

Xenolith

Notes Toward A Speech Delivered at THE NINE BILLION NAMES OF CONFUSION, Jan. 23, 1981

Some things are easier in October. ...when, for instance, I asked Larry & Leah if I was to do another Friday nite 'speech' at Confusion. And, when Larry said, "Sure, if you want to..." -- I replied: "I want to."

I was even sober at the time, which only goes to show that I'm capable of making foolish commitments in any state. But it had been a long time since January, the pre-Friday nite worries of last year had faded along with my budding speech-making career ...and besides, I had all these neat things to tell you about.

Well, I still have all these neat things to tell you--as well as several new people to make 'famous'--but despite perhaps twenty-five 'speeches' mentally composed in the interim, here it is, a week and a half before the convention. ...and, as usual, nothing has been committed to paper.

I sometimes wonder why I bother worrying about it: After all, the only way I can assure something having more than a seven day gap between conception and appearance is *not* to make it into a speech -- but rather write it out for Glicksohn or Denise to publish...

But that's already been done, and it still doesn't alleviate the problem of the moment.

It is with some reluctance that I resist the urge to pick up the phone, call Larry, and tell him that, since he's so convinced that I'm a mere hoax...HE can bloody well do the speech himself! But I can't do that... Still, what stops me is not anything silly like "not letting friends down"... ..or even because if I copped out I know Leah would attribute it to my recently attained puberty.

No, it is a much more pressing reason than either of those that keeps me sitting here at the typewriter. You see -- if I back out this year, I know they won't let me have a slot *next* year...

...and I'm certain that I'll have the rope trick perfected by then!

(Besides, Leah assures me that they need even more footage of my hands shaking on videotape...for inclusion in the next Spare Change production: BIG BIRD EATS CHICON IV.)

If the hands do shake, it will only be a sign that it's been too long since Happy Hour; not because it's been a year since the last speech.

It hasn't been quite that long since my last fanzine, but it has been a while. And, for reasons soon to be stated, it will probably be a while before my next one. And so, never one to let precedent stand in the way, I see here an opportunity to fulfill two obligations at once...and give to you:

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BILL BOWERS' XENOLITH #15: A Relentlessly Ecclectic Personalzine

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Two days after Ronald Reagen was elected, I got a job.

After all, even though I voted against both Carter and Reagen, in the end, as I quipped to women friends (and Frank Johnson), I didn't lose: YOU did!

If I was a bit estatic about the job, the fact that I'd worked less than three weeks between Memorial Day and the Election may have had something to do with it.

I had, several years ago, after careful observation of older relatives, and after having gotten rid of my own ulcers, decided that the only sensible way to approach life was to take my "retirement" on the installment plan, rather than waiting for some mythical age when I'd be too tired -- I understand some people get that way -- to enjoy myself. Still, while my current lifestyle is wildly extravagant only in terms of the amount of miles I put on my car, my income level over the past several years has not been sufficient to support a six month yearly "vacation".

1980 was not a fiscally sound year for me -- but I made it with the dint of some creative bookkeeping, and the freindship of some neat people. And when they sighed, and asked when I was going to settle down and get a "real job" ...well, that was a fair question. Still, I don't think they quite comprehend the total (almost physical) aversion I have to that concept: I played it straight for almost sixteen years, and what I have to show for that "real job" is the ulcer scars -- and a pension of \$128.00 a month...starting in 2008.

Still, I've been tempted more than once over the past six months. A sense of stability in at least one area of my life has a certain attraction. But I'm not sure I'm mature enough to handle stability.

The fact that I enjoyed the job was a bonus, but since I temp, I knew the duration was limited. One or two months, they told me, going in; I hoped it would last through the holidays, but wasn't really surprised when it ended up December 12th. From past experience, I knew that the chance of a new job that close to Christmas was minimal, so when I found out that the agency not only had a job for me starting the next Monday, but that it could well last a year, I was, in a word, overjoyed.

Even if it was a 59 mile drive. One way.

On the Friday of the first week at that job, I was called into the office and told that they couldn't use me.

Flashback:

In August, a few weeks before Noreascon Two, I was told to report for a job, starting on a Wednesday. Three days later...Friday afternoon, I received a call from my boss at the agency -- ten minutes before I was to leave work. He told me that the company had called him, and told him that they no longer needed my services. "I'm not sure why," he said. "Call me Monday and I'll let you know."

That was one of the more despondent weekends in my life, but I survived it, and called the office the next week. "They said your initial drawing wasn't good enough; it was sloppy and the line work wasn't up to par."

"Bullshit," I said. I may be self-deprecating in evaluating certain of my abilities, but while I'll never set any speed records, I take pride in the quality of my technical drawings. I'm a damn good draftsman.

"Okay," he said. "I'll check into it."

I waited a week, my self-confidence in the balance, as he pulled strings through contacts in that company, and finally I received a call:

It turns out that the supervisor I had been working under, new in his job, had received several cracks from fellow supervisors about the length of my hair.

This was pre-Boston, and it was a tach longer than it is now, I guess ...but still, my calendar said that it was August of 1980. ...not 1960.

Working temp, you work at the mercy of who you work for even more than in other jobs. And I don't quibble with the right of a supervisor to dismiss me; it's a part of the price you pay for the relative freedom. I just sometimes wonder about the guts of someone who takes off work an hour early so he won't have to be the one to tell me... and then lies to my boss on top of it.

We had several phone discussions over the ensuing months of no work, my agency boss and I, and finally I agreed to get a haircut before reporting to my next job.

Ah well, it had been a while since I had sold out. In any aspect of my life.

End flashback.

...and the December story continues:

The Friday of Reckening was the Friday before Christmas. This time I knew that there was no chance of my getting another job until after the first of the year and...for reasons I'll get to in a bit, I was even more depressed over this dismissal than I was the one in August. In many ways, it was the biggest bust of my life.

Now let's face it: I'm never going to arrive at the point where I'll enjoy rejection. In any area. But I haven't survived until this age (1943 was a very good year!) without acquiring -- with some effort -- defense mechanisms that automatically come into play given the proper stimuli.

...and when the rejection involves a job (and, sometimes, not) the procedure is simple: I call up a friend, say "Hey, can I come crash with you a bit?" -- and simply take off for a couple of days. Some would call this running away from the problem; I chose to call it putting myself back together. One more time.

After the Ides of December, I made a few phone calls, survived the weekend, re-filed for unemployment Monday morning ... and Monday evening I took off, planning on spending a couple of days in -- of all places -- Ann Arbor, before paying an obligatory Christmas visit to my parents in a northern Ohio town that's so small it couldn't possibly have produced a fan other than myself.

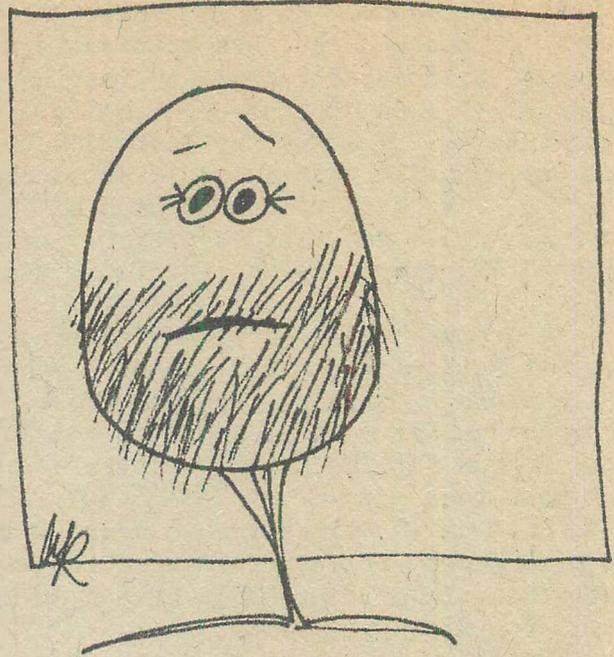
I crashed with the Prosecutor and Leah that night -- but Larry had hidden his so-called evidence well -- so I departed for deepest Ann Arbor Tuesday morning. That afternoon I proceeded to start running a slightly incredible fever for three days, and in the process forfeited a rather unique Christmas present.

