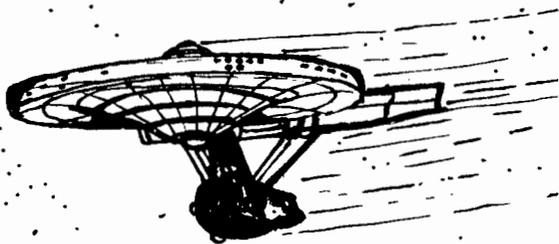
Alexander Doniphan Wallace: "Very many thanks for all the goodies provided by members of the N3F, a notable group of pleasant people.

About William Kotzwinkle's E.T. This novel is a Boy Scoutish juvenile, even provided with a Den Mother, very modern, the mother of two of the teeners who play a prominent part. (It may be worth noting that I have not viewed the film.) The prose style is a very modish Standard American English and the author seems to have worked very hard to construct "synonyms" for ET, the ancient botanist who was left on earth and retrieved at the end. There is generally -- but not always -- a steady flow of pleasant humor, marred by the fact that the author's efforts are blatantly obvious. The "science" is so much hocus pocus of the locus and the focus. The characters are sometimes entertaining, but not for long.

N.Y.T. Book Review (29 August) splurged with four reviews in SF&F King's Different Seasons, Robinson's Mindkiller, McCaffrey's Crystal Singer, and E.T.

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Elsewhere and elsewhen, but within the confines of TB, the thought was promulgated that editors should editorialize.



Has N3F recently issued a manifesto? BRSFL (Baton Rouge SF League) published its NEWS, an exuberant clubzine; excellent repro and generally quite readable.

I am not sure of the name of the group who publishes CUSuFuSSing, probably Barnard Columbia SF Society. Thish (#36) was mainly reviews of books, including one of Lisa Goldstein's, THE RED MAGICIAN. The reviewer found this of excellent quality.

I have just been apprised that good Irish linen handkerchiefs are now priced at \$48 per dozen. These are not of the quality used by Prince Charles of Wales, merely good. Reference to the Irish brings to mind Jack Vance's FIVE GOLD BANDS, a novel with an Irish protagonist, Paddy Blackthorn. Vance mentions Cuchulin's goat, an allusion that defeats me. Perhaps some Hibernian coeval can aid me on this.

Thanks to N3F's outgoing administration and good luck to the incoming group.



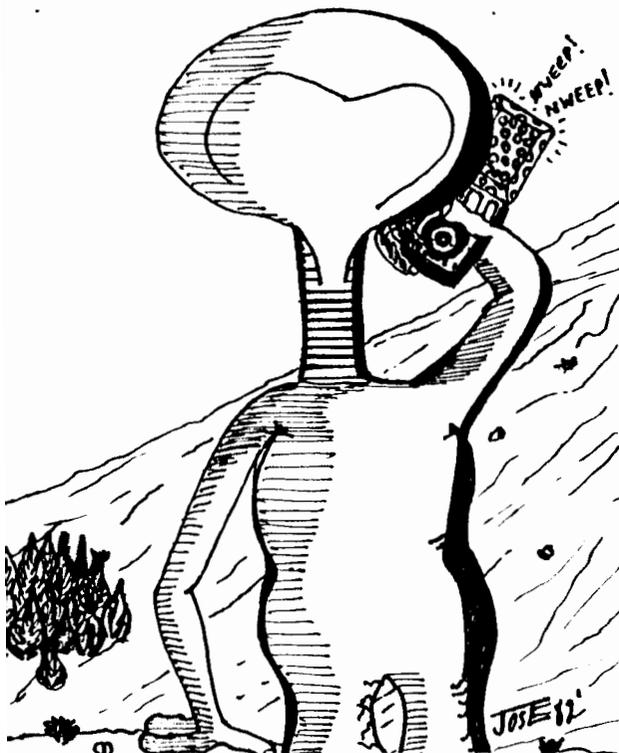
As to September 1982 /Tightbeam/, a solid and satisfying issue, and my thanks to those who made it so.

