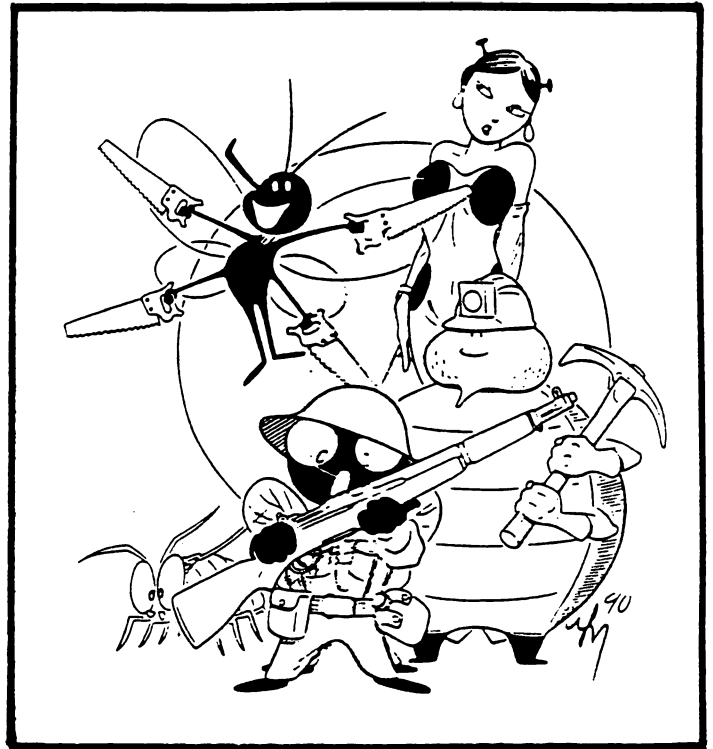




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# ANVIL 53

Charlotte's Web Editorial Natter	4
Seasonal Greetings from the Christmas as a Movable Feast Society	6
Zine Reviews Roy G. Bivens	8
The Old Ironmaster and Fannish Pursuits	11
...Now You Don't Taral Wayne	14
A Baker's Dozen List of Books	16
Resnick Retrospective Patrick J. Gibbs	17
The ANVIL Chorus Letters from <u>you</u>	21



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"Charlotte's Pretty Good Fanzine"

# Charlotte's Web

Help! My life is on fast-forward! Where's the pause button...?

Since last we talked, my youngest child moved out, leaving me with a vacant room; thereafter, Julie Wall showed up on my doorstep and filled said room (Nature abhors a vacuum); family holidays become marathon automobile trips; and there's been a for-crying-out-loud war! I was ready to begin work on ANVIL only to discover that my assistant editor had moved to California. Have you ever had the feeling that you missed something somewhere along the way? I've had that feeling a lot lately. Let's scan the tape .....

Freeze frame.... February: ConTinuity. Mike Resnick, GoH. Mike told me he had a good time... better than he had expected when he saw the huckster room. (One table of books, the rest media and gaming stuff.) "I only knew three people when I got here, but now I know about fifty." I think the three he knew were me, Penny Frierson and ANVIL book reviewer Pat Gibbs. Penny ran Operations, where we hung out. Rebecca Brayman, Julie, Pat, Penny and I were the adoring audience until the locals found that Mike is not only approachable, but a very good story-teller. I hated to give him up on Saturday, but one mustn't be greedy.

Rewind, search.... Freeze frame.... New Year's Day. News Flash.... Well-known arachnophobe and faan-dancer Linda Riley dislocates knee... cartilage damaged.... Emergency Room visit nets splint and crutches for Linda.... ChattaCon Committee holds emergency meeting, decides Dance Will Go On!... Accident caused by cricket leaping from Christmas tree... Friend Penny Frierson comments: "They're all spiders 'til they're dead."

Fast forward... Freeze frame.... January 7 & 18... Birthdays: mine and Julie's respectively. Went to Chili's on my birthday where the hired help serenaded me with a rap version of Happy Birthday. We took the cake to Linda's (still recovering from cricket incident) // Julie's parents took her, her brother Jason, my husband and me to dinner to celebrate Julie's birthday. The waitress brought a dessert w/lighted candle to the table and the whole restaurant full of people sang to her!

Freeze frame.... January club meeting. Merlin Odom elected Keymaster, Adrian Washburn is Gatekeeper. Don Reynolds volunteered to be vice-president if he didn't have to do anything. Linda is treasurer for life and Charlotte is editor and sometime secretary. Julie, who was not there, was elected President, but we didn't tell her. Inauguration planned. Wake for the Big Bang Theory (which is dead) to be held. Come as your favorite cosmologic theory. Meeting ends in confusion.

Freeze frame.... February club meeting. Julie arrives. Red carpet rolled out. Torch is passed. Inaugural parade held. Julie overwhelmed, but game. Costumes: Don Reynolds, Black Hole. Charlotte had a hanky (not with a Bang, but with a whimper). Julie had a futuristic hair-do -- she thought it was cosmetologic. Penny was the Big Bust theory. Club decides to have Summer Party. Meeting ends in disorder.



Freeze frame... March meeting. Begins with caravan from my house to youngest child's apartment to deliver bed frame. Gang of Seven troops in with bed frame, is introduced to roommates. "This is my mother," (pause) "and these are her friends." Cindy and I set up bed. Linda checks fridge -- finds one can of beans, with spoon. From there to Frostbites for frozen drinks. Huntsville fan Steve Richards seen in public with Mafiaettes. Go to meeting. Andrea Gilbreath presents program: "Acid Paper and You". Entire business session spent on deciding name for summer party. And the winner is.... Consomme'. (Just your cup of soup?) (Soup and nuts?) Meeting ends in chaos.

Rewind... scan... freeze frame... New Year's Eve. Julie and I go to Stven Carlberg's New Year's Eve party. In Atlanta. Meet Stven's S.O., Maria. Ward Batty, Jim Cobb, Hank Reinhardt -- all Voices From The Past -- are there. Sleep over, have breakfast, go home.

Fast forward... freeze frame... ChattaCon. Held at Labyrinth House. See Stven & Maria in cavernous, echoy, con suite. Stven expresses bemusement at receiving bread-and-butter notes from recent out-of-town guests.... Linda limping, but game. Tony Ubelohr, editor of PULSAR!, interviews GoH Harry Harrison in hotel bar. Editor of ANVIL sits in. GoH leaves, editors drink themselves silly. Go to Adrian's room party. ANVIL editor passes out. Convention ends in blur.

Stop tape. Well, I guess I didn't miss anything after all... it was just the usual stuff. In the meantime, if I want to get this ANVIL out on schedule (in case you hadn't noticed, the 'schedule' is April and October), I've got to find another assistant editor. Ha! Think I'll ask Julie.... she can't very well refuse as she is living in my spare room....



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# Seasonal Greetings

...from the President of the CHRISTMAS AS A MOVABLE FEAST SOCIETY!

This year it has been decreed that Christmas is on 10th January 1991 -- partly because that's the day my best briar is due back from the pipe hospital; partly because it's the anniversary of the birth of Wilf McVittie, inventor of the only typewriter with a line spacing that matches the lines on the back of the Post Office's air letter form; but mainly because I got all my correspondence into a bigger mess than usual this time and missed the deadline for normal Christmas posting.

In this annus mirabilis, people throughout the world have been thinking hard about the demise of communism, the Hubble trouble and Brazilian rain forests. I, however, have been occupying my mind with one of the great imponderables of history -- why is it that some people have no sense of humour?

It all began in my office one Saturday lunchtime a few weeks ago. I listen to Radio 2 when I'm working, trying to keep the volume such that I can hear the middle-of-the-road music but not the vacuous chatter inbetween. At midday on Saturdays there is a programme, hosted by actor Gerald Harper (Adam Adamant, in the early TV series), in which any listener can nominate a good, kind and thoughtful neighbour to receive a bottle of champagne. That's fine with me, but of late Harper's dawdling, affected, condescending delivery has begun to penetrate and irritate the depths of my soul.

On the fateful day he got on my nerves so much that, in a fit of peevishness, I grabbed a sheet of paper and -- in spidery script suitable for an octogenarian -- wrote a him a letter which was an obvious parody of those he reads out every Saturday. I don't like anonymous letters, and as I was personally having a tilt at Gerald Harper, I felt obliged to disclose my real name and address. The following is the main text:

Dear Mr. Harper:

Each week I hear you giving a bottle of champagne to a good neighbour, and I would like to nominate my friend Bob Shaw for a bottle because I think he is the best and kindest neighbour one could ever hope to meet.

This summer a big Rotweiler dog came into my back garden and tried to kill my cat, Daisy. The cat was so terrified that it took refuge in the top of my old pear tree. Bob's house is behind mine, and when he saw what was happening he rushed into my garden and drove the Rotweiler away. He was not the slightest bit afraid of the dog, even though he is partly disabled from his time as a fighter pilot in Korea.

Not content with driving off the horrible dog, Bob then climbed up the tree and rescued Daisy, who was too scared to move. Ever since that day Bob has popped into my house three or four times a week just to make sure that Daisy and I are all right. I am a widow and find it hard to cook for

myself because of my arthritis, but Bob always brings me some lovely home-cooked food. He is a wonderful cook and I am sure he could win prizes for it if he tried, but I would like him to have a prize for being the nicest neighbour in the world. He hardly ever touches alcohol, but I am sure he would enjoy a glass of champagne in the knowledge that it had come from you and the BBC.

Yours sincerely,

Edna Baines (Mrs)

I mailed the thing off, luxuriating in the strange tranquillity which comes from writing a letter to the media, and thought that would be the end of it. (The most I expected was a note saying "Nice try, Mr. Shaw, but I wasn't born yesterday.") It was a considerable shock to my system, therefore, when the letter was read out to millions of Radio 2 listeners on Saturday, 1 Dec. To make matters worse, it wasn't Gerald Harper who did the reading. He was off ill, probably as a result of trying to sound like the old BT dialing tone every time he speaks on radio. It was good old Vince Hill, the nicest nonentity in showbiz, who did the reading. My poisoned dart had hit the wrong target.

And, to make matters worse than worse, a couple of weeks later a bottle of really good champagne was delivered to my house. None of your Sainsbury's or Tesco stuff here! Sadie is quite embarrassed over the whole episode, and currently we are lying low, waiting for the heat to die down.

I think I'm finished with practical jokes.

Sincere best wishes for Christmas and the New Year!

BoSh





# Zine Reviews

by Roy G. Bivens

I've got to hand it to my good friend Charlotte. Whenever she tells me she needs the fanzine review column "...like in the near future, OK?" it gets the old thought processes worked up again. This time, it stimulated some long dormant synapses with links to science fiction of times long past. I think it was Bob Tucker, or maybe Robert Heinlein (help me out, readers) who once said that science fiction is a time-binding avocation. I think I can vouch for that. I was invited to a friend's house not too long ago, to help him sort through boxes of old pulp magazines that had been in stasis for several decades in a corner of his attic. In one box, I came across a few gems from over fifty years ago --copies of *Amazing Stories* with Frank R. Paul covers, depicting wondrous cities of the future with weird-looking skyscrapers and flying vehicles. You know, more and more I really think that we are now living in the so-called 'world of the future' that Hugo Gernsback solicited stories about way back in the 1920s and 1930s. We've got thinking machines that can defeat all but a handful of human beings at the centuries-old game of chess; we've got walls that turn into windows on the world that, with a punch of a button, provide over 50 different choices of entertainment or news programs to watch; we've got wars fought with smart bombs and invisible-to-the-enemy aircraft, that start and are over in a matter of hours.