Finally, realizing that I should at least *visit* Ohio before Confusion, I crawled into my car and left Saturday afternoon, for a token visit to Barberton. En route, I paused at the Perkins just down Reynolds Road from the Conclave hotel (it seemed appropriate) for my first solid food in four days.

Upon finding a semblance of my normally substantial self back in Cincinnati that Sunday evening, I wanted nothing more than to simply hibernate the remainder of the winter, regaining strength, and the ability to smoke and to drink anything other than gallons of orange juice. But such was not to be: Casting aside all thought of selfish things like health and sobriety, I managed to appear all *five* nights of the Fourth Annual Cincinnati Perpetually Floating New Year's Party. (It was, after all, my duty as one of the prime perpetrators.)

I must admit it slightly strange that I found the highlight of the whole shebang was taking Sid "home" to Tabakow's on my way to pick up a laggard at the Greyhound station 5 ayem, Friday the Second -- but then, I've always been amused, and bemused, by the strangest of circumstances.

And so my version of 1980 ended.



I have written much in this fanzine of the mystical magical touring beast -- the dirty green '76 Mustang that has motorvated me the past four and a half years -- and which now has an odometer reading an imaginary "ten" before the nine thousand miles actually showing. I went back and read the relevant issue, and belatedly noticed that when Maia said that -- "If a Mustang lasts 100,000 miles, it'll last forever." -- she did not add any gurantee that it would do so cheaply.

Now I've rarely been accused of being cynical, but I have the distinct feeling that my 1981 began that same Friday afternoon when -- nine or ten hours after having dropped Sid off -- as Ms. Tardiness and I were on the way out to breakfast, the car died.

I was not thrilled, I must admit...but by utilizing the services of the Cavin Transit Authority, we were able to make it to the parties until I could borrow Tanya's -- *Cincinnati* Tanya's... pickup truck. The Mustang spent a week in the garage, until they told me it would cost close to \$300.00 to fix correctly...but that it could be made to run for about thirty bucks -- but with absolutely no guarantee that it would run more than a day.

Most of the times I have heard that phrase -- "no guarantees" -- over the past several years, it hasn't been in reference to parts meshing in a mechanical fashion, but, then, I would probably have been unable, in those cases also, to pay the asking price for firm guarantees.

Still, with the death of the car it did seem as if the end of 1980 was blending into the beginning of 1981 with a bit too much similiarity. The feeling was only intensified when, after the parties were over, the guests were gone, and we were left to our own devices, I parked Tanya's truck outside of Cavin's apartment while we went out to see a cheapy matinee.

Now I've said "I should have known better" in just about as many instances as I've foregone guarantees -- but in this case I think I had an excuse: Just because a succession of Cavin-mobiles had been wiped out by cars failing to negotiate that curve in the road...well, that was little more than a subject of idle curiosity to me. ...after all, I'd been parking my car there on the average of two or three times a week since June of 1977 with nary a scratch.

You guessed it -- but only as proof that not *everything* I write is terribly esoteric. When we returned from the movie (and the incredible sight of Bill Cavin *not* being able to finish a second helping of LaRosa's spaghetti) I noticed that something was amiss. The fact that the truck was at a differnt angle, and several feet further down the street from where I'd parked it, might have been a clue.

Once the note was found wedged in the door, and it was established that the accident had been reported to the police, I worked up enough courage to call Tanya. She took it quite well...considering that she had been laid-off that very same day.

But this particular segment-story doesn't end quite there:

A few days later, as Tanya and I were in the truck touring Cincinnati's junkyards, looking for a bed...for the truck...we stopped at a self-service gas station. As I walked up to the window and offered my credit card, the attendant asked for the license plate number. I looked back at the truck and saw no front plate. Slowly realizing that was ridiculous -- since the truck was registered in Ohio and not Kentucky -- I called back to Tanya... and she went around to the back of the truck...

Apparently the plates had been ripped off the previous night when, once again, it was parked outside Cavin-territory.

As we drove off from the gas station I commented to Tanya that knowing me had certainly made her life more interesting.

"Yes," she replied, "...but I was so looking forward to a dull and boring year, for a change."

"Wrong," I said.

Obligatory Mention: In my Spacecon "report" last issue -- I made a glaring ommission. For those of you who are curious, yes, Mike *did* knock on my door

once again. This time it was particularly amusing in that he not only did so at 11:30 -- before the appointed hour -- but while I was participating in a mini-hall party... and was seated right beside that same door.

I understand that he returned at midnight to repeat the performance, but, and this will come as a distinct shock to some here tonight...in some cases I actually *do* learn from prior experience. ...because, by then, along with several friends (and Bill Marks), I had migrated to down by the pool, and was quite visible.

This has been the obligatory Mike Glicksohn mention.

...and THIS is a blatant attempt at plea bargaining:

I have been told, with some fervor, that the future of fanzines lies in video-tape, or with home computers. This may well be, but it is not likely to be an immediate future in my case. The economics don't compute: not when the priorities lie in access to people rather than access of equipment.

But I do have one piece of equipment that I suspect more of you here have... or have access to, than have mimeographs or dittoes. And that is a cassette recorder/player.

I'm not saying it's a first -- but I haven't heard of one before -- and so I was a bit surprised when, after hearing it was coming out almost as long as I've heard *Imp 2* was coming out -- when Larry Tucker handed me a copy of the first issue of *Uncle Albert's Electric Talking Fanzine*¹ at Octocon. (Do I have to add -- "the real one" -- for *this* audience?)

...and, other than a minor aesthetic nitpick: Just as I prefer twilltone to slick stock, and just as I prefer Tri-X to Pan-X, so do I prefer masking tape to Scotch... -- I rather enjoyed the production. I do think Larry should have looked over the graphics in *Xenolith Three* before presenting the Reynolds interview, but Spider is always enjoyable, the Martian Entropy Band selections were a form of art that even Bowers couldn't put in a box...and the Rotsler's and Gilliland's were, as usual, in their stark simplicity, brilliant.

...and the fold-out of the entire Air Corps was nostalgic: I take it Ro was in town the weekend it was shot?

But, Larry, you did commit the one unpardonable sin of a first issue: The only horror I can think of that is worse than being forced to read...is being forced to *listen* to...a piece of fan fiction.

For shame.

(If you're going to have stories, at least have relevant ones: Get Ro to do the verbal "Secret Handgrip" story for you...)

As for me, I now have an unique copy of *Uncle Albert's*...: I have recorded over *Sub-Space Scraps* a couple of selections from the album *Al Curry Goes Disco* -- and can now listen to the second side with some degree of appreciation.

Larry, you ask for RoCs: Well, you've just recorded mine.

...I still can't help preferring Larry Downes' variation on LoC a lot more, though. And this has been the Annual Obligatory Larry Downes Mention.



¹*Uncle Albert's Electric Talking Fanzine* is available from LARRY TUCKER, 2818 White-wood, Ann Arbor, MI 48104, for \$2.00, or the exchange of a blank 60 minute cassette audio tape. (He doesn't mention adding anything for postage in the latter case... but I think it'd be a nice gesture.) Try it; it's fun...

...and sometimes you almost choke when you have to swallow words that have been put into print:

A while back I published a letter from Mike Bracken, that Mike Glicksohn responded to. In X:14 I published Bracken's answer to Glicksohn. To ultra-simplify things, for the purpose of segueing to the story I want to tell as quickly as possible, Bracken said that the reason he gave up doing fanzines is because he is now making his living in the graphics and writing professions...and he no longer has the inclination, or need, to do fanzines.

My reply to him went like this:

I'm sure that there is a "proper" term for it, but I call it one of your basic "life" decisions. Surprisingly, this one was made consciously. To wit: I have the skills/training/talent to do what Mike is doing for a living. But I'm not.

...about that job in December: the one week one.

It was through the agency, but it wasn't drafting: It was as a technical illustrator in a large industrial firm. I said, sure, why not...I'll try it. And when I got there the first day, I knew I'd found a home.

With direct access to a composer, stat machine, headliner, waxer, and various other neat toys...what would-be Andy Porter wouldn't have been at home? And though most of the work thrown at me was mere doctoring of previously drawn items, I enjoyed the people. And I didn't even mind the hour and fifteen minute drive.

I was happy.

And when the chief engineer asked me to come into his office that Friday afternoon: ...with a sinking feeling, I knew what was coming; I wasn't fast enough; my line work on doctoring up reduced mylars wasn't adequate to their needs.

