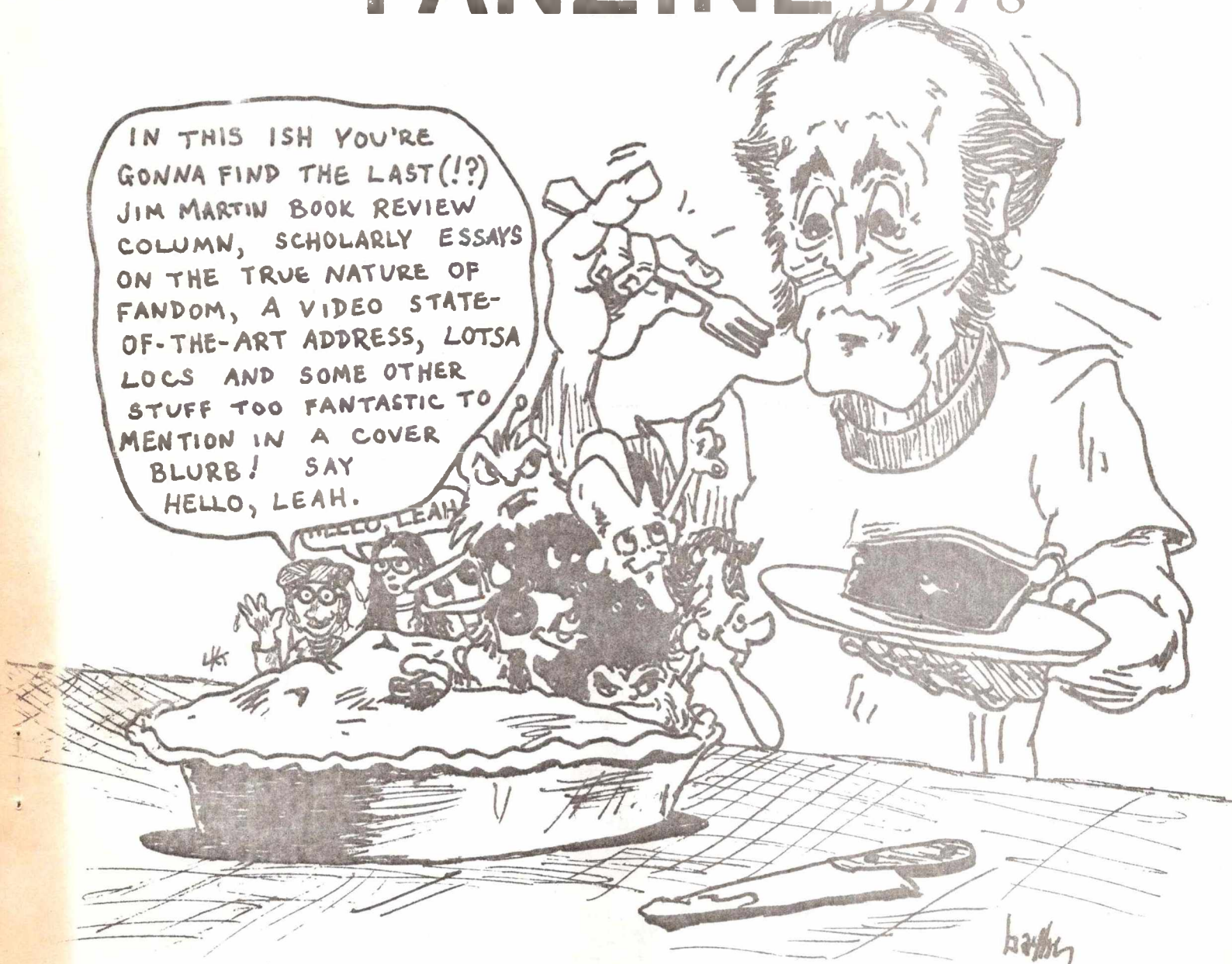


WDKY no.5

UNCLE ALBERT'S SCIENCE FICTION FANZINE

Winter
1977-8

IN THIS ISH YOU'RE
GONNA FIND THE LAST(!?)
JIM MARTIN BOOK REVIEW
COLUMN, SCHOLARLY ESSAYS
ON THE TRUE NATURE OF
FANDOM, A VIDEO STATE-
OF-THE-ART ADDRESS, LOTS A
LOCS AND SOME OTHER
STUFF TOO FANTASTIC TO
MENTION IN A COVER
BLURB! SAY
HELLO, LEAH.



CONFUSION II ISSUE

UNCLE ALBERT'S SCIENCE FICTION FANZINE
(WE DON'T KNOW YET #5)
WINTER 1977-8

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UNCLE ALBERT EXPLAINS



By now I'm sure that some of you more attentive readers have noticed that in this zine (as in its predecessors, WE DON'T KNOW YET and CAP'N RO'S WHIZ-BANG) ConFusion is mentioned quite frequently. This is no accident. Larry and Ro are both members of the Stilyagi Air Corps.

Like many sf clubs, the Air Corps doesn't do an awful lot of things. Oh, they meet every week to get drunk and play poker (or, in warmer weather, play volleyball) but aside from that the only thing even faintly resembling any sort of organized club activity is, of course, the yearly Ann Arbor con.

Stilyagi doesn't even have an official fanzine anymore (if, indeed, it ever had one to begin with). It just happened that Larry felt like putting out a zine and most of his early contributors happened to be members of the Air Corps. Incidentally, there are now at least two resident Air Corps members who put out zines. Myself, of course, and Leah Zeldes, who will now be pubbing IMP from Ann Arbor. And then there's Sandi Lopez who, for a short period, was involved with a Wimminzappa (did I spell that right?). But, as usual, I'm straying from my topic. . .

The SAC has rather rigid membership requirements. To be a member, you have to show up at a meeting. Once. As a result of this quaint method of recruitment, the Ann Arbor group has a total membership nearly equal to that of LASFS, with individual Stilyagi-ites residing in Toronto, Chicago, Los Angeles, Detroit, all over Ohio and, yes, even in Ypsilanti. On the other hand, attendance at meetings is considerably smaller than the total club membership. The regular attendees are mainly those who live in Ann Arbor, Detroit and its suburbs and, yes (again), even Ypsilanti. But I think I've strayed from one digression into another. Lessee, what was I talking about?

Oh, yeah. The con. First there was the A² ReLaxICon, chaired by Gargonzola State University's renowned Ro Nagey. Then there was ConFusion 13, followed by ConFusion 12, both, again, chaired by Cap'n Ro. Last year, ConFusion 14 was held, co-chaired by Larry Ward and Zita Kutkus (who filled the position vacated by Sid Altus some 2½ months before the con). Now, finally, we have ConFusion π , which is actually the 4th ConFusion, or the 5th A² con, depending on how (or if) you're keeping count.