And it's interesting to live in this 'world of the future.' I'm not much at chess, but I can push buttons as well as anyone. So as I watching CNN describe Saddam's latest speech -- the one where he was telling how great Iraq's military forces were and how fiercely they had beaten back American forces in the Mother of All Battles, repeatedly striking our fists with their chins -- I couldn't help thinking that fifty years ago this war might have taken years to fight, with great numbers of casualties and no clear assurance of victory. Already around here, there are signs that there will be parades and celebrations to welcome home the troops, just like when World War II ended. Back then, soldiers were made as welcome as possible when they returned, with discounted or free tickets to sporting events, and free taxi rides. There was an oft-repeated story (stop me if you've heard this before) of the GI who had just arrived back in New York after the end of the war in Europe. Still in uniform, the first thing he wanted to do was wash the taste of army rations out of his mouth with a good seafood dinner. When the cabbie asked him where he wanted to go, the soldier answered, "Take me where I can get scrod." And so the cabbie turned around as if to size up the fellow's intentions, and answered, "You know, in all my years of driving that's the first time I ever hear use of the past pluperfect."

If all this seems like a long way to go to lead into a fanzine review column, you're right. But it did seem to be a way to frame a review column about two of the more literary science fiction fanzines.

The first of them is Leland Sapiro's Riverside Quarterly. And the first thing I should say about it is that it's a fanzine that's probably not for everybody. RQ appears to be aimed at the academic scholar, since there are articles (complete with footnotes) about the gothic novel as it relates to science fiction, and a literary comparison of two H. G. Wells novels, The War of the Worlds and The Time Machine. Besides that, there are quite a few short works of poetry, a highly-forgettable short story, and even a look

back at the "Coneheads" skits from Saturday Night Live. All in all, a pretty mixed bag.

And this is not an easy zine to read. The two academic articles are actually fairly interesting; Pat Hodgell's gothic novel essay seemed aimed at the works of Charles Dickens, but provided a pretty good background to exactly what a gothic novel is, as well as the differences between terror and horror as a genre. Colin Manlove's comparison of two H. G. Wells novels pointed out some contrasts and similarities between the two novels that in some ways make them seem as two halves of a whole. However, academic papers are often quite dry (to put it politely) in style, and these live up to that reputation -- you've really got to want to read these articles to make it through them. Also, it was more than a little difficult to even understand all this material, because the text in RQ is reproduced in tiny reduced-courier typeface on gold-colored bond that was real hard on my eyesight and my ability to concentrate on what I was reading.

Other than the academic articles, the rest of the issue appeared fairly ordinary. The one short story showed once again the large difference in quality you get between fiction published in prozines vs. that found in fanzines. There was quite a bit of poetry, of variable quality; the format of the zine seemed to be that each article was separated by three-pages-by-god of poetry before encountering another essay. The letters section at the end of the zine was nicely put together, with correspondence from quite a few recognizable names, both fan and pro. The artwork used to break up pages of text was of pretty good quality, but often bore little if any relation to the neighboring text.

If, after all of this, you've come to believe this is at best a mixed review for Riverside Quarterly, you're right. Still, this is probably a worthwhile fanzine to subscribe to; with all the different varieties of things in each issue, there's likely something there for you. But it would be a better zine yet if the editor would get rid of things of lesser interest and quality, and publish in a slightly kinder format to the senses.

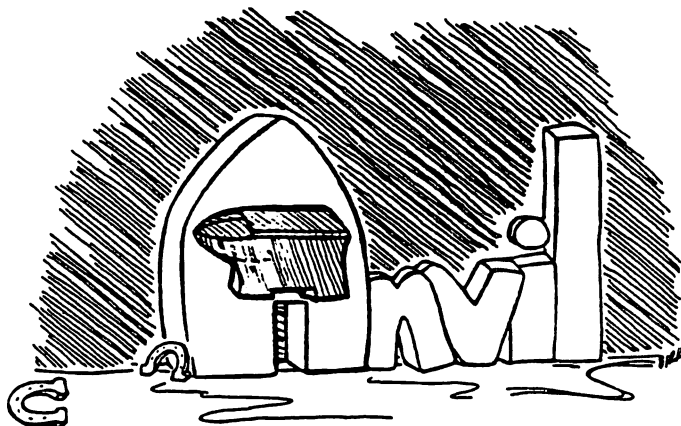
Much better is A. Langley Searles' Fantasy Commentator. Now this is a fanzine you can point to when somebody asks you why should trees die in the name of fandom. Where Riverside Quarterly apparently runs articles about science fiction of interest to literary academia types, Fantasy Commentator publishes articles about science fiction and fantasy of interest to historians. The current issue exemplifies this, as it's the Lovecraft Centennial Issue, in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the birth of H. P. Lovecraft. There are no less than six different articles about Lovecraft in this issue on a broad spectrum of topics, running the gamut from R. Alain Everts' recounting of the last days of Lovecraft, to Sam Moskowitz' recap of the 1990 Lovecraft Centennial Celebration held in Providence, to Wilfred Talman's recounting of the time Lovecraft and Frank Belknap Long were "psychoanalyzed" via a simple word association test, to a collection of sonnets by contemporaries of Lovecraft, including Robert E. Howard, Stanton A. Coblenz, and Clark Ashton Smith. I have to admit that until now I hadn't really been all that interested in Lovecraftiana, but after browsing through all this material, I've developed a curiosity about the man that may eventually get me to find some books by and about him. Which, I guess, is one of the purposes of this special issue.

Anyway, besides all the Lovecraft material, there are also some other things of interest in the issue. For instance, there are two continuing series by Sam Moskowitz, one of them about Bernard Macfadden (editor of pulp magazines in the time of Hugo Gernsback), and the other self-explanatorily entitled "Voyagers Through Eternity -- A History of Science Fiction From the Beginnings to H. G. Wells." There's also an interesting article by Mike Ashley excerpted from an upcoming book about Hugo Gernsback that described Gernsback's editorial policies and preferred story topics for his line of pulp magazines, which included stories about that 'world of the future' I mentioned a little earlier. Even the letters column is of interest to science fiction historians, as the ubiquitous Sam Moskowitz appears in print once again, with a long remembrance of his last visit with the late Donald A. Wollheim.

There's more to Fantasy Commentator than just history, though. I was a little disappointed by the complete lack of illustrations or photographs in the issue, other than the photo of Lovecraft on the front cover. However, the writing more than makes up for it. The essays and narratives in this fanzine contain some of the best writing I've seen in any non-professional publication. Moskowitz has been one of science fiction's best essayists for decades, and has been a continuing presence in FC for over 40 years. The Immortal Storm, perhaps the most famous historical book about science fiction ever written, appeared first in serial form there; with his two multi-part historical series, he continues to show that a) his writing continues to be as interesting and well-crafted as it was 40 years ago, and b) he hasn't run out of historical doings to write about yet. He and other contributors provide that kind of high-quality, stay-up-late-at-night-to-finish-reading-the-issue writing you just don't see all that much anymore even in professional publications, much less fanzines. This is without a doubt one of the best fanzines published, and by all means I recommend you take steps to acquire a copy.

Issues Reviewed: Riverside Quarterly (Issue 31 /July 1990/ reviewed) from Leland Sapiro, 807 Walters #107, Lake Charles, Louisiana 70605; available for \$2 (no other availability info listed). Fantasy Commentator (Issue 41 /Fall 1990/ reviewed) from A. Langley Searles, 48 Highland Circle, Bronxville, New York 10708-5909; available for \$5, or six issues for \$25 (published semi-annually).

(Editor's note: Well, this hasn't exactly been the Mother of All Fanzine Review Columns, and Mr. Bivens isn't always this short-winded; either he's been staying up too late at night watching CNN, or else he's been spending too much of his time trying to think up more literary war jokes instead of reading fanzines. Now that the war is over, though, he should be back to his loquacious self before too much longer. And yes, he'll be back again with more fanzine reviews next issue.)





# The Old Ironmaster and Fannish Pursuits

by Buck Coulson

I've noticed that fandom tends to lead to other things, but in my case they've tended to be such strange things. Such as performing marriages. I became an accredited minister in the Universal Life Church back in 1969, when Denny Lien sent my name in to the Church along with his. He didn't bother to tell me about this; I came home from work and Juanita had opened the mail and my very official-looking ordination certificate was sitting on the typewriter. It's too bad that Denny couldn't have seen my expression. He confessed in a letter, some time later. I framed the certificate, got in trouble with one of my co-workers by telling her that her husband -- a ministerial student at a local religious college -- was doing it the hard way, and more or less forgot about it. Unfortunately, my son Bruce didn't forget. He was home visiting and called back to a friend in Columbus, OH, about something. (Bruce never learned how to write letters; he telephones.) I happened to be walking past the phone when I heard him say, "Well, Dad's a minister." By the time I got the phone away from him, he'd agreed that I'd perform the wedding of a couple of his friends who didn't want to be married in a church. So, what the hell, I got a license allowing me to perform marriages in the state of Ohio -- insisting that the happy couple pay for it -- and went through with the ceremony. Joe Hensley, who was a judge then (he's retired now), gave me a copy of the civil ceremony he used, which was marvelously short.

The wedding itself wasn't short enough. The location was a botanical conservatory in Columbus, which is apparently popular for this sort of thing. There was no rehearsal. We arrived in good time to find that the bridesmaids' dresses weren't finished. The bride's father had forgotten to bring the punchbowl, so he and Bruce, over Bruce's objections, were dispatched to buy one. (I asked Bruce why he agreed to go, and he said "Because she said she'd break both of my arms if I didn't." Sounds like a good reason to me...) The conservatory is located in an industrial area of town, so stores weren't plentiful, but they finally returned with a stainless steel double boiler, which was used. The dressing room was the conservatory potting shed, which had a broken door, so one of the bride's female relatives was stationed in the doorway to keep out intruders. The actual ceremony was to be conducted next to an ornamental pool, with bride and groom approaching over the bridge crossing the pool, while groomsmen and bridesmaids came around a path along the side of the pool, where the ceremony was to be conducted. When the couple had inspected the conservatory, the pool had been filled, with goldfish swimming in it, and they had thought it a charming spot. Of course, at the time of the ceremony, the pool had been drained, and was an empty concrete basin with some desiccated seaweed in the bottom of it.

About 7 p.m., the bride's brother arrived at the dressing room to tell her to hurry up; there was another group scheduled to use the same room.

"But we have it for all night!"

"No, we don't; there's another group coming at 7:30."

At that point, the bridesmaids dresses hadn't arrived. They did arrive, however, and the bridesmaids dressed hurriedly and the wedding party got more or less assembled, the groomsmen squeezing past me on the narrow path. (I'd been at my proper location for some time, talking idly to the groom while we waited for something to happen.) Since this was the tropical plants room, there were huge overhead fans whump-whumping away, distributing hot air and moisture. I performed the ceremony, while the official photographer peered out from behind various plants, trying to get a good picture. Since the photographer was black, Juanita said the result looked a bit like something out of the movie "King Solomon's Mines". Afterwards, one of the groomsmen, who had been about six feet from me during the ceremony, said, "Well, I could see your lips move, and he kissed the bride, so I suppose they're married, but I couldn't hear a damned word."