I've been here before.

I don't know: I had been given no specific deadlines, and no comments were made to me directly on the quality of my work. Maybe their judgement was valid, but I was happy with the job and with my output. Obviously, different perspectives from theirs, and yet they were very nice about the whole thing.

Still, I was out of a job again. ...and totally, painfully crushed.

I doubt that I'm unique in having a few things in life that you want, need...so achingly, desperately much, that you can virtually taste it.

...and when you have something like that, if only for a fleeting moment -- or a week -- and then lose it, the hurt of withdrawal is so intense that you invariably say that it would have been better not to have experied it at all.

...you say that for a while -- and mean it; but gradually the pain diminishes, and the gradual realization that having experienced joy for a while is its own reward ...and besides, we do go on living, don't we?

Still, I can't help but wondering if it is possible to want something TOO much -- so much that your self-doubts become self-fulfilling, and in the end you lose that which you want most...

I really wanted that job.

And that basically ended what I was going to say. ...until *this* week:

Again, a three day job -- but since only two had been promised, I was pleased. And they were happy, saying that they would ask for me by name the next time they needed temporary help.

As a bonus, I even got an half hour overtime Wednesday.

--but I paid for it.

Because of that extra half hour...I found myself trapped in the lobby, along with the tools of my trade. The office staff had left, locking the door exiting out to the real world.

...and the door through which I had entered the lobby could only be opened if

DETRITUS

MIKE GLICKSOHN In a couple of hours I'll be leaving for the airport and Windycon so it seems appropriate to write you another to-be-hand-delivered loc on Xenolith. It's obviously a more reliable method of ensuring I keep my name before your reading public since I did loc your issue before this one and must assume that the Postal Disservice lost it.

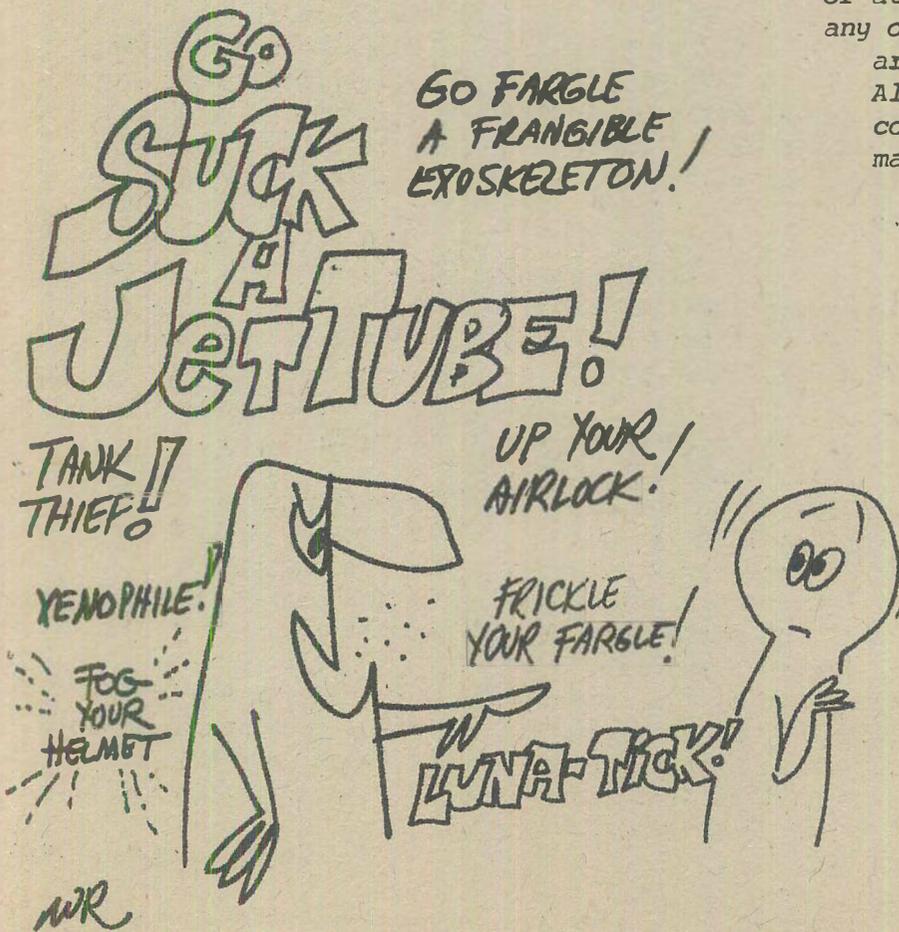
Eric's letter is an eloquent statement of the differences between the Bill Bowers who published the most recent pseudo-Outworlds and the Bill Bowers who published those issues that preceeded it. As such, it is evidence of the falseness of Eric's claim that he had little to say about the issue. He may have used few words, but he said a lot.

Eric seems to have done a pretty good job of shunning fannish contact at least since I haven't seen him at a con in some time. I know for sure he wasn't at Rivercon last summer, for example, because at the Thursday night precon party I had a couple of shots of tequila and when I came back on Friday the bottle was still there! Obviously Eric had to be miles away.

There are very few male fans I can think of who seem to stand in the shadow of a female companion. An obvious example, I guess, at least to the casual observer, would be Ron Bushyager. And just offhand I can't think of anyone else. This is largely due to the fact that even while the ratio of male to female fans has greatly improved in recent years, the majority of the better known fans are still male. With the excep- tion of fanartists, there isn't really an area where the prime movers are largely

female. And many of the best known female fanartists are unattached, or at least not attached firmly to any one person. So there just aren't many Unknown Men Tagging Along Behind Girl Wonders. Of course, nowadays there aren't many Unknown Women Tagging Along Behind Boy Wonders either so the whole question is probably academic. Just ask John Langner's wife, old what'shername...

What's this about you regaining your anonymity? Anyone who is destined to be recorded in the fan-history of the 70's and 80's as "a thin fan who accompanied Paula-Ann Anthony to churches" can hardly be considered an institution, right?



You should have pointed out to Mary that your fanzines are like soap opera. If you miss a single issue you'll never understand what's going on but skip three or four years and then pick one up and everything will be perfectly understandable, with perhaps a name or two changed here or there. Sort of a "As The Handle Turns" or "The Guiding Lightbox" of fandom.

Actually Funny Hat Fandom is about the best guess at the meaning of F.H.F. that I've seen to date. Wrong, naturally, but a very reasonable attempt.

Joe Christopher (a name I don't recognize) makes an interesting point in asking about Paj (a name I do recall quite well: I even know what his fanzine was called and can even pronounce it!). Most of your readers won't know Paj and won't know his very fine fanzine and perhaps even you won't remember the unique system he invented for rating fanzines. Well...???

Alexis's comment deserved a lengthy response but I guess you felt you'd already made the point. His remark was a fascinating comment from someone who is an "outsider" to Bowers but very much an "insider" in fandom. But that's always been the nature of fanzines and Alexis knows that as well as I do which is why, I expect, you didn't state the obvious.

Irish in Jackie Causgrove? Must have run out of Southern Comfort...

Liked Jackie's comments on fans and fandom. They echo something said at the "I Hate Fandom" panel in Boston. Namely that it is foolish to criticize fandom for not being something it was never set up to be in the first place. Fandom's just this bunch of guys, see (not a sexist comment but a HHGTTG reference) and nothing more. To expect more from it than one would expect from any cross-section of the population sharing a recreational interest is completely unrealistic, as Jackie eloquently points out.

I can't recall what you might have said about K² to arouse Terry's maternalistic instincts but surely she ought to know that we all have to put up with comments about ourselves, appearances, and personalities. You are often described as tall and skinny. You accept this because you are tall and skinny. Dave Locke is often referred to as a shrimp and he accepts this in good grace because he is a shrimp. (At least vertically.) On rare occasions people call me short, drunk and hairy and I don't quibble because two out of three ain't bad. But Terry can hardly chastize fans for being too conservative in one paragraph and then complain when they write honestly in the next. (I'm assuming you made mention of the fact that Ken is stout since he is stout. Of course, he didn't complain; Terry did. Terry is not stout. If you'd called Terry stout, she could complain. But you didn't. Ah these fans...such delicate egos to work with, eh wot.) (Three to one you won't publish that.) (Knowing you can't resist a dare, make it two to one.)