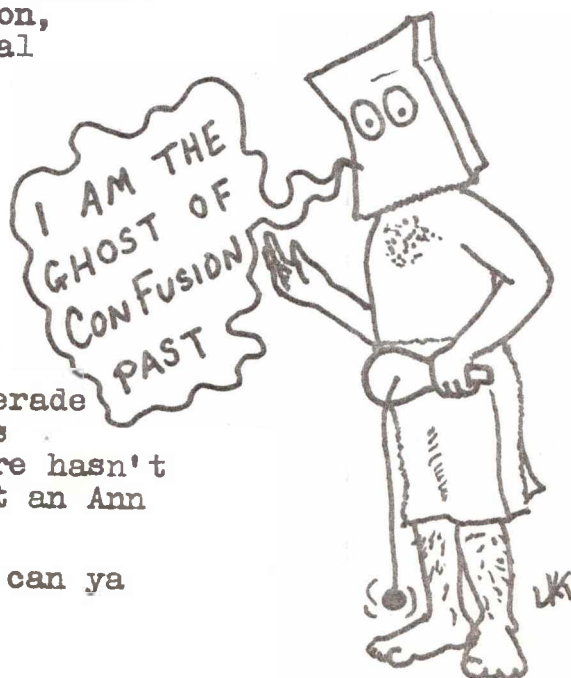
How, one might ask, has the Ann Arbor con changed over the years? For one thing, it's gotten bigger. This is not surprising, since virtually all of the cons that have been around for more than a couple of years seem to have grown. Increased attendance at cons could (as some people believe) be a result of an increase in popularity of science fiction or (as I personally believe) an indication that there really are secret experiments with cloning being conducted in this country (well, maybe not all of them, but a lot of them fan-types sure look alike to me). The most significant change brought about by increased con attendance is fairly obvious. Longer lines at the elevators, more frequent beer runs, heavier traffic in hotel stairwells, surlier waiters at banquets, increased evidence of sexual aberration and cannibalism (this last observation being partly conjecture based on certain studies I have read about conducted on rats in increasingly overcrowded situations), cheaper name badges and, inevitably, fewer hotels willing to put up with all this nonsense in the first place. But, one might ask, might there not also be some undesirable effects as well?

I think I'll shelve that last question for discussion at some later date.

How else has ConFusion changed? Is it flashier, more electric, more entertaining, informative and classier? Is it a better run con than any the world has ever seen? Has it become the ultimate in fannish experience and endeavor? To all of the above mentioned leading questions one must reply "Yes, yes, Uncle Albert! It's all true - every word of it!" (If you want a more objective point of view, you're looking for it in the wrong fanzine.)

All kidding aside (oh, really?), this year's ConFusion will be a little bit different. Oh, there will be the usual panels and speeches, lotsa great parties (a few of them sponsored by the con), filksinging and other typical con-type activities. In addition, there will be some not-so-typical ConFusion-con-type goings on. For instance, there will be a Masquerade Ball. This, as any frequent con attendee may think, doesn't seem very un-typical. Lotsa cons have masquerades. But a Masquerade Ball? While not unique (many of the earlier sf conclaves had masquerade parties), it is certainly not the type of masquerade seen in recent years. And it is unique for ConFusion, since there hasn't been a masquerade of any sort at an Ann Arbor con for three years.

So, Uncle Albert, what else can ya show me?



How 'bout a special, world premier, fannish-type dramatic presentation? Or how 'bout two of 'em? One will be comprised of some original, unseen by human eyes, fannish skits performed by the Moebius Theater. For the uninformed (and all of us, even Uncle Albert, have been in that position at least once in our lives), the Moebius Theater is a fannish theatrical company working out of the Chicago area. If you were at the last Windycon, you might have caught their highly amusing "Stage Wars" act, a play based on the adventures of a hick farmboy named Luke Warmwater. At Confusion they'll be doing "Future Schticks", featuring Tim Allen, Leah Bestler, E. Michael Blake, John J. Buckley, Jr., Marty Coady, Phil Foglio, Alice Insley, and Thalia St. Lewis. (I also heard that Ben Zuhl is understudying at least four roles - could be very amusing if a lot of people in the cast come down with laryngitis.)



**TOKYO BEING WIPED OUT
BY A KILLER MUPPET**

The other dramatic presentation will be something else (in several senses of that phrase). Y'see, Randy Bathurst recently discovered that, in addition to his other artistic talents, he is pretty damn good at sewing together muppet-like creatures. Some of his puppet creations have wandered off, finding homes in places like Cleveland and Detroit. At Confusion II there is going to be a sort of reunion, as well as an introduction to some newly created creatures. The precise nature of Randy's puppet show is not known, although I do know that parts of the script are being written by Randy, Larry Tucker and Derek Carter.

That's about all I can tell you about the special events at Confusion, except to reaffirm the reports you might have heard that the EMU Madrigal Singers are indeed being replaced by Lou Tabakow as the banquet entertainment. Now that boggles the mind.

Next ish, I have been informed, there will be some changes made. It seems I'm to be kicked upstairs. The cover will still bear my name but, like that other well-known zine bearing the name of another highly renowned sf personage (no, Mike, not Terry Hughes), the only thing I'll actually appear in will be the letter column. So keep those locs rolling in.

-- UNCLE ALBERT

ALIENATION FROM THE MUNDANE

You have stumbled onto something peculiar called 'fandom' and it appears to be vaguely connected with something called 'science fiction.' You are confused, and perhaps bemused, for much of fandom seems difficult to understand and some of it appears downright idiotic.

You are right. ¹

Science fiction fandom began in the thirties as a coterie of sf readers who wrote to each other and the science fiction magazines. At first these were just people who shared a common interest, but their activities later began to include such things as conventions and their own amateur publications, or "fanzines", and in this way, gradually, fandom began to evolve; first, into a hobby, and then later into a subculture, a way of life with its own norms, values and mores.

In its most simple definition, fandom is:

...A hobby enjoyed by some readers of science fiction, weird fiction and fantasy fiction....For no reason in particular, some readers of these types of fiction yield to the impulse to do something more than simply read their favorite type of literature. No other specialized type of fiction has produced a fandom of these proportions. Even more curiously, many persons continue active in fandom long after they have lost an interest in reading these types of fiction. ²

But fandom can be more than that. The people who participate in it tend to follow one of two philosophies: Fandom Is A Way Of Life (FIAWOL) or Fandom Is Just A Goddam Hobby (FIJAGH). The proponents of the latter generally drift in and out of fandom, putting it aside as they find other interests or occupations in, to use the fannish term, the "mundane" world. But there are many believers in FIAWOL who have been fans for decades.

Even as far back as the forties there was a marked "tendency for fans to find one another's company pleasant at times when science fiction and fantasy were not the topic of conversation." ³

Bob Tucker in 1941 summed up the new attitude: 'The time is coming when fans and fanzines will no longer revolve about the professional magazines. We shall revolve strictly about ourselves; an unorganized society that has cast aside the core that it began on, and moulded a much better substitute.' ⁴

Today this is pretty much what has happened. Science fiction is still important in many ways, but mainly because it is what brings people into fandom in the first place.

Science fiction is important because it draws fans together. It's not science fiction which starts fans pondering on any abstruse problem they come on. It is science fiction which makes possible and stimulates discussion on these problems. And once science fiction has done this, its task is

done. Fans can be quite independent of science fiction, once they're in touch with each other.⁵

Basically, what is important to fans about fandom is other fans. One fan put it this way:

We come together because we value sf. We stay because we value each other. We celebrate fandom because it is the bond that holds us together.⁶

The major interaction between fans is through correspondence, fanzines and occasional meetings at conventions. Of late, long distance telephoning has also become common, and many fans do not flinch at \$100 or more phone bills amounted through hours of simply chatting with their friends across the country and abroad. Fandom promotes friendships over long distances, and it is not uncommon for a fan to have met someone he considers one of his closest friends only once or maybe not at all, although they may have used reams of paper in correspondence. Many fans, especially proponents of FIAWOL, have few or no friends outside of fandom, and for those who live in areas not heavily populated by fans this may mean that all of their friends live very far away. But "having all your friends live 800 miles away still beats the hell out of having no friends at all."⁷ Despite this, many of the fans who have friends only within fandom have very little desire to find friends outside it.