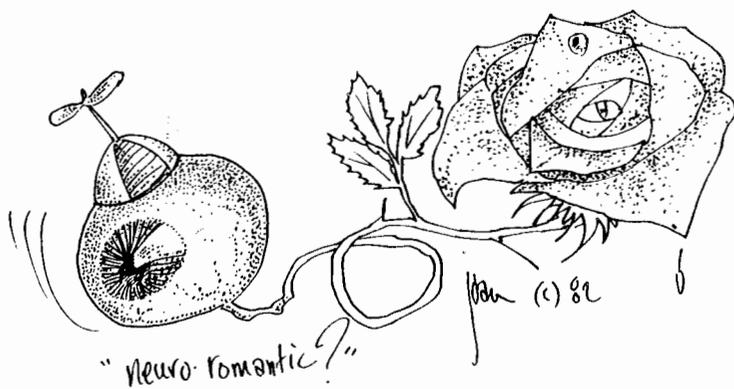
Jeff Kasten to Craig Chrissinger: "A true novel is never a collection of short stories," (his emphasis). Query: how does he define novel? Is PICKWICK PAPERS a true novel, or if not is it a false novel? Recall that Dickens started with stories and ended with a novel.

I have read that Asimov does not like the nick-name 'Ike'.

Mike Sopp inquires at large: can aspiring young writers survive without prozines? Both Kipling and Conan Doyle attained fame circa 1890 from their short stories; each went on to novel-try but the shorties were the best paying. It seems fair to say that Harlan Ellison (a great name indeed) broke the barrier on a basis of short stories; I do not recall a single novel by him. It is a guess that only ten percent of all short stories are more than ephemeral.

John A. Purcell kindly sent me a copy of his ENNUI #2, nice writing and excellent production.





It would be so very, very nice if the supreme hierarchy would consult the appropriate sybil and arrive at a firm decision as to an editor for TB over a period of at least a year, better two years. Please be assured that this is NOT a stricture of the recent temporary Editors. It takes time and concerted effort to produce a zine with some sense of personality. Shifting editors destroys the possibility of emphasis, unity and coherence (as the old school texts put it). If there is no editor there is no editorial policy, and the reader is left to assemble the bits and pieces into something that has a holistic character and makes good sense. A final thought: in my humble opinion any editor ought to edit, use the blue pencil. This is, of course, counter to the position taken by Donald Franson, but I fervently hope that it will not upset him.

((The preceding is an amalgam of four separate letters, divided by the slashes///. Even so, ADW has such a disconcerting trait of jumping around from one topic to another, and without saying anything about many of them, that I find his LoCs always totally confusing. Still, I'll try to answer a few points that I can pick up.

My review of E.T.-the novel was in my last apazine. In general, I liked it, though reading something so close to, yet so different from a movie I had already seen was strange.

If the BRSFL NEWS is worth telling us about, how about telling us how to get it?

I don't think either Ingrid nor I consider ourselves "temporary" editors

any more. We each started out that way, but over a years span now, we've become ~~alternating~~ editors. We each have varied ideas on what an editor should do, and what TB should be. And by alternating, we both get a chance to carry out our own ideas. She feels an editor should pass on comments with minimal counter-comments from her, while I feel longer comments are due almost every LoC. I don't know about her, but I try to be very sparing with the blue pencil. But I do use it. Not every item that comes to me gets printed, but those that do (and that's most of them) get printed pretty near in full. I have neither time nor energy to request rewrites of everything, and so must take it as it comes.

I think TB does have personality. A schizophrenic personality, as both Ingrid and I give it our own flavors. Or perhaps two, distinct personalities would be better way to phrase it. Whichever way, I think TB is a pretty nice zine, and as coherent as any in Fandom. okl.))

John Thiel: "Those disputing about the policies of Ben Bova, as in the September TIGHTBEAM, might be interested in having his address, so they could write to him directly and tell him their complaints, and ask further questions about his policies. Bova's address is 12 Lakeview; Arlington, Massachusetts. I'm sorry I don't have the zip code, but there's no need to get in touch with him immediately, I suppose. He is also available c/o his magazine, but there he has to state magazine policy.

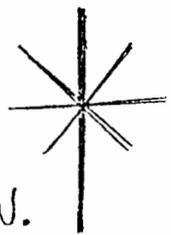
John Ramia: "Antip, bitch, cuss, duck, eradicate, flip, giggle, hop, itch, jump, kick, laugh, meander, nod, open, pinch, quish, rip, saw, tear, ulcer, vomit, whine, Xerox, zook¹. YES, twenty-six things to do because of/with this LoC.

The June ish of Tightbeam was the best clubzine I have ever put my supper on. Most defective were the drawings and the opinions of the various Neffers were perverted beyond recall. Wonderful, simple and amazing; next time let's see more items from other Neffers. Over 300 but where are their eyes then? In their heads? Well, it's time everyone contributed to the zine in some fashion - I'm for an enforced Contribute To N3F Zine law. Those creatures who pay dues and drop off with little or no acti; well I'm almost inclined to think some people actually have jobs? If there is no required acti within this organization, then why don't people get involved?