Mike Bracken undoubtedly knows that there is much more to fandom than producing fanzines. One doesn't have to give up the pleasures of fandom when one starts making a living writing or designing magazines. I haven't published a major fanzine in ages but I still remain active in fandom. The focus of my activity has definitely changed in recent years, however. I don't publish much, I don't loc much, but I attend conventions, I see my friends, I work the art auctions, I go to parties. That's a viable reason for being in fandom. Saying "Well, I make my living doing what I used to do for fandom so I don't need fandom any more" doesn't seem to me to indicate that the speaker had any idea of what fandom was all about when he or she was a fan. I don't criticize anyone for abandoning fandom, understand. I just like to occasionally see someone doing it with a better understanding of what they've abandoned than Mike seems to be showing me.

(On t'other hand, Mike says it all with "in changing I've lost that enjoyment of fandom that I once had." That is the only and the best reason for dropping out of fandom. Nothing more need or should be said.)

Leah must use the word "know" in some obscure fashion I don't understand. If she can't remember what the initials F.H.F. mean then she doesn't know what F.H.F. means. For which I am rather glad, by the way...



Leah really does a number on you, doesn't she? Quite a few zingers there, and you didn't say a word about them. Your restraint was exemplary, my friend. I'm currently biting my tongue not to say what springs to mind in response to her outdowns because I know damn well you'd publish it and get Leah mad at me! Luckily I'm only on my third martini and I have to leave in twenty minutes for the airport...

On the other hand, you do get off a pretty sharp analysis of your own, albeit in a very esoteric way, so I guess you don't need any lessons from me! (10/24/80)

I guess if you're coming to stay here tomorrow night I ought to finish off the loc I started and sent to you via Sandy. Anything to save seventeen cents for the poker game, eh wot?

Actually, there probably isn't much more to say. I suppose I could talk about the highs and lows of my own birthdays but talking about the Big 30 once took me fifteen pages so that's probably not too great an idea.

In my naviety I'd never put the whole picture behind the three matching caftans together, had never realized the undercurrent of your former machiavellianism that lay beneath the surface. Tsk, tsk; there are times when I'm too trusting for my own good. Here you were tweaking the noses of collective fandom and I thought it was all ---- being sweet. ~~I should have known better!~~ I tend to think of myself and to be thought of as a cynic but clearly I'm really just a simple country boy being taken in by the

hard cruel realities of big city life. Still, I did get a caftan out of it...

Dotti's speech reads well but I have to believe she had some help writing it. She's precocious but she isn't that precocious; some of the language and some of the subtlety of the humor hints at some more sophisticated writing hand being involved. She certainly presented it well, though, strings or not.

Curry's song is delightful; I'm assuming it's a close parody of the original since I've only ever known the first couple of lines of the thing but either way he has managed to capture at least some of the aspects of your character to perfection.

I'm sure Cas will be delighted to finally get a mention in your fanzine especially after the bit that Skel wrote about how you have affected her bedtime! Now she'll spend the next year trying to figure out who that caftanned person was and which of us did what to whom and when. She may never have another decent night's sleep thanks to you! And imagine how Skel is going to feel about it. I'd dunk all letters from Stockport into a bucket of water before opening them if I were you!

Sleep well, old friend. And don't snore, okay? I've gotta work on Friday.

(10/29/80 - 141 High Park Ave, Toronto, Ont., M6P 2S3, CANADA)

...if I *did* snore, you deserved it; after all, I spent the night with fully a third of my body hanging over either end of that postage-stamp you call a bed! ¶ Okay, I'll bite: what's "a HHGTTG refernce"? (But don't you remember...I'm the only one who's allowed to be esoteric here?) ¶ Some of the "evidence" at the ConFusion Trial has reminded me that Spacecon wasn't the first time you came banging on my door. ...oh, you mean that was *your* room at the first Autoclave? ...err, sorry about that!

MARTY CANTOR ...I will write a bit about how *Xenolith* makes me feel somewhat jealous and isolated. Of how I wish that I could get to at least one of the mid-western cons so as to meet many of the fine people mentioned in your zine. I see

no way that I can ever get the money to visit your section of the country--my getting to Denvention II is going to be financially iffy.

Out here the only fannish cons are Westercon and Loscon, the other cons being media things of one or another stripe. This means that I get to the one Loscon per year--and a Westercon whenever it is in Los Angeles. *sigh* I feel deprived.

And left out when I read your zine. But I do thank you for sending me a copy--it is nice to know that this con circuit exists, that fans enjoy it, and you so readably write about these things. And you, my friend, have a corps of loccers of exceedingly high level. I heartily approve of giving a goodly portion of a zine over to good loccers (as you seem to do); except, in the case of your zine, it does cut down on the space that you can devote to your own writing (which I like). Maybe you might want to put some of your writing into HTT? Well, I thought not. After all, which faneds ever have the time to write for other zines? Too few, I fear?

Joe Christopher writes about the Australian scientist who has hypothesized that almost all of the species today have specialized to the point that major development is at an end. "(If man's brian size increases, all children will have to be born by caesarian section--it's a possible future development, I suppose, but it would lead to dependency on a certain level of civilisation.)" My first thought on this is that maybe start microminiaturising brains. My second thought is that nature has already done this; and, as the cases of ----- and ----- prove, it does not work. (1/8/81 - 5263 Riverton Ave., #1, North Hollywood, CA 91601)

My first thought was to print the names. My second thought...probably not wise. No matter how much I might agree with Marty. ¶ I keep meaning to write for other fanzines, but, well... Someday, when you least expect it! ¶ Thanks to a foolish commitment made to a friend who unexpectedly kept her end of the bargain, it is much more likely that I will be at Westercon this year, than Denver. I'd like to make both; how I'm going to manage either is completely unknown at the moment. Maybe if I get a job...?

BILLY RAY WOLFENBARGER You're not the only one been goin' thru Changes, you can bet yr mimeo ink on that! Lately (much, much lately) I've been going thru the mid-30s blues. Damned if I can get rid of them; just have to ride thru them, I suppose. I'm married 10 years (had a great anniversary on October 24, the surrealist poet G. Sutton Breiding was here, we ate late, fell asleep before we even got the Kahlúa opened--fresh-bought, too); Sara will be 10 next month; I didn't vote in the Democratic/Republican elections (which to my mind is more like a NoConfidence vote); tho I did do some voting...in the recent SPWAO elections (Small Press Writers & Artists Organizations); I still smoke too many cigarette, tho I'd cut down--again; doing more fiction-writing these days (and I owe you more chapters of LaM, I haven't forgotten); and I tend to get depressed too easily. (Know anyone out there in the enormously wide world interested in publishing a collection of my fantasy verse? Formerly I called it THE REMAINDER OF THE WINE, tho I'm expanding it, and found a much more accurate title: THE WHITE FACES.) But I really suppose all this has nothing whatever to do with the fact that I received *Xenolith* 14 today, a very cold, foggy & rainless day in Oregon...ah, the structures of these new Novembers....

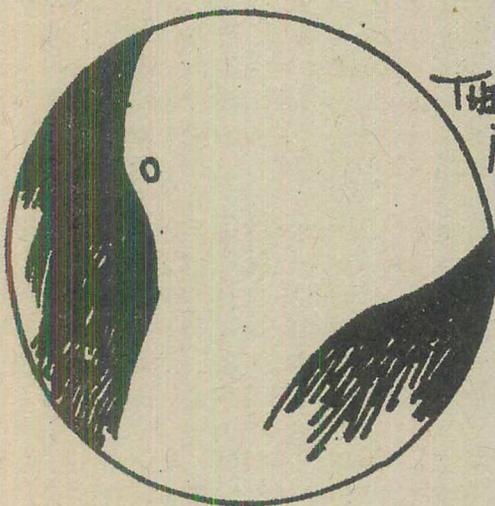
I enjoy the hell out of *Xenolith*...& I'm speaking of the 14th issue before me, on the dining room table, next to my typer I've put here because my back is to the wood heating stove, & my room...office/study...is too cold & lonely (& cluttered) right now. But enough of all that. *Xenolith* is one sure way, I've found, for me to remain in touch with what's happening in the outside fannish world...and bless you for sending me all those issues, even the ones that had no Wolfenbarger in them.