Surveys taken among fans show that they tend to be loners, first born or only children, and voracious readers. It has been suggested these things combine to make most fans have difficulties in dealing with people. From this may stem the general feeling among fans that they are somehow different from "normal" people, a breed apart, which is an explanation of why they can get along so much better with other fans than with "mundanes." The surveys also show that fans have a diversity of professions, tend to have higher I.Q.s than average (which may also be a cause of problems in relating with people), and most have had some college education. Males are more predominant than females, and more of the latter seem to be FIJAGH believers. Average age is around 25, but ages range from 12 and even younger to 70 or more.

One proof of the existence of a subculture is its consistent use of its own dialect or a plentiful supply of slang. Fandom's slang is used consistently enough to



cause bafflement and resentment in many individuals who encounter a fanzine or attend a club meeting for the first time. 8

Many of the words devised by fandom are words for things unique to itself, such as fanzine; others, like typer (typewriter) and egoboo (things which boost one's ego) are fannish abbreviations of terms for things which exist outside of fandom as well. Mundane is fandom's equivalent of gentile -- i.e. anything or anyone not fannish. It has been suspected that fans use this special slang in order to be elitist, and to some extent this is true.

Fans' alienation from the mundane, despite the reasons that may have driven them into fandom in the first place, is self-enforced. Though they may wince at the stereotypical mundane expression of "You read that Buck Rogers stuff?" the more popular that sf and its related aspects become, the more snobbish the fans become. Readership of sf, and along with it a limited knowledge of fandom, is increasing, and as a result fans are becoming more and more cliquish and elitist. Members of the more popular followings of Star Trek and comic books are looked down upon and excluded from programming at sf conventions, where they were once provided for. Mundane publicity of fan events is often shunned, and even fan publicity in the larger print-run fanzines is discouraged.

Fans as a group, as well as individuals, alienate themselves from society at large. While many can and do participate in societal norms and mores, to the extent of working, etc., in the outside world, they may do so on the surface only, and have different personal values. For example, the majority of fans are agnostics or atheists, though the largest group is of Jewish or Catholic background. Fans do not have the compunctions against touch that are so common in mundania. It is not unusual for a first meeting between two fans to begin with a hug and a kiss, whether they are of opposite sexes or the same one. Fans are often (not always) remarkably tolerant, and tend to be liberals.

The relatively small group of people that calls itself fandom is a subculture alienated from general society, and unlike many such groups, it likes it that way.

FOOTNOTES

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4. Ibid., p. 36.
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6. Susan Wood, "The Club House," Amazing SF, June '76, p. 129.
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8. Warner, p. 39.

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 - Cy Chauvin, Roseville, Mi.
 - Robert Coulson, Hartford City, Ind.
 - Brett Cox, Tabor City, N.C.
 - Larry Downes, Oak Park, Mi.
 - Diane Drutowski, Royal Oak, Mi.
 - Gary Farber, Bronx, N.Y.
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 - Mike Glicksohn, Toronto, Ont., Canada.
 - Jeff May, Liberty, Mo.
 - Elliot Weinstein, Guadalajara, Mexico.

The preceding research paper, in slightly altered form, was written in Spring, 1976, for a sociology class taught by Mr. Joseph Gamache at Oak Park High School. Assignment: a paper on alienation. Grade received: A. Previously published in Killer Queen 12 for MISHAP, July 1976.

SON_F QUARK

Being some random thoughts and observations on Skiffy*
Cons

or

On A Possible Analogy between Science Fiction Conventions
and Religious Rituals

Being a rather ~~terrible~~ verbal type person, given to wild-eyed speculations of a very tenuous nature (and because Uncle Albert has been after me to write "something" for his next zine), I have spent numerous hours - often on those long drives home from some weekend or other - wondering, Why do I go to these things (i.e. Skiffy Cons)?

Well, lessee, I know some things about conventions in general and Skiffy Cons in particular. To start with, it is widely acknowledged that people can, will and do act differently at conventions than they do elsewhere. Partying til all hours; imbibing, ingesting and inhaling substances which render them weak and silly; exercising a wide range of sexual latitude; and acting generally gonzo weird (Hmm, come to think of it, for some people that's really not much of a difference. . .).

Science fiction conventions are different from a lot of other kinds of conventions in at least three ways. First, they are not job or work related. Yes, professional writers, editors and what not do come to skiffy cons, but most attendees are fen. The pros have their own gatherings for the consideration and betterment of their craft (like Clarion and Milford, for example). For the most part, skiffy cons are recreational or social activities.

Secondly, they are basically coeducational (i.e. "mixed company"), whereas the classic business-type conventions (or at least their stereotyped image) are almost exclusively male. This, I understand, is a recent development for fandom and, to be honest, is not as true currently as it has been for conventions in general. But I digress.

Thirdly, more than other conventions, skiffy cons allow for, and sometimes even encourage, very different kinds of behavior. Come on down, wear a costume, play out your fantasies - it's all right, we're all family here. Ghod knows, I do things at cons that I wouldn't dare do anywhere else; a somehow-I-don't-think-

*skiffy (ski' fē), adj. [by folk etym.<sci-fi] science fiction.



they-would-understand kind of thing. (What's that I hear clanking in the background?)

Well, then (mumble, mumble), I reiterate: Why do I go to these things, anyway? (Are you ready for this? We are about to go over The Edge. . .) I remember, from an anthropology course on the study of primitive religions, the following:

- 1) Religious rituals are set off in space and time from the rest of the mundane, day-to-day world.
- 2) Within these special boundaries, experiences and behaviors which would be out of place elsewhere are not only allowed

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but hoped for and encouraged. Not just any strangeness, mind you. The point seems to be to induce an altered state of consciousness, leading to what is classically known as mystical or religious experience. These are possible but not exclusive forms of

- 3) "peak" experience, which are those moments of "flow", of ecstatic emotion, which revitalize the psyche and make the rest of existence bearable.

A side note here, if you will bear with me for a moment, dear reader. It has been noted that the lack of peak experience in a person's life, if unalleviated, leads to a condition wherein the ego, the everyday functioning part of the human psyche, goes into a depression which will deepen until the individual suicides. When conditions become intolerable, the organism self-destructs. But again I digress, and I don't really want to dwell on such a downer topic.

So, where have I come to now? Consider this:

- 1) Cons are set off in time and space. Fairly obvious - all gathered together (hopefully blocked together) in a hotel for two or three days. The outside world occasionally intrudes, but the feeling of a con can stay with you throughout and insulates one very well.*

- 2) Unusual behavior and experiences abound. Well, not universally, but they are accessible and do happen to some people. They are accepted and, to some extent, encouraged.