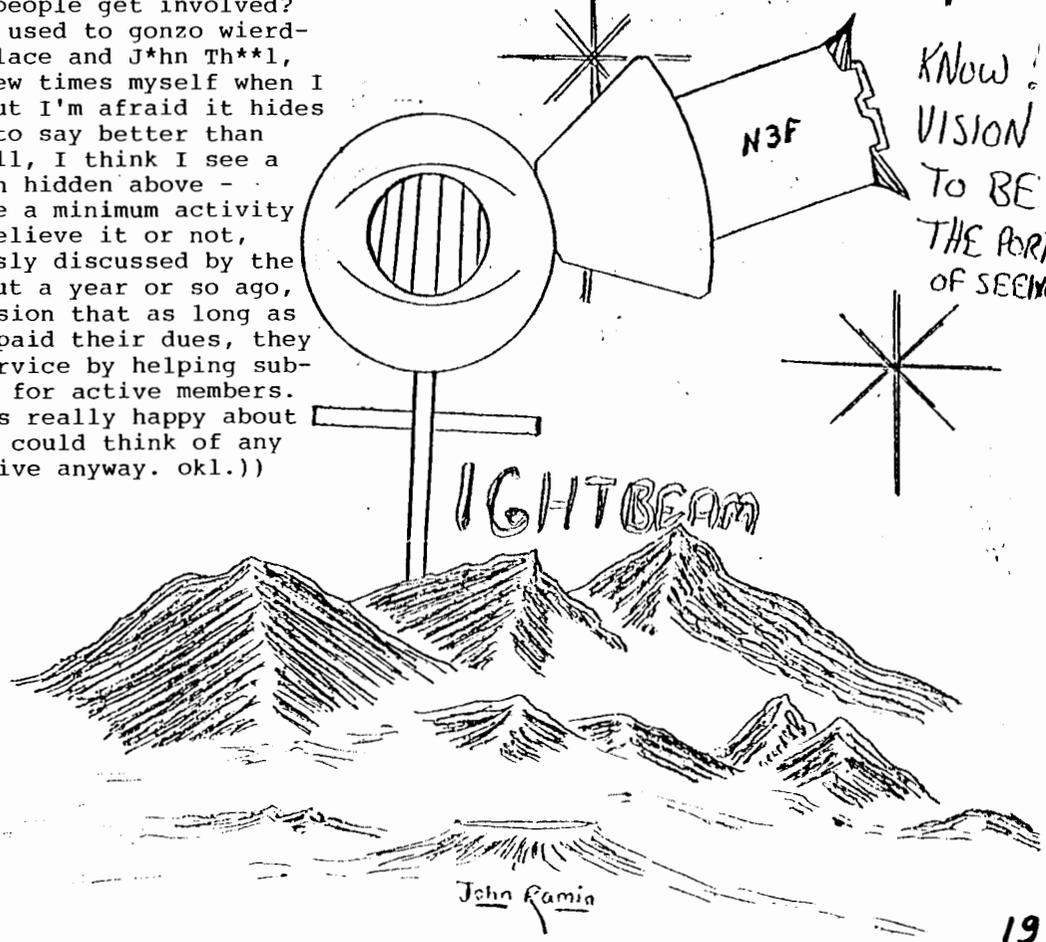
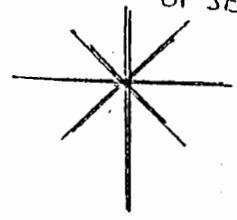
((I'm almost used to gonzo wierdness from ADWallace and J*hn Th**1, even did it a few times myself when I was a neofan. But I'm afraid it hides what one wants to say better than reveals it. Still, I think I see a serious question hidden above - "should N3F have a minimum activity requirement?" Believe it or not, this was seriously discussed by the Directorate about a year or so ago, with the conclusion that as long as the "deadwood" paid their dues, they were doing a service by helping subsidise the cost for active members. Not everyone was really happy about that, but noone could think of any viable alternative anyway. okl.))

(1) An alien code of absolute and sincere isolation from using their vision in any external, objective, and creative way - anything can worship a pole. ~~see~~ illustration.

YEA, WANDERERS,
 FAR SAILERS!
 LET us ANCHOR.
 FOR SHOULD WE
 DOCK AT IMAGINATION.