We adjourned to another room, which we presumably did have for all night, and got on with the reception. The fans and the relatives formed two distinct and somewhat hostile groups. I tried to stay with the fans, but the bride's mother cornered me and quizzed me on the tenets of my church. Since I hadn't bothered to think up any, I was at somewhat of a loss. I think I mentioned that "we" were very liberal, but the exact conversation has been mercifully forgotten.

I've officiated at three more marriage ceremonies since then, and have a fifth one coming up in late March, but none of them have been quite as... ah... interesting?... as the first one. My next worst moments came last year when two filkers were getting married, by a quite different minister, and Juanita and I drove up for the wedding. We were standing around in the parking lot of this country club near some suburb of Chicago, waiting for the ceremony and talking to some of the other fans present, when the Best Person -- she couldn't quite be the Best Man, could she? -- came up and said that the minister was late, and if he didn't show up, could I perform the ceremony? I didn't know if Illinois required a state license for ministers (I found out later that it does), but if it did, I didn't have one. I also didn't have my ceremony with me; I haven't done marriages frequently enough to have memorized it, so I'd have to do it all ad lib. I said sure, I'd do it if necessary, assuming that with everyone there, a ceremony of some kind was needed and if they had to, they could have a quiet legal ceremony later. Then I sweated until the official minister did arrive; I'd prefer to not go through another 10 or 15 minutes like that.

The other unusual occupation acquired in fandom is that of recording engineer. For Off Centaur's "Dorsai" tape, Teri Lee asked me to record some midwestern singers at a Chambanaccon; since Off Centaur was located in the Bay Area, the company didn't get to many midwestern conventions. So I dismantled my stereo and lugged about half of it to the con; amplifier, tape deck, and some microphones. In a Ford Pinto station wagon, along with 5 people and their luggage, Juanita's and my huckster material in a half-dozen big boxes, a large cooler for drinks and such, two guitars, and a dulcimer. We took turns breathing; we couldn't all inhale at the same time. I did get the recordings taped, and got my name of the final tape as a "sound engineer", but actually I don't believe that anything I recorded made it onto the final tape. Gene DeWeese commented that I was more of an "unsound engineer" (aren't friends nice?), so I got a badge reading "Unsound Engineer" and wore it to several cons. The next time came when Mike "Moonwulf"

Longcor refused to go out to the west coast to make a tape, so Off Centaur shipped me a Nakamichi tape recorder and some high-quality microphones, and we did the recording in our living room. Wulf wanted to do it all in one day, but discovered that a 60-minute tape usually takes longer than that. The end came when he blew the same song line on three separate takes, and said he'd try it once more and if he didn't get it this time he'd quit for the day. He got the line perfectly -- and blew the next one. He stayed overnight and finished recording the next day.

I got my name on another tape as "recording engineer", though Teri said she didn't want to have to go through the process of cleaning up my tapes again. (Aren't bosses nice? We're still friends, though.) More importantly, I got paid for both recording sessions, so I suppose I'm a professional -- if not too successful -- recording engineer. I actually collected a quite good amount for two days' work for Moonwulf's tape. Science fiction fandom is really a very strange place.

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# ...Now You Don't

by Taral Wayne

Walking down Yonge Street, I followed an urge to turn off the strip into a video arcade. This wasn't normal. I had never been an arcade haunt, preferring to spend my quarters on Queen, in the paperback parlors. But just then I was feeling nostalgic for the 70's.

The 70's were the years of my early fan career, and in those halcyon days The Derelicts were wont to surge up and down the strip like a tide of four or five or six, jostling to speak, and flooding suddenly into whichever gaudy establishment caught their flow. For such poor souls, the video arcades exerted a powerful attraction. That moment I felt some small sympathetic pull. Like it was in the old days.

The members of The Derelict fan group were gone now -- dispersed to their separate lives. But the arcades lined Yonge on both sides from The Eaton Center to Bloor Street still.

Like all video arcades, this one was a long, activity-filled hole in the wall of respectable businesses to either side. Noise emitted from it like the blare of a horn. One moment I was outside, on the sidewalk. The next moment I was inside, sucked into the narrow space between the rows of games. To either side of me played raucous, cheerful tunes. Machine gun fire rattled, blasters blasted, mighty 450 cu.in. super-charged engines roared down back stretches, star gates opened, castle walls crumbled in the grind of stone on stone, and golf balls bounced nimbly on simulated greens. Assorted other electronic mimicry was indescribable.

Almost to the end of the arcade, so far back from the street I thought I saw an actual pin-ball game, I came to a halt.

Why had I stopped at THIS game, I asked myself? Most games were played around violent, blood-curdling concepts such as thermonuclear war, rampaging mobs of kung-fu fighters, invasions of space creatures, and tag-team matches. But THIS game, I immediately saw, was different. Instead of a labyrinth or battlefield, the screen projected an innocent looking pedestrian shopping mall.

The detail was intriguing. So far as I could tell, the simulation could be modeled from a real street, in a real place anywhere in the United States or Canada. Actually, one of the names on the corner street-sign rang familiar. I could have been on a street with that name once, but if I had, it might have been anywhere. For the sake of that unknown place, I put a quarter in.

The game came abruptly to life. No introductory presentation, no instructions, no name. Just one moment the frozen street, then suddenly pedestrians and cars moved across the screen. In the middle of the game was a tall, rather somber looking dude with a fedora I last saw on William Powell in "The Thin Man". He carried a laundry basket. The imaging was good. I could tell he had three pairs of old fashioned boxer shorts in his wash. In the upper part of the screen were three numbers -- one began to count seconds. Players, five. Points, zero. I began to play.

Moving the joy stick did nothing at first, until I thumbed the button on top. That brought a second figure onto the screen, a nondescript young woman with a shopping bag. The Thin Man began walking away from me at a brisk pace, apparently headed for the laundromat on the other side of the street. Moving the stick moved my pedestrian -- forward, backward, left or right, faster or slower depending how far I pushed. It seemed as though every other pedestrian made a point of getting between me and the Thin Man as he crossed --

Was it in LA I once saw such a street-sign? No, not that part of the country, I was sure. East coast. Maybe Baltimore or Philly. Oh, well.

Evidently, chasing the Thin Man was the thing to do. As I crossed after him a cobalt blue van narrowly missed my shopper. I squeezed between a Mazda and a punk rocker, shot ahead much too fast and cut across the Thin Man's path. He swerved, unexpectedly, and I was rewarded with a musical tone and a thousand points against the running time.

I brought my shopper around in a hi-gee turn that ought t've spilled the tuna helper out of the bottom of her bag, and had another go at the Thin Man. Contact!

"Boop", went the game. My shopper disappeared, along with 200 points. A number changed from 5 to 4 the same instant that my next pedestrian appeared. It was a black guy with a ghetto blaster this time. He responded as before, but I had to move fast as the Thin Man was almost half way across the street.

No, that was Summack Street that time in '78, in Albany...

Fortunately, the Thin Man was moving obliquely, headed more toward the corner 7-11. It was easy to get between him and the laundromat, forcing him to circle around his goal while I took the inside path. This simple tactic immediately netted me 5,000 additional points.

But then a cop moved up and halted me. While he wrote me a jaywalking ticket the Thin Man shot straight as an arrow for the laundromat. As soon as I could I ran full tilt after him, but it was too late. The Thin Man disappeared inside. While I was wondering what to do next, a parked hatch-back suddenly pulled out and ran me over. My second pedestrian disappeared, too. I was down to three.

Now I was a fat man with a beard and a sub sandwich. The Thin Man was coming out. This time the advantage was mine. The only way back was across the street, and I was already between him and the far sidewalk. I was determined to be in his way every step he took. The next few minutes was a blur of moving vehicles, ambient pedestrians, cops, barking dogs, skateboarders, and burst water mains. Skillfully I maneuvered the Thin Man through looping curves, figure eights, and several dosey-does, never letting him get closer to the other side of the street than half way. 500,000 points!





# Resnick Retrospective

By Patrick J. Gibbs  
Critic in Residence

The Guest of Honor at the ConTinuity '91 in Birmingham was Mike Resnick. I was there, too. Our Esteemed Editor and I were sitting in the con operations room Friday evening and naturally I brought up the topic of this issue's book review column. I could not work up much enthusiasm for the Best of 1990 -- it was a relatively lackluster year for novels. But for about seven years I have wanted to do an overview of Mike Resnick's novels. I mentioned this to her and she said "Go for it," or words to that effect.

So here we are. Before we start, I should mention that Mike was a wonderful guest of honor. Several of us sat with him in a lobby area outside the video room until the early hours of Saturday morning, just talking about all sorts of things. He has always been very approachable, and is a darned good conversationalist. Mike was active in science fiction fandom for almost twenty years before becoming a SF author. All that time he made his living writing other fiction under a pseudonym, but he finally turned to his first love -- science fiction.

Mike Resnick is one of the great masters of the story-telling art. We are fortunate to have good story-tellers in relative abundance in science fiction. Take a look at "contemporary fiction", if you doubt the latter proposition. Before we begin, one caveat: There is a whole body of work from Mike Resnick's early SF career (The Soul Eater, Birthright: The Book of Man, Walpurgis III, The Branch, and the "Tales of the Galactic Midway"), my copies of which are sitting somewhere in a box. They are now out of print. So this will not be the thorough treatment my subject deserves. Maybe another time...

"Tales of the Velvet Comet" is what first attracted me to Mike Resnick's work. It is a series of four novels set in the future universe established in Birthright. Eros Ascending begins the saga of the Velvet Comet. Built in orbit around the planet Charlemange, and about 1300 years in our future, the Velvet Comet is "the most luxurious brothel in the galaxy, complete with gourmet restaurants, bars, nightclubs, elegant shopping mall, resplendent suits and fantasy rooms" and, for those who do not like sex, a gambling casino. All of this is contained in an orbiting space station.

One sign that science fiction had matured beyond adolescence during the 1980s is that "Tales of the Velvet Comet" had commercialized sex as a backdrop for some non-titillating but stimulating stories. Stimulating in the sense of though-provoking and exciting. The issues raised in Eros Ascending involved the nature and abuse of power, business ethics, and human love.

It is a good story about a man who found that he still had some principles left after leading an unprincipled existence. He was Harry Redwine, an accountant sent by mysterious and unidentified corporate executive in the Vainmill Syndicate, the owner of the Velvet Comet, to visit the brothel and tamper with its computerized accounting system so that a regular audit will show enormous hidden losses -- and disgrace another Vainmill

executive. Harry was experienced at this sort of accounting sabotage and so good that he was never caught.

This time Harry made the mistake of falling in love with a victim, the madam of the Velvet Comet, the Leather Madonna. Resnick's skill as a story teller is evident in that the romance of these two lonely people is credible and not a cliché. So Harry is faced with the challenge of accomplishing his mission while still leaving the Leather Madonna a way out to preserve the Velvet Comet from ruin. He succeeds in his double-cross, but there is no artificial happy ending. The story flows from its own internal logic to a satisfying conclusion.

Eros at Zenith continued the series and is set thirty-four years later. Unfortunately, its publication by Phantasia Press was the last time the series appeared in hardcover, with those spectacularly provocative Kevin E. Johnson wraparound cover illustrations. The last two books were published by Signet in paperback.

Eros at Zenith is a murder mystery, complete with a hardboiled detective. Andrew Jackson Crane is sent by the Vainmill Syndicate to solve an impossible murder on the Velvet Comet and to dispose of the matter without creating a scandal. That would be bad for business. In the course of the investigation he discovers a much greater crime and another murderer. Again Resnick is not writing about a brothel. Eros at Zenith is about crime and vengeance and concepts of justice.