- 3) I am not claiming that fens go to cons to have religious experiences but, as we all know, they do go to have a good time. And I know from personal experience that sometimes I have an exceptionally good time, and leave feeling very happy and at peace with the world and with memories that I will treasure for years. Are they "peak" experiences? Well, close enough for tolerance. I don't think that I am so different from other fens and, hearing the occasional glowing reports of others' experiences at cons, I suspect it is more widespread than one might think.

In closing, I would like to point out that I am not attempting to claim that cons are a form of religious ritual. (Actually, I find the idea faintly amusing.) If anything, I suspect that perhaps they are both examples of something a lot more basic in our psyches which can surface in widely differing forms. (As another ferinstance, what might Aristotle have been referring to in his writings about catharsis?)

Then again, the idea may have no substance at all. I really

* Makes you glow in the dark, too . . .

don't know. It did manage to keep me occupied and out of trouble for a while, which my keepers are thankful for and, besides, whathehell, Archie, whathehell, it sure was fun while it lasted.

- - - Dave Innes

an ANARCHIST MANIFESTO

Science fiction fans of the world unite! You have nothing to lose but your pretensions!

A little more than a year ago at AutoClave, there was a panel misnamed "Sex in Science Fiction." It had nothing to do with science fiction and little to do with sex, but had mostly to do with fannish self indulgence. I don't recall who was on the panel (all fans look alike to me) but I do recall two statements which set me to thinking. One man confessed that all his very best friends were fans and indeed he found it difficult to form bonds with people in the more general world of non-fans. Another person on the panel declared with a perfectly straight face that fans are just one big happy family, and if he should engage in a little incest with someone else from the fannish family his wife would understand, because she's a fan and he's a fan, and we are all fans and golly-gee, aren't fans just the nicest people. (Of course if fandumb is just one big happy family there are roles to be filled, and filled they are. These are the father and mother surrogate roles. Those who run the family, make the decisions and reap the profits - economic, psychological and sexual. So it is with the "fannish family".)

How transparent must something be? Here we are presented with a man who cannot form meaningful relationships with 99.99% of the human race, but only with people who share his own very narrow, limited range of interests. This is not seen as any sort of a bad reflection on him, but rather as a good reflection on us (fans at large), because he's such a swell fellow the fact that he can "relate" to us (especially if we are female, where a "relationship" lasts 20 minutes to several hours at best) means we are better than the people he cannot relate to (the rest of the world). Get it? At the same time we have a bozo who is obviously using fandumb to promote his marital infidelities and anything else he can get away with. This smug, self-satisfied, self-serving attitude has become pervasive in fandumb. We are told that SF fans are inherently better than other people (who are condescendingly called mundanes), that fans are just the most warm, loving, wonderful, etc. ad nauseum people in all the seven galaxies, and fandumb is just one step removed from heaven. But be not deceived, oh my sisters and brothers.

What fandumb is is a scam, a cynical confidence game run by

a self-appointed elite of so called big-name fans who have organized themselves into a series of cliques and seek to control the great uncliqued masses of fans for their own nefarious purposes.

It works like this. The purpose of organization is to benefit the organizers; the purpose of fannish organizations and all organized fandumb is to feed the egos of the organizers, egoboo being the currency of the realm. Fans are by and large people with above average intelligence and below average social and emotional development. When everyone else was out in the school yard relating, the proto-fans were in the library reading "Have Spacesuit, Will Travel" and "Storm Over Warlock". In addition, the heavy duty, hard-core fandumb-is-a-way-of-life crowd tend to be people who have failed at other aspects of their life. They have difficulty relating to real people, they are known by their gimmicks (hats, cameras, toys and other props), they lead dull, boring (mundane if you will) lives, and seek to derive from fandumb the ego gratification, emotional support, general comraderie and basic attention to themselves that they cannot get elsewhere. They view fandumb as their personal domain, something which exists solely to serve their purposes, and above all else, something which must be controlled so that it may continue to serve their interests. The struggle for control is the true motivation behind the current brouhaha about increasing attendance at SF cons. We are told that attendance at SF cons is becoming "unmanageable", but what is the purpose of managing cons and who are they being managed for? What troubles the BNFs is that when too many people enter the field too fast they cannot be properly indoctrinated, shown what's what and who's important and who's not. It is this last point on which all organized fandumb rests and it is this point which worries the BNFs most. After all, how can you be a star if nobody knows who you are? As a result of the BNFs fears, a number of things have come about. Attempts have been made to limit attendance at cons to true (i.e. indoctrinated) fans. Increasingly at cons the BNFs have taken to private parties among themselves to spare themselves the excruciating embarrassment of appearing elsewhere and not being recognized. Cons have appeared which are by invitation only, to fully insure that only the "right" people attend.

The BNFs manage their rule by a number of strategems.

1. By defining fans as being superior to other people, and BNFs being superior to other fans, by perpetuating the fandumb-as-an-extended-family myth, and by the emphasis placed on fannish traditions (anything done twice becomes a tradition) they seek to create an insular isolated organization existing apart from the real world, having its own heirarchy (with BNFs at its head), and its own traditions (among them, sex, or reasonable facsimile thereof with anyone they can get their hands on, and its accompanying braggadocio).
2. By creating a fannish jargon, or fanspeak, a method is provided to define one's place in the heirarchy. Fanspeak consists of contractions (corflu) anacronyms (SMOF) and words formed by inserting the letter H (Ghod, Bheer)(the logic of this escapes

me). The more of this gibberish one can spout the higher ones place in the fannish scheme of things, and since the ENFs created fanspeak, they profit most from this esoteric index of fannishness.

3. By imbuing things fannish with a disproportionate and sophomoric sentimentality they strive to give the whole fannish thing substance, emotional content and depth. They are trying to convince us that fandumb is not just a hobby, but it is important and meaningful and helps to improve the world at large. It also serves as a game among themselves to show off their fine fannish sensibilities.

And so it goes. Hi ho. But must it always go so? For those of us in the Fannish Anarchy Movement, our goal and our fervent desire is clear: to bring about an end to the controlling structure of ENFs, SMOFs and other such groups who rule fandumb like despots. Not to replace them with other equally oppressive groups, but to do away with all leaders, parking meters, all structure and all organization. Any structure implies control, somebody above somebody else. What differentiates them is the method for ordering people within the structure. Complete, total and absolute freedom and equality can only be achieved in the intoxicating atmosphere of total anarchy. Our method, like the Yippies before us, is ridicule, defiance, deliberate disruption, outright silliness, downright laziness and acts of guerrilla surrealism to reduce the system to such an absurd state that nobody will be willing or able to take it at all seriously again, for all eternity.