All the Convention chatter/speeches/locs in #14 came at a prime time. Tomorrow we're going up to Portland for Crycon II! Haven't been to a con for at least 5 years (Westercon, in Oakland)...and at this point in early evening I'm getting anxious (even excited) about the whole thing. (Haven't seen Fritz Leiber or the famous Alpajpuri [Joe Christopher take note: I mentioned 'Paj again] for years!) Etc. *Xenolith*

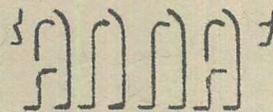
arriving today gets me even more excited & anxious (psyched-up, as some college-people used to say), and I thank you, I-thank-you.

Good to see something from Leah A Zeldes again; I enjoyed reading her stuff.
(11/13/80 - 22681 Coburg Rd., Harrisburg, OR 97446)

MAIA When I read the incident wherein you allegedly "stole" someone from Mike, ultimately appearing all three in matching caftans to confuse the gossipers, I was greatly amused (and certainly approved), and oddly enough, felt no curiosity whatever about the woman's identity. I read the incident to a friend, at Conclave, and his immediate reaction was "I wonder who she was?" That seemed to be the least important part of the anecdote to me (someone later told me, and it almost ruined the story for me, not because of her identity but because it seemed to reduce the anecdote



THE RELIGIONS THAT PRODUCE
IMAGERY ARE THOSE THAT
ACKNOWLEDGE THE
FEMALE PRINCIPLE



...by CAROLYN DOYLE

A kiss... a quick hug. I don't care for long good-byes.

I was outside the Detroit airport, being seen off by a friend. His battered car chugged out of the Departures lane, and in a few minutes I was in a 727, wishing I'd arrived earlier and snagged a window seat. An Oriental businessman was sitting in my center seat, and paused for a moment when I showed him my pass. He moved over to the aisle seat just as I was about to shrug and take it. I barely noticed the old woman to my right. I was occupied with my thoughts, and then with my book. But when the seatbelt sign flashed, Anna spoke, and there was a better story in her voice than in my hands.

"How does this work?"

I feel ill at ease when asked to explain something. It is easier to just *do* it. I solved the problem by showing her how the belt locked and *unlocked*, and then she snapped it shut.

I was looking her over before I realized it. Only a relative or an artist could have seen the young woman hiding inside her, beneath too much white, wrinkled flesh. She was small and dumpy, with a little face and nice eyes. All of her clothing was black; blouse, kerchief tied under the chin, shoes, and pants, instead of the expected skirt. She had a pronounced accent.

"Thank you. It is my first flight -- I'm scared."

I marked my place in the book, and put it in my lap. She wanted to talk, and seemed to understand that I wanted to listen.

from Universal Truth to Mere Funny Story.)

The Semi-Obligatory Cover Lyrics are, well, um, they can be best described as, uh --you may recall that my immediate reaction to them was to shriek and pound my head on the nearest wall. I like it.

And I do thank you for running Dotti's GoH speech from Spacecon. It reads well, especially when I can remember various people's reactions when they first heard it (and in spite of the inevitable nerds who inquire suspiciously, "She didn't really write that herself, did she?"). I'm glad to hear there will be a Spacecon next--er, this--year. Last year's was the best of the conventions I attended (even if I later discovered that there's no such thing as a 1957-S dime) ((the foregoing was the Obligatory Esoteric Reference)).

I, for one, am relieved that you weren't declared a hoax at ConFusion; I'd feel

"I'm going to visit my daughter in Indianapolis. Is that where you are going?"

I answered yes, it was, and that no, I wasn't from Detroit, but was returning home from a weekend trip. She didn't ask any questions--people who want to talk when you want to listen don't do that. Soon she told me her secret. I honestly can't say if I knew she had something on her mind before she told me -- sometimes I think I did. It's like a song you heard years ago -- misty and half-real, and you're never sure about it. The plane was still on the ground.

"My husband died. Six month ago."

Sometimes a thing *needs* to be done... and you do it. I found myself holding her hand. I can't remember exactly how she said it, but what she said was this:

"He had been sick never. Never sick a day. One day, fall down in the garden. A stroke. He hardly talk, no move. He tell me, hold on to the house, no go to an apartment, or with son. Stay right *here*." I wish I could convey how eloquent she was.

She had been born in Yugoslavia, and came to the U.S. with her husband when she was 25. She worked in a laundry for 17 cents an hour, using the money for her children's education as well as necessities. Her son lived near Detroit, and she lived on the acre of land her husband had built their home on.

She showed me the home-made noodles and sausage which she had made for her daughter. We talked about how the words for numbers in Rumanian and Spanish sound alike... how she wished her grandchildren would try to learn Rumanian... how sad she was that her husband had died. I doubted if she would die of grief over him. There was something steely about her, that kept me from feeling pity, and a sign of this was the pants she wore. They told me how adaptable she was. I did not feel sorry for her, any more than one pities a young person, about to enter the big world. I felt the worry for her future I would feel for that young person's. How long before she must leave her home, unable to care for it, or for herself? How long before her relatives tired of caring for her, wanting to live their own lives? I wondered if she pondered her future years as I found myself doing.

We told each other our names shortly before we landed. I don't know why we waited so long, or why it seemed to be the least important part of our conversation. I pointed out the sunset, and the city lights as we approached the airport. With one hand carrying her food bag, and the other hand holding her's, we walked into the airport. She introduced me as her "new granddaughter" to her relatives, as I stood and grinned like an idiot. Her son-in-law took the bag, and told me they'd take good care of her now. I wanted to look in his eyes and make him promise to do just that... but my own family was waiting.

I saw Anna again as we left the baggage terminal. She came to me, and thanked me ...for what? Being her friend? In that case, it makes sense why I was thanking her too.

A kiss... a quick hug. I don't care for long good-byes.

---Carolyn Doyle; August, 1980

awfully silly sending a loc to someone who doesn't exist.

And if I'd realized I had this little to say, I'd have left larger margins. Oh, well. What's a little white space among friends?

(1/31/81 - 801 S. 18th St., Columbus, OH 43206)

...and speaking of "cute, but putrid" T-shirts ("I'll see your esoteric reference, and raise you one..."), we also heard from:

BILL MARKS I get a strange sense of time slip locating a fanzine three months after it's publication but reading about Spacecon in *Xenolith* brought back many fond memories and the shocking realization that Spacecon was in fact only six months ago and that those people who I consider to be my dearest friends have, in fact, been a part of my life for less than a year. Spacecon is rather special to me as well because it is basically the influence and pattern after which I ran King Con.

Xenolith #14 surprised me to no end when I actually recognized almost half of the names in it as those of people I know. Some day maybe I too will be able to publish bunches of esoterica no one other than myself will be able to understand. As it is I currently have to rely on my spelling to achieve the same effect.

(1/11/81 - 50 Abbeywood Tr., Don Mills, Ont. M3B 3B3, Canada)

HARRY WARNER, JR. Another *Xenolith* to hand, and I hasten to write a loc on it before you confuse me by publishing the previous issue or the third following issue or the same issue again or something even more alarming.

I can sympathize with your bias against getting into a graphic arts career because of what it might do to your fanzine publishing. And I've had enough experiences over the years similar to those Mike Bracken describes to comprehend why his fanac has dropped off. Nevertheless, there's another side to this coin which has become increasingly familiar to me during all these years of fandom as a hobby and journalism as a vocation.

In my particular case, the tiredness I find from the need to use a typewriter and think up words in both vocation and avocation gets compensated in part by the fact that fandom permits me to do as I please in writing, while I'm repressed in many ways by the job's requirement for writing. One trivial aspect of this does my psyche more good than might be imagined. Newspapers have word fetishes and taboos. Some of them seem external while others change as new people in authority come and go. You just can't imagine how much fun it is to write locs and fanzine articles in which I can use "yesterday" as often as I like, while it's strictly forbidden in the newspaper. I can write out the numeral ten in fandom but I must put it in figures like the movie, 10, on the job. At various times through the years, I've been forced to try to remember not to use "head" in the sense of a chief or president, "held" as in a meeting being held, and many other temporary no-nos, and then make a new effort later to restore them to my job vocabulary when the individual who disliked them went elsewhere. I can write an address on an envelope when I send a letter to a fan in whatever style I wish; on the job, for no imaginable reason, I must say that so-and-so lives on South Locust Street but if I use the full address I must give it as 28 S. Locust St. Nobody knows why abbreviation is forbidden in the first example and mandatory in the second, but it's just done that way.