Scandal finally catches up with the Velvet Comet in Eros Descending. It seems almost natural that this book deals with a conservative religious sect's reaction to, and attack upon, the existence of the Velvet Comet. Thomas Gold decides to launch a crusade against it and the alleged abuse of a beautiful alien race who work in the brothel aboard the Velvet Comet. The story of his downfall and that of the Velvet Comet is another moral fable. It is the natural progression from the topics of the first two books. It is especially pleasing, after the deluge of series books through the past years, that this book flows naturally from the others, but its plot is not at all dependent upon them.

Eros at Nadir is the conclusion of the series. Show business and computer intelligence are the topics for the last book. Nate Page is given the job of writing a holographic musical about the history of the Velvet Comet, almost 100 years after it opened for business. It seems like a normal assignment until he discovers that the Comet's computer system, Cupid, is still around and is interested in seeing that the truth be told about the late great institution.

Eros at Nadir was published in 1986. That year also saw the publication of Santiago. If any of these books qualify as Resnick's masterpiece it is Santiago. The universe is the same as that of the Velvet Comet series, but over 28 centuries later. By that time there is a region of the known galaxy called the Out Frontier worlds. The power of an oppressive governmental system masquerades under the name of the Democracy. Against the forces of stasis stands a rebel outlaw known as Santiago. According to the accepted wisdom he has been terrorizing the Frontier worlds for years. Seeking the truth of the matter is a woman reporter who desperately wants

his story to save her failing career. Joining the hunt with her (coming from several directions) are several of the best bounty hunters around, attracted by the price on Santiago's head. The novel follows each of these individuals towards Santiago's hideaway planet and the climactic revelation of his secret and his death. (No, I did not violate my rule against giving away the ending. Read it and find out.)

Santiago is more than a western set in the far future. Through his prose styling, pacing, characterizations, and plotting Resnick succeeds wonderfully in giving a mythic element to his story. It delves down to the bedrock of certain truths about humanity and the universe that are usually found only in great fantasy. The Lord of The Rings is the most frequently cited example of this sort of fiction.

By careful handling of characters with archetypal qualities the author makes philosophical points about humanity without ever preaching or stooping to allegory. It was present in a lesser degree in the Velvet Comet series and it is what makes Resnick a great fabulist. I once heard him say that all of his books are "just" moral fables. I prefer to think that any great fiction since the invention of the modern novel in the last century is working towards this result.

Ivory in 1988 was Resnick's first hardcover since the Phantasia Press editor of Eros at Zenith. Again we make a huge jump into the future to a time more than 3,000 years after Santiago and about 72 centuries from our present. The narrative of Ivory covers over 73 centuries as it traces the ivory tusks of the Kilimanjaro Elephant, the largest elephant to have walked modern Africa. The tusks truly exist, and reside in a storeroom of the British Museum. It is a survey of human foibles and frailties as we tour the future universe of the Frontier Worlds.

The protagonist in Ivory is a researcher at the publishing house that maintains the big game trophy lists (a la Boone & Crockett), but in the year 6304 of the Galactic Era, by which time mankind has spread all over the galaxy. The last Masai warrior in the galaxy retains Duncan Rojas to locate the tusks of the Kilimanjaro Elephant so that he can perform his duty to his race. Bukoba Kandaka's story is interwoven with vignettes of the tusks throughout history. The ending of the story flows naturally and has a satisfying conclusion.

Paradise was published in hardcover in 1989 and in paperback in April, 1990. You should still be able to find it in the bookstores. It is set on a distant world in the middle of the timeline of Resnick's future universe, covering almost one hundred years of a period about 27 centuries from now. The world of Peponi appears to be an unspoiled paradise to the humans who land there.

At first it is adventures and big game hunters, but eventually it is the makers of "civilization", who decide to raise the native alien race to their level, or at to try. When humans arrived at Peponi, the natives had not even discovered the wheel. It is a novel about what has happened in some parts of Africa for the past two hundred years and yet at the same time it is not tied down to parallelism. So it is more accurate to say that the novel is about the way we learn to live within our world and about the

cultural biases which go into our understanding of what is a civilized being, human or alien.

I have three books that are not from the Birthright universe. First in chronological order is the hard-to-classify Adventures (1985). Adventures follows the travels of Lucifer Jones, self-appointed leader of the Tabernacle of St. Luke, which is a church out there somewhere in the bush of Africa that he has promised the Lord he will build someday. These are just fun stories of a totally unscrupulous and endearing character who wanders from one scam to another, both as perpetrator and victim, as he works on becoming personae non grata in most of the countries of the African continent during the 1920s. It is humorous satire and homage to the adventure stories which were the stock of pulp magazines and Saturday serials of a simpler era, e.g. Doc Savage.

Stalking The Unicorn (1987) is Resnick's venture into parallel worlds. John Justin Mallory is a private detective who has an elf appear in his office to hire him to find a missing unicorn. To do so he enters a Manhattan that contains nymphs, gnomes, and a malevolent demon named Grundy, who is looking for the same unicorn. It is an entertaining story mixing the genres of detective fiction and fantasy.

Second Contact (1990) is a novel that hits close to home for me. I was an Army lawyer for four years and the book is the account of Major Max Becker of the U.S. Space Service's legal branch. He is given the assignment of defending a starship captain who decided one day to kill two of his crewmen in the belief that they were aliens who had infiltrated his ship. It goes back to the first contact between humanity and the alien when the two ships met in space out near Epsilon Eridani and proceeded to blow each other to bits.

It is now 23 years later, 2065 A.D. and mankind is preparing a warm reception for the aliens. Major Becker's client, Commander Wilbur Jennings, has decided that they have already arrived. When he refuses to plead not guilty by reason of insanity, Becker starts performing his professional obligation to defend him and investigates so as to find the evidence to either prove his client is right or enable him to convince Jennings to cop a plea.

I found Second Contact to be exciting, and it kept me fooled until the very end. But it did not have the feel of any of the other Resnick novels. Maybe I was just uncomfortable with what he was doing with the military, since I have been there. right now it is one of the few Resnick novels on the bookstore shelves. You should not pass it up -- it is a fine example of his storytelling art. It will give you a couple of evenings of exciting reading.

So there we are. I have covered the majority of Mike Resnick's novels from the past seven years. With any luck I have shown you that we have an under-appreciated writer up there in Ohio. Now your challenge is to find all those out-of-print titles. Mine is to find that box with all his early novels.



# The ANVIL Chorus

Hi, there. This is Julie Wall, the new assistant editor. I came back to B'ham last November without telling anybody outside my family that I was coming (the decision and the move happened within one truly horrible week), not even Charlotte and Linda. Then I hung out at the folks chicken ranch in Cullman for a week or so, chilling out. I thought about calling Charlotte, but eventually decided that showing up on her doorstep unannounced would be more dramatic. I was right. I rang the bell and Charlotte answered it. She just stared for a few minutes before shrieking "JULIE!" and throwing open the screen door.

When I secured a job in January, I said to her, "Remember how you said that the Blue Room was mine whenever I wanted to use it?" I don't know if she intended on my staying this long. Anyway, when she heard at the March club meeting that Richard Spann was moving (had moved?) to California, she immediately turned to me and said, "Do you want to be assistant editor of ANVIL?" Knowing which side my bread is buttered on, I immediately said, "Yes."

So, here I am, fervently hoping that Richard Spann's tenure at this job has not set a precedent for the turnover rate. Even ~~if~~ when I do move out, and even if it was a job offer I couldn't refuse, this is too much fun to give up. I certainly don't have Richard's experience. My only fan writing to date has been as secretary of BSFC (years and years ago before Charlotte took over as editor of ANVIL) and HaRoSFA, but I'm going to give it my best shot. Got to keep Miz Charlotte - and her many devoted readers - happy.

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Cathy Doyle, 26D Copeland Lane, Newport News, VA 23601

I enjoyed all the Bob Shaw material, along with the account of your well-deserved Rebel. And the interview with Tom Clancy. When I saw the ads for the Atlanta whateveritwas, I said, this couldn't be THE Tom Clancy, could it? Sure enough. I was impressed about how much I agreed with what he was saying, even though I would assume I was a great deal more liberal than he is. Gosh, maybe I'm becoming a closet conservative and don't know it (frightening thought for the day).

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Walter Willis, 32 Warren Road, Donaghadee, N. Ireland BT21 OPD

In answer to Buck Coulson, the originator of the phrase "sticky quarters" was Dean Grennell. It was his habit to use at the local drugstore the celloaped coins he got for subscriptions to his fanzine Grue, and he reported in that fanzine that on the last occasion he entered the store, he overheard one clerk saying to the other, "Here comes old Sticky Quarters."

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We also heard from: Bruno Ogorelec, Ricky Shepard, Bernadette Bosky & Arthur Hlavaty, Greg Turkish, Lawrence Watt-Evans, and M.K. Digre.

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Robert Bloch, 2111 Sunset Crest  
Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90046

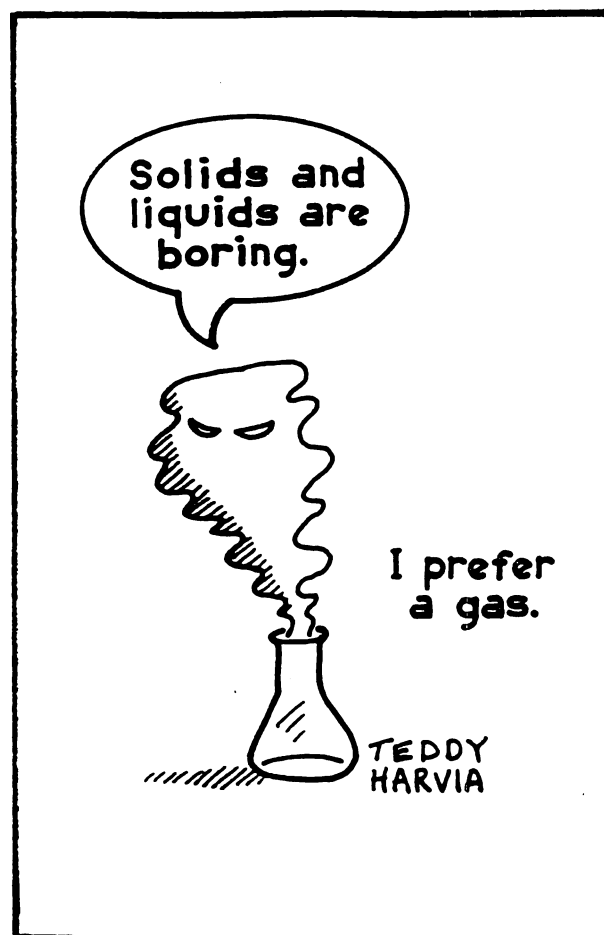
Just back from World Fantasy Con  
to find ANVIL, and enjoy Gilliam's  
perceptive reviews, the Clancy  
interview, and - very definitely -  
the account of Bob Shaw's adven-  
tures stateside. Lots of mail  
to catch up on, but I did want  
to let you know immediately how  
much I enjoyed this issue.

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Teddy Harvia, P.O. Box 905,  
Euless, TX 76039

Cathy Doyle's remark "Another boring  
cat story, why don't we gas them all?"  
inspired the attached cartoon. I  
originally thought of merely changing  
'cat' to 'fan' but then decided to  
make it more elemental.