By now you are probably asking yourself, "What can I, a run of the mill SciFi fan do for the movement?" Glad you asked. Do this:

The next time some bozo tries to impress you with his knowledge of fanspeak; the next time a fan tells you that fans are such warm, wonderful people, and aren't we ever so much better than those icky mundanes; the next time you read in a fanzine one of those interminable boring letters from some member of the glick-clique about what a grand time they all had at the last con with each other; the next time someone gives you a friendly incestuous grope; the next time somebody tries to lay any of this fannish ~~shit~~ drivel on you, exert your anarchic individuality, show them in a clear and forceful manner that you don't give a fuck who they are or what they are here for. Yell out something obscene, or "who cares" or "so what". Or better yet, hit them square in their smug fannish face with a nice fannish pie. Think about it. Smash the elitist. Rip down the false walls separating fans from the real world. Off the ENFs. Off all the fans. Up the anarchistic revolution of free individual science fiction reading people. Let those pies fly. And remember kids, when you're out there smashing the state, keep a song in your heart and a smile on your lips. (And a pie in your hand)



THEY ARE SOMEWHAT SMALLER than we are and body hair is beginning to return. They remain in close association with the dog but no longer utilize them for specialized tasks. They retain fire at a high instinctual level, tending it much as a bird builds a nest. Many packs are now without fire entirely. They retain a far larger vocabulary of warning calls, etc., than any other vertebrate. They no longer function as a planetary dominant species and have in fact died out in the climactically harsher areas (many groups, such as the Eskimos and Chinese, were unable to keep up their specialized survival techniques) to be displaced or supplanted by competitive herbivores in still others. They retain confused memories of a past glory and many packs still have annual ceremonies at which some scrap preserved, though no longer understood, such as the Lord's Prayer, the Triple Refuge or Einstein's formulation of the relation between Mass, Energy and the Speed of Light, is recited. The tendency is for each territorial band of nine to twenty or so adult individuals to be dominated by a small matriarchy of mature animals. They no longer engage in inter-group violence nor carry out purposive agricultural activity, though some plant species are maintained by semi-instinctual behavior like that surrounding fire. They no longer maintain cultural norms in regard to incest or the treatment of the dead.

They never reached the stars; they were too far away.

J.A.M. SESSION

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND--a movie

TELEMPATH, Spider Robinson, Berkley, \$1.50

STAR OF DANGER, Marion Zimmer Bradley, Ace, \$1.50

WHIPPING STAR) Frank Herbert, Berkley \$1.50

THE EYES OF HEISENBERG) \$1.25

In this the last of these JAM-sessions, we find not only books but a movie--Close Encounters of the Third Kind. Since the movie has not yet hit the Detroit area (I saw it in New York), the following thoughts are offered as preparation for seeing the movie.

First of all, you should, at all costs, see the movie. If you delay, you will kick yourself around the block when you finally do see it. Not that the movie is that good as a movie, but that it is good enough, with visual effects that dwarf in the physical and metaphorical sense anything you have seen so far, including 2001: A Space Odyssey, and Star Wars. Second, don't sit too near the front if you see the movie in a theater that plays music loud. The score is very loud. Third, don't have false expectations. The movie is set in the present, on the earth's surface. It is probably too long, and it drags a little at times. There is one scene (involving dirt shoveled through a kitchen window) that doesn't come off very well. Finally, don't judge the movie until it is ended. It is the visuals that make it spectacular, and they are excellent all the way through, but they are breathtaking in the last several minutes.

TELEMPATH is, I believe, Spider Robinson's maiden voyage (you will forgive the term) as a novelist. There are a lot of things wrong with it, but its flaws are the kind that give realistic hope that Robinson will turn out to be a really good s-f novelist. The book describes events in the near future, after the development of nasal supersensitivity has forced a migration from the cities and a cessation of all activities producing foul odors. (Or at least their control. Flatulence in a crowded room is a serious crime.) Now the Spider's idea is an interesting one, but one that must be handled very carefully if it is to be made the basis for an entire novel. It's just hard to take a serious attitude toward foul odors. The beginning of the novel doesn't assist in hewing to this careful line because the hero is a little too hip-flip, and a little too selfconsciously unselfconsciously black. Even with these strikes against the book, however, Spider's relaxed storytelling ability manages to carry the narrative fairly far. Even though the reader may be dubious about what he is being told, the writing makes the whole thing sound interesting.

The thing that makes the book finally seem a bit silly, however, is the way in which the plot is structured. For one thing, there are simply too many different ideas used to prop it up. For another, it is worked out with such painstaking detail that no one is allowed to be unhappy by the end of the book, even if that means people pretending they are dead for weeks on end, sudden revelations about what drives various characters, and the like. The style of writing makes the reader want to overlook all of this, but there is just too much. And yet, these are clearly flaws that are preferable to the usual ones--too few ideas, or a plot insufficiently worked out. Self-restraint, which is what Spider needs, is much easier to achieve than unaccustomed hard work. If nothing else the book is enjoyable, so you will have a good time reading even while you are sometimes squirming.

STAR OF DANGER is one of Marion Zimmer Bradley's Darkover series--a loosely connected series centering around the planet Darkover. It stinks. I am sorry to say that, too, especially having read the fascinating apologia, "An Evolution of Consciousness," by Bradley in issue 22 of Science Fiction Review (August 1977). I had expected, in reading Bradley's article, to discover that Star of Danger was the first in the Darkover series--a ready excuse for an author who has been working on a series for over twenty years. But it wasn't, and she seemed satisfied with it in the article. What's wrong with Star of Danger? That characters are wooden, the dialog poor, the writing poor, and the ideas sometimes bordering on the absurd. At the risk of seeming overly picky, let me offer the following as an example of the quality of the writing. Note that the flaw, even though perhaps not major, is in the first sentence of a chapter--a place where particular care should be called for:

If Larry's father had hoped that this glimpse of Darkover would dim Larry's hunger for the world outside the Terran Zone, he was mistaken.

Someone who hopes can be disappointed; someone who thinks can be mistaken. Someone who writes ought to be a lot more careful with words, which are the essence of her craft. At another point we are asked to believe that the human "natives" of Darkover have no idea that they are descended from Terran explorers of an earlier era, even though the Terran humans on the planet are aware of that fact and seem to have daily dealings with the natives. Gaffs such as these, appearing in a novel that is otherwise little more than an exercise in gosh-wow, just aren't worthy of a professional author.

Books by Frank Herbert are being rereleased to cash in on the man's popularity. Beware. WHIPPING STAR is fine if you like Herbert; THE EYES OF HEISENBERG is a turkey any way you cut it. Whipping Star is part of the same universe inhabited by the Dosadi Experiment (reviewed last issue, favorably) and shares many of the same characteristics. The conversations are convoluted;

many things are not said, often keeping the reader slightly off balance, and yet there is a compelling quality to the writing that gives Herbert a power that is hard to identify. Whipping Star has the added virtue of a convincing portrayal of attempted conversations with creatures that exist among the dimensions, and whose appearance to us is but a suggestion of their real nature. If language is based at least in part on experience, how could such a creature ever learn a human language? Perhaps it can't, Herbert conveys, and makes the plot turn in part on frustrating inability to communicate with the Calebans.

The Eyes of Heisenberg starts promisingly enough, but by the end it is hard to suppress a feeling of outrage when a major event--the mysterious intervention of an unidentified force in the process of gene-shaping--is never satisfactorily explained. Likewise when the hero's "solution" to the problem of a new social order is incredibly contrived, unlikely of success, unlikely not to have been anticipated by the science of the day if possible, and unlikely to be accepted by the parties who seem ready to do so at the end because the author has made them do so. Foul! A definite aberration for Herbert. Avoid it.

Ave atque vale.

Jim Martin

VIDICON PART 4

state of the art address

Let's take a look at state-of-the-art video. I'm not talking about the latest porta-pak model, or even the new Convergence editing system we're getting at work. Those things are only modifications of a rapidly becoming obsolete, decade old system. Instead, let's take a look at some really significant new systems applications - applications that are going to affect all of us a lot sooner than we might have expected.