I don't know much about designing books or laying out magazine articles. But I suspect that a job involving that sort of work would have its own elaborate set of pointless rules to feel rebellious against. Whether the ability to follow instinct and desire in fandom would compensate for the other troubles which a job-like-hobby creates, I don't know. And I haven't even mentioned the larger freedoms I appreciate in fandom, like using sentences as long and wandering as I please, writing about anything that strikes my fancy, and having no reason to worry whether a readership survey will produce bad news about my creations.

Another note on this matter of whether fans are conservative: Have you ever

noticed how many fans share the interests of the figure who has become a symbol of the conservative who is so conservative that he's reactionary, Archie Bunker? Playing poker, for instance. Drinking. Expressing contempt for politicians.

Videotapes of big moments at cons, and their display at other cons; there's another piece of evidence of how the future is catching up with us. Just the other day I was severely shaken when I made an excuse for not going to a lecture which someone wanted me to attend. I was promptly told that it didn't matter if I was busy that night, because the organization which sponsors this lecture series is videotaping each of them and I should simply drop in and watch the tape the first evening I have free. And this isn't a big organization with a huge auditorium full of people for its lectures, either; it's a specialized subject matter with not more than perhaps 140 chairs in the small room where it's held. Ah, that wonderful word, held!

Yes, I know about the things that somehow circulate from one office to another for posting on an unobtrusive bulletin board or passing from desk to desk. There was the year when every newspaper within my field of knowledge somehow acquired a copy of the Gettysburg Address, typed triple-spaced with almost every available bit of blank space on the page filled with corrections and complaints by a copy reader over the bad writing from copy desk standards. The Associated Press used to create a Christmas Tree every December 24 on the teletype in the years when all teletypes used extremely wide rolls of paper permitting elaborate designs. Once someone acquired a list of books received for review purposes, and I've forgotten all of the ingenious titles and authors except "How To Satisfy a Woman", Rider Haggard.

Yrs., &c., ~~Patty~~ Harry Warner, Jr.

(11/20/80 - 423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, MD 21740)

...not to mention "A Russian Tragedy", by I. Bitter Titoff.

GEORGE LASKOWSKI I agree with your response to Harry Warner about being able to recapture moods and feelings from past years, and write about them coherently. I keep all of my old program books and name-badges as reference points and memory-joggers. Usually they trigger off enough thoughts to enable me to put happenings and actions together into a chronological enough pattern to make some sense out of, and write about what'd happened coherently.

Terry Matz does bring up a valid point about some (many) fans being narrowminded. Agreed, they are among the most intelligent people I've met, but they can be very obstinate about the littlest things, like the term "sci-fi", or that their "fandom is "the" fandom, or the most valid form of fandom. A fan mentions Trekdom, and others turn aside their heads, treat the person as an outcast before they hear what s/he has to say. Just as bad as mundanes who, when they hear 'science fiction', say, "Oh, that weird stuff." Fans are both tolerant, and intolerant, both in degrees greater than that of ordinary folk. Maybe because of that paradox they are among the best people I know.

Hmmm. An obscure comment to Mary (Maia) Cowan, about your Mustang. Don't believe her, that if it survives 100,000 miles, it'll last forever. If it survives 100,000 miles, that means it'll last for 9,000 miles more. If it survives another 1,000 miles, then it will survive for another 9,000 miles, and so on. Ford products are engineered that way.

(1/2/81 - 47 Valley Way, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48013)

I'm not quite sure how to put this, George...but I find it slightly...err, "strange"... that the day you wrote the letter, is the day the Mustang "died"...at 109,000 miles...!

TIM MARION It's easy to tell from Dotti Stefl's GoH speech that she is a very bright young lass with a good command of the English language and a good sense of humor. I wish you had said just exactly how old she is. I note you mention that she gave her speech "...without all those people who had to have done her fanzine for

her not lifting a hand", emphasis yours. The rumors that I have heard have said that although Dotti Stefl is a good writer, she does not know how to type, and that her mother typed and laid-out the fanzine for her and somebody else printed it. I suppose on that basis she could be nominated for a best fan writer, but the rumors also state that a considerable amount of ballot-stuffing went on--reportedly Dotti Stefl's mother went around with copies of the FAAN ballot with Dotti's fanzine already marked on the sheet, and handed these out to convention fans (when the award is supposed to be for fanzine fans) at conventions. If this is true, it certainly strikes me as being more than a bit unethical. But I don't know if it's true or not, because I'm not in a position to know. Doubtless you already know all of this good stuff, but I don't think it's fair of you to refute a group of people without addressing yourself to the main body of their criticisms. Then again, this is your fanzine, so I suppose you can be unfair by not printing this letter or one like it by someone more knowledgeable concerning the matter than I.

(1/10/81 -- c/o Kleinbard, 266 E Broadway, Apt. 1201B, New York, NY 10002)

As far as I know, Dotti turned twelve in November. ¶ This much I know: Dotti is the one who pressured me to contribute to her fanzine...in person, and with several notes and postcards. I don't remember whether the latter were typed or scrawled with crayon --but the letter I got back after asking her to be GoH at Spacecon was typed. And I have no reason not to believe it was composed and typed solely by Dotti. I was at a convention where Suzi was passing out FAAN ballots; she was definitely pushing the cause, but I didn't see any pre-filled in. And I have heard rumors that, while the idea for the speech was hers, Dotti had help with the polishing of it. ¶ If Dotti, or Suzi, wants to respond, fine... But it is not my place to defend them. What is my place is to note what bugs me the most...and that is that 99.9% of the bitches I've heard have come from people who don't like Suzi. Both Suzi and Dotti have strong personalities--I love them both, but both continually drive me up the wall. But the one fact that's been continually overlooked is that Dotti is not only Suzi's daughter; she is a person in her own right. ¶ (If the rumors I've heard are true--that *Warhoon* was professionally mimeographed--does this mean Bergeron should turn in his Hugo?) ¶ This all reminds me of a DUFF campaign a few years back, when Rusty Hevelin was running: convention after convention I heard the refrain..."But he's a convention fan...and the fan funds are for fanzine fans." The fact that Rusty was publishing and contributing to fanzines in the early 40s, before most of the current definers of what's "fannish" were born, seemed irrelevant. But facts often are, when personalities are involved. ¶ And if now Rusty finds that, because of a physical handicap, other forms of fanac are better suited to him...well, he's done more for the fan funds than *any* fanzine fan. And if Dotti, because of age and inexperience has help with what she does, the fact remains that *she* is primarily responsible for a fanzine with a remarkably high level of contributions...and the best convention GoH speech I've heard or read. Without her, they would not have *been!* ¶ Let S/He Among You, who has written and stencilled every word in every fanzine you've done; run it off, collated, stapled and personally delivered every copy by Yourself...cast the first ballot. ¶ Fans...conservative...?

LARRY DOWNES Reading *Xenolith* #13 & 14 the other day, I felt as if I had entered some sort of time warp. I can't recall the number of the last one I got (though I'm certain you, with your phenomenal talent for bookkeeping, could tell me), but it didn't seem as if I'd missed any. Short cute article by Bob Tucker. Hmmm hmmm. Comment from Bowers about new job. Hmmm hmmm hmmm. Don D^{Am}massa letter. Interlino quotes from Mike Glicksohn. Complaints from your readers about elusive esoteric references (and good God, I remember what FHF is, and I not only know what the letters stand for, I've even been watching carefully as one of the members makes a valiant effort at a second try), comments from Terry Matz (Terry Matz!) about one of your speeches, number thirteen ending with a change of address. And Leah telling that story again (I know I have heard/read it at least a dozen times) about Croatoan and that was

Someone who has...Leah Zeldes...wrote me, saying: "...your delivery is still something less than smooth (we have your hands shaking on videotape). Copping out by publishing your speeches without giving them is certainly not going to help, either." --this last in reference to my *Graymalkin* 5 contribution.

Giving speeches is certainly not the only time my hands shake, but, in any event, this time I was ready to go public. Well, at least I had the introductions written out...