I do not keep a journal for fear that  
it'll make me concentrate on details  
rather than the overall picture, that  
it'll make me concentrate on what I'm  
going to write about what I'm doing  
rather than on what I'm doing. It's  
a matter of perspective.



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Dick Lynch, P. O. Box 1270, Germantown, MD 20875

I'm struck and intrigued by Cindy Riley's cover for ANVIL 52, which depicts  
an innovation in agricultural pest control -- using a rocket engine to get  
rid of kudzu growth. Don't think it'll work, though.

Anyway, issue 52 looks to be maybe your best issue yet, with articles by and  
about Bob Shaw plus your usual features. You really do deserve another Hugo  
nomination. ((Aw, shucks.... By the way, Dick, there was this guy on a  
fan publishing panel with me and Inzer and Carlberg at Chattacon, who is a  
fan historian from Virginia. He was talking about what a good zine MIMOSA  
is, and how it deserves to be nominated for a HUGO, with which sentiments we  
all agreed. Then he sort of caught himself, and remembered that I was  
sitting at the other end of the table. "Uh," he said, "...and ANVIL's a  
pretty good fanzine, too." The whole room broke up laughing, me most of  
all. And that explains the line on the contents page. -- cp.))

Richard Gilliam's interview with Tom Clancy was really well done, and  
brought back not-so-fond memories of 28 years ago when Clancy talked about  
the Cuban Missile crisis. Where I went to school in far northern New York  
state, we didn't have to fill out forms saying whether or not our parents

would pick us up in case of a nuclear strike, but I distinctly remember one morning when the crisis was at its peak, hearing classmates say to each other, "Well, we're still here this morning." They say the '60s are coming back again in the '90s, but that's one thing I hope we don't have to live through again.

---

Taras Wolansky, 100 Montgomery St., #24-H, Jersey City, NJ 07302

I had to chuckle at Richard Gilliam's review of the movie Dick Tracy. What Gilliam calls its "reactionary attitude" is one of its more realistic aspects, as well as one of the ways it is true to its source. Dick Tracy is a romanticized version of the Tough Cop, for a time when Earl Warren was still a crooked politician on the West Coast. (Funny thing, though. In spite of the danger of having their civil rights violated, city people in those days used to go out at night a lot more than they do now!)

About the changes in Central and Eastern Europe I feel somewhat as Harry Warner does. Knowing as I do the sustained, obscene howl that is Soviet history, I've never been able to nerve myself to watch Dr. Zhivago. (They have much to answer for, those who defended the Soviet Union all those years, who refused to believe the endless evidence of its crimes, who vilified the trickle of defectors and dissenters who told the truth.) And when I watch the wonderful old Ernst Lubitsch film, **The Shop Around the Corner**, set in Budapest before World War II, I sadly imagine the characters' fate under the Communist regime to come. That one is too old to survive his term in a concentration camp; that one will degenerate into a drunken, snarling Soviet-style shopkeeper; that one will sleep with the local commissar so her husband can keep his job as the drunken, snarling etc. (Mr. Vadosz, the sleazy gigolo who got fired for screwing the boss's wife, will of course be the local commissar!)

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Ken Cheslin, 10 Coney Green, Stourbridge, West Midland DY8 1LA, England

Thanks for ANVIL 52, the cover of which is now enhanced by cat's footprints where Sam, our rather inept tabby, walked over it. (You have excellent illos.) BoSh on Kubrick, etc., was entertaining... I know what he means about cliches, one would imagine that the protagonists in various dramas, as seen on TV, would themselves have been a lot of TV, yet I constantly see situations where the whole scenery is strewn with obvious clues, and the actors, (I suppose you can blame the producers/script writers, etc) fumble around as if they hadn't a brain cell amongst them, its most annoying. (I might say that this isn't universal, but it is pretty common... and that goes for books too, half the trouble heroes get into is because the writer doesn't allow them to see the most obvious things, or act in a sensible way...)

"Dealing with serious topics does not make a story important, or serious" says Pat Gibbs in the course of his reviews, and I couldn't agree with him more. It's a remark that could be expanded, with examples, to cover prose and poetry, stage plays and films. For some reason my train of thought rolls on to briefly think on another of my pet hates, the inaccuracies you find in film and books, from seeing Alexander's cavalry equipped with

stirrups, to distances, like light years (a hoary old boo boo) spoken of as time measurement, to folk in Cl2 in France eating potato stew...

The Tom Clancy interview remark, I paraphrase, about cutting down the number of staffs and surplus personnel, struck a chord with me. It applies to more organizations than the military. Its sort of folk-lore amongst the front line teachers here that money and promotion go to the folks in admin, who don't know very much about the practicalities of the job; the most obvious case being books on education written by folk who have never stood in front of a class. An interesting interview.

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Brad W. Foster, P. O. Box 165246, Irving, TX 75016

Haven't seen any of the films reviewed this issue, my big ticket purchase of the summer was for DARKMAN, at which I had one hell of a good time. A better time than at the over-flaunted BATMAN movie, in large part because that one was overhyped, so my expectations were higher, whereas I went into DARKMAN just looking for some fun, and got it!

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Ladislav Peska, Na dolikach 503, 274 01 Slany, Czechoslovakia

I haven't heard from you in a long time. In August I was at the Worldcon in The Netherlands. I hoped to meet with you when I saw your name on a panel, but in vain. I met Dick and Nicki Lynch from Germantown there. The journey to Den Haag is very expensive from Czechoslovakia (about 3500Kcs). So I founded a travel agency (SLAN tour) and organized a trip for SF fans to Worldcon and for tourists to Den Haag.

This summer there was a big interest in traveling from Czechoslovakia. I visited a number of places and towns in Europe (Venezia, Paris, Nurnberg, Slachburg,...) and so made a good profit with it. But the good time is finished. Last year six large travel agencies were in Czechoslovakia, and now there are about 1200. It is big competition.

We were feeling wealth of capitalism in our country in October: prices of oil and gas grew about 100% and the Czech crown was devalued about 55%. The future is much more pessimistic; in January the price of energy will increase about 400%.

In November the communal election was in Czechoslovakia. I was nominee on deputy. Our Communist Party obtained 30% of the votes. It was a very good result for us. And I was on second place in our list of candidates. It means I will have little time for SF now. ((As Charlotte and Pat Gibbs were overheard saying while reviewing the locs, "It's not easy being Communist." - jw))

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Sheryl Birkhead, 23629 Woodfield Road, Gaithersburg, MD 20882

Tsk, tsk -- sultanas = mere raisins... not so. (But don't ask me what the actual difference is.) I'll readily admit that some of the culinary list

was beyond my lexicon (Aussicon?).

Gee-- on tape -- sounds innocuous, but... (ah, thereby hangs the 'tail') my VCR resides in the upper TV room at the Lynches -- broke -- so to speak. It has been to the (Sears) repair shop 4 times -- total bill about \$85 (they finally stopped charging me). The last time round they let me go back into the repair area to see for myself that while in the shop, it worked FINE (as it had for them on the previous 3 visits except for having munched out on a tape) -- sure'nuf - perfection. Took it home (again) -- no go. Sigh. The Lynches offered to be guinea pigs so I took it down there (maybe it was my outlet/tv/whatever) and No Way Jose' -- didn't work there either. So, I let it roost there quietly. Eventually I'll junk it or sell it to some unsuspecting soul since it does, apparently, work -- if you happen to live in the Sears repair facility. As a result, can't watch or record tapes -- bummer. After finally getting a VCR.

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Harry Andruschak, P. O. Box 5309, Torrance, CA 90510-5309

Thanks for ANVIL 52. I'm not sure when it arrived, since my alleged filing system has completely broken down. I was off on another six week Post Office school in Normal, Oklahoma, and the six weeks of mail that piled up has mostly remained untouched due to lack of time.

...then I picked up the mail, and APA-L had arrived. APA-L has been going through some lean times. In the last few months the copy count has dropped from 65 to 50, and this week was again reduced to 35. LASFAPA is now down to a copy count of 25. Los Angeles fandom seems to be slowly losing interest in apas, and has long since ceased to be center of fanzine/genzine/clubzine activity.

By the way, concerning the "Anvil Chorus". If you do not have a recording of Verdi's IL TRAVATORE, may I suggest the RCA compact disk set with Zubin Mehta conducting the New Philharmonia Orchestra, and a cast heading up by Leontyne Price. True, the plot of the opera is a bit absurd, and shows why the cynics claim that opera is proof that anything too silly to be spoken can be sung. But what singing! This recording is a fine example of what a top-notch chorus can do for an old chestnut like the Anvil Chorus.

As for the Clancy "interview", it makes no sense. In one sentence Richard Gilliam claims that Clancy supports the concept of personal civil liberties. But "Freedom of Religion", in the sense of "Freedom from Religion", does not seem to be a personal civil liberty to Clancy if he supports school prayer (mono-theistic prayer, of course), anti-flag burning (turning the flag into a religious symbol), anti-abortion (shove the Christian concept that unbaptised babies go to hell onto women who do not accept this religious concept), and so on. In truth, Clancy seems to be another bigot.... F\_\_\_ him. I refuse to buy any of his books if he has that sort of mindset. Civil Liberties for white male Christians only, right? ((Harry, Harry, Harry, I think you need to read the article again. You seem a little confused on what Clancey does and does not support. And even if the guy were totally against everything you believe in, even if he was a bigot, that would be no reason not to read his books (okay, so you don't have to buy them). How can you disagree with somebody if you don't listen to what they say? I was just



complaining the other day that I didn't read any of so-and-so's books because he was a sleazeball who propositioned me at a con where his wife wasn't. It was pointed out to me that if I banned books by every author who ~~was/a sleazeball~~ had an annoying personality trait, it would leave me with an awfully short reading list. - jw))

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Brian Earl Brown, 11675 Beaconsfield, Detroit MI 48224

It's a delight to see a new issue of ANVIL. Guess you haven't thrown in the towel again. Adding a co-editor may well help prevent those burn-out blues. ((I, for one, certainly hope so - jw)) Sorry to hear that your mimeo has died. It would appear that yet another mimeoed fanzine has bit the dust. The sad thing is that the jump up to photocopy is pretty steep. It's enough to knock a lot of fanzines out of consideration. Maybe that's why there are so few fanzines being published today. Who's crazy enough to do it, or rich enough to do it often?

Charlotte, I really enjoyed your editorial chit-chat and the review of "Pump Up The Volume." Wow, a kid-flick that's not mindless. I also greatly enjoyed your narrative of Bob Shaw's visit to Birmingham and stay with you. It was well told with many nicely told anecdotes. It sounds like you had a great time -- except for when you didn't -- and I envy you the time spent with BoSh.

Richard Gilliam makes some interesting observations about a pair of films that I haven't seen. I doubt that I'll ever be tempted to watch "The Cook, etc." since I have little tolerance for gross films. I may watch Dick Tracy when it comes to cable but was put off by its decision to use that weird primary colors color scheme. It's amorality is an interesting point but as a pulps fan I've noticed that the detectives and heroes back then generally shared that utter conviction that they were right and hence free to do whatever was necessary to achieve their ends. Rather like the way the War on Drugs has been eroding our Civil Rights, invading our privacy and generally assuming people are guilty until proven innocent. For a democracy, Americans have a deep Dictatorial streak.

Bob's speech to the DSC was amusing and cute and avoided the usual earnest talks about What Fandom Means To Me. I'm sorry to hear that Bob was not in a position to write the next great Kubrick movie but think of all he's been spared -- the move to Sri Lanka, the rapid decline in the quality of his writing, being slaved to endless sequels to a really minor story, etc.