Cable TV is nothing new. Nor is pay TV. What is new is something that's being field tested in Columbus, Ohio right now. It's called Qube and it is a development of the Warner Communications entertainment conglomerate. On the surface, at least the way it's being used now, it looks a lot like just another warmed over version of pay cable TV. You dials your movies and you pays your price. On closer inspection, we see

that the technological potential Gene Youngblood was telling us about at the beginning of this decade is finally being realized. As usual, it took somebody with a lot of bucks and all the wrong reasons to do it.

The thing that makes Qube so unique is that, finally, two way communication has been established between TV signal origination and the viewing public. When the man on the screen asks a question of the home viewers in Columbus, it's not merely rhetorical. The Columbus audience pick up a little box and punch out their answers, which travel back up the cable to a computer where all the responses are sorted out and tabulated for immediate feedback. So far, the uses to which this system has been applied have been predictable.

First, there's an automatic scan built into the system that computes instant Nielsen ratings every six seconds. Next, there's the multiple choice commercial gimmick picked up on by an enterprising travel agency. The way this works is the audience is first asked which of five vacation spots they'd most like to hear about. After the computer tabulates the vote a second or two later, the chosen piece of video footage is run. Viewers can then push another button to indicate that they want to have the appropriate travel brochures mailed to them. Then there is the lonely housewives application. Y'see, there's this day-long talk show where the people on the TV ask the audience questions like "what are you having for lunch?" and then you get to see how many are eating peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, or bologna, or spaghetti-oes. Then there are the audience participation game shows, but I'm sure you don't need me to tell you how those work.

Other applications that are being tested include taking college course quizzes over the tube, direct communication with elected officials (keep an eye on this one in the future, gang) and ordering merchandise from stores.

Other things that are happening besides Qube include stepped-up production of home video recording systems. This has resulted in increased legal actions on the part of program producers, spearheaded by the suit filed by Disney against Sony and continuing through the case of Learning Corporation of America, Time-Life Films, Inc., and Encyclopedia Britannica Educational Corporation versus the Board of Cooperative Educational Services in the First Supervisory District-Erie County, New York and several of its employees. The eventual solution to this conflict will probably be tried in the courts for a long time to come but, I suspect, will not be solved there. The myriad court actions should eventually inspire someone - enough someones - to step up production of Qube-type pay TV systems until, eventually, I predict that broadcast TV, the essentially free dissemination of information to virtually everyone with a home receiver, will become a thing of the past.

Incidentally, if you've got any stock in a coaxial cable manufacturing company, I strongly advise you to dump it. CB'ers

notwithstanding, coax is on the way out. When all those new Qube systems start springing up around the country, chances are the information being transmitted is going to be digitalized, traveling via fiber optics. And on the brighter side, new image display screens ought to be hitting the market in a few years with several hundred lines better resolution than the current broadcast standard. Sid, you'd better try to unload that Advent while you can still find a buyer.

Returning our gaze to fandom, we see Steve Innes running the audio recording and playback system once again at ConFusion. Unfortunately, only audio recordings will be made this year, since I have been too busy chairing the con to arrange to set up and man a video recording system. Once again, all the recordings made at ConFusion are being made available to the Science Fiction Oral History Association.

And speaking of the SFOHA; they are having an election. Yes, they're finally far enough along in their organizing that they have drawn up a set of Bylaws (drafted by Lloyd Biggle, Jr.) and are on their way toward becoming an institution. If you still don't know what the SFOHA is all about, perhaps this excerpt from their proposed Bylaws will help to clue you in.

The purpose of the Association shall be: 1) to search for recordings in the area of Science Fiction Oral History made in the past and reprocess them when necessary; 2) to record current events in Science Fiction Oral History or obtain recordings of such events; 3) to arrange special interviews and events of historical interest in the area of Science Fiction and record them; 4) to promote the interest in Science Fiction Oral History with programs at Science Fiction Conventions and elsewhere and in all other ways possible; 5) and to donate copies of all of said recordings to official depositories at universities in the United States and foreign countries where they will be available for study and preserved for historical purposes.

If you still haven't joined the SFOHA (and I know that billions of you people haven't - I've had a peek at their list of members) and you feel that what they're into is a worthwhile thing, send them a check for \$3 for a one year membership. The address is SFOHA c/o Eastern Michigan Science Fiction Society, 117 Goodison Hall, Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197.

In the next installment of this column I should have the results of the SFOHA election. Until then I advise you all to turn off your TVs and turn on to video.

- - - Larry Tucker

DEAR UNCLE ALBERT

While trying to unload a copy of the last UASFF on a Stilyagi Air Corps member, I happened to include the name of a certain hirsute, Canadian loc'er in my sales pitch. "Oh?" the Stilyagi-ite replied. "Did he use the phrase 'damn fine' anywhere in the loc?" Apparently, "damn fine" is the customary Glicksohnian praise for exemplary fannish achievement. A quick scan of the letter revealed that he had used the phrase "damn fanzine". Was that close enough? The Stilyagi-ite made a funny face and bought a copy anyway.

Surprisingly (after some of the comments I made after his last loc), I received another letter from Mike. The sentiment expressed in the opening lines indicates that he is big enough (he's at least as tall as I am) to let bygones be bygones. I should add, however, that he is still a little confused. The envelope was addressed to Larry Tucker, c/o Uncle Albert, rather than the other way around, as per my instructions last ish.

Mike Glicksohn
141 High Park Ave.
Toronto, Ont., M6P 2S3

Dear short-tempered, snotty, testy,
rude, intemperate and ill-mannered
Uncle Albert,

Following the old mundane axiom that turnabout is fair play the least I can do is greet you in a manner inspired by your witty remarks in WDKY #4. Nothing personal, of course: one just likes to try and follow the tone of the fanzine one is replying to, eh wot? Following your directions as proffered to me while you prepared your sumptuous gourmet meal of chicken soup and peanut butter sandwiches in your suite at Windycon, I didn't take your comments to heart. (Actually, now that I think about it, it was Larry Tucker who told me not to let your comments bother me. Does he really know what you're thinking or should I ignore the both of you?) Were you here now, watching as I consume my martini and my bowl of Campbell's Chunky Chicken soup followed by a slice of rye bread and chunky peanut butter, I'd instruct you not to take my salutation seriously but you aren't so I can't so I won't and you can and so there, fella!

The thought of a world filled with Uncle Alberts is so devilishly nauseating that it's enough to drive a man to drink. Thanks, guy; that's one thing I owe you for.

You've got a lot of nerve complaining that people don't send you locs and when they do they address

them to that asshole Tucker and then when I send you a long loc properly addressed you get all high-falutin' and snarky about it. Can't have your cake and eat it too, you know. Unless you're schizophrenic, of course, and one half doesn't talk to or acknowledge the other. But then you'd have to have some sort of silly false identity that actually imagined himself to be real and anyone that obviously deranged would stand out even in a collection of misfits, maniacs and malcontents like fandom, don't you agree?