.....
 Introduction of DENISE PARSLEY LEIGH -- King Con: October 31/November 2, 1980

...when recalling their first convention, Steve wrote that Denise had "met many of the CFG people we now (reluctantly) call friends, got drunk, was attacked by the familiar of a certain tall (well, not short) BNF, and in general had a hell of a time."

Despite the no doubt pleasurable adventures of my cat, I didn't meet Denise until the weekend following that 1977 MidwestCon. It was at the watering place of Cincinnati fandom--a hole-in-the-wall called Hap's Irish Pub. And before the night was out, I had managed to steal Denise away in the parking lot of an all-night King Kwik.

(Actually, it was her idea. I just went along for the ride.)

A couple of weeks later, I introduced Denise to Mike Glicksohn on my front porch --and, later that night, they proceeded to save my life.

Then came Steve and Denise's second convention, a Rivercon...but in spite of that I persuaded them to go to something called Hippotocon. It was there that Denise did something that only Jon Singer and Marla Gold had done before: she broke my rib.

And I was in my own bed at the time.

(Steve didn't help; he was laughing. In the other bed.)

And so it went.

And somewhere along the line I commented to Denise that ...all of my friends did creative things. So what was with her?

That innocent statement led to unexpected consequences ...but for my interpretation of same, well, you'll just have to wait for *Energumen* 16. [...and wait...!]

Which reminds me... Which MidwestCon was it, Denise, where we spent that wonderful Friday night in Mike's room ...and he came up to us the next afternoon, wondering who had been in his room the night before who smoked...?

(Denise just called, and I told her I was working on her Introduction. She told me that I could recount anything... As long as I didn't mention giggling. I agreed.

(Still, now is probably the time to correct a Popular Misconception; Denise does not giggle in bed.

(I do.

(She only snores so loudly it can be heard three doors away.)

Speaking of misconceptions, though...

The Thursday night before a Marcon a couple of years ago, as I was busily packing and attempting to get a fanzine published...per usual -- I received a frantic phone call from Denise.

Steve was practicing and she needed someone to drive her to the drugstore to pick up a kit.

The program book at that year's Marcon did not include the major Friday night feature: The Denise-is-not-pregnant Party.

They also serve who only drive and wait.

When wee Bill called the other night, I asked him is there was anything I was supposed to do to justify my title at this convention. He said that my mission (if I chose to

accept it) was to get Denise to talk. I assured him that I could probably manage to get her to say something...

...if only: "Fuck you, Bowers!"

Other than that, she may never speak to me again, but, well, if I have to make speeches when I'm Guest of Honor at a convention ...what makes her so unique she doesn't have to?

Yes, I know she's better looking than I...

...even if she isn't as cute as Steve.

But Denise is one of the Special People. She is perhaps the most open, trusting person I know. And as a result she gets hurt sometimes...but she still stays the same: I've seen Denise down, but very, very rarely bitter. About anyone or anything. It's a gift I don't have, and I envy her it...even if I cringe a bit sometimes when she leaves herself wide open.

She's neat. She's unique. And she's responsible for one of the neatest, most unique fanzines around.

She's my friend, and I love her...even if sometimes she literally drives me up the wall.

...and even though she has QUOTE stolen UNQUOTE more women away from me than has Steve!

At first, I had the idea of pulling a "This Is Your Fannish Life...Steve & Denise...", but that would have involved a considerably larger resulting convention. And, while I do love them, it also seemed like a lot of work. So I started these introductions before leaving for the convention, and finished them up Friday morning in Toronto, at Mike Glicksohn's apartment ...after having spent Thursday evening hanging over both ends of his idea of a full-size bed.

By far the roughest part came in holding them down to a reasonable length--both in terms of incidents recounted ...and the amount of space it would take for me to adequately express my admiration for Steve and Denise. (If either of them wishes to annotate the entries I did include, I suppose that's okay. But I hope they'll be gentle; they have fully as much on me as I do on them!)

I really was going to perform the introductions...but after the banquet turned into The Last Trek to Limbo ...the only other appropriate place would have been at the Midnight Art Auction. King Con had some problems, but by and large it went well. Still, by that time Saturday evening I was sober again, Denise was properly nervous about what I might be saying about her ...and Steve was, in his own unique way, attempting to become ambidextrous--so, with some relief--I decided not to try and compete with the Let's All Make Linda Michaels Wealthy Show.

Besides, I had already told Denise that I would write something for the next Graymalkin -- and this way I had it more than half done already...

.....
 Introduction of STEPHEN LEIGH -- King Con: October 31/November 2, 1980

I seem to have a lot less to work with in introducing Steve (rather than with Denise); but that may be more a question of my orientation, than Steve's blandness. Or it may simply be that Steve is more discrete. He is; generally.

The night after I "stole" Denise, I had a 4th of July party...and Denise brought Steve over. It was our first meeting. And, after a period of playing the Cavin-nervous host, I ended up spending most of the evening sitting on the love seat. With Denise.

Steve sat across the room, and said very little.

I later learned that Steve had concluded that Al Curry was perfectly safe...and that I was not to be trusted.

Well, one out of two isn't bad...but other than that one instance, Steve has proven to be one of the most frighteningly perceptive persons that I've ever met. And one of the most gentle.

Other than the masquerade I persuaded him to go to, Steve wasn't overly thrilled by his second convention.

But I was persuasive, and I talked the Leigh's into going to Hippotocon by giving them special badges. There Steve had the pleasure of watching me fall apart ...and watching Denise break my rib. And he's gone to quite a few conventions since.

Why, I hesitate to ask: Perhaps he's waiting for Denise to break another rib; he's certainly had several opportunities to see me fall apart.

But those were the days when Steve was still shy and well-mannered.

Such as the time he made the cover of Asimov's ...and I asked him to autograph the story. It was just before we went into a CFG meeting ...and Steve immediately climbed up into a tree. And refused to come down, until I told him that no longer would I provide him with excuses for missing the Cincinnati Would-Be Writers Group.

Yes, Steve used to be shy...

But perhaps Boston, and his newly acquired talent for crawling under tables has reaffirmed his humbleness...

...I mean, the comment that Bill Marks is better than he needs more verification than I've seen to date.

But the other instance, well... Sunday evening there, Steve was recounting how, as he was wandering the halls late the night before--he had been stopped by a fan who, upon seeing Steve's namebadge, had launched into an impassioned monolog on how much he enjoyed Steve's fiction.

"...and he knew the titles of all Steve's published stories," Hania said.

"Which is more than I remember," Steve added.

Phyllis Eisenstein was not impressed.

"It can't be all that hard to do," she said, "when you haven't had that much published."

If I seem to take a certain amount of delight in the few times I've seen Steve at a total loss ...well, perhaps it's because those occasions are so very rare.

Steve has a good act.

...but it's far more than an act -- even though it took me a couple of years to realize that Steve is possibly the most self-assured person I know, except Glicksohn.

With one exception--that being the shortest (occasionally) free-standing structure in Toronto--all of my best friends have been women. Over the last three years, the exception has doubled...in number. More so in sheer size.

There are still times that I feel a bit awkward around Steve, but that's me, not him. I admire him, I remain in constant awe of his abilities in so many different areas...and yes, I envy him too.

But I also love him...

...and not only because he has QUOTE stolen UNQUOTE one less woman away from me than has Denise!

PS: Steve, I just want to repeat something that I told you this spring: Stick with me kid, and maybe...someday...you'll be Guest of Honor at a real convention!