KNOW!
 VISION
 TO BE
 THE PORT
 OF SEEING



Mike Macomber: "I just recently joined the N3F and recieved copies of the June TNFF and TIGHTBEAM. I realize there have been (at least) two issues of TB since then ((no, only one.okl.)), and I'm very likely speaking on a long-dead subject, but Roy Tackett's letter in that issue has me so worked up that I cannot restrain myself.

Yes, I agree that many of the earlier writers wrote much better stories and novels than many current writers, but to say that one should turn away from social and emotional themes to immerse oneself in technical details and engineering problems is ridiculous. A major advancement in the SF genre has been the development of fiction which can deal with the crisis of inner space as well as those of outer. Though the Golden Age authors were able to spin a spine-tingling yarn, their references to human characteristics, personality traits and emotional turmoil tended toward the extremely cliché and overtly obvious. Even the more recent authors of technical stories, even the great Larry Niven (who I have the utmost respect for) cannot draw completely convincing and believable characters.

Heinlein's attempts at real human drama, even in the case of Stranger In A Strange Land -- and I'm gonna get it for this one -- ended in "neat" events and juvenile perceptions. But, I'm not suggesting that all of our founding fathers were impotent in this area. Ray Bradbury wrote some of the best ~~people~~ stories that will ever see the light of publication. Ted Sturgeon's More Than Human is clever, enjoyable and moving.

Still, the real masters of the sub-genre are the recent authors: Ellison, Webb and such. Webb's Variation On A Theme From Beethoven is as good as anything Bradbury's ever put on paper.

Finally, /Roy Tackett's/ contention that social problems will "work themselves out one way or another" is, simply, wrong. This kind of condemnation of an entire section of the SF writing community and their intentions only serves to emphasize the weakness of his arguments. I do not need to condemn technical SF to praise social SF, so why must he do the opposite? My comments above are not put-downs.

They are merely meant to show the necessity of a sub-genre to cover notions and themes ignored by pure SF.

Let us hope Mr. Tackett will read this letter, consider it carefully, and either decide I am right or I am nuts.

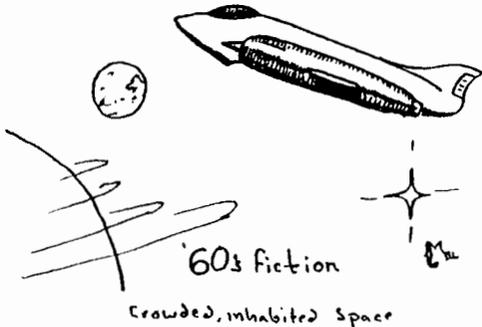
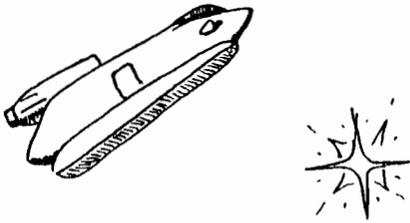
((I'm sure Roytac will defend himself on this, so I'll keep my comment brief. But it seems you've answered yourself, by referring to the social SF (what I think of as 'soft' SF) as a sub-genre, separate and distinct from pure (i.e. 'hard') SF. I don't think Roytac was condemning soft SF per se, but rather the attitude that hard SF is outdated, and the only allowable SF is the soft stuff. If anything, by your own phrasing, only the hard stuff is really SF. The soft, social form is certainly a valid genre, but it's no more real SF than are fairy tales and fantasies. okl.))



Frank Denton: "Jeff Kasten asks some interesting questions regarding the short fiction market. Several comments come to mind. He wonders that not many people seem to be buying Analog. My observation is that the biggest percentage of people

in fandom are currently hooked into fantasy more than science fiction. If I'm right, then the majority of Neffers are not buying Analog, but more likely F&SF and Amazing. One step beyond that is the hazard of a guess that they are not buying the magazines at all. Of all the readers of either or both science fiction and fantasy, a small number support the magazines. The circulation figures tell that tale.

Why people are flocking to fantasy is another question. Some sociologists among the fans have suggested that much of it is the uncertainty of the current world situation and the eco-



The movie market has sparked its continuation. As more people read it, more people wrote it. But not always as well as their predecessors. The demand is there, so editors and publishers buy manuscripts that show less than excellence. To fill the market we now have a lot of poor fantasy, fantasy that would not have found a market in the late 60s and early 70s.