Roy G. Bivens' review of PROPER BOSKONIAN once again hits the nail on the head. But he is lax in failing to note the peculiar problems of editing a clubzine. Editors assume they are expected to use material from club members but members for the most part don't bother contributing and when they do oftentimes it's not exactly what the editor was looking for. While it is possible to edit an excellent clubzine, it isn't as easy as it might seem.

It's nice to see that Pat Gibbs is still alive. I hadn't read any of the Hugo nominees this year. Don't feel like apologizing for that, either. HYPERION, in particular seemed unappealing: an overlong quasi-fantasy masquerading as science fiction. In any case, I continue to enjoy the skill of Pat's reviews.

Richard Gilliam's interview with Tom Clancy was quite a surprise. Don't often

see interviews with real-life famous writers in fanzines. Clancy has some very interesting views. He does have a point, I think, that we're spending too much money on fancy weapons and too many upper management types. I was particularly surprised that Clancy speaks highly of John Varley.

Can't say that I approve of this modern trend towards not indenting the first line of new paragraphs.

Steve Antczak likes the new "Flash" TV show, which is fine. I like the show, too. But that one flaw Steve mentions is hardly the only or the worst technical flaw. Sometimes when he runs papers get blown about, sometimes they don't. And to be frank, no one can move so fast that they can't be seen. But still it's fun and the actor is quite personable and many of the speed gimmicks, while impossible, are fun.

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Steve Antczak, 926-C Waverly Way NE, Atlanta, GA 30307

Well, my opinion of the "Flash" TV show has dropped considerably. It's become another run of the mill cop show, almost as bad as Knight Rider was. Given, the people involved with the Flash are definitely more talented, but the material is just plain old lame. And they've hardly developed the characters at all, keeping the likeable black lab assistant constantly two steps behind Barry Allen. Amanda Pays is given next to nothing to do as well. And I'm getting sick of the amusing little ways Allen uses his Flash powers to do things like separate red and white blood cells, for example. Anyway, maybe they'll pull it through the first season and redeem themselves. Next Trek did.

About Richard Gilliam's critique of "The Cook, etc." I'd have to disagree that it failed on an artistic level. I think it achieved exactly the mood it was aiming for. This was black comedy at its blackest, which is supposed to instill a disturbed sense of humor in you. You know, where you sit there and laugh, but it's nervous laughter. The "pompous and unnecessary pseudo-intellectualism" was meant that way, in my opinion, to parody exactly the kind of thing Richard decries in his review.

The rest of the zine provided good, light reading material, which I enjoyed heartily. Especially the interview with Tom Clancy, which was quite fascinating. I've never seen Yandro, but now I'll have to keep an eye out for it in case an old ish pops up at a con or something.



Eva Hauser, Na cihadle 55, 160 00 Praha 6, Czechoslovakia

What a tremendous pity that you weren't at the Worldcon in Haag! I wanted so much to meet you! Anyway, I met there Neil Rest, who found my address in ANVIL some time ago, and now he is in Prague.

It was my first international con and I was extremely enthusiastic with the wonderful atmosphere of friendship, openness, tolerance, with all these discussions... I met there Judy Hanna from London who edits the fanzine "FTT" and is interested in feminism.

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Buck Coulson, 2677W-500N, Hartford City, IN 47348

Re: Greg Turkish's shopping list -- as far as I know, sausage is pork all over America, though I suppose in degenerate locales like New York and San Francisco they might stock beef sausage. As far as I'm concerned, beef sausage is called hamburger.

Re bird statuette from Kubla... I got a small glass skunk from a Michigan convention. Since David Brin got a dolphin and Juanita got a music clef (both of glass) I assumed the con had gone to some trouble to fit the awards to the individuals. (Does a skunk fit my personality? Don't answer that; I already know. Anyway, it was partly for my skunkskin cap that I wear to one-up Lan's coonskin.)

"There could be treasures out there and only the regular readers of /the promags/ will know about them." No, the regular readers of COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE will know about them, too. I get paid for letting them know.

I admire Roy Bivens' memory. If I said that I'd "never seen an issue" of a fanzine before, the editor would be sure to write in enclosing a photocopy of my loc in issue 7. So I try to avoid saying things like that. I don't think Roy is a trufan, though. The memory is a clue to that, but mostly he admits that he isn't competent to comment on feminism. A trufan never admits he's not competent to comment on anything at all in science fiction. Some of them aren't competent, of course, but they never admit it.

Patrick Gibbs has a point in that "Boobs" is fantasy, but it was published in a science fiction magazine, and thus eligible according to the rules. And the best short story on the ballot. The problem is basically that no two people agree on what science fiction is, so there can't be any rigid rules about excluding fantasy. Your fantasy is X-fan's science fiction. For that matter, I object to giving a Hugo to half of a novel, however good HYPERION may be.

I'm glad to see Clancy talking peace, but "If the United States and the Soviet Union make peace who else is going to make war?" is a remarkably silly question. How about Iraq, the IRA, Pakistan and India, the Sikh Separatists, any Arab state and Israel, Egypt and Sudan, etc. etc.? "If we both turn off the spare parts..." Then France takes over, n'est-ce pas?

Actually, character aside, most fans are city dwellers and it's difficult to keep a dog in the city. A dog needs room, and cities don't provide much. Large dogs don't fit in apartments, and small dogs are no more interesting than cats

and a much bigger nuisance. I'd rather have a cat than a cat-sized dog, any day. Smallest dog I ever owned was a Cocker Spaniel which weighed 30 pounds as an adult, but that's about the lower limit on size. (Yes, I know, there are now 30 pound cats, but I don't want one. Where does a 30 pound housecat sleep...?)

At least I like small children, Harry. Come to think of it, are you sure you have the right term? Misogyny refers to a dislike of women; children and dogs have nothing to do with it. And I do like women, at least in particular if not in general.

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Catherine Mintz, 1810 S. Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia, PA 19103

It was a pleasant surprise to see an issue of ANVIL and an even pleasanter surprise to see that Richard Spann is going to help shoulder the editorial burden. I've enjoyed Richard's zines and look forward to seeing him in ANVIL.

I was pleased -- well not exactly pleased, but vindicated -- to read that Patrick Gibbs was not overwhelmed by this year's Hugo winners either. They were a very adequate but not exciting lot. It was the first year I can remember that there were no discoveries for me: I had read all the nominees beforehand.

In particular HYPERION and its sequel annoyed me. Not because they weren't interesting science fiction, but because I felt that the whole thing needed another rewriting. Its details are sloppy and there are places where, I suspect, Simmons didn't remove a paragraph or so after he had re-edited it and copied it to another part of the story. Also, I like long books -- they give an author a chance to stretch out and really create a universe -- but I occasionally felt Simmons was just heaving in another mass of information or another plot loop to spin things out.

The dead stop at the end of Hyperion didn't endear it to me, either, the more so that The Fall of Hyperion is not a direct continuation of the first book, but another book altogether in style and structure. It does pick up at roughly the same point in time as Hyperion ends, but it takes a while to begin to tie off Hyperion's loose ends.

I wonder if Simmons won't have done better to spread his ideas over several smaller, more tightly structured books. Canterbury Tales is all well and good, but the leisurely days of ambling toward a shrine through an English springtime are past: we expect a tighter narrative in these days of the thirty-second sound bite.

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Mike Glicksohn, 508 Windermere Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M6S 3L6 Canada

Lately I've been so busy with mundane obligations that I've written very few locs but somehow the thought that this particular faned drives with a loaded magnum under the seat inspires me to make some time to write and thank you for the most recent ANVIL. I'll be loccing as I read it so I can't honestly say that this is your usual fine mixture of enjoyable reading material (not yet anyway) but I can at least say that I see no point to your presenting the letters in an Ace Double type format. This not only fails to add anything to the issue, but it detracts from it by making the reading of the locs decidedly

awkward. I hope this was a one-time experiment that will be discontinued when you see how unsuccessful it was.

Interesting review/editorial. This would not have been a film I'd have made much effort to see but thanks to your comments I'll try to remember it and catch it when it eventually shows up on my cable movie channel as I'm sure it will. (Unfortunately I'll probably just have a vague idea that it's an interesting movie having something to do with "pump up" and "volume" and I'll end up watching a body building contest or the latest Schwarzenegger flick!)

Richard Gilliam certainly made me realize how out of touch I am. One of the films he talks about I haven't seen and the other I haven't heard of. I may not have my finger on the pulse of popular culture but I hadn't realized I no longer even knew where to find it!

You and I belong to what I think (and hope) is a very exclusive club, Charlotte. When I was on a panel with BoSh at the Atlanta worldcon I prompted him to tell that sports' column story and when he forgot to include the punchline I told it to the audience! I can't believe there are too many other fans who can make the same claim. (There's an easy explanation for Bob forgetting the best part of one of his most famous stories though: in Atlanta, he'd had a bit too much to drink; in Chattanooga he'd had too little!)

Bob's tale of airplanes, cretins and missed opportunities was typically shavian in its style and content which made it a delight to read, of course. I suppose the Shaws are just too nice and decent looking to avoid troublesome and annoying passengers when they travel. I usually want to be left alone when I'm flying somewhere and don't have too much difficulty getting my wish. A scowl and a few mutters will usually silence even the most garrulous and obnoxious fellow traveller. But I suppose looking like a Charles Manson family member probably has something to do with it! ((Charlotte, how can this guy be cute and look like a member of the Manson family? - jw))

I'm flattered to be used as a way of identifying Boyd Raeburn but I suspect Boyd might feel otherwise! He was a jazz fan, a gourmet, into fancy sportscars and was one of the finest fannish writers of his time. I don't qualify in any of those four categories and Boyd certainly never made a career out of loccking fanzines as I have. Still, maybe I'll slip downstairs and pour a dram of 25 year old Macallam single malt in Boyd's honour... I think he'd approve of that at least.

I agree with Roy's admiration of Jeanne Gomoll's writing, drawing and editing ability. If he does not know it, the reason for her recent absence from the fanzine scene was the decline and death of her brother from AIDS.

Gilliam usually has his facts straight but I find it hard to believe that any author sold more books than Stephen King in the 1980s. His string of best sellers was absolutely phenomenal.

You've got me on the originator of 'sticky quarters' but I'm sure Harry or Brian will help. But I do have a dozen copies of Yandro, Buck, although I don't recall ever loccking it. I have a vague recollection that you didn't send out issues in returned for published locs but that may be inaccurate. Every now and

then you'd send me one and I'd wonder why. And a couple of years later you'd send me another one and I'd wonder why again. So it went.

Lloyd's all wet when it comes to fanzine criticism. Constructive intelligent criticism of fanzines is one of the defining aspects of fanzine fandom. A decent critic will temper his comments with an understanding of the editor's inexperience or youth but while I've never been an intense fan of the KTF school of criticism I do honestly believe that hard-hitting honest fanzine criticism is a mainstay of a healthy active fanzine fandom. It's a shame there aren't more people doing it and those who wish to should be encouraged. Proper criticism can only be helpful to a faned and can thus only improve fanzine fandom as a whole.

I'm fascinated by the image of dead cats and dogs parading along Los Angeles highways, as described in Andruschak's letter. Does King know about this? Maybe there's a Pet Semetary involved?