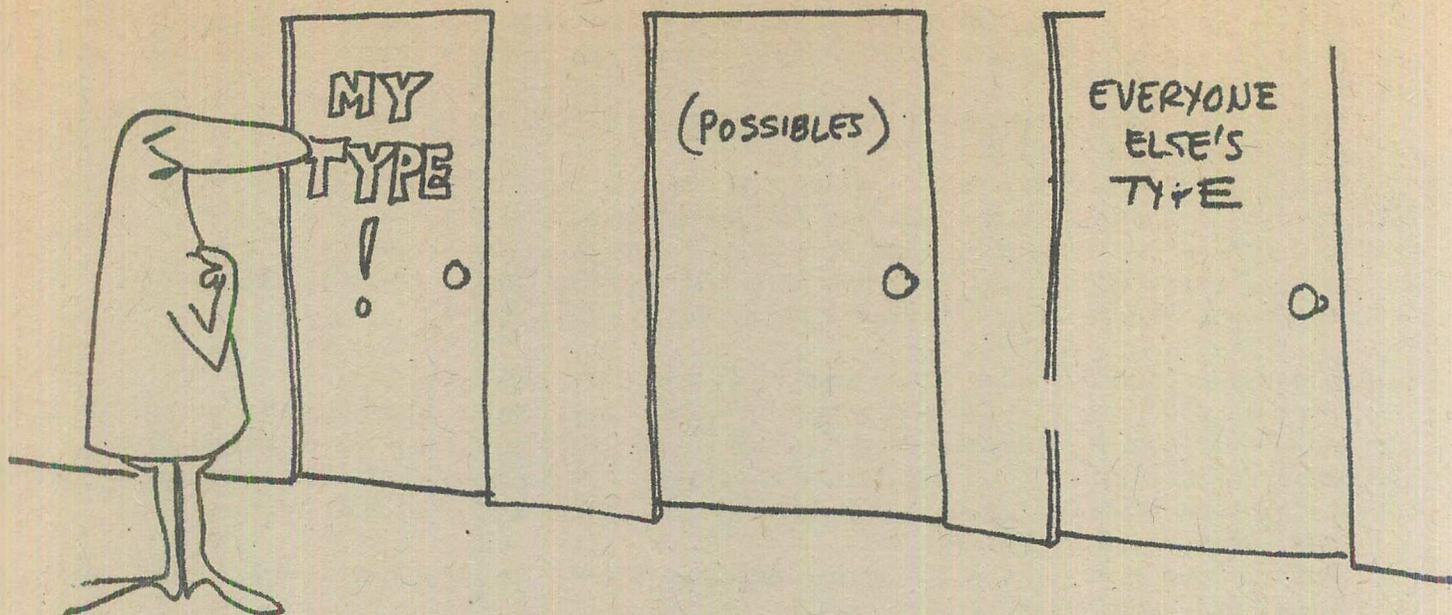
...and, after having been a guest of a real convention (ConFusion) and a fake worldcon myself, well, when Steve is honored at his real convention, I sort of hope that I'll be chosen Toastmaster.

...even if I actually have to do the work this time.

I'm easy. ...anything...anything at all, for a basically "free" convention!

...thanks, Bill and Kevin: I had a good time...

---Bill Bowers: Cincinnati/Toronto/Cincinnati--10/29. 10/31 & 11/4/80

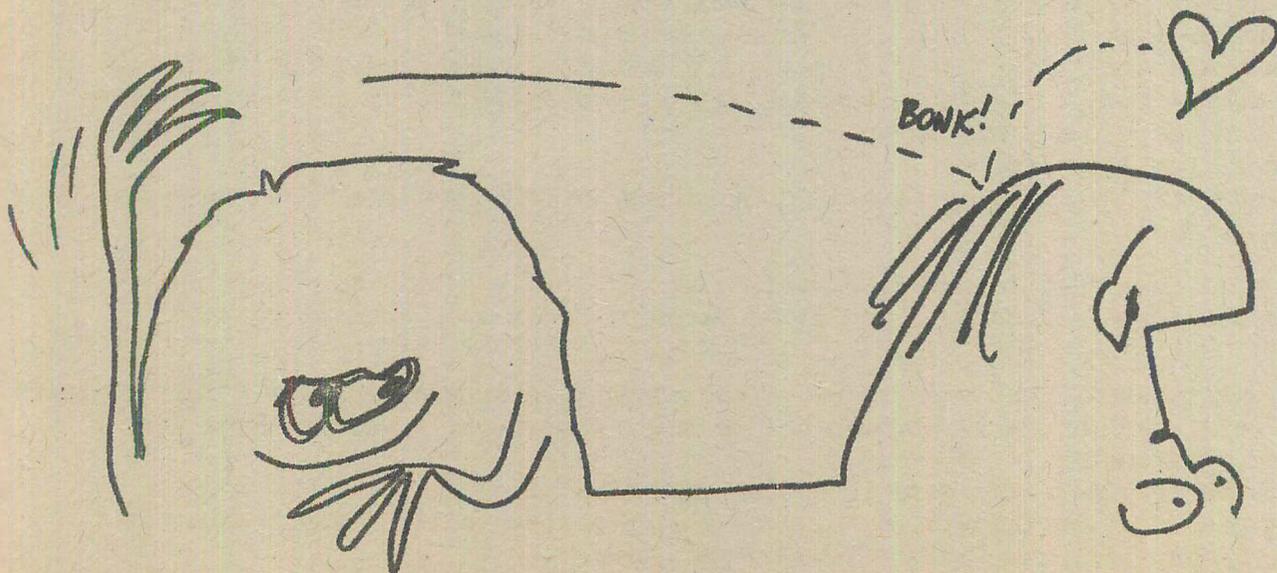


...continuing the tradition (well, doing something three times in a row has the makings of a tradition, doesn't it?) of dredging up items from the past--mostly unpublished:

I seem to get into these cycles in my writing; some would call it ruts, but the only way I can resolve something is to keep working at it, over and over again. A while back (before the movie came out), it was the drawbacks and obligations I saw in "fame". More recently, it has been the games of assumptions people play. Including me.

But overall, the subject that continues to fascinate me the most has always been the same: my relationships with others. And the curiosity about what others think of them. (There was the phase where I was attracted only to tall women, with long dark hair, they said. And occasional rumor has it that I don't prefer women at all.)

All being disclaimer to this: When I wrote the following, I knew I'd eventually publish it...when it was "safe" to do so. But I haven't dated it. For...as I once said, in a different context: "You see, even though that convention was a very long time ago, it was only yesterday also..." Either way, it's now the past; ah, nostalgia!



IMPRESSIONS

+++++ [Series 2, Number 1]

I used to write.....and PUBLISH....assemblyings of words
that I labelled "Impressions"
(they were not essays / they were not poems)
--rather I thought of them as Word Sketches

But that was long ago
--before serially-monogamous love letters
--before esoterically-personal "speeches"
--before personally-esoteric (read: "gut-teasing") fanzine word concentrations.

But -- what to do
this time ...when it is different - because you are different
...when it is the same - because (essentially) I am the same

And when I want to say
very simple things, really

But I can not ...the situation, you know
and so I do the best I can - here; I have no choice.
Unlike others, I have no diary, no Journal, no private repository
I have only this (my "fanzine") and my letters to you.

It is unfair (of course), but among promises made, "fairness" was never included.
--and, as always (with me), I suppose Remember?
--Nothing is as simple (as it appears to others);
--Nor as complex (as it seems to me). So what's new?

None of this was planned, you know.
And I really didn't need this now I was doing quite well--for me--thank you.
And yet, I really needed it/you now more than even I realized.

What attracts one person to another?
Some things simply can't be analyzed/graphed/flow charted. Of course, I try.
There have been those who have attracted me physically & those of emotional bonding:
But there have been few (so very few) to whom I was ...drawn... both ways.
So. Why. You?

Some of the factors I know / others I assume / others leave me puzzled.
All I know for sure, though -- is this:
Rightly or Wrongly (words inoperative for the duration) I Love you.

Three Words.
Words that either come too easily -- or much (when it counts) too hard.

This Time
(for this is our time...no matter how long or short it proves to be)
when they -- the words -- came out
They came naturally ...if a week delayed.

I don't know
where "we" are going
The book is not yet written/plotted/scripted & the movie will be made by others.
I do know that there will be problems, pains, hurts
to counterpoint the joys
Life/Love is like that, I guess.

Sometimes I wish that everyone else would simply go away--
and leave us alone
But that is hardly possible -- is it?

...and probably not even desirable.
(As much as I shut them out, I really do need my friends...now more than ever.)

I make grandiose plans -- they never work
I go with it naturally -- and it usually works

I know this (on paper)
knowing it in reality is another ballgame (sorry!)
But then, reality was never my strong suite. Weird, isn't it...?

I guess, like you said, we just have to take one day at a time
and see what happens
We don't have much choice, do we?

And for this day, what I have
(I don't know about you) is this:

Once again,
All is new
All is true
All is you

--Bill Bowers:

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Again, thanks to Jackie Causgrove for electrostencils...and the use of the mimeo!
...and even after all this, I still don't know how to express my feelings for Susan...

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