Couple that demand for fantasy with the musical chairs played by editors these days and, in my humble opinion, a lot of stuff is being published these days that should never see print. I feel that there are a lot of editors who are not doing their jobs, both in the sf world and without. I've read some books in which I'm quite sure not a scene was questioned nor a word changed. I know how it feels as an author to have one's deathless prose questioned. But there is stuff in print which ought to have been questioned. And changes asked of authors. Ghu help me, I'd like to have my stuff improved with some expert's help. Real editors still rise to the top as do good writers. And both demand the best.

conomic situation here at home. Further comment I'm not qualified to make. Does living vicariously in another world for a while relieve the tensions of living in this world most of the time?

Beginning in the mid-60s with the high achievement of Tolkien's Lord of the Rings, the flood gates were opened and fantasy poured out. A lot of it has been very good. My own theory is that because much of it was good, it gained a reputation among readers. More and more people read fantasy. It was available and we gobbled it up.

I don't know if the magazines are in the process of dying or not. I do know that there are a lot of very fine semi-pro magazines out there, and the beginning author often finds that he or she is competing with older pros for space for their stories. A lot of names we recognize easily are found in the pages of these semi-professional publications. They must be labors of love for their editors and some are actually losing money. But they are paying markets and they are getting good stories. One hopes that they would be left even if the current fully professional markets fold. I think we've lost the ones that are going to be lost and that Analog, F&SF, Amazing, and Isaac Asimov's are capable of withstanding the current recession and will keep going. There is even some hope that Fantastic may be able to come back one day.

((While I prefer short fiction, sales figures clearly indicate that most readers prefer novel-length. Indeed, when Fantastic was absorbed into Amazing, the editors said it was because the market simply was not supporting even that one all-fantasy zine, while its sister, Amazing, with the same virtual quality of stories, was surviving. Not flourishing, but surviving. And this preference for long stories seems even more pronounced among mainstream readers. Since part of your thesis seems to be that most newcomers to our ~~genre~~ genre are mainstream readers who have gotten hooked on fantasy, the deduction would then be that an ever smaller percentage of fen will support the short story sources, be they pro, semi-pro, or even anthology. okl.))

Jeff Wilcox: "Fegnotes:

DARTH VADER IS A SITHY!

THE N3F DOES IT WITH ZIP codes!

THE FANDOM BUG IS A SOCIAL DISEASE!

I don't know if this will be printed or not, as some would say it is somewhat presumptuous of me to write, but here goes. For a few months now I've heard some grumbles from a few (not many, just a few) members that

the two clubzines were getting a bit thin. I can understand this as I've been wondering lately why they aren't larger. I mean, the N3F is a club that has over 300 members, 24 new members added within the last couple months - as reported by the October TNFF. Now with 300+ fannish fans running around, that should mean a lot of activity going on. In the case of the various departments (at least, the ones I'm familiar with) it does. In the case of TNFF it does also. But in the case of Tightbeam, it seems woefully short for the size club we have. Agreed, the quarterly schedule may be about what the editors may want to take on and no more; but with the size of the club, I can see where Tightbeam could be brought out on a monthly schedule, and still be full enough so that the editors might have to print only the best letters. I could say that -- but not after the announcement given by Owen Laurion (in the October TNFF). For those who haven't read it yet, it says that the clubzines may have to switch over to commercial printing (in the past a fellow member did the printing, only charging the club for cost) and so the price for putting them out will go from \$70 to \$400 an issue. These figures are Owen's (I'm not convinced it will take \$400 to put out the zines, but I can very easily see the price doubling over the first price). The present economic situation may well mean we'll see less of Tightbeam, not mote. What's to be done about it? Owen asked for volunteers to take over the printing and/or editing. This is fine for me, I'm interested; but I have my own projects coming up and would be fooling both you and myself if I said I could take it on. I will offer this, though -- my upcoming SF/F fanzine is called "Paper Rockets". And I will open it to any of the members of the N3F for discussing club business or subjects, announcements, and so on. While I'm selfish enough to want to do my own fanzine, I can offer this.