One doesn't hardly see articles by Joni nowadays which is a shame since she ~~mentions my name frequently~~ writes an entertaining conreport. I bet Dave Locke really loved it. There isn't much to say about the report itself except to protest one minor factual error. Harper and I weren't even attempting to set any sort of temporal record: I was merely investigating the improvement in his osculatory technique to ascertain the legitimacy of his graduation ceremony. Had anyone told me there was a record on the line we'd be there still!

I can't see why Suzi Stefl should be upset, though. Mike happens to be a good friend of mine. If one can't kiss one's good friends then who can one kiss? Hell, I've kissed Suzi Stefl and Mike hasn't gotten upset about it!

I guess I'm really not au courant on Slime Ratings if Fred Haskell is a zero and Randy Bathurst is a one. I'd have put them the other way around. And on the basis of the fact that I'm always too busy playing poker to get mentioned I'd have thought I rated at least a minus five: it's well known I'm more interested in a straight flush than a straight flash any day. Let's get sex out of the conventions and back in the gutter where it belongs, that's what I say.

Gentle Ben's piece of fan fiction is just that: fiction. Even the preamble, before the barrage of dreadful puns, bears as much resemblance to reality as Ben does to Adonis. But then Ben always did have enormous difficulty distinguishing fact and fiction. (He's the only person I know who has three times bought objects claimed to be the skull of Claude Degler as a small boy from three different people claiming to be Claude Degler.) The malicious suggestion that I imposed an entrance fee of a bottle of duty free booze for admittance to the post-Anonycon Glickcon is a vile slander, a base canard and a slight exaggeration. I merely pointed out that anyone entering this fair Dominion could so import a bottle and that this would certainly help add to the enjoyment of the party. If several people chose to leave their remnants of liquor here as a token of appreciation for a damn fine gathering (and rather than carry them across the border under the watchful eyes of the customs' officers) that merely reflects the inherent unselfishness and generosity of so many of fandom's finest members.

The piece itself is droll and filled with esoteric fannish references that only Ben and I will under-

stand. If Ben keeps this up he's going to become the Lee Hoffman of his generation. (Sixth Fandom Lives! and wears a beard in Minneapolis...er...Detroit...that is...Chicago...um...Ann Arbor...??) And a lot of people are going to be as surprised as hell when Ben reveals that he's really a girl!



Perhaps I've inadvertently maligned you and your Altus ego Tucker by suggesting I'd won money from either/both of you at the poker table. It was an honest mistake; I've won a lot of money in games you were playing in and I just assumed some of it was probably yours. My humble apologies of course; and please do feel free to enter into any game I'm involved in!

Best etc. . . Mike

I really do like Michael, in spite of any impressions to the contrary one might have received after reading my comments in the previous ish. He's a nice Canadian, a fair poker player and a reasonably informed and entertaining loc'er. And he usually has a kind word for everybody. Here's one for you, Mike.

Horsefeathers!

See? Isn't that a nice word? It's all kind of ambiguous and fluffy sounding, in a leathery sort of way. It could be worse. I could have said "poppycock", which is an organ found on certain flowers that is used for. . .

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Neil Rest it's kinda nice seeing stuff from other people
4433 Walton who don't spell any better than i do, but
Chicago 60651 aren't self-conscious about it.
i ran into Uncle Albert's in the art show at
Windycon, and leafed through it. . . until i
ran into my name. attached to something which sounded like me,
but which i have absolutely no recollection of. weird, es-
pecially since i did go on to use the name (as you see),

has anyone gotten low enough to make dumb jokes about 'letter bomb cranks' (has your letter bomb run down? just a few quick turns. . .)?

Hippotocon was the greatest regret i had about going to California in August. i mean, Bubonicon was nice, but it was my only con all month, and you guys were back here/no, i mustn't become maudlin. i have enough trouble being one place at once, anyway. but boy, i bet i would have had a great time at the Labor Day Wilcon, if i weren't trying to have a great time in that silly over-the-hill attempt at a middle class idea of a first-rate hotel in Miami Beach.

your video piece/installment/serialization points up a contrast i've been noticing lately. been going on for a while, but i just really began noticing lately. it seems that most people's reaction to an idea is 'how much would it cost?' i tend to think more along the lines of 'who do i know who has that equipment, or access to some? who knows enough about that to help me do it? who has contacts to get the materials at minimal cost?' it may help that all the things i'm interested in have been mastered much more thoroughly by other people. specifically, i know a couple of video freaks, and one, last i knew (only about a year ago, as i recall), was doing the instructional A-V for a college near Chicago, and he'd probably have fun going from 50 to 60 Hz, or whatever that screwy Aussie tape is, and Damn, but i want to see the Aussiecon videotapes. . .

only recently has my congoing become organized and Affluent enough to have rides. i've probably hitched to half the cons i've ever been to, at least, including almost all the world-cons. seeing travel stories in conreports seems a little wierd. hitchhiking is a unique and wonderful way of not only getting there (generally pretty quickly and efficiently, too), but it is absolutely The Best way to see places. after all, the people are most of what anywhere is about, and only the nicest seem to pick up hitchers (actually, it's mostly people who hitch, or have hitched, so there's some understanding immediately).

though i concede it is different for women *sigh* gotta ask Joni about 'Dimetapp', if you spelled it right. it really sounds like some phone phreak thing i've never heard of. and last but far from least, and just so you shouldn't get a swelled head (swelled extremities of the head is plenty enough); A Complaint About Censorship. in late (Sunday afternoon in the bar with the eight or ten people left) conversation at I-Con (even better than last year, even if they'd boarded up the whirlpool we used), Dana concluded that some of her Slime Ratings essay was omitted, nay, expurgated. the descriptions exemplifying the ratings, and accounting for the various individual listings seem to have been considerably lengthier and more explicit in the original. For Shame! to have tampered with so serious a contribution to Science!

it's just occurred to me to check the Farmers' Almanac to see if it knows that the worst blizzard of January, in the eastern Midwest, will be January 12/13.

neil

As usual, neil, there's a lot in your letter that seems to cry out for comment. To begin with, you aren't the only one who seems to question the authenticity of your previous loc (neb lhuz comments on that in the loc previous to yours).

Yes, people do seem to think of things in dollars and cents, rather than in terms of what their investment might really be worth. In mentioning costs, Larry was endeavoring to talk to his audience in a manner he thought might be more universally understood. You, on the other hand, seem to have a better idea about what being a video freek is really all about.

Regarding your Complaint About Censorship; Dana's article was run in its entirety. If the Slime Ratings piece was edited at all, it must have been done to a draft previous to the one Dana handed to Larry.

UA

Joni Stopa
Wilmot Mt.
Wilmot, Wis. 53192

Dear Uncle Albert,

Your fanzine has really been looking up. There has definitely been an improvement. After all, would I be locating if there hadn't?

True that Larry Tucker has lovely hair, beautiful blue eyes, and was looking better than ever at Windycon. Ah, but who got the loc from me? It was obvious why you had to take over the fanzine, what with Larry's gadding about to all the cons and being a playboy, he couldn't possibly handle the kind of responsibility that the successful faned must. I'm sure that being a sex object has its own rewards, but true intelligence and creativity will out in the end. . .

I'm glad to see more Bathurst art thish, it certainly dresses things up a bit. It was quite clever of you to win over one of the most talented artists around.