I have decided that my initial investigation of the width of the margins used to determine whether or not the letters were supposed to be upside down, just mis-collated or done deliberately to make me say something and look foolish was inconclusive (not to mention mildly paranoid) so I'm going to assume it was a mistake and restaple the issue in the normal fashion. I await the truth of the situation with breathless anticipation. But not for long as I quite enjoy breathing. ((Charlotte says you're too cute to be made to look foolish - jw))

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Harry Warner Jr., 423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, MD 21740

Another fine issue of ANVIL brought immense enjoyment to me and a bit of nostalgia for the past. Each time a new fanzine arrives that follows the old traditions of fanzine publishing, like ANVIL, I get this sense of a brief intrusion of the past into the present and a fear I'll never again see familiar typewriter typefaces, feel the velvety surface of mimeo paper, and recognize the line drawing techniques most suited to mimeography. I was so taken up by this thought I didn't realize you switched toward the end to a copier until I read about it, but I meant well.

I can't think of anything in particular to say about the movie material that begins this issues, since I haven't seen and probably won't see the films involved. But I loved the Bob Shaw section, even though I didn't see Bob (there) and may never see him again, but who insists on consistency from a letterhack? His own account of his adventure with Stanley Kubrick (which I assume has some factual basis) is hilarious. It makes me happy I'll never be forced to work with a great film director, although a few people have told me they think Irwin Allen should make a movie based on my life.

Buck Coulson really should write an extended history of Yandro. The two pages he consecrates to that topic in his column this time contain some bits of information I hadn't know and I'm sure almost everything in them will be new to most of ANVIL's readership. For that matter, it would be nice if the Coulsons could emit another issue of Yandro. If Hyphen, Cry of the Nameless, and Innuendo can made a curtain call after many years of suspended publication, Yandro certainly could provide the same service for fanzine fandom.



Theodore Roscoe might be the most unjustly neglected fine pulp writer. So I'm glad to find Buck reviewing one of his novels. I've read several of Roscoe's hardcover books with enjoyment, but his fiction in Argosy had a special allure that is lacking from the more serious non-fiction he wrote in later years. Roscoe's Argosy contributions frequently set forth some kind of outrageously impossible situation which was finally resolved logically in the end. I suppose this method could qualify as a special kind of mystery story which challenges the reader to guess where the writer has exercised legerdemain instead of the identity of the guilty character. It's been many years since I last looked into the pages of those Argosys from the later 1930s and early 1940s, and I can't remember any specific details of the stories, but I do recall that one of them was based on an old musical masterpiece entitled "It Ain't No Sin to Take Off Your Skin and Dance Around in Your Bones".

I would be cheered up more by Tom Clancy's assurance that "there is a possibility that we can end war entirely" if it didn't sound so familiar. Neville Chamberlain made me so happy when I was a teenager and he returned to England after a trip to Munich with the news that peace in our time had been achieved. Today's situation is uncannily like the way things were in the years before World War Two. If the nations of the world don't oust Iraq from Kuwait, either by sanctions or by conflict, there is going to be another world war within a decade. (I personally believe that another four or five months of blockage would either stir up a revolution in Iraq or leave its army so distraught that victory in battle would come easily for United Nations forces. But to do nothing at all would just increase the parallel with what happened when Hitler moved into the Rhineland and annexed Austria.)

Mike Glicksohn and I both share the same temptation to watch baseball on television instead of writing locs during the warm months. The situation will be more critical next summer because the local cable has changed the Home Team Sports channel from pay-extra to part of the basic package, which means an additional 60 or 70 Baltimore Orioles games will become visible on my television set. I suppose I could buy a second-hand portable typewriter light enough to hold on my lap and write locs between pitches. This typewriter is much too heavy for that purpose and I'd probably electrocute myself if I attempted such a thing with a 110 volt typer.

I've always suspected some fans like cats for one more reason, over and above those Lloyd Penney lists. A lot of fans have sex lives quite similar to those preferred by felines.

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Lloyd Penney, 412-4 Lisa Street, Brampton, Ontario L6T 4B6, Canada

Thanks for my copy of ANVIL 52. Congratulations on getting an assistant to help you with the zine. I'd think to maintain the high standards you've set in the past, some help would be welcome to give you some rest.

Hosting BoSh must have been quite an experience, and a bit of a circus, too. After hosting another Irish national for a couple of weeks a few years ago (Peter Morwood), I can understand that most of you were probably harried trying to keep up with him, a little poorer trying to supply the bheer, and sore with laughing from his jokes. Fortunately for us, Peter's wife, Diane Duane, was there to act as Peter's governor, keeping him at a slightly lower speed. If

BoSh was there by himself, it must have been a three-ring circus.

Congratulations on getting that Rebel Award... it sounds like at least in one area, awards are truly given for merit, and not because you're politically correct, or are friends with the awards committee.

Good to see that Marc Ortlieb is active in publishing again... I should write about getting a Q36 in the mail (or if this note appears in the local, how about it, Marc? ta.)

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Mark Manning, 1400 East Mercer #19, Seattle, WA 98112

Another ANVIL hits the spaceways, and too soon after #51 to give a guy a chance to write a nice, leisurely LoC! ((Come on, now, Mark, I'm trying to get Charlotte to stick to a nice, leisurely, twice-a-year-April-and-October schedule - jw)) On the assumption that this means your publication schedule is actually returning to something approaching frequency, this LoC is being written quickly, as soon as the ish is done all read (he said, using a Southernism for local color [actually, this Southernism comes from the old Odom Tennessee Pride Sausage TV commercials of the 60s. The spots opened with a shot of a cartoon-animation hillbilly, who sang, in a high, nasal tenor, "Fer real cuntry sawsiij, th' best yew evurr trahd, look fer me-yee awn th' labull uvv Tennesuh-ie Prahd. Hit's real cuntry sawsiij, yesiree! Th' secret uvv th' goodness is th' recipe, and before this sawng is dun awl played, Mr. Odom'll tell yew hahw hit's made." Whereupon the hillbilly dissolved into spots and stars, which then formed themselves into a little mustachioed man. He--Mr. Odom-- wore a lab coat as he now sang, in a kind of Grandpa Jones-but-a-bit-lower voice "First you take a bit of X and pinch of Z. Then for flavor and taste, you add Y-9D. A touch of Odom magic blends all three--that's the secret of the secret recipe!" Odom now dissolved into spots and stars, which instantly resolved into a fiddle and bow, played a quick cadence, then spotted-and-starred themselves back into the hillbilly. He called out, "Tekk HAWM a pakijj uvv Tennesuh-ie Prahd!" One more cadence, and the commercial was over, perhaps to be followed by Skipper Ryle introducing Popeye cartoons, or perhaps by another commercial, which, at midday, might be "Come alive--you're in the Pepsi Generation", or, in the evening, after, let's say, Hawaiian Eye, might be "A man named Petri, he's the one, who makes a real fine wine". (I see the beat minds of my generation/starving, hysterical, naked/wandering the angry Yuppie streets, looking for Ipana...))).

I enjoyed nearly everything in the ish except the interview with Tom Clancy, which, while perhaps interesting from a political standpoint, wasn't nearly as lively as anything else your article-file coughed up. joan hanke-woods' art works well for you, too. In a fanart market heavily weighted towards cartoony styles, that's a real accomplishment.

My fiancée, Getsu-shin is right this very second submitting to the urge to chuckle over both Jerry Collins' bacover and BoSh's story of Singapore's Raffles Hotel (a clear case of simultaneous submission!). Gets, it is worth noting, living in Singapore for a couple of years. If Bob Shaw had just asked us, we'd have told him the Raffles was planning to close.

Gets says she Does Not Approve of hotel's modernization scheme -- Raffles'

management going to read this ish, Charlotte? Hmm, that's not such a silly question, really: You should send #52 to the Raffles Hotel Museum, which is actively assembling a collection of memorabilia.

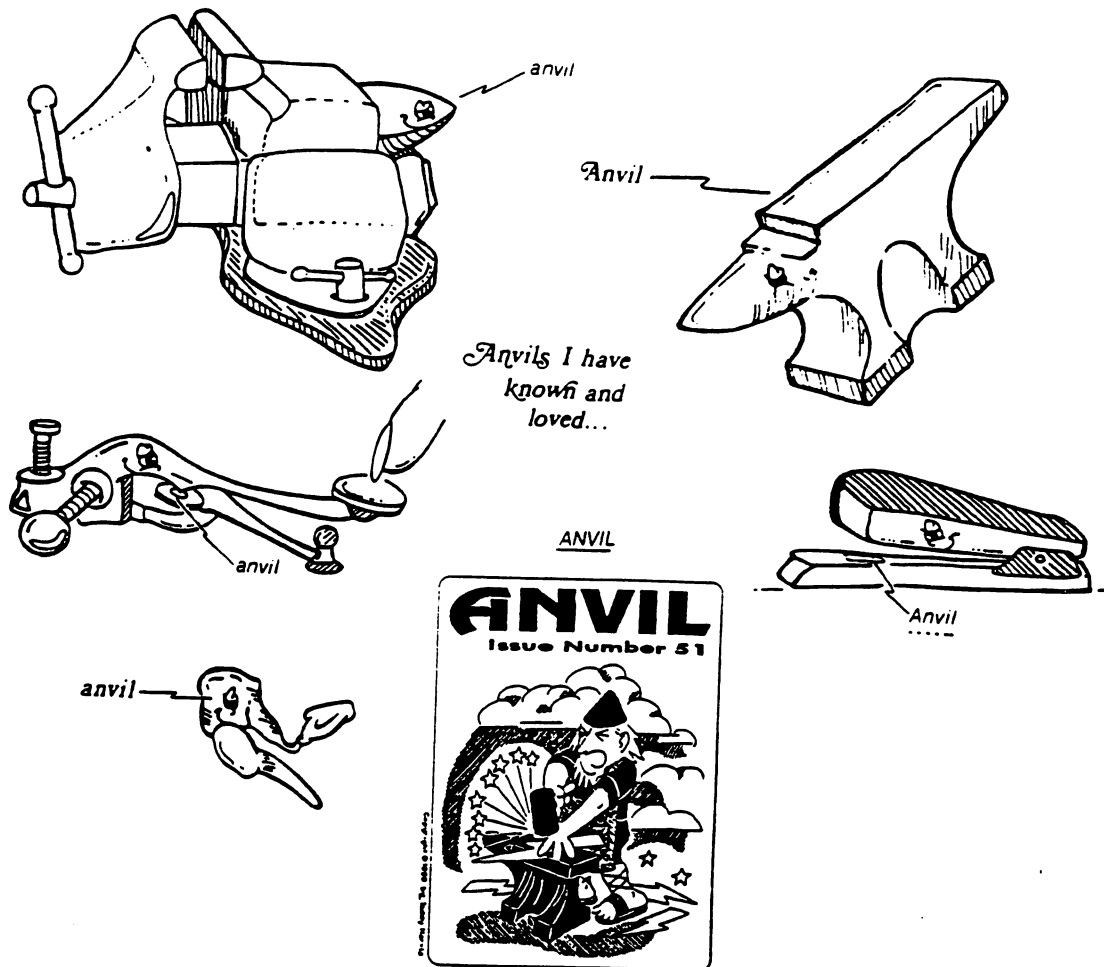
Oh, and she advises Singapore-bound travelers that, if they visit Sweekee's for Hainanese chicken rice, they can get their blood cubes "to go", that public restrooms in Singapore are to be avoided at ALL COSTS, and that, if they take a side trip to the Malaysian capital (K.L.) American tourists would definitely be wise to claim Canadian citizenship.

You see? ALL KNOWLEDGE is contained in fanzines!