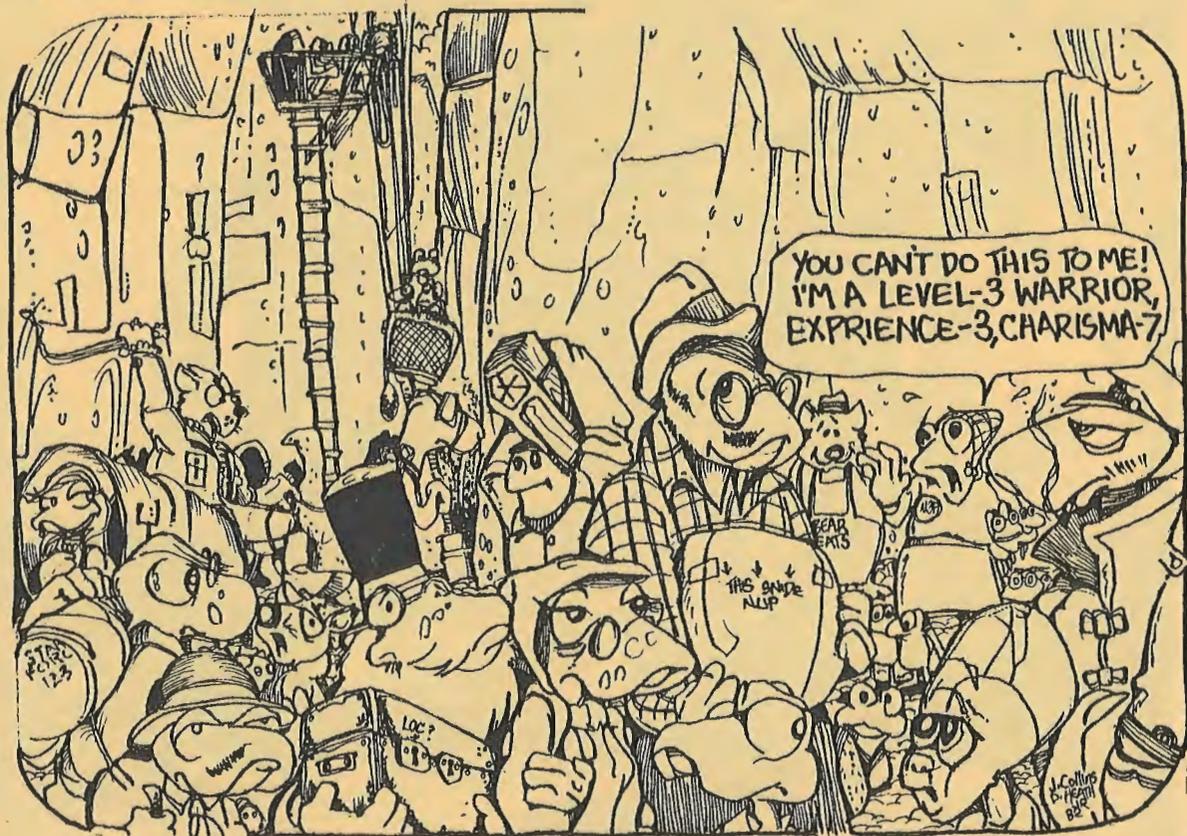
((I'm glad that at least one person reads TNFF. Jeff is the only person who seems to have noticed my editorial in the last ish of that zine. The quarterly schedule is, indeed, dictated more by economics than by the preferences of the editors. My editorial at the start of this issue says more

on that. The \$400 figure was quoted by two or three of the printers I contacted, but I finally found one that only ran about \$120. Yep, just about double the old figure, but still within what we can afford, barely. I enjoy the egoboo of pubbing TNFF and alternate TBs, but still think there should be a less expensive way to do it. As for the argument that has been made in the past that if three months worth of LoCs won't fill an ish, how could two months worth do it, I'd answer that this LoC from Jeff is the only one that came in during the last couple of weeks before the deadline. Had this been a November issue, instead of December, it would have been shorter by only this one letter.

Although I, too, would like to see more letters (and art) in TB, I also suspect that the reason so many don't contribute is because they prefer to do their fannish writing in one of the other pools open through the N3F - Round Robins, Correspondence, N'APA, NFAS. Many Neffers pub their own ishs,

and so haven't the enthusiasm left over to LoC any other zines. Directorate dupletters this year were so long and so frequent that several were even given names, just as if they were a new type of fanzine, which is part of why few officials, other than Don and myself, appeared in TB this year.

Apparently, very few of the people who contribute to Tightbeam bother to read TNFF, since no one else tried to do anything with the Feghoot theme I asked for in the October ish. So I'll ask it again, here, for the next ish of TB (Ingrid, forgive me). Let's see some Feghoots, LoCs about fannish puns (they seem to crop up especially horrid in D&D games), or book reviews of "The Complete Feghoot", "The Flying Sorcerers", Benedict Breadfruit in Randy Garrett's "Takeoff", or anything else relating to that special form of the shaggy dog story. For an example and more complete description, see the inside of the back cover of the October TNFF. okl.))



TIGHTBEAM