Dana's article was quite thought provoking as well as amusing. I do feel that she should be persuaded to go at it at a greater length. There are quite a few men who could use some coverage. Information, that's what we liberated femme fans need!

I'm not quite sure what to say about "From the Miasma", except that Egypt was not that way at all. . .

Zuhl seems to have caught the aura that the aging boy wonder surrounds fandom with. (Look, I can't explain how a skinny Canadian surrounds fandom but, a) it's True and b) it's a great image.) He caught the alcoholic haze, the drug induced visions, the j'ne Ces't quoi of our favorite superfan.

Speaking of whom, I see he is now showering his grace upon

your letter column. Whereas he has some insights on the possible uses of videotape he misses the greatest boon of all for us intrepid partygoers. If we must be on a panel, then the whole thing could be shot days, even months, in advance, giving us plenty of time to plan and rehearse our witty, spur of the moment repartee. This ploy would guarantee a good program every time.

After enough tapes were collected there could be a circulating library of tapes available to all con committees. Eventually around the clock programming would be possible. The confirmed con-goer would be able to look at his program book and plan his day in advance.

The Dickson-Offutt debate - skip, saw it at Octocon
Glicksohn, Dozois, Haldeman and Tucker on the importance of fanac - a must see

Once things are really going, you'll be able to pick up the program before the con, watch it in the comfort of your own home and make appropriate comments on the programming while attending to the more serious aspects of the con - socializing.

I see that you have permitted Larry to mention his con in your fanzine. If you could find time in your busy schedule, could you perhaps convince him that ConFusion should be held in Wisconsin? In the first place, ConFusion and blizzards have become synonymous. It would make a great deal of sense to move the con to the less snowy side of the lake. Fans would then be able to drive around and not through the storm.

ConFusion is held in Ann Arbor by Ann Arbor fen. This makes no sense. To be properly confusing it should be out of state and preferably on the other side of the lake.

In the third place, I know of a very nice HoJo that is only fifteen minutes from here and has nice eating establishments nearby.

My final argument is that Jon and I can't get to any cons at all during the ski season and if one should be held at the HoJo, we could get to the parties at least. Don't you think that my final argument is reason enough to change the location of ConFusion?

Keep up the good work with the fanzine. Any day now you should get a letter from Harry Warner, Jr.

Best,
Joni

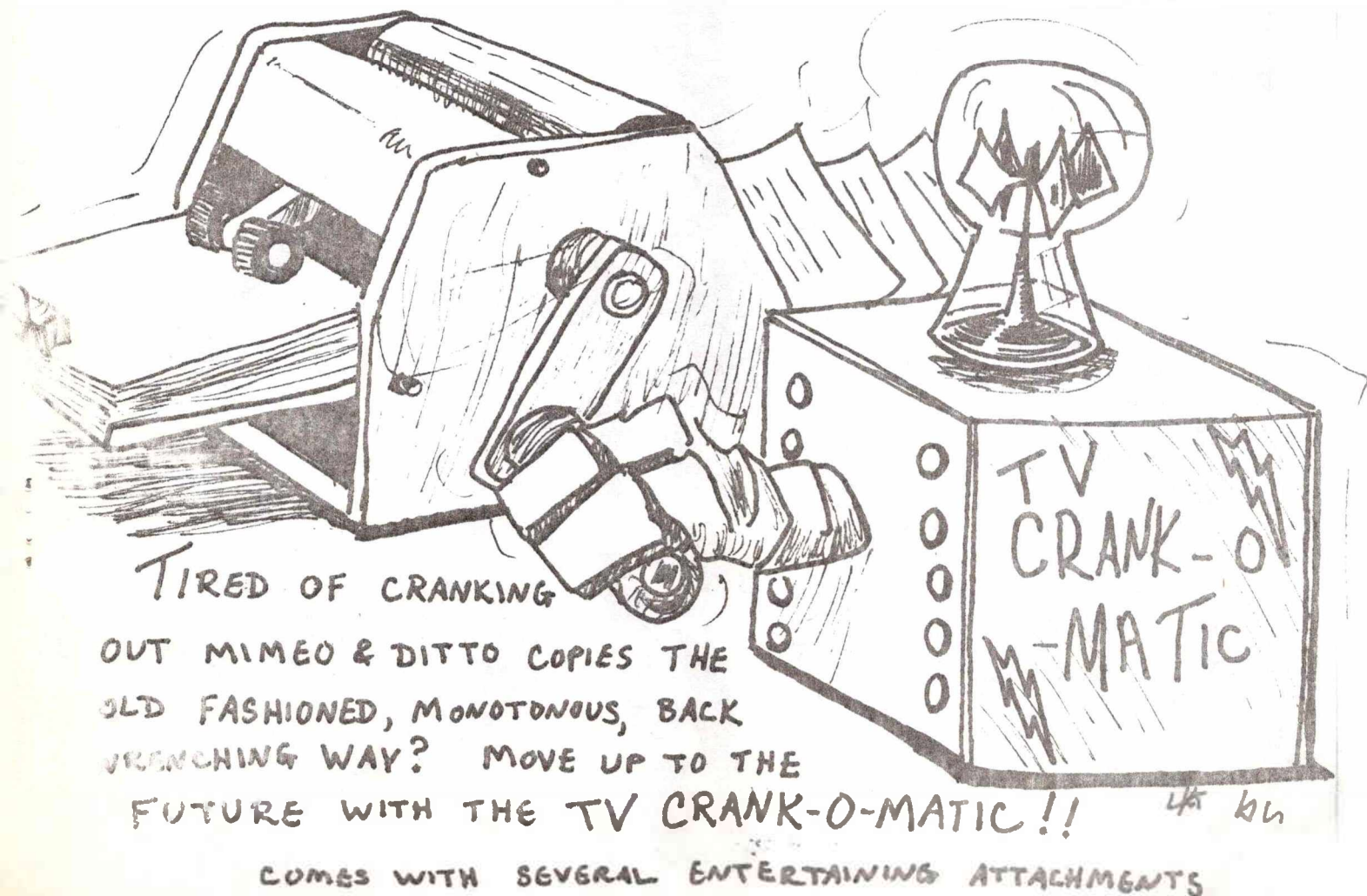
A few days after receiving the above loc, Joni called me on the phone to give me two more reasons why ~~I should let~~
~~the Block do it this time~~ ConFusion should be held in Wisconsin. One was that Joni and Jackie are best friends and since Ms. Causgrove has moved out to the coast, the only chance that they

would get to see each other would be if ConFusion was held near Wilmot Mountain. The other reason was that, since blizzards have become traditional at ConFusion, we really shouldn't rely on the unpredictable Michigan weather to provide the necessary arctic environment. If the Wisconsin weather failed to cooperate, Jon could just borrow the snow machines from the ski slopes and truck them over to the HoJo.

Sorry, Joni. Nice try, but the con is Larry's department. I just run the zine (although I fear I might not be doing much of that anymore, either).

Next ish (which should be out sometime around Walpurgis) Larry says he'll have a rather subjective con report on (you guessed it) ConFusion, the usual video column and some very interesting articles authored by a few newcomers to these pages. I'll be here, too, replying to locs in my own witty, highly informed fashion. See you then.

Uncle Albert





**BEM
DANDY**

**OUT STEPPIN
CONFUSION
AT THE
BALL**

*Thomas
Rose
77*