Keep on fanpubbing; we Seattle fans have a Secret Plan to pump some new life into zinefandom, so we need you to show us new ANVILs to look up to!

(Come to think of it, the only time one can look up to an anvil is when it's about to crash on top of one's head, so maybe you should disregard that last sentence....)

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Irv Koch, 5465 N. Morgan St. #106, Alexandria, VA 22312

Breakfast at the Dinosaur's: For some reason Ike Dinosaur had been talked by one of the local fen into taking that fan's niece to a con about 400 miles off, one of those confusing deals involving chains of favors and rides going years back. He also had to pick up a guy getting off work from a strange shift. The combination had the niece, Jancie, at Ike's at about 5 AM, waiting, and eating breakfast.

There was also an ANVIL on the table, and between bites of syrup covered breakfast, Ike was soon off on a tangent from another tangent from something in the fanzine.

"Scanners," he said, "now they have cheap scanners. And 'gif viewers' of just the right resolution. And Meade Frierson doing one of the two big national BBS lists. What I would do," he paused for more pressed semi-crispy sugar coated food, "if I were doing a fanzine now, is to talk Frierson into setting up a BBS himself, so people could call and drop info into it. For a small subscription, people could be given access to an 800 number.

Then, I'd just go ahead and do the ANVIL pretty much like now. No fancy desk top publishing. Simply word process the pages. Not even fancy fonts for titles -- the blocks of asterisks and such do fine. Leave holes for the art. Put it on with glue stick.

Then I'd scan the thing page by page at fairly low resolution. I'd make each page of the zine into a "page" for the screen --lots of 'gifs' floating about now are like that. The kicker is that with what's out there now, there's got to be a way to actually simulate turning pages -- probably a file for each page with links of some sort.

Then I'd change the color of the background of each page to simulate a different color on each page. Light color. Black letters.

Put the file on the BBS and send out flyers telling everyone how to get to it. Send some special types the zine on disk (with a viewer program -- public domain or shareware).

People could leave comments on the BBS -- hades, a 10 minute call from even California to Birmingham isn't that much these days."

"Might work," Jancie replied. "I guess this is your wahfful of comment."

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Dave Gorecki, 9129 W. 167th Street, Orland Hills, IL 60477

The BoSh items are the highlights of the issue for me... the only way they could have been better would be to send a video cassette of the speech to watch the inimitable Shaw delivery. SF seems to be blessed to the extent which its authors are able to perform as well as write: Harlan, Robert Bloch, and Fred Pohl come to mind; I can't think of any mundane writers who come across as interesting, although I certainly would like to have heard Sam Clemens on one of his tours.

About Dick Tracy: a glacial film from a glacial actor... the most interesting thing about it for me was the brief, unheralded cameo (as a forger) by Ian Wolfe, a familiar character actor who was playing balding, middle aged men as far back as 1934, who must be about ninety by now, still plugging away at it. He turned up in the Karloff/Lugosi film The Raven in '35, then in several of the Rathbone Sherlock Holmes films. I remember being astounded to see him still acting, in a STAR TREK episode about 1966... and here he turns up again. No doubt they'll be wheeling me to a 3D-TV at the old folks home in about 40 years, and I'll have the feeling that Alan Young did when Rod Taylor showed up after a few decades in TIME MACHINE.

Speaking of George Pal films (watch this seque) Charlotte should keep an eye on Gene Barry in WAR OF THE WORLDS as he turns from scientific genius to hero by taking off his specs early in that film.

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Roger Weddall, P. O. Box 273, Fitzroy 3065, Australia

My Birmingham SF Club t-shirt has been much worn, and gratefully (i.e. gratefully + greatly?) appreciated -- by others, but very much more by me! Enclosed please find a photograph of me wearing it, not a very good photograph but proof nonetheless that it did arrive. Whenever I wear it I dutifully uphold the bylaws and regulation of BSFC, the only problem being finding enough places where I can wear it and live up to the spirit to the full. Conventions are primary targets, naturally....

I spent Christmas day round at my sister and her boyfriend's place (as opposed to them coming around to where I live) and it was a very relaxed affair. When I'm not working on Christmas day -- which seems to be every second year, on average -- I like to invite a few friends around and prepare a meal for them. This year, it was Deb and Dan's turn (they thought) to have Christmas at their place, but I still managed to invite one person for the meal. Croatian/Yugoslav fan Damir Coklin, who until his arrival in Australia I knew only through the pages of ANVIL, had only been in the country for a month or so, and so I thought it would only be the decent thing to do, to make sure he had an invitation to somewhere to have Christmas dinner.

(Digression: Damir wrote to me midway through the year and said he'd be coming out -- I presumed for a visit. It turns out he's intending to stay, and luckily he seems to have landed on his feet. Within the month he knows his way around Melbourne, has a place to live, a girlfriend and a job -- not necessarily in that order. He's a nice fellow and he tells amusing, scandalous stories about other Yugoslav fans. End digression.)

Congratulations on your Rebel Award -- you really are a modest person, Charlotte, and I can just see you mumbling and fumbling and being overwhelmed by the reaction of the crowd, and your own reaction to being chosen. Even from this distance, it is clear how much you have given Southern fandom... I just wish that there was more opportunity for you to have an effect - in person - on our own version of 'Southern' fandom, speaking of which, when are you going to stand for DUFF, anyway? ((When they move Easter to after April 15. -- cp))

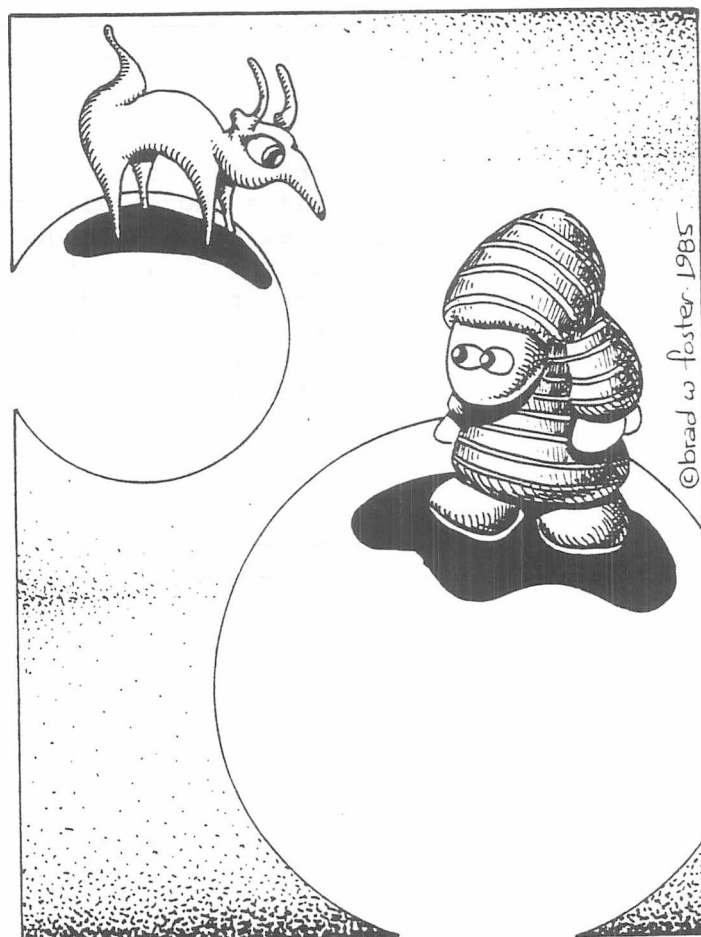
ANVIL for the Hugo! At least, for the ballot. I don't see Pirate Jenny (yet?) and as far as I'm concerned, ANVIL, Mimosa, and Trapdoor are the three fine,

fannish fanzines I see coming out of America that embody the spirit of what its all about. Mind you, when Bill Bowers gets publishing again... but you certainly have my vote, er, nomination. This idea must simply be the oldest in the book, but I urge all fans reading this (if any are) to get off their backsides and become supporting members of Worldcons so they can nominate and vote for the awards that exist only because of fandom. It's really that simple, isn't it? I should add, congrats to Leslie Turek and The Mad 3 Party on the Hugo fanzine win... getting too het up about awards is a silly thing to do.

Speaking of Hugo Awards, I was interested to see Patrick J. Gibbs' reviews of the 1990 winners, glad too, to see that I was not the only person in the world not completely swept with uncritical enthusiasm for Dan Simmons' winner HYPERION. Unlike Patrick I didn't mind the length, but find it quite uneven as a book. There certainly are some wonderful ideas in the book -- and also in the second-half-of-the-story FALL OF HYPERION -- and the book is for the most part superbly paced, but I found some aspects of the thing a bit too derivative for my liking. I didn't, for instance, feel that the author ever really escaped from under the shadow of the CANTERBURY TALES, because I don't think that he came adequately to terms with the religious theme that I thought he was invoking. Certainly not in the first book, HYPERION, and in the 'sequel' I reckon he lost his way a bit. Still, most of the pilgrim's stories were memorable, and I agree it's Hugo-winning material, if flawed.

Other features: Bob Shaw was, as usual, wonderfully diverting. He really does know how to tell a story, doesn't he? Bravo, Bob. I didn't get to see you in Perth because I couldn't afford to get over there, so I'm glad to see a fandom larger than West Australia finally reap the benefits of your second trip down under. Encore.

Last of all, let me say how much I enjoy Roy Bivens' reviews of fanzines, especially when they're of fanzine I've not read. He is entertaining and informative. Ha, I'm sounding like a copy-writer for an ad for a television news service -- it's definitely time to stop this loc and... go to the beach or something. Probably something. We're going a few days from now to an open-air performance (set in and around the Botanical Gardens) of A Midsummer Night's Dream. I can see us all now -- the audience, I mean -- traipsing around from pond to parkbench, watching Shakespeare happen. If it's something to write home about... I'll write to you about it!





Bob Shaw, 66 Knutsford Road, Grappenhall, Warrington, Cheshire WA4 2PB, UK

I enjoyed ANVIL 52 so much that as soon as I had finished reading it I sat down and wrote a 15-page letter of comment. And then -- realising I was in danger of ruining my reputation as the worst correspondent in fandom -- I tore the letter up. I'm almost sorry I did that now, because there were many things in the zine which deserved praise. The cover artwork was one, and I really loved the sensible tone of Patrick Gibbs' reviews. It suggests wide reading and a high degree of intelligence.

By the way, I recently discovered that okra is actually quite well known in this country. It goes under the name of gumbo, or lady's fingers. In spite of that, I still think it is one of the most useless vegetables ever invented. It has about as much taste as recycled toilet roll tubes, which makes it a close second to what we call courgettes and you call zucchini. I used to watch Kojak, and would feel envious when at the end of a good case he would invite his buddies to a restaurant he knew which did an excellent zucchini. When I discovered that zucchini ((this is the way Bob spelled zucchini. I caught myself wondering if that was the British spelling, when I realized that, of course, it wasn't... - jw)) was only the homely, miserable, tasteless, boring courgette I went off Kojak for ever. Those lollipops must have destroyed his taste buds.

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Shortly after receiving this letter in early March, I had a phone call from Bob telling me that his wife, Sadie, had died suddenly and unexpectedly. It was a crushing blow to Bob, as it would be to anyone, to lose wife, friend, and lifelong helpmate. Bob and Sadie were guests in our home for a week in 1986, and we remember her as charming, warm, and witty. All of Bob's friends in Birmingham extend their heartfelt sympathy.